

**Oaklands** School  
Together Everybody Achieves More



# Attendance policy

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<b>Date written</b>	September 2022
<b>To be reviewed</b>	September 2023
<b>Version number</b>	1.1.

**PART OF THE  
SAFEGUARDING POLICIES**

# **Attendance Policy**

## **Written September 2022**

### **To be reviewed September 2023**

#### **1. Principle Statement**

- 1.1. At Oaklands School we offer all pupils, parents and staff equal opportunities regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, ability or background. To achieve this, we provide support for individual learning needs to ensure that all pupils meet their potential. We recognise the range of needs and value the wide diversity of cultures of each child. We do not tolerate discrimination of any kind against our pupils, parents or staff.

#### **2. Introduction**

- 2.1. Regular and punctual school attendance is important. Pupils need to attend school regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them by law. Oaklands School fully recognises its responsibilities to ensure pupils are in school and on time, therefore having access to learning for the maximum number of days and hours. Our policy applies to all children registered at this school and this policy is made available to all parents/carers of pupils who are registered at our school on our school website. This policy has been written to adhere to the relevant Children Acts, Education Acts, Regulations and Guidance from the Department for Education in addition to guidance from the Local Authority.
- 2.2. Although parents/carers have the legal responsibility for ensuring their child's good attendance, the Headteacher and Governors at our school work together with other professionals and agencies to ensure that all pupils are encouraged and supported to develop good attendance habits. Procedures in this policy are followed to ensure this happens.
- Children who are persistently late or absent soon fall behind with their learning. Children who are absent from school frequently develop large gaps in their learning. This will impact on their progress and their ability to meet age related learning expectations. A child whose attendance drops to 90% each year will, over their time at primary school, have missed two whole terms of learning.

#### **3. Aims and Objectives**

- 3.1. This attendance policy ensures that all staff and Governors in our school are fully aware of and clear about the actions necessary to promote good attendance. Through this policy we aim to:
- **Ambition** Improve pupils' achievement by ensuring high levels of attendance and punctuality to achieve at least 96% attendance for our children
  - **Self-confidence** Create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm and seen to be valued by the school
  - **Perseverance** Work in partnership with parents, pupils, staff and the Attendance Advisory Service so that all pupils realise their potential, unhindered by unnecessary absence
  - **Independence** Raise awareness in parents, carers and pupils of the importance of uninterrupted attendance and punctuality at every stage of a child's education and to encourage in pupils a sense of their own responsibility
  - **Respect** Recognise the key role of all staff, but especially class teachers, in promoting good attendance and promoting a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure and valued
  - **Enquiry** Establish a pattern of monitoring attendance and ensure consistency in recognising achievement and dealing with difficulties. Ensure that the policy applies to Nursery and Reception aged children in order to promote good attendance habits at an early age.

#### **4. Authorised and Unauthorised Absences**

- 4.1. There are occasions when children will be absent from school, mainly due to sickness. If a child is absent from school, parents/carers should telephone the school on the first day of absence by 9.30am.
- 4.2. If a child is marked as absent and no notification has been received from the parent/carer, a phone call and text will be sent requesting information as to the reason for the absence. Until a reason and subsequent authorisation is given an "N" code is marked in the register. If no reasonable reason is given for absence, it will be recorded as unauthorised. If parents/carers cannot be contacted, other

contact names given to the school on the child's records will be used. If we are still unable to make contact, a home visit may be carried out by school staff with a letter left. If we cannot get hold of a contact and we believe there may be a safeguarding concern, the school has a duty of care to contact Kent Police, requesting that a welfare check is carried out. This may involve police attending your property.

- 4.3. Wherever possible, routine medical and dental appointments should be arranged out of school hours or during the holidays. No child must leave school unless accompanied and signed out from the school office.
- 4.4. Decisions regarding the authorisation of absences are the responsibility of the head teacher, not the parent/carer. Authorising absence means that the school has either given approval in advance for the pupil to be away, or that the explanation offered afterwards has been accepted as satisfactory justification.
- 4.5. Taking children out of school for shopping trips, birthday treats and similar reasons will not be regarded as authorised absence by the school.
- 4.6. School staff need not accept a parent's/carer's explanation for a child's absence, whether written, telephoned or given in person, if they doubt the explanation. Absences without any explanation are treated as unauthorised.
- 4.7. In the event that a child incurs 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a six school week period, a referral will be made to the Attendance Advisory Service for Schools and Academies (AASSA) and a Penalty Notice will be issued to each parent/carer: £120.00 to be paid within 28 days reducing to £60.00 if paid within 21 days.
- 4.8. Failure to pay the fine will result in a court prosecution for the child's non-school attendance.

