Attendance Policy



Oxlow Bridge School

Partnership Learning

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1. Aims

This policy aims to show our commitment to meeting our obligations with regards to school attendance, including those laid out in the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on Working together to improve school attendance (applies from 19 August 2024), through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- setting high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all pupils;
- promoting good attendance and the benefits of good attendance;
- reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence;
- ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled;
- acting early to address patterns of absence;
- building strong relationships with families to make sure pupils have the support in place to attend school;

At Oxlow Bridge School, we are committed to ensuring that all pupils receive the highest quality of education and are able to achieve their full potential.

The target attendance (including authorised and medical absence) for all pupils registered at this school is 95% or above.

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy is based on the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on Working together to improve school attendance (applies from 19 August 2024) and school attendance parents/carers responsibility measures. The guidance is based on the following pieces of legislation, which set 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 Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (and 2010, 2011, 2013, and 2016 amendments)
- the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024
- the Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 and the 2024 amendment

It also refers to:

- School census guidance (updated October 2024)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (Updated September 2024)
- Mental Health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for Schools (February 2023)
- Attendance

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 The Governing Board is responsible for:

- setting high expectations of all school leaders, staff, pupils and parents/carers;
- making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties, including making sure the school records attendance accurately in the register, and shares the required information with the DfE and local authority;
- making sure that the school works effectively with local partners to help remove barriers to attendance, and keeps them informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate;

- recognising and promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos;
- making sure the school's attendance management processes are delivered effectively, and that consistent support is provided for pupils who need it most by prioritising staff and resources;
- making sure the school has high aspirations for all pupils, but adapts processes and support to pupils' individual needs;
- regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data and helping school leaders focus improvement efforts on individual pupils or cohorts who need it most;
- working with school leaders to set goals or areas of focus for attendance and providing support and challenge;
- monitoring attendance figures for the whole school and repeatedly evaluating the effectiveness of the school's processes and improvement efforts to make sure they are meeting pupils' needs
- where the school is struggling with attendance, working with school leaders to develop a comprehensive action plan to improve attendance
- making sure all staff receive adequate training on attendance as part of the regular continued professional development offer, so that staff understand:
    - the importance of good attendance
    - that absence is almost always a symptom of wider issues
    - the school's legal requirements for keeping registers;
    - the school's strategies and procedures for tracking, following up on and improving attendance, including working with partners and keeping them informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate.
- making sure dedicated training is provided to staff with a specific attendance function in their role, including in
    - sharing effective practice on attendance management and improvement across schools;
    - holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

The governing body has responsibility for the school attendance strategy and for approving the Attendance and Punctuality Policy every year. The governing body will receive updates on attendance at least termly.

3.2 The Headteacher is responsible for:

- implementing 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;
- issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary, and/or authorising Partnership Learning Attendance Officer to be able to do so;
- working with the parents/carers to develop bespoke support approaches for attendance for pupils with SEND, where pupils face barriers to attendance, particularly for those with complex medical needs.
- communicating with the local authority when a pupil with an education, health and care (EHC) plan has falling attendance, or where there are barriers to attendance that relate to the pupil's needs;
- communicating the school's high expectations for attendance regularly to pupils and

parents/carers through all available channels.

- ensuring that the school meets the legal requirements for all aspects of school attendance and punctuality as set in the Working Together to Improve School Attendance Guidance (August 2024);
- ensuring attendance are accurately recorded in the register and sharing the required information with DfE and local authorities;
- benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement ensure that the school meets the legal requirements for all aspects of school attendance and punctuality as set in the Working Together to Improve School Attendance Guidance (August 2024).
- reporting regularly to the governors about attendance figures and any issues;
- authorising or not authorising any term time absences and informing the parents/carers of the decision;
- liaising with Partnership Learning Attendance Officer as required;
- liaising with the Local Authority Attendance Lead as needed
- ensuring staff monitor attendance of the pupils in their class by completing the registers accurately and in time twice a day;
- ensuring same day contact with parents/carers where a child is been absent, and no contact has been made;

3.3 Class teachers are responsible for:

- ensuring that they are available to collect pupils from the buses and parents/carers on arrival
- completing the online registers by 9:30am in the morning and by 1:30pm in the afternoon each day;
- ensuring any messages from parents/carers regarding their child's attendance or absence is shared immediately with the admin and Headteacher
- raising any safeguarding concerns relating to attendance with the Headteacher.
- discussing attendance issues with parents/carers and sharing attendance figures at parents' evenings and review meetings.

