



# Orton CE Primary School

## Attendance Policy 2024

Approved by <sup>1</sup> - Full Governors	
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Position:	Chair of Governors
Signed:	
Date:	To be Approved by Governors November 2024
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Orton CE School is a  
*happy* place to *learn*, *grow* and *thrive*.

*Our school vision is to be an excellent place to learn*

- *Rooted in the Christian values of love, hope and forgiveness*
- *Growing strong in a caring and safe environment*
- *Thriving and flourishing to go out into the world.*

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# WHOLE SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY

## 1. School Context

In line with our school vision Orton C of E School is committed to providing a full and inclusive education to all pupils and embraces the concept of equal opportunities for all. We strive to provide a welcoming, safe, secure and caring family environment, where all are valued and respected as individuals, enabling everyone to grow and thrive in a safe and caring environment, whilst growing in their love and understanding of each other and their beliefs.

Regular and punctual attendance is an essential prerequisite to effective learning. Research shows that children who attend school regularly are more likely to be successful. A child who misses a day of school each week misses an equivalent of two whole years in their school life. Missing school leads to gaps in education that become difficult to fill. We will consistently work towards a goal of 100% attendance for all children. Every opportunity will be used to convey to pupils, their parents or carers and the wider community, the importance of regular and punctual attendance.

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 and this school attendance policy is based on the Westmorland and Furness Model School Attendance Policy to ensure it complies with our legal duties updated by the DfE in 2024.

When a child of compulsory school age is absent from school, the attendance register must indicate whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised and the appropriate register code will be used.

**Our school's target is an attendance of 95.6 % overall but of course we aim for as close to 100% as possible.**

## 2. Introduction

- 2.1 Regular school attendance is essential if children are to achieve their full potential.
- 2.2 Orton CE Primary School believes that regular school attendance is the key to enabling children to maximise the educational opportunities available to them and become emotionally resilient, confident and competent adults who can realise their full potential and make a positive contribution to their community.
- 2.3 Orton CE Primary School values all pupils. As set out in this policy, we will build strong relationships with families to ensure pupils have the support in place to attend school and identify the reasons for poor attendance.
- 2.4 Orton CE Primary School recognises that attendance is a matter for the whole school community. Our Attendance Policy should not be viewed in isolation; it is a strand that runs through all aspects of school improvement, supported by our policies on admissions, safeguarding, anti-bullying, child protection, safeguarding and behaviour and inclusive learning. This policy takes into account

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the Human Rights Act 1998, the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and the Race Relations Act 2000.

2.5 This policy aims to:

- promote good attendance;
- reduce absence, including persistent and severe absence;
- ensure every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled;
- promote early identification to address patterns of absence;
- promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

### 3. Legal framework

3.1 This policy meets the requirements of the [working together to improve school attendance](#) 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:

Part 6 of [The Education Act 1996](#)

Part 3 of [The Education Act 2002](#)

Part 7 of [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)

[The School Attendance \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2024 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)

[The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2024 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)

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

3.2 Legal proceedings are a statutory intervention used by the local authority against the parents of registered pupils who fail to attend regularly at school. Parents whose children are on a school register and fail to ensure the regular and punctual attendance of their child(ren), may be guilty of an offence under Section 444(1) or 444(1A) of the Education Act 1996 and the authority may take enforcement action through the courts to secure regular attendance.

3.3 We are publishing this policy to help parents understand the importance of school attendance and their statutory responsibilities, but also to preserve the uniquely cooperative nature of our school by avoiding unnecessary conflict with our supportive parent body.



- 3.4 Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act states that parents must ensure that children of compulsory school age receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude to any special educational needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. A prosecution can take place against any person who has parental responsibility for the child's education or who has care of the child. Parents have a legal duty to make sure that their children are properly educated. It is the parent's responsibility to ensure that their children attend school regularly and arrive on time. If you allow your child to be absent from school without good reason, the school will not authorise the absence, you may be committing an offence, and you could be issued with a penalty notice or prosecuted.
- 3.5 A child is of Compulsory School Age at the beginning of the term following their fifth birthday. A child ceases to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday in June of the school year in which they reach the age of 16.
- 3.6 Under the Education Act 1996, the local authority has a statutory responsibility to ensure that parents secure education for children of compulsory school age and where necessary, use legal enforcement.
- 3.7 The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024, require schools to take an attendance register twice a day, once at the start of the morning session and then again during the afternoon session.
- 3.8 The register must record whether the pupil was:
- present;
  - absent;
  - present at approved educational activity; or
  - unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

## **4. Safeguarding**

- 4.1 Every pupil should be able learn in an enjoyable and safe environment and be protected from harm. We respect and value all children and are committed to providing a caring, friendly and safe environment for all our pupils so they can learn and participate in all school activities in a relaxed and secure atmosphere.
- 4.2 Attending school regularly promotes the welfare and safety of children whilst they are not in the care of their parents/carers. Safeguarding is about offering early help and support to children and families and difficulties with attendance and lateness may be signs that something is worrying the child or that there are difficulties within the family. Poor or irregular attendance, persistent lateness, or children missing from education may be considered a safeguarding matter if this places a child at risk of harm.



