Oakhill

faith stronger than the oak

Attendance Policy

Aims

At Oakhill School we aspire to high levels of attendance from all pupils. Good attendance is essential for all pupils to get the most out of their school experience, including their attainment, well-being and wider life chances.

The aims of this policy are as follows:

- to develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of good attendance;
- to ensure, so far as possible, that every pupil at Oakhill is able to benefit from and make their full contribution to the life of the School;
- to prioritise and where possible improve attendance and punctuality across the School, reduce absence and set out the School's approach to the management of absence / non-attendance;
- to recognise the linkages between attendance / absence and pupil wellbeing, specifically ensuring a consistent whole school approach to safeguarding
- to increase awareness of the clear link between good attendance and good attainment;
- to help to promote a whole school culture of safety, equality and protection;
- to identify and support pupils who are persistently absent or at risk of becoming persistently absent at the earliest opportunity.
- to support pupils' emotional wellbeing, mental health and safeguarding needs in relation to attendance

This policy is published on the School's website.

The importance of good attendance

At Oakhill School, we recognise the importance of developing good patterns of attendance from the outset. This is an integral part of the School's ethos and culture. In building a culture of good school attendance it recognises:

- the importance of good attendance, alongside good behaviour, as a central