



**OFFORD**  
PRIMARY  
SCHOOL

# ATTENDANCE POLICY

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<b>Approved by:</b>	Governing Body
<b>Review Cycle:</b>	Annually
<b>Last review:</b>	November 2023
<b>Next review:</b>	Academic Year 2023/ 2024



## INTRODUCTION

The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school. Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school. At Offord Primary School we see attendance as the essential foundation to positive outcomes for all our pupils and it is therefore seen as everyone's responsibility.

## Aims and Principles

At Offord Primary school we aim to meet our obligations with regards to school attendance by:

- Developing and maintaining a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance.
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence.
- Ensuring every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled to.
- Accurately complete admission and attendance registers and have effective day to day processes in place to follow-up absence.
- Regularly monitor and analyse attendance and absence data to identify pupils or cohorts that require support with their attendance and put effective strategies in place.
- Build strong relationships with families, listen to and understand barriers to attendance and work with families to remove them.
- Share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities and other partners when absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe.
- 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 promote and support punctuality in attending lessons. Support is offered to pupils back into school following a lengthy or unavoidable period of absence and provide support to build confidence and bridge gaps. Our aim is for attendance of 96% + across the academic year through ensuring that all pupils regularly attend school.

## Legislation and guidance

It is important that all schools to adhere to the requirements of the school attendance guidance [working-together-to-improve-school-attendance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE), and refer to the DfE's statutory guidance on school attendance parental responsibility measures, each of 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
- School attendance parental responsibility measures 2015

## **School procedures**

### **Attendance register**

All schools by law are required to keep an attendance register, and all pupils must be placed on this register. The attendance register will be taken at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

Every entry in the attendance register will be preserved for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made. (*See Appendix 1 for attendance codes*)

### **Attendance and parental responsibility**

Parents/Carers are responsible for making sure that children of compulsory school age receive a suitable full-time education. A child reaches compulsory school age on or after their fifth birthday. If they turn five between 1 September and 31 December, then they are of compulsory school age on 31 December; if they turn five between 1 January and 31 March they are of compulsory age on 31 March; if they turn five between 1 April and 31 August they are of compulsory school age on 31 August.

### **Arrival and registration**

The school doors open at 8.40am. Children enter through individual class doors and proceed quickly into their classrooms for a starter activity provided by their class teacher. Registration opens at 8.50am at which point all children must be in school. Registration closes at 9.00am.

### **Punctuality**

It is important that children attend school on time each day; this is the parent/carer's responsibility. It is very disruptive for a class when a child is late after a lesson has started and it is equally distressing for a child to enter a lesson late.

Any child arriving after 8.50am must be signed in by the school office. Times of arrival and reasons for lateness are recorded on the school's MIS system. If a child arrives during the registration period (8.50am- 9.00am) they will be marked as 'Late' (L). If a child arrives after 9.00am this is marked as 'Late After Registers Closed' (U) for that session. The number of minutes that the child is late will be recorded. The afternoon register is taken in the same way at 1.15pm.

Parents/Carers are required to provide a satisfactory explanation as to why their child is late before an attendance code may be changed. It is important to understand that not all explanations given by parents/carers are considered to be an authorised absence. Therefore, care will be taken with any



attendance marks given. Explanations from children are not acceptable, which means that the mark given originally, will remain on the child's attendance record for that academic year.

### **Unplanned absence**

Parents/Carers must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence. This can be done by telephoning the school absence line and leaving a message stating:

- The name of the child
- The child's class
- The reason for absence
- The name of the person leaving the message.

The school answer machine is checked daily. Parents can also e-mail the school absence email address with this information if they prefer ([absence@offordprimaryschool.org](mailto:absence@offordprimaryschool.org)).

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.

No child should attend school until 48 hours after they have suffered sickness and/or diarrhoea.

If a child becomes unwell during the school day, the school will make every effort to contact parents/carers so that the child can be collected. It is the parent's responsibility to ensure the school has up to date contact details including more than one emergency contact.

### **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.

Parent/carers are required to collect/ return the child from/ to the school office.

### **Following up absence**

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

When a child is absent, the class teacher will record the absence in the register. The school office will contact the parent/carer on the first day of absence if no reason for the absence has been received. If there is any doubt about the whereabouts of a child, the school office will inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead or another Senior Leader. Every effort will be made to get in touch with the emergency contacts listed on the MIS system for the child, in order to check on the safety of the child. If necessary, a welfare visit to the child's home address will be carried out. In exceptional circumstances the police or Social Care will be contacted.

### **Reporting to parents/carers**

We regularly inform parents of attendance updates via articles in our newsletters.



On an individual basis we inform parents about their child's attendance and absence levels during parents' evenings and on their annual school report.

Where necessary we hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who we consider to be vulnerable or are persistently or severely absent to discuss attendance and engagement at school.

### **Authorised and unauthorised absence**

#### **Granting approval for term-time absence**

The Headteacher may not grant any leave of absence to pupils during term time unless they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'.

The school will consider 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 previously.
- 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.

Requests for holidays during school time, because the cost is cheaper, or parents have not been able to take the time during school holidays, **does not** constitute exceptional circumstances.

### **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. [Penalty Notice Code of Conduct - April 2023 \(cambridgeshire.gov.uk\)](https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/penalty-notice-code-of-conduct)

This may consider:

- 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.

