

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 |

| Review Frequency | Next Review Date |
|------------------|------------------|
| Every 3 years | 9/2021 |

Introduction

This policy reflects the DfE regulations which came into force in September 2013 which state: 'Head Teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.'

Rationale

At Orchard Primary School we seek to ensure that all our pupils receive a full-time education which enables and encourages them to reach out for excellence and gives the best possible opportunities for children to realise their true potential.

We believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is the development of positive attitudes towards school. To this end, we strive to make our school a happy and rewarding experience for all pupils. We will reward those pupils whose attendance is very good through termly attendance certificates. We will also make the best provision we can for those pupils who, for whatever reason, are prevented from coming to school.

It is however the parent's responsibility to ensure that the school has all current contact details and a home or mobile telephone number must be provided.

Our objectives in devising a policy for promoting good attendance are:

- To encourage full attendance and punctuality
- To monitor attendance and apply appropriate strategies to minimise absenteeism
- To acknowledge and celebrate a successful record of attendance
- To make attendance and punctuality a priority for those associated with the school including pupils, parents, teachers and governors
- To develop a framework which defines agreed roles and responsibilities and promotes consistency in carrying out designated tasks
- To provide support, advice and guidance to parents and pupils
- To work effectively with other services and agencies to support these objectives
- Pupils who attend school on a regular basis can take advantage of the full array of educational opportunities available to them. Research shows that those pupils who have irregular attendance are at risk of not achieving their full potential and in extreme cases, may be drawn into anti-social or criminal behaviour.

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)

Procedure to follow when pupil is absent

Parents and carers should inform the school on the morning of the first day of absence either by telephone or leave a message, clearly stating the reason for the absence and the expected duration of illness.

When a pupil is absent unexpectedly, the class teacher will record the absence in the register, which will inform the school office. If the office has not already been informed of the reason for a pupil's absence, they will endeavor to contact a parent or carer by telephone or text message.

When the pupil returns to school, parents or carers must ensure that a note or verbal confirmation is provided to explain the reason for the absence.

A note may be sent to the school prior to the day of absence, e.g. if a pupil has a medical appointment. Parents are encouraged to provide the appointment card/letter.

If there is any doubt about the whereabouts of a pupil, the class teacher should take immediate action by notifying the school office. The school will then be in contact straight away with the parent or carer and a 'Safe and Well' check will be carried out.

When a pupil is absent, the class teacher will record the absence in the register. As part of our Safeguarding Procedures, the school office will endeavor to contact the parent or carer and other emergency contacts if no message has been received regarding the reason

Types of Absence – 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.

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.

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.

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).

Holidays during Term Time/ Leave of Absence

Since September 2013, all schools have been 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 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.

Any parent/carer requesting leave of absence of more than 5 days will be asked to make an appointment to see the Headteacher to explain the circumstances. Where parents/carers take children out of school without authorisation, parents leave themselves at risk of legal action.

The school will write back to the parent informing them of the decision that has been made by the Headteacher.

A copy of the request and schools reply will be kept in the students file.

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 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.

Legal Action for unauthorised Holidays

Where the parent has taken a holiday and it has not been authorised the case may be referred to the local authority to pursue legal action.

The parent(s) of any pupil who has absences recorded as a result of an unauthorised family holiday, will each be fined £60 which must be paid within a 21 day period. Failure to pay the fine(s) within this timescale, will result in the fines being doubled to £120, which will need to be paid within 28 days of the original fine being issued. If the fine(s) remain unpaid after the full period of 28 days has expired, parents may face legal action under section 444 of the Education Act 1996. If found guilty of an offence under this Act, Parents will receive a criminal record and could be fined up to £1000.

Punctuality

Pupils are expected to arrive punctually, ready for registration at 8.55 a.m. The school gates are locked from 9.00 am and any pupils arriving after this time must enter school through the main entrance and be 'signed in' by a parent/carer.

Registers close at 9.00 a.m. and pupils arriving after this time will be marked as 'Late' on the class register.

Any pupil that arrives at school after the register has closed will be coded as a 'U' code. This equates to an unauthorised mark. Legal action can be taken when a child has 'U' codes as this is deemed to be an unauthorised mark. Parents/Carers of pupils who are persistently late will be contacted by the Headteacher and will be asked to address the problem.

Where possible parents must ensure that they book all medical appointments either before school starts or after school finishes. It is useful for parents to provide the school with the appointment card and/or letter for any medical appointment. All medical appointments will be coded as an M which does equate to an authorised absence.

The Law and School Attendance

Under the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 the governing body is responsible for making sure that admissions and attendance registers are kept. Unless stipulated each regulation applies to all schools in England.