## **5. Medical Evidence and Attendance Clinics**

- 5.1. On the third day of absence a text will be sent to parents enquiring whether GP advice has been sought and possible return to school date. There may become a point where a child's absences become more frequent, and this should not be condoned simply by parents/carers writing a note to explain the absence.
- 5.2. If a child's attendance becomes a cause for concern, the parents/carers are written to, advising them that their child's attendance is becoming a concern. If it remains a concern, the parent will be invited in to an attendance clinic to discuss any issues with the senior staff and the school's Attendance Advisory Practitioner (AAP).
- 5.3. The parents/carers are written to informing them that absences will not be authorised in future without some additional assurances that the absences are unavoidable, for example providing some medical evidence. The over generous authorisation of absences can lead to a belief that regular attendance is not important. Parents/carers must see that the school will not simply grant permission without question.

## **6. Attendance Registers**

- 6.1. Registration is a legal requirement. Regulation 10 of the Education Regulations 1981 requires schools to meet for not less than 380 sessions during the school year. All schools are required to maintain two registers; an admissions register (known as the school roll) and an attendance register. By law attendance registers must be called twice a day; at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session.
- 6.2. The electronic register on Arbor is used for inputting attendance. Any notes or messages are countersigned by the class teacher, dated and put in the register to be dealt with by the school office. Liaison between class teachers and the Attendance secretary in the school office is important. All children's parents should be contacted on the first days' absence. Pupils must be marked either as:
  - Present (/)
  - Absent (N)
  - Further marks, such as late (L) or ill (I) will be added by the school's attendance secretary.

## **7. Persistent Absence**

- 7.1. Pupils of legal school age whose attendance falls below 90% are reported to the Local Authority at the end of each term as Persistent Absentees (PA). These children's attendance is monitored weekly and parents of those children whose attendance improves are sent weekly texts to inform them. Parents are written to each term to inform them if their child's attendance the previous term was below 90%, and therefore appeared on the persistent absence register.

## 8. Leavers and children who cease to attend without prior notice (CME) procedures

- 8.1. Parents must inform the school in writing if they are planning to remove their child from school. This must include the details of their address, if moving out of area, and the new school the child is planning to attend or that they are exercising their right to educate their child otherwise.
- 8.2. All Education Otherwise information will be passed on to the Inclusions Team at Medway Council, who are responsible for monitoring all children who are educated otherwise. If after ten day's continuous absence the school has been unable to ascertain the whereabouts of a pupil, they will refer the child's details to the Local Authority, in order to perform further checks that are not available to school.

## 9. Non starters

- 9.1. Pupils who are allocated places but fail to start are also treated as CME. If the school has been unable to make contact with the family during a ten-day period after their expected arrival, they will refer the pupils to the Local Authority for further checks.

## 10. Attendance Advisory Service

- 10.1. The Local Authority (LA) is responsible, by law, for making sure that registered pupils of compulsory school age attend regularly. Medway Council's education department employs Attendance Advisory Practitioners (AAPs) to monitor school attendance and to help and advise parents/carers on how to meet their responsibilities.
- 10.2. A senior member of staff (*the Deputy Headteacher*) monitors the registers weekly to look for patterns of absence and vulnerable groups, and meets with the AAP fortnightly; if a child's absences are continuing to be a concern despite intervention from the school, then the child will be referred to Attendance Advisory Service for Schools and Academies (AASSA).
- 10.3. The AAP will make contact, followed by a first warning letter in the first instance. If there is no improvement in the child's attendance, an attendance panel meeting will be convened. The parent/carer will be invited to the meeting and a copy of the agreed decisions will be sent to them. Should there continue to be further unauthorised absences, a final warning letter will be sent and a court date sought.