- 4.3. Safeguarding the interests of each child is everyone's responsibility and within the context of this school, safeguarding and promoting the welfare and life opportunities for children encompasses attendance, behaviour management, health and safety, access to the curriculum and anti-bullying, protecting children from abuse and neglect, online safety, radicalisation and extremism, FGM and CSE.
- 4.4 More information on safeguarding and the protection of children can be found in the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.
- 4.5 In order to allow us to safeguard the children in our care it is important that parents and carers provide the school with their current contact details and provide at least three other contact numbers in case of emergency.
- 4.6 It is also important for parents inform the school of any specific vulnerability in relation to their child or home circumstances.

#### 4.7 First Day Response

If children are absent from school, Parents/Carers are expected to contact the school by telephone before 9.30am to give the reason for the child's absence. If the Parent/Carer has not contacted school by 9.30am the school will attempt to make telephone contact. The school administrator will check the class registers on SIMs each day before 9.30am and will contact the parents of any child absent without a known reason. The school administrator will then update the register.

Should the administrator not be able to make contact with the parents or carers they will then continue to call all contacts for the child until contact has been made. Should the administrator not be able to make contact with the family either directly or through any of the other contacts for the child they should inform the Headteacher immediately who will then consider deploying members of staff to visit the family home to check on the families well-being and safety. Should no contact be possible the Headteacher or a member of staff acting on their behalf may ask for the police to check on the family's well being.

### 5. Categorising absence

- 5.1 Where pupils of compulsory school age are recorded as absent, the register must show whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.
- 5.2 Absence can only be authorised by the headteacher/principal and cannot be authorised by parents. All absences will be treated as unauthorised unless a satisfactory explanation for the pupil's absence has been received.



5.3 Parents must advise the school by telephone on the first day of absence and provide the school with an expected date of return. This should be followed up in the form of a written note from the parent/carer, though verbal explanations may be acceptable where this is considered appropriate.

5.4 Absence will be categorised as follows:

5.5.1 Illness

Parents may be asked to provide medical evidence to allow the headteacher to authorise absence where appropriate. This will usually be in the form of an appointment card, prescription, etc.

5.5.2 Medical/dental appointments

Parents are advised where possible to make medical and dental appointments outside of the school day. Where this is not possible, pupils must attend school for part of the day. Parents must show the appointment card to school.

5.5.3 Other authorised circumstances

This relates to where there is cause for absence due to exceptional circumstances.

5.5.4 Suspended or permanently excluded (no alternative provision made)

Suspension or permanent exclusion from attending school is counted as an authorised absence. The child's class teacher/form tutor/head of year will make arrangements for work to be sent home. Alternative provision must be arranged from the sixth consecutive school day of any suspension or permanent exclusion and the appropriate attendance code should be used to record this.

5.5.5 Religious Observance

Orton CE Primary School acknowledges the multi-faith nature of British society and recognises that on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside school holiday periods or weekends and this necessitates a consideration, by written request by the parent, of authorised absence.

5.5.6 Traveller absence

It is expected that Traveller children, in common with all other children, are to attend school as regularly and as frequently as possible.

To protect Traveller parents from unreasonable prosecution for non-attendance, the Education Act 1996, section 444(6), states that a Traveller parent is safe from prosecution





if their child accrues 200 attendances (ie 200 half days) in the year preceding the absence. To help ensure continuity of education for pupils, when their parent(s) is travelling for occupational purposes in England it is expected that the pupil should attend a mainstream school where their parent(s) is travelling and be dual registered.

**Orton CE Primary School** will be regarded as the base school if it is the school where the child normally attends when they are not travelling. However, the pupil must have attended in the last 18 months. Traveller children can register at other schools temporarily while away from their base school; in such cases, the pupil's school place at **Orton CE Primary School** will be kept open for them whilst travelling. This is to protect them from unfairly losing their place at their school of usual attendance.

**Orton CE Primary School** can only effectively operate as the child's base school if it is engaged in on-going dialogue with Traveller families. This means that parents must:

- advise of their forthcoming travelling patterns before they happen; and
- inform the school regarding proposed return dates.

**Orton CE Primary School** will authorise absence of Traveller children if we are satisfied that a family is travelling for work or trade purposes and has given indication that they intend to return.

