

Orchard Community Primary School



Attendance Policy

This policy was approved by the Governing Body of Orchard Primary School at their meeting on.....

Signed..... Chair of Governors

Version	Date	Author	Reason for Change
0.1	9/2018	FS	New Policy
0.2	10/2020	FS	Review and re-adoption
0.3	Summer 2023	FS	Review

Review Frequency	Next Review Date
Every 3 years	Summer 2026

Introduction

Orchard Primary School seeks to ensure that all of its pupils receive an education which enables them to maximise opportunities to reach their full potential.

Research shows there is evidence of a strong link between good attendance and increased attainment. Pupils who regularly attend school make much better progress both socially and academically. Regular attendance enables pupils to adapt better to routines, schoolwork, and friendship groups.

Therefore, those pupils will have a positive experience of learning and a more successful transition from primary to secondary and beyond to further education and training.

Aims of the policy:

- To work in partnership with parents and other agencies to strive towards every child reaching 95% attendance to ensure that they can get the best out of the educational opportunities provided.
- To make attendance and punctuality a priority for those associated with the school including pupils, parents, teachers and governors.
- To maximise attendance across the school population and reduce persistent absenteeism (below 90%).
- To ensure that we have clear and robust strategies in place to manage and promote regular attendance, for all students at Orchard Primary.

School Staff to Support Attendance

The school's strategic leader for attendance is the headteacher, Fiona Shields.

The school's attendance officers are Rachel Daft and Michelle Farrar. Please contact the attendance officer on a day-to-day basis when your child is absent or for any queries regarding attendance.

The school's parent support advisor/safeguarding and pastoral lead is Fiona Shields.

Promoting regular attendance through good practice

It is essential that everyone involved in promoting attendance is clear about the important role that must be carried out in order to raise standards. Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility – parents/carers, pupils and all members of school staff.

To manage and promote regular attendance Orchard Primary School will:

- Keep parents updated on the school's overall attendance figure and individual pupil's attendance via advisory letters home, newsletters, termly pupil progress reports, the annual report, social media and the school website.
- Follow the DfE and Government guidance in relation to school attendance.
- Report to parents how their child is achieving in school and how their child's attendance is impacting on this via regular parent evenings.

- Build positive relationships between home and school that can be the foundation of good attendance. The link between attendance, attainment and wider wellbeing will be discussed with parents.
- Ensure prompt follow-up action in cases of non-school attendance by conducting a safe and well check by 9.20am via telephone in the first instance, and then text message, where registers have been closed and no explanation given, on the first day and subsequent days of absence, to establish a reason for a child's absence.
- Report children missing education (CME) to the LA.
- Utilise attendance data, analysing patterns and trends to target attendance and punctuality improvement across pupil cohorts or individual pupils, to reduce persistent or severe absence from school.
- Review the attendance policy annually and publish this on the school website.
- Account for and consider the specific needs of pupils and their families where there may be other barriers to attendance (medical conditions or special educational needs and disabilities) and provide support to overcome these barriers. (e.g. Early Help or other wider partners).
- Follow Public Health guidance should any outbreaks in school occur.
- Support pupils back into school following a length or unavoidable period of absence and provide support to build confidence and bridge gaps.
- Monitor individual students' attendance to:
 - a) Acknowledge good and improved school attendance
 - b) Notify parents when we are worried about their child's attendance by following the procedure below.
- Implement the following strategies to improve attendance and reduce persistent and severe absence that meets the requirements of Working Together to Improve Attendance 22 (DfE).
 - Emphasise the importance of good attendance at the meeting for new parents.
 - Ensure that a high profile is given to the issue of attendance in all school publications e.g. prospectus.
 - Attendance Policy available on the school's website.
 - Newsletters used to remind parents about school policy and the rules about holidays in term time.
 - Assemblies held on the importance of good punctuality and attendance.
 - Monitoring absence and punctuality each half term, to establish regular patterns of absence and to act on any findings by reporting to parents or to the Local Authority as appropriate. Particular attention is paid to vulnerable groups of children e.g. Looked after Children.
 - Prompt investigation of any issues that may be affecting a child's well-being and attendance. (If absence persists, or becomes a concern, the Headteacher will contact parents advising them about improving attendance. After this, any further unauthorised absence will result in a formal letter from the school and may end in the Local Authority taking legal action).
 - Set challenging but achievable attendance targets on the annual Core Strategic Plan.
 - Monitor attendance termly for any emerging patterns below 96%. Parents will be routinely contacted if attendance falls below 90% at the end of every full term.