3.4 The school administration staff are responsible for:

- taking calls from parents/carers about absence on a day-to-day basis and recording and sharing it on the school systems;
- ensuring online registers are completed by class staff after the closure of registration on a daily basis;
- transferring calls from parents/carers to the appropriate leader, in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance;
- calling and/or emailing parents/carers to gather information on the reason of a pupil's absence;
- raising any safeguarding concerns relating to attendance with the school's Headteacher.
- Printing and sharing with parents/carers the attendance records of all pupils as needed

3.5 Parents and Carers responsibilities:

Where this policy refers to a parent/carer, it refers to the adult who has parental responsibility for a child or young person. The school works in close partnership with parents/carers to achieve excellent school attendance.

The law states that parents/carers of children of compulsory school age are required to ensure that they receive full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise (Education Act 1996)

It is the parents/carers' responsibility to ensure that their children arrive at school on time and are picked up promptly at the end of the day

If a child is going to be absent, the parents/carers/carers should contact the school on the first day of absence. They should state the reason for their child's absence as well as the date they are expected to return to school. If there is no contact, the school will contact the parents/carers on the first day of absence. On their child's return to school, the parents/carers may be asked provide evidence to support their child's absence from school i.e. Appointment letters, copy of prescription etc.

4. Persistent Absence

Persistent absence is where a child's attendance falls below set thresholds. We recognise at Oxlow Bridge, that due to the pupils' complex medical needs, it is highly likely that many pupils will reach this threshold, we will therefore not be including authorised absences in this calculation.

If the threshold for "persistent absence" is met through "unauthorised absence", parent/carers will be asked in the first instance to come into school to meet and discuss this and identify a way forward.

If there is no improvement, a further meeting will take place with Partnership Learning Attendance Officer and appropriate action will be taken by the Partnership Learning Attendance Officer to resolve the situation. This may include:

- direct work with the pupil and family;
- referral to other agencies;
- arranging suitable support to help the pupil in making a return to full attendance;
- legal proceedings under the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003, Education Act 1996 and the Children Act 1989. Fixed penalty notices may be issued to parents/carers. There is an appeals process for parents/carers who have received and contest a fixed penalty notice.

5. Holidays and leave of absence

Parents/carers who request absences in term time must complete the necessary form (available from the school). It is expected that parents/carers plan holidays and any requests for leave during school holiday periods. Given the nature of the needs of the pupils at Oxlow Bridge, holidays and requests for leave may be individually considered under the exceptional circumstances criteria. If they are not authorised in term-time they may incur a fixed penalty notice. All fixed penalty notices are discussed with the Partnership Learning Attendance Officer before being issued.

6. Children missing in Education

Children missing in education are:

- those known to have lived in the local or neighbouring authorities, or attended school here, and their whereabouts are unconfirmed, or unknown (this includes those that have been reported to have moved either within the UK but outside of the Local Authority Boundaries or abroad either to live or study);

- those known to be residing in their respective Local Authority boundaries and are believed not to be in education;
- those whose parents/carers claim to be providing elective home education but, because of the Local Authority's informal enquiries, are believed not to be in receipt of suitable and efficient education.

If a child becomes known as a Child Missing in Education, the relevant EHC (Education Health Care) Team, the MASH team and the Partnership Learning Attendance Officer will be informed immediately.

In some cases, the police will be made aware to safeguard the child and discover more details on the child's whereabouts by generating a 'Merlin' report that will be sent to the MASH team.

7. Recording attendance

7.1 Attendance register

The school record every pupil's attendance using an electronic registration system.
Attendance registers are completed timely and accurately by the class teacher twice a day.

If a pupil is absent and a reason is provided, this will be passed on to the pupil's class team for effective registration or recorded directly onto the register by the school administration team.

