Oakley School

Skills for Life and Independence

Attendance Policy

Date reviewed: September 2023

Date agreed and ratified by Governing Body: March 2024

Date of next review: September 2025 (or sooner if required)

Appendices: 0

1. Introduction

Oakley School is committed to the continuous raising of achievement of all our pupils. Regular attendance is essential if pupils are to be successful and benefit from opportunities presented to them.

The Governors, Headteacher and staff, in partnership with parents, have a duty to promote full attendance at Oakley School. Parents have a legal duty to ensure that their child(ren) attend school regularly and arrive on time.

1.

Our school aims to meet its obligations with regards to school attendance by:

- Promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence

We will also support parents to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend regularly and will promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the school attendance guidance from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on school attendance parental responsibility measures. These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- The Education Act 1996
- The Education Act 2002
- The Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2010
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2011
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2016
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.

3. School procedures

3.1 Attendance register

By law, all schools (except those where all pupils are boarders) are required to keep an attendance register, and all pupils must be placed on this register.

At Oakley School the attendance register is taken by the Class Teacher at the start and end of each school day.

Every entry in the attendance register will be preserved for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

3.2 Unplanned absence

Parents must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence – for example, if their child is unable to attend due to illness – by 9.00am or as soon as practically possible (see also section 6).

It is the parents' responsibility to contact the school on the first day their child is absent. This is a safeguarding issue so that all parties know that the child is safe.

Parents/carers can leave messages on the school's answer phone on 01892 823096, (the school office is staffed from 8.15am to 4.15pm) or you can send an email to: **office@oakley.kent.sch.uk**

If you know in advance that your child will not be attending school e.g. to attend a medical appointment, please ring or send a note to school.

If no contact has been made to the school regarding a child's absence:

- The parent will be contacted via text/telephone/e-mail.
- Where there has been no communication, a letter is sent to parents requesting a reason for absence and the absence is marked as unauthorised.

Absence due to illness will be authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask parents to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents will be notified of this in advance.

3.3 Medical or dental appointments

Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence; advance notice is required for authorising these absences.

However, we encourage parents to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

Applications for other types of absence in term time must also be made in advance. Information relating to whether the school can authorise such absences can be found in section 4.

3.4 Lateness and punctuality
Regular and punctual attendance at school is essential for pupils to maximise their educational opportunities. The school day starts at 8.45am and registers close at 9am. Late arrivals must enter via the Main Reception and sign in.

Late arrival after registers close without an acceptable reason will be marked as unauthorised absence. Frequent lateness will be discussed with parents at open evenings and may be referred to the Community & Family Engagement Co-ordinator and/or PRU, Inclusion and Attendance Service (PIAS). It can provide grounds for prosecution or Penalty Notice.

Penalty Notice Proceedings for Lateness

- 10 incidents of late arrival after the registers have closed in a term may lead to a Penalty Notice Warning Letter being issued by the school
- The Penalty Notice Warning Letter sets out 15 school days during which no unauthorised absence is to be recorded
- If unauthorised absence is recorded during the 15 day period, the school may refer the pupil to the PRU, Inclusion and Attendance Service (PIAS) and a Penalty Notice(s) may be issued (one per parent per child)
- Where a Penalty Notice is not paid within 28 days of issue, PRU, Inclusion and Attendance Service (PIAS), may instigate court proceedings

3.5 Following up absence
The school will follow up any absences to ascertain the reason, ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary, identify whether the absence is approved or not and identify the correct attendance code to use.

3.6 Reporting to parents
Pupils' attendance record will be shared with their parents/carers annually in the written end-of-year report and in the Annual Review of the child's Education, Health & Care Plan (EHCP).

4. Authorised and unauthorised absence

4.1 Granting approval for term-time absence
Heads of School are not permitted to grant any leave of absence to pupils during term time unless they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the Headteacher's discretion.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments – as explained in sections 3.2 and 3.3
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart

- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a Traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision

The Headteacher is not obliged to accept a parent's explanation and if the absence is not authorised, parents will be notified.

The following reasons are examples of the kinds of absence that will **not be authorised**:

- Persistent non-specific illness e.g. poorly/unwell
- Absence of siblings if one child is ill
- Oversleeping
- Inadequate clothing/uniform
- Confusion over school dates
- Medical/dental appointments of more than half a day without very good reasons
- Child's/family birthday
- Shopping trip
- Family Holiday

Time off school for family holidays is NOT authorised, absences may be agreed in exceptional circumstances such as during or after a crisis, or a significant family event.

Applications for leave of absence MUST be made at least 4 weeks in advance of the requested date.

Agreement to each request is at the discretion of the Headteacher, acting on behalf of the Governing Body. Each case will be judged on its merits in line with the criteria outlined above.

If the absence is not authorised and the holiday is taken anyway, the case will be referred to the PRU, Inclusion and Attendance Service (PIAS), who will issue a Penalty Notice for £120, (or £60 if paid within 21 days) to each parent for each child taken out of school.

4.2 Legal sanctions
Schools can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

If issued with a penalty notice, parents must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice ultimately rests with the Headteacher, following the local authority's code of conduct for issuing penalty notices. This may take into account:

- A number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute the parent or withdraw the notice.

5. Attendance monitoring

The Attendance Officer monitors pupil absence on a weekly basis.

Parents are expected to call the school in the morning if their child is going to be absent due to ill health (see section 3.2).

If a pupil's absence drops below 95% we will contact the parents to discuss the reasons for this.
If after contacting parents a pupil's absence continues to rise, we will consider involving an education welfare officer.

The persistent absence threshold is 10%. If a pupil's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 10%, the pupil will be classified as a persistent absentee.

Pupil-level absence data is collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. We compare our attendance data to the national average and share this with governors.

6. Roles and responsibilities

6.1 The Governing Body

Pupil absence and exclusion reports are provided to the Teaching, Learning & Assessment Committee three times each year. The reports are then shared with subsequent Full Governing Body meetings. The governing body is responsible for holding the Headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

6.2 The Headteacher

The Headteacher is responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented consistently across the school, and for monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors.

The Headteacher also supports other staff in monitoring the attendance of individual pupils and liaises with appropriate staff about issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary.

6.3 The Attendance Officer

The Attendance Officer:

- Monitors attendance data at the school and individual pupil level
- Provides attendance reports to the Senior Leadership Team on a weekly basis
- Reports concerns about attendance to the Headteacher
- Works with School Liaison Officer to tackle persistent absence
- Arranges calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Advises the Headteacher if/when to issue fixed-penalty notices

6.4 Class Teachers

Class Teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office.

6.5 Office/Reception staff

Office/Reception staff are expected to take calls from parents about absence and record it on the school system.

7. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed every three years by the School Liaison Officer. At every review, the policy will be shared with the governing board.

8. Links with other policies

This policy is linked to our Child Protection and Safeguarding policies.

Should you require any further information please contact West Kent PRU, Inclusion and Attendance Service (PIAS): Tel: 03000 413930.