To manage and promote the regular attendance of their children, parents will:

- Understand their legal responsibilities by ensuring regular school attendance with regard to the Section 444(1) and 444 (1A) Education Act 1996 and Section 36 of the Children Act 1989.
- Understand their responsibility to keep the school up to date with at least two emergency contact details as required by the Children Missing Education requirements and in line with the Keeping Children Safe in Education guidance 2022.
- Impress on their children the importance of regular school attendance by keeping absences to a minimum and ensuring that children are only out of school when they are too sick to attend.
- Establish effective communication with the school and swiftly address any worries their children may have about coming to school so that we can work together to resolve this.
- Contact school on the first day of absence to inform school of the reason and when the child is expected to return. Keep school informed if the absence is likely to continue so that school and partner agencies can ensure that amendments or alternatives can be made to provision if required.
- Provide the school with any medical appointment cards and where possible make appointments out of school hours. If this is not possible, parents should ensure that children attend prior to or following their appointment.
- Ensure that family holidays are taken during school holidays and not during term time, appreciating that there are 13 weeks of the year during which the school is closed.
- Attend any meetings called by school and partner agencies to discuss attendance.

Punctuality

Pupils are expected to arrive punctually, ready for registration at 8.45 a.m. (There is an arrival window of 10 minutes from 8.35am). The school gates are locked at 8.45am and any pupils arriving after this time must enter school through the main entrance and be 'signed in' by a parent/carer.

Morning registers close at 8.55 a.m. and pupils arriving after this time will be marked as 'Late' on the class register. Afternoon registers are completed by 1.05pm

Parents/Carers of pupils who are persistently late will be contacted by the Headteacher and will be supported to address the problem.

Procedure to follow when pupil is absent

Illness - Parents and carers are expected to inform the school office on the morning of the first day of absence either by telephone or via voice message, clearly stating the reason for the absence and the expected duration of illness. It is also useful for parents to Dojo their child's class teacher.

If office staff have not been informed of the reason for a pupil's absence, a 'Safe and Well' check will be carried out by 9.20am where staff will contact a parent/carer by telephone or text message to ascertain a reason for the absence. Attempts will be made throughout the day until successful.

Medical Appointments - A message via email, a telephone call or Class Dojo may be sent to the school prior to the day of absence, e.g. if a pupil has a medical appointment.

Request for leave of absence in term time

All parents who wish to take their child out of school for any reason (other than medical reasons) should email the Headteacher with a leave of absence request.

It is school that makes the decision whether to authorise or unauthorise the absence. School will make this decision based on the information available to them. Parents are encouraged to provide as much information as possible and information such as appointment cards, medication or application for leave of absence will assist school in making this decision.

Where parents/carers take children out of school without authorisation, parents leave themselves at risk of fines or legal action. For example, a penalty notice may be issued due to the deliberate taking of leave of absence in term time where it can be demonstrated that the parent/carer understood that permission had not or would not be given and where this has created a period of unauthorised absence in the current term of at least 10 sessions.

Types of Absence

Authorised - The parent/carer of a child of compulsory school age is required by law to ensure that the child regularly attends the school at which he/she is registered. Should a parent fail to ensure that his/her child attends that school regularly then the parent is guilty of an offence.

Legally, every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school as either authorised or unauthorised.

Authorised absence is where the school has either given approval in advance for the child to be absent or where an explanation offered afterwards has been accepted as satisfactory justification for absence.

Absence may generally be authorised for the following reasons:

- Illness
- Medical or dental appointments, by necessity made in school time
- Accredited Exam – ballet/music (extra-curricular)
- Approved sporting event
- An exceptional 'enrichment' opportunity (e.g. involvement in a public performance)
- Family Bereavement
- Serious family crisis
- Exclusion
- Wedding – close family relative
- Religious Observance
- Traveller child travelling for the purposes of parents employment
- Other unusual/rare 'exceptional' occasions (the nature of such occasions will be determined by school on an individual basis)

Unauthorised - Unauthorised absence is where no explanation has been given for the child's absence or where the explanation offered is considered by the school to be unacceptable.

Absence will **not** be authorised in the following circumstances:

- If no explanation is offered by the parent/carer
- The explanation provided is unsatisfactory (e.g. shopping, day off to celebrate a birthday, minding the house, day trip etc.)
- Family holidays in term time (unless granted under 'exceptional' circumstances)
- Where there are a sporadic absences and the attendance is declining.
- Where no medical evidence has been provided when requested.