7.2 Unplanned absence

The pupil's parents/carers must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 9:00am or as soon as practically possible, by calling the school administration staff, where a message can be left on the answer machine, with a member of the admin team or emailed to the school email, office@oxlowbridge.com .The school will mark absence due to physical or mental illness as authorised, unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness. If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, a meeting will be organised to discuss this absence.

7.3 Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parents/carers notifies the school in advance of the appointment, although parents may be asked to provide physical evidence of the appointment.

7.4 Following up unexplained absence

When any pupil expecting to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the school will:

- call the pupil's parents/carers on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the school cannot reach any of the pupil's immediate contacts, it may be necessary to call additional contacts provided; If the school are unable to assertain the reason for absence or contact the family by 12pm, a home visit may be considered.
- identify whether the absence is approved or not;
- identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained.
- call the parents/carers on each day that the absence continues without explanation, to make sure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the

school will carry out a home visit;
- where relevant, report the unexplained absence to Partnership Learning Attendance Officer and the EHCP Team/Local Authority;
- where appropriate, offer support to the pupil and/or their parents/carers to improve attendance;
- identify whether the pupil needs support from wider partners, as quickly as possible, and make the necessary referrals;
- where support is not appropriate, not successful, or not engaged with, issue a notice to improve, penalty notice or other legal intervention (see section 9.2 below), as appropriate.

7.5 Reporting to parents/carers

The school will inform parents/carers about their child's attendance and absence levels when appropriate.

8. Authorised and unauthorised absence

8.1 Approval for term-time absence

The Headteacher will allow pupils to be absent from the school site for certain educational activities, or to attend other schools or settings.

The Headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if the request meets the specific circumstances set out in the 2024 school attendance regulations. These circumstances are:

- taking part in a regulated performance, or regulated employment abroad;
- attending an interview;
- study leave;
- a temporary, time-limited part-time timetable;
- exceptional circumstance as a one-off event/s which are unavoidable, examples may include the death of a close relative, attendance at a funeral, respite care of a looked after child, a housing crisis which prevents attendance.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least 4 to 6 weeks before the absence, and in accordance with any leave of absence request form, which can be requested via to the school's email account, office@oxlowbridge.com

Examples of unauthorised absences:

- parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily;
- absences that have not been properly explained;
- travel during term-time, including family holidays, that have not been agreed;
- confusion over school term and holiday dates;
- child's and/or family birthdays;
- any routine family event or trip, for example, shopping.

8.2 Sanctions

In some circumstances Oxlow Bridge may have to consider the use of potential sanctions, including, but not limited to, those listed below to tackle unauthorized poor attendance. Decisions will be made on an individual, case-by-case basis.

8.2.1 Penalty notices

The Headteacher (or someone authorised by them), Local Authority or the police can fine parents/carers for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school-age, by issuing a penalty notice. If the school issues a penalty notice, it will check with the Local authority before doing so and send it a copy of any penalty notices issued.

8.2.2 Notices to improve

If the national threshold has been met and support is appropriate, but parents/carers do not engage with offers of support, the school may offer a notice to improve to give parents/carers a final chance to engage with support. Notices to improve will be issued in line with processes set out in the local code of conduct for the Local Authority area in which the pupil attends school.

9. Supporting pupils who are absent or returning to school

9.1 Pupils absent due to complex barriers to attendance

Some pupils face more complex barriers to attendance. This includes pupils who have long term physical or mental health conditions and those who have special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

Their right to an education is the same as any other pupil and therefore the attendance ambition for these pupils is the same as it is for any other pupil, but additional support may need to be provided.

In developing this support, the usual processes relevant to any attendance case including;

- understanding the individual needs of the pupil and family;
- working in partnership with the pupil and family to put in-school support in place and working with other the local authority and other agencies where external support is needed (and available);
- regularly reviewing and updating the support approach to make sure it continues to meet individual needs.

Some pupils face greater barriers to attendance than their peers. These can include pupils who suffer from long- term medical conditions or who have special educational needs and disabilities, or other vulnerabilities. High expectations of attendance remain, however, we will work with families and pupils to support improved attendance whilst being mindful of the additional barriers faced. We can discuss reasonable adjustments and additional support from external partners where appropriate.