## 11. Holidays and Leave of Absence During Term Time

- 11.1. On 4<sup>th</sup> July 2013, the Secretary of State for Education issued an amendment to the regulations given to schools and academies regarding the authorisation of term-time holidays. The amendment makes clear that schools 'may not grant any leave of absence during term time, unless there are exceptional circumstances'. Exceptional circumstances are at the discretion of the head teacher.
- 11.2. Should parents decide to go ahead with the leave of absence, Medway Council will issue a fixed penalty notice. The 2007 Regulations set out the procedures for issuing penalty notices (fines) to **each parent** who fails to ensure their children's regular attendance at school. **Parents must pay £120 per child and per parent unless they pay within 28 days when the fine is reduced to £60 per child and per parent.**

## 12. Punctuality

- 12.1. The schools' policy is to encourage high standards of punctuality amongst our pupils. See times below for opening. For Nursery, the afternoon session door opens at 12.15pm and closes at 12.30pm. Any children arriving after these times must be taken by the parent to the main office. \*

	Gate opens	Gate shuts	Register shuts and late book opens	Late book shuts and U code starts
Year R, 1, 2	8.30am	8.45am	8.45am	9.10 am
Year 3,4,5,6,	8.40am	8.55am	8.55am	9.20 am
Year N	8:55am 12:10pm	9:05am 12:20pm	9:10am 12:25pm	9:30am 12:45pm

- 12.2. At the above times, registers close and the late book is opened. Any child not present in school by that time is marked as absent. The name, class and time the child arrives are recorded in the late book. The adult on the late book marks the child as L (late) in the register and a reason needs to be given for lateness.
- 12.3. Afternoon registers are taken at 12.50pm (Years R,1, 3 and 5 ) and 1:10pm (Years 2,4 and 6 ).

- 12.4. The late book closes at the times in the table above. A child arriving at school after these times will be recorded as C if there is an adequate explanation; failure to provide this will be recorded as U (unauthorised absence).
- 12.5. The late books are monitored by senior staff, with any concerns are reported to the Head teacher. Letters are then sent to parents/carers and if needed, the Attendance Advisory Practitioner will become involved.

### **13. Truancy**

- 13.1. All children who are absent from school should be phoned on the first day of absence. Class teachers need to communicate with the school's Attendance Officer if they are particularly concerned with a child's non- attendance.

### **14. Reporting to parents/carers**

- 14.1. A child's percentage attendance, number of unauthorised absences and times late is reported to parents/carers on the annual report.
- 14.2. The gradings are as follows:
  - 100% Perfect attendance
  - 96 – 99.9% Good attendance
  - Under 96% Worrying attendance
  - Under 90% - Concerning attendance and classes as Persistently Absent.
- 14.3. Weekly Attendance emails are sent out to share up to date attendance data with parents and carers.
- 14.4. Parents whose children are persistently absent are emailed termly with a review of their attendance data.

### **15. Implementation of the policy**

- 15.1. The essence of good practice is prompt action by vigilant class teachers. Their early intervention often prevents children drifting into more frequent or prolonged absences. The fact that pupils know their absences will be noted and that there is a prompt follow up stresses the importance attached to attendance and punctuality.
- 15.2. Attendance is given a high priority at Oaklands. The following incentives and rewards are used:
  - Weekly celebration assembly to share each class's attendance. Class bonus and trophy given to winning class from each phase
  - Attendance board outside head teachers office displaying class attendance information
  - Attendance board in main reception area with class attendance information
  - Medal and certificate for children with 100% attendance since September (or since joining) presented at end of each term. These children's names are put into a raffle at the end of terms 2,4 and 6 for £20 gift vouchers
  - Certificate and award given to children who have 100 % attendance each term
  - Certificate given to children whose attendance is above 96% at end of each term
  - In class attendance display and in class rewards for children's attendance
  - Nursery attendance information to be shared termly with nursery parents
  - Attendance Matters newsletter to be published termly to all parents with updates and attendance news
  - In it To Win it Rewards- children who complete a full week in school have their names added to a jar- each week a child's name is drawn to take part in a reward session
  - Aiming for 90 focus children- contact parents and track attendance – celebration when 90% achieved
  - Attendance tea parties- weekly tea parties for all focus attendance children ( Persistent absence children) who achieve a full week in school
  - Attendance streaks- this is for all Persistent Absence children who reach the terms target Attendance Streak
- 15.3. Attendance is monitored closely. Attendance lead monitors all persistently absent children, or those who have been previously persistently absent, every week. Records show over view of attendance and actions taken.
- 15.4. Attendance officer and HSSW update with actions to ensure a whole school approach.
- 15.5. Personal Development and Welfare team meet weekly and review focus attendance children- support put in place to overcome barriers to attendance

- 15.6. HSSW support focus children families and ensure roots of absence issues are known so appropriate support can be put in place
- 15.7. Year groups and vulnerable groups are analysed to identify patterns in behaviour. This allows specific action to target certain groups
- 15.8. Attendance lead meets with parents/carers of children at risk of becoming Persistently Absent or those whose child's attendance has shown a sudden decrease- this allows for school to be fully aware of the child and families needs and provide appropriate support