Persistent Absence

Persistent Absence (PA) is absence of 10% or more. An individual child is deemed to be a persistent absentee, therefore, if his/her attendance is less than 90% (regardless of whether or not the absences have been authorised).

If a pupil has an increasing number of authorised absences, classed as 'persistent absence', contact will be made with the parents to ascertain if further action needs to be taken. Re-occurring unauthorised absence may be referred to the Local Authority and this can lead to legal interventions.

The school may also make a referral to the Local Authority department responsible for CME (Children Missing Education) if there is a concern about a pupil's welfare or safety.

Parents are expected to co-operate with the school and attend any meeting when requested to do so.

Holidays during Term Time/ Leave of Absence

Schools are given strict guidelines from the Department of Education that there is no entitlement in law for any leave of absence for a holiday during term time and as a consequence, requests for leave of absence for reasons that are not considered to be special or exceptional should not be approved.

Procedure for requesting a holiday in term time

Any applications for leave of absence must be made in advance in writing/email and any request can only be authorised where school accepts that there are 'exceptional circumstances'. The reason for the request should be given in detail. The school will email back to the parent/carer informing them of the decision that has been made by the Headteacher.

Examples of circumstances that will not be authorised:

- Availability of cheap holidays and cheap travel arrangements.
- Days overlapping with the beginning or end of term.
- During the first term, when a pupil is just starting at School, as it is very important for the child to settle into their new class;
- During an assessment/test period – Key Stage 1 & 2 SATs
- When a pupil's attendance record already includes any level of unauthorised absence
- We will also take into account the current attendance for each child when making a decision.

***'Exceptional Circumstances' Criteria**

It is not possible to define all 'exceptional circumstances' therefore the circumstances of each leave of absence application will be taken into account on an individual basis. However, examples of what might be considered 'exceptional circumstances' for leave in term time, as agreed by Governors at Orchard Primary School are:

- Service personnel returning from or scheduled to embark upon a tour of duty abroad.
- Where it is company/organisational policy for an employee to take leave at a specified time in the year and there is no opportunity for a family holiday in school holidays i.e. in some cases a parent's employer might restrict holidays to a certain time period. This must be supported by documentary evidence from the employer.
- Where a holiday is recommended as part of a parent or child's rehabilitation from a medical or emotional issue. Evidence must be provided by qualified professionals such as a Doctor.
- An emergency situation that requires the child to be away from school.

Where there are other factors which the head teacher may consider to be exceptional circumstances, this may be referred to the local authority for advice.

The school reserves the right to ask parents for written evidence where it feels this is required.

Barriers to consistent attendance

Some pupils face greater barriers to attendance than their peers. This can include children with long-term medical conditions, those who have SEND or pupils whose needs have been identified on an Educational Health Care Plan.

Should a child struggle to cope with the demands of a full-time timetable, a part-time timetable may be implemented temporarily. This is agreed in conjunction with outside agencies such as Oakfield or the Educational Psychologist. This is the responsibility of the SENDCO, in liaison with the Headteacher, educational professionals and the class teacher.

School will deal with attendance sensitively, put reasonable adjustments into place and consider whether additional support is required.

Children Missing Education (CME)

Where a child is not attending school, cannot be traced/contact cannot be made with the parents/carers or has moved without a forwarding address, we are required to inform the local authority that the child is missing.

A referral will be made to the Local Authority if no contact has been made with parents/carers by the 10th day of the absence, or sooner if deemed appropriate, at which point the child will be deemed to be 'missing in education'. In addition, the school may carry out a home visit and refer the family to social care and the police to ensure any concerns for the child's welfare have been thoroughly investigated.

Pupils will not be removed from the school roll until notified by the Local Authority that their enquires are complete.

Safeguarding

Orchard Primary School recognises that children missing in education can act as a vital warning sign to a range of safeguarding issues including neglect, sexual abuse, child sexual and criminal exploitation. A child not attending school is therefore considered a safeguarding matter. Any attendance issues which may be related to safeguarding and child protection issues will be followed up in accordance with the school's Safeguarding Policy.

Related Policies

The Attendance Policy has a direct link to the school's Safeguarding Policy; Behavior Policy; Anti-Bullying Policy; SEND Policy; Equalities Policy and the Health and Safety Policy.

The school has also adopted the Local Authority Policies on Children Missing Education, Elective Home Education. The school follows Local Authority guidance in relation to coding absence for families who travel as part of their culture.

All of these policies have been endorsed by our Governing Body which support the school in all attempts to improve the attendance and safeguarding agenda.

Development and implementation of this policy will be considered under school obligations from the Equality Act 2010 and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.