Traveller children will be recorded as attending an approved educational activity when:

- the child is on roll and attending another visited school;
- the child is undertaking supervised educational activity under the jurisdiction of another local authority's Traveller Education Service;

Where Traveller children are registered pupils at a school and are known to be present either at a site (official or otherwise) or in a house and are not attending school, the absence will be investigated in the same way as that for any pupil and appropriate statutory action may be undertaken.

#### 5.5.7 Late arrival

Registration begins at **9am prompt**; pupils arriving after this time will be marked as present but arriving late. The morning register closes at 9.30am so pupils arriving between 9am and 9.30am will be marked with an L indicating they are late for school. If a pupil is marked as late, the number of minutes late will also be recorded in the register.

The register will close at 9.30am; pupils arriving after the close of register will be recorded as late (code U). This is not authorised and will count as an absence for that school session and statutory action may be taken where appropriate.

On arrival after the close of register, pupils must report to the school office to ensure that we can be responsible for their health and safety whilst they are in school. Parents will be asked to sign their child in.

The absence will only be authorised if a satisfactory explanation for the late arrival can be

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provided, for example, attendance at a medical appointment.

The absence will be recorded as unauthorised if the pupil has arrived late without justifiable cause.

#### 5.5.8 Unauthorised absence

Absence will not be authorised unless parents have provided a satisfactory explanation and that it has been accepted as such by the headteacher.

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 should **not** be authorised in the following circumstances:

- no explanation is offered by the parent/carer;
- the explanation offered is unsatisfactory (eg shopping, minding the house, etc);
- family holidays (unless granted under 'exceptional' circumstances).

5.6 All requests for leave of absence will be responded to in writing outlining the conditions of leave granted.

If a parent wishes to request a leave of absence they must first arrange to discuss with the Headteacher either by phone or in person. Parents will then be asked to complete a Leave of Absence Request which should be returned to the school office. The request will be considered and the Headteacher will respond in writing to the request so the parent clearly knows whether the request is authorised or not.

5.6.1 If a pupil fails to return and contact with the parents has not been made or received, school may take the pupil off the school's roll in compliance with the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024. This means that the child will lose their school place.

5.6.2 If the permission to take leave is not granted and the parent takes their child out of school the absence will be unauthorised. In cases where the national threshold is met schools must consider a penalty notice. In these circumstances the school will refer to the local authority. Fixed penalty notices will be issued in accordance with Westmorland and Furness Council's code of conduct.

## 6. **Deletions from the register**

6.1 In accordance with the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024, pupils will only be deleted from the register when one of the following circumstances applies:

- The school is replaced by another school on a School Attendance Order.
- The School Attendance Order is revoked by the local authority.
- The pupil has ceased to be of compulsory school age.



- Permanent exclusion has occurred and procedures have been completed.
- Death of a pupil.
- Transfer between schools.
- Parent notifies the school in writing they are withdrawing the child to be educated otherwise than at school.
- Failure to return from a period of leave after both the school and the local authority have tried to locate the pupil.
- Where a pupil has been detained under a sentence of detention and there are reasonable grounds to believe the pupil will not return to the school after the period of detention. This will be agreed in discussion with the Youth Justice Service.
- 20 days continuous unauthorised absence and both the local authority and school have tried to locate the pupil and agree to deletion from the register.
- Left the school but not known where he/she has gone after both the school and the local authority have tried to locate the pupil.

6.2 Orton CE Primary School will follow Westmorland and Furness Council's Children Missing Education Procedures when a pupil's whereabouts are unknown.

## **7. Roles and responsibilities**

### **7.1 The governing board**

The governing board is responsible for:

- Promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos.
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties.
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data.
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school.
- Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance.
- Holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

### **7.2 The headteacher**

The headteacher is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the school.
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors.
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils.
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies.

7.3 **The designated senior leader** at Orton CE Primary School is also the Headteacher

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The designated senior leader is responsible for:

- Leading attendance across the school.
- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement.
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes.
- Having an oversight of data analysis.
- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data.
- Arranging calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues.
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families.
- Working with the named LA Attendance Support Officer to agree actions for pupils whose attendance is a concern and support strategies are not working.

#### 7.4 **The attendance officer** at Orton CE Primary School is also the Headteacher

The school attendance officer is responsible for:

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data (see section 7).
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement.
- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance and the headteacher.
- Working with LA Attendance Support Officers to tackle persistent absence.

#### 7.5 **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 by 9.15am and 1.15pm each day.

#### 7.6 **School Business Manager**

School Business Manager will:

- Take calls from parents about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system.
- Transfer calls from parents to the Headteacher / Class Teacher / SENDCo in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance

#### 7.7 **Parents/carers**

Parents/carers are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day on time.