9.2 Pupils returning to school after a lengthy or unavoidable period of absence

As soon as the school is notified of a pupil's return to school after a lengthy or unavoidable period of absence, it will arrange to meet with parents/carers and all relevant parties, in order to discuss the most suitable transition and steps towards the child returning full time when appropriate. Specialist school nursing team will support when there has been a health-related absence. All pupils who have had a hospital admission will need a formal return to school meeting.

Phased returns or shorter timetables may be in place to suit the needs of the pupil. The school

will consider adjustments to practices and policies to help meet the needs of pupils who are struggling to attend school, as well as making formal reasonable adjustments under section 20 of the Equality Act 2010 where a pupil has a disability. Any adjustments should be agreed by and regularly reviewed between the school and the child's parents/carers.

For more information on this, please refer to our guidance document entitled "Procedure for pupils returning to school following a medical procedure"

10.Attendance monitoring

The school's admin team will monitor the attendance of all pupils and will inform the Headteacher of any concerns in weekly attendance figures and will share specific pupil information with the DfE on request. The school has granted the DfE access to its management information system so the data can be accessed regularly and securely. 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. Attendance will be monitored and shared with governors.

11.Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the Local Authority and/or DfE is updated, and as a minimum every two years. At every review, the policy will be approved by the full governing board.

12.Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Behaviour policy

. Appendix 1: attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed

Attending a place other than the school		
K	Attending education provision arranged by the local authority	Pupil is attending a place other than a school at which they are registered, for educational provision arranged by the local authority
V	Attending an educational visit or trip	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised or approved by the school
P	Participating in a sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
W	Attending work experience	Pupil is on an approved work experience placement
B	Attending any other approved educational activity	Pupil is attending a place for an approved educational activity that is not a sporting activity or work experience
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered

Absent – leave of absence		
C1	Participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad	Pupil is undertaking employment (paid or unpaid) during school hours, approved by the school
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
J1	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
S	Study leave	Pupil has been granted leave of absence to study for a public examination
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
C2	Part-time timetable	Pupil is not in school due to having a part-time timetable
C	Exceptional circumstances	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances

Absent - other authorised reasons		
T	Parents/carers travelling for occupational purposes	Pupil is a 'mobile child' who is travelling with their parents/carer(s) who are travelling for occupational purposes
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance

I	Illness (not medical or dental appointment)	Pupil is unable to attend due to illness (either related to physical or mental health)
E	Suspended or excluded	Pupil has been suspended or excluded from school and no alternative provision has been made

Absent - unable to attend school because of unavoidable cause		
Q	Lack of access arrangements	Pupil is unable to attend school because the local authority has failed to make access arrangements to enable attendance at school
Y1	Transport not available	Pupil is unable to attend because school is not within walking distance of their home and the transport normally provided is not available
Y2	Widespread disruption to travel	Pupil is unable to attend because of widespread disruption to travel caused by a local, national or international emergency
Y3	Part of school premises closed	Pupil is unable to attend because they cannot practicably be accommodated in the part of the premises that remains open
Y4	Whole school site unexpectedly closed	Every pupil absent, as the school is closed unexpectedly (e.g. due to adverse weather)
Y5	Criminal justice detention	Pupil is unable to attend as they are: • In police detention • Remanded to youth detention, awaiting trial or sentencing, or • Detained under a sentence of detention
Y6	Public health guidance or law	Pupil's travel to or attendance at the school would be prohibited under public health guidance or law
Y7	Any other unavoidable cause	To be used where an unavoidable cause is not covered by the other codes

Absent - unauthorised absence		
G	Holiday not granted by the school	Pupil is absent for the purpose of a holiday, not approved by the school
N	Reason for absence not yet established	Reason for absence has not been established before the register closes
O	Absent in other or unknown circumstances	No reason for absence has been established, or the school isn't satisfied that the reason given would be recorded using one of the codes for authorised absence
U	Arrived in school after registration closed	Pupil has arrived late, after the register has closed but before the end of session

Administrative Codes		
Z	Prospective pupil not on admission register	Pupil has not joined school yet but has been registered

#	Planned whole-school closure	Whole-school closures that are known and planned in advance, including school holidays