There is no right of appeal by parents against a fixed penalty notice.



## **Strategies for promoting attendance**

Offord Primary School treats all pupils and parents with dignity and staff model respectful relationships to build a positive relationship between home and school that can be the foundation of good attendance. In communicating with parents, we discuss the link between attendance and attainment and wider wellbeing, and challenge parents' views where they have misconceptions about what 'good' attendance looks like. Where a pupil or family needs support with attendance, we work with and support the family to provide the best possible solution to the family's needs.

## **Attendance monitoring**

The Senior Administrator monitors pupil absence on a fortnightly basis. Attendance of individual pupils that is giving cause for concern is discussed with the Headteacher. Pupils who need support from wider partners are identified as quickly as possible and any necessary referrals are made, with support from the school's Pastoral Support lead, the school's SENDCo and/or the Trust Education Welfare Officer (EWO).

Attendance data is used to identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern, and we monitor and evaluate those children identified as needing intervention and support.

We follow the process map issued by Cambridgeshire County Council and use their letter system to alert parents to the fact that there is a problem with attendance (see Appendix 2).

If a pupil's absence falls below 95% during the academic year, the school will contact the parents to discuss the reasons for this. If after contacting parents a pupil's attendance continues to fall, the school will inform the Trust Education Welfare Officer (EWO).

## **The persistent absence threshold is 10%.**

If a pupil's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 10% (equivalent to 1 day or more a fortnight across a full school year), the pupil will be classified as a persistent absentee.

## **The severe absence threshold is 50%**

Particular focus is given by all partners, to pupils who are absent from school more than they are present (those missing 50% or more of school). These severely absent pupils may find it more difficult to be in school or face bigger barriers to their regular attendance and as such are likely to need more intensive support across a range of partners. A concerted effort is therefore needed across all relevant services to prioritise them.

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.

## **Roles and responsibilities**

### **The Local Governing Board and Trustees**

Improving attendance requires constant focus, and effective whole school approaches require regular ongoing support, guidance, and challenge. Therefore the governing body will:

- Recognise the importance of school attendance and promote it across the school's ethos and policies.
- Ensure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties.
- Holds the Headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy.
- Regularly review attendance data, discuss, and challenge trends, and help school leaders focus improvement efforts on the individual pupils or cohorts who need it most.



- Ensure school staff receive adequate training on attendance.
- Share effective practice on attendance management and improvement with other schools.

### **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 issues fixed-penalty notices, where necessary.

### **Trust Education Welfare Officer**

The Trust Education Welfare Officer will work across the schools in the CAM Academy Trust to ensure the highest possible levels of attendance and welfare for pupils. They will work in conjunction with the County Council to utilise the Local Authority's statutory duties, responsibilities and powers for school attendance.

### **The Attendance Officer**

At Offord Primary School the Senior Administrator is the Attendance Officer. They will:

- Take calls/ emails from parents about absence and record it on the school MIS system.
- Monitor attendance data at the school and individual pupil level.
- Report concerns about attendance to the Headteacher.
- Work with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence.
- Arrange calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues.
- Advise the Headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices.

### **Class teachers/form tutors**

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



## APPENDIX 1

### Absence and Attendance Codes

The national codes enable schools to record and monitor attendance and absence in a consistent way which complies with the regulations. They are also used for collecting statistics through the School Census System. The data helps schools, local authorities and the Government to gain a greater understanding of the level of, and the reasons for, absence.

#### The codes are:

Present / = am \ = pm	Present in school during registration.
Code B	Off-site educational activity.
Code C	Leave of absence authorised by the school.
Code D	Dual Registered - at another educational establishment.
Code E	Excluded but no alternative provision made.
Code G	Holiday not authorised by the school or in excess of the period determined by the head teacher.
Code H	Holiday authorised by the school
Code I	Illness (not medical or dental appointments)
Code J	At an interview with prospective employers, or another educational establishment.
Code L	Late arrival before the register has closed.
Code M	Medical or dental appointments
Code N	Reason for absence not yet provided
Code O	Absent from school without authorisation
Code P	Participating in a supervised sporting activity.
Code R	Religious observance
Code S	Study leave
Code T	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence
Code U	Arrived in school after registration closed
Code V	Educational visit or trip.
Code W	Work experience.
Code X	Not required to be in school
Code Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances
Code Z	Pupil not on admission register
Code #	Planned whole or partial school closure

Further information regarding the above attendance and absence codes can be found in the DfE website:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-attendance>



## APPENDIX 2

### SCHOOL ATTENDANCE PROCESS. Process map to be used in conjunction with 'Step by Step – Early Interventions and Referral Process – April 2023'

[Cambridgeshire Attendance Support Team - Learn Together \(cambslearntogether.co.uk\)](https://www.cambslearntogether.co.uk)

Schools should ensure they develop their strategic and systemic approach to manage overall attendance. However the need for schools to be vigilant and able to meet the individual needs of the child and family is important and needs to be part of the systemic approach. Schools should have their own thresholds for taking action where attendance becomes a concern. Avoid waiting for a child's attendance to slip to 90% or below (the persistent absence threshold).

The Attendance Service recommends implementing a step by step process for early intervention prior to referrals to our service for legal sanctions to be applied.