- Call the school to report their child's absence before 9.15am on the day of the absence (and each subsequent day of absence), and advise when they are expected to return.
- Provide the school with more than one emergency contact number for their child.
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day.

## 7.8 Pupils

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school every day on time.

## 8. Using attendance data

### 8.1 The School will:

- Monitor attendance and absence data half-termly, termly, and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil level.
- Identify whether there are groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern.

Pupil-level absence data will be 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. The school will compare attendance data to the national average and share this with the governing board.

### 8.2 Analysing attendance

The school will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these pupils and their families.
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns.

### 8.3 Using data to improve attendance

The school will:

- Provide regular attendance reports to Class Teachers, and other school leaders, to facilitate discussions with pupils and families.
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies.

### 8.4 Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is

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where a pupil misses 50% or more of school.

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence.
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school.
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance.

## 9. Support systems

9.1 Schools recognise that poor attendance is often an indication of difficulties and trauma in a child's life. This may be related to problems at home and/or in school. Parents should make school aware of any difficulties or changes in circumstances that may affect their child's attendance and/or behaviour in school, for example, bereavement, divorce/separation, incidents of domestic abuse. This will help the school identify any additional support that may be required. It is expected that the child and their family work collaboratively with school to identify the anxiety-based school avoidance resources most appropriate for support and to accept the support that is offered or advised.

9.2 **Orton CE Primary School** also recognise that some pupils are more likely to require additional support to attain good attendance, for example, those pupils with special educational needs, those with physical or mental health needs, migrant and refugee pupils and looked after children.

9.3 The school will implement a range of strategies to support improved attendance for all pupils. Strategies used will include:

- Escalation of attendance approach / graduated approach.
- Referrals to support agencies such as early help or family hubs.
- Pupil Voice Activities.
- Anxiety-based attendance avoidance materials.
- Trauma-informed approaches.

9.4 Punctuality

In addressing punctuality at Orton C of E School, we:

- have clear procedures - registers close at 9.30 am and 1.30 pm;
- publicise this policy in School and communicate it to parents/carers;
- balance any sanctions with positive encouragement;
- praise and acknowledge punctuality and improvements in punctuality;

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- ensure that teachers set a good example by arriving punctually for registration and for lessons;
- follow up the reasons for lateness and be alert to any emerging patterns or problems.

9.5 Where parents fail or refuse to engage with the support offered and further unauthorised absence occurs, Orton CE Primary School will consider the use of legal sanctions.

## 10. Legal Interventions

### 10.1 Prosecution

Where intervention fails to bring about an improvement in attendance, the local authority will be notified and legal action in the Magistrates' Court may be considered however; initiating prosecution proceedings is a serious step that is normally taken by an Attendance Support Officer or other relevant officer at the LA.

All alternatives to prosecution will be considered and discounted ahead of considering prosecution. These include;

- Attendance Contracts,
- Penalty Notices or an Education Supervision Order.

10.1.1 Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 states that if a parent fails to ensure the regular school attendance of their child if he/she is a registered pupil at a school and is of compulsory school age, then they are guilty of an offence.

10.1.2 A parent found guilty of this offence can be fined up to £2,500 and/or be imprisoned for a period of up to three months.

10.1.3 Alternatives to Section 444 prosecution are Attendance Contracts, Penalty Notices or an Education Supervision Order.

### 10.2 Attendance contracts

An attendance contract is a voluntary agreement between school and the parent, it can also be extended to include the child and any other agencies offering support to resolve any difficulties leading to improved attendance.

10.2.1 The contract will outline attendance targets and will detail agreed actions that will help to achieve the target. The contract will be reviewed regularly.

10.2.2 The contract can be used as evidence in a prosecution should parents fail to carry out



agreed actions.

### 10.3 Penalty Notices

Penalty Notices will be considered when:

- A pupil is absent from school and the absence has not been authorised by the school.
- A pupil has accrued unauthorised absence without reasons provided and/or accepted as exceptional by the headteacher/principal.

10.3.1 A Penalty Notice gives the parent the opportunity to discharge themselves of their legal responsibility if a £160 fine is paid within 28 days. There is usually the opportunity to pay a reduced amount of £80 if paid within 21 days of the date the Notice was issued.

10.3.2 Failure to pay the Penalty Notice may result in a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

10.3.3 Penalty Notices will be used in accordance with Westmorland and Furness Council's Penalty Notice Code of Conduct.

**Review date:** October 2026

**For further guidance please refer to the DfE document:**

Working together to improve school attendance Statutory guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities – August 2024.