School governors are bound by the statutory requirement under Section 538 of the Education Act 2006 which requires governing bodies to provide information requested by the Secretary of State. This includes absence data that will be collected every term through the School Census.

The Headteacher and all staff work to ensure a high level of enjoyment and commitment to learning as a means of ensuring regular attendance.

Where school attendance problems occur, the school will endeavour to work with parents in the interests of the child to achieve a resolution.

Attendance is recorded and data stored and analysed using the SIMS Attendance module.

It is a statutory duty for class teachers to call and maintain accurate registers; these are legal documents, and may be called for as evidence by the court. Class Teachers are legally responsible for marking their class attendance register twice per day at the start of each session.

The Education Act 1996 (Section 444) states:

'If a child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at school fails to attend regularly at the school, the parent is guilty of an offence'. The school reserves the right to consider taking legal action against any parents/carers who repeatedly fail in their responsibility to send their children to school on a regular basis.

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.

The school will recognise the importance of good practice by:

- Keeping and maintaining registers accurately
- Ensuring prompt follow-up action in cases of non-school attendance e.g. by telephoning the child's home or sending a text message, after the 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
- Ensuring that parents understand the school's attendance policy and procedures for reporting absence by issuing an advisory letter/notice promoting good attendance to all parents annually
- Reporting children missing education (CME) to the LA
- Regularly analysing attendance data and setting an annual attendance target
- Rewarding and celebrating good and improving attendance through certificates or dojo points
- Providing parents with regular attendance grades for their child as part of the termly 'Progress Check Report' and annual report
- Constructively working with pupils and their families to ensure each child attends school regularly and punctually by establish an effective and efficient system of communication with parents and appropriate agencies to provide mutual information, advice and support

School Attendance Strategies

- The importance of good attendance will be discussed at the meeting for new parents
- A clear statement is in the school brochure about the high profile given to the issue of attendance
- Attendance Policy available on the school's website
- Newsletters used to remind parents about school policy and the rules about holidays in term time
- Rewards for 100% attendance (end of each term)
- Attendance is reported in the Achievement Assembly to children at the end of each week. Praise and a certificate is given to the class with the highest attendance
- 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 targets on an individual attendance plan (related to what is achievable for the individual child) – children reflecting on their own attendance record
- Put an agreed 'Attendance Action Plan' into place each year as part of the School Improvement Plan

Parental Support

Parents are asked to support the school in helping their child to establish a good attendance record by:

- Making sure their child understands the importance of good attendance and punctuality
- Taking an interest in their child's education, through asking them about their school work and encouraging them to get involved in school activities
- Discussing any worries that their child might have about coming to school and informing their class teacher about anything serious
- Not letting their child take time off school for very minor ailments
- Arranging appointments and outings after school hours or at weekends or school holidays
- Ensuring that family holidays are booked during school holiday time and not during term time (there are 13 weeks of the year during which the school is closed)
- Being very clear with their child regarding the school's expectation that they arrive at school every day by 8.55am, appropriately equipped and wearing full school uniform

Data Analysis

The data which is extracted from accurate and up-to-date attendance registers will be used to support the more effective management of whole-school attendance matters. Such data can be used to:

- support and underpin the target-setting process (for individual pupils, year groups, identified cohorts, the whole school) in relation to overall attendance and unauthorised absence on a (half-)termly and yearly basis

- identify individual children and particular groups of children who are or may be at risk of becoming persistent absentees
- facilitate and encourage early intervention
- identify particular types or patterns of absenteeism (for example, time lost to term-time holidays, regular absences on Mondays and/or Fridays, etc.)
- match attendance trends with attainment trends
- identify possible inconsistencies in the implementation of school policy
- report attendance matters to parents/carers

Monitoring

Attendance is monitored termly for any emerging patterns below 96%. Parents will be routinely contacted if attendance falls below 90% at the end of every full term.

Evaluation

When evaluating success, the school will consider whether or not:

- Patterns and trends in the school's attendance and pupils' punctuality are improved
- Parental response to absence has improved
- The school has been successful in raising the profile of attendance by celebrating good attendance within the school, governing body and the local community
- Pupils and parents are fully aware of the importance of punctuality and regular attendance and aware of the attendance procedures operating within school
- Parents and governors are made aware of the current law on attendance
- Attendance issues have been included as topics in school assemblies or PSHE lessons

Safeguarding

Any attendance issues which may be related to safeguarding and child protection issues will be followed up in accordance with the Child Protection Policy.

Related Policies

- Child Protection
- S.E.N
- Behaviour
- Anti-bullying
- Equal Opportunities and Inclusion