## **16. How parents can help their child**

- 16.1. The Department for Education expects a child to have an annual school attendance of not less than 96%. By working together, we aim that every child at Oaklands achieves that goal.
- 16.2. Parents can support their child in having good attendance habits by:
  - Ensuring that your child has everything they need ready for school the night before
  - Ensuring regular bed times and wake up times on school days
  - Ensuring that children arrive at school on time
  - Talk to a member of school staff if there is a problem

# Appendix 1

## Addendum for Attendance

This is taken from DFE Guidance: Recording Attendance in relation to coronavirus (Covid 19) during the 2021-22 academic year.

### Attendance expectations

From 8<sup>th</sup> March 2021 pupil attendance will be mandatory and the usual rules on attendance will apply, including:

- parents' duty to ensure that their child of compulsory school age attends regularly at the school where the child is a registered pupil
- schools' responsibilities to record attendance and follow up absence
- the ability to issue sanctions, including fixed penalty notices, in line with local authorities' codes of conduct

## Appendix 2

### What can we do if we cannot contact a family/child that attends our school?

- **Do you have up to date contact details for each child and for other people with whom they may live with (for example, a child may move in with grandparents or friends while a parent self-isolates or recovers).**

Keeping Children Safe in Education requires schools to have two contact numbers where possible for families, but good practice suggests three numbers is better. Having a telephone number outside the household could be crucial and save much time if you become unable to contact a family at some point.

- **Consider what kind of contact you are planning to have with families and the point of that contact.**

Where you have very frequent contact think about what benefit you are offering to the child and the parent. Checking up daily on families without a perceived benefit from their end will quickly be perceived as a lack of trust or form of social control and, unsurprisingly, will be resisted by parents and young people

**It is important that this is also communicated to families so that they are clear about the need to make contact with the school if their child is not going to be in that day, along with regular reminders.**

### Key Questions and Considerations for schools

- Is the child involved with Social Carer Early Help, have you contacted the worker to discuss/support joint working?
- Does the child have other siblings at different schools, have you contacted the other school?
- Have you made a home visit to ascertain they still live at the address?
- Have you rung, text, and email every contact you hold for the student?
- Have you emailed the pupil? (using pupils school email address)
- Have you completed a contact data exercise recently, to ensure they hold correct contact details for all students?
- Do you know for certain that the pupil has access to IT to complete online learning?

Once all of these have been tried, Attendance Advisory and Children Missing Education (CME) [cme@medway.gov.uk](mailto:cme@medway.gov.uk) will assist, however if the family and children are still living in Medway this is a school issue not a CME as they have a school place in Medway.

#### **Policy and Procedure**

Schools need to have a clear policy in place about how unexplained absences are dealt with. This should include:

- **determining when the first phone call to a family should be made (it is recommended that the call is made in the same morning);**
- **what should happen if there is no contact made with the family;**
- **when a visit should be completed and who will be tasked with undertaking this visit;**
- **what should happen if there is no answer upon visiting.**

This will however also require schools to make the differentiation between a welfare concern and an attendance issue – this should be done on a case by case basis considering everything that is known about the child and their family, and schools will need to determine who in the school is deemed to be able to make this decision.



## Key Contacts

### **Safeguarding**

01634 33 1662 **No Name Consultation Line** – 9:30-12:30 Monday – Friday

This line should **NOT** be used in the case of children who are at **risk of immediate harm** or where a **clear disclosure** has been made.

**In this case the DSL / Headteacher needs to call Children's Services First Response Service on**

**01634 334466**

**For advice and support to school on all education safeguarding related issues.**

[kate.barry@medway.gov.uk](mailto:kate.barry@medway.gov.uk) **LA Education Safeguarding Officer**

**01634 331017**

### **Attendance and Child Missing in Education**

[christine.clarke@medway.gov.uk](mailto:christine.clarke@medway.gov.uk) **LA Attendance & Advisory Team Manager**

**01634 334331**

[cme@medway.gov.uk](mailto:cme@medway.gov.uk) **LA Children Missing in Education Officer**

**01634 337308**

[aassa@medway.gov.uk](mailto:aassa@medway.gov.uk) **Attendance & Advisory Team**

**01634 337310**

**Please note: the ASSA team are available during 8am – 4pm Monday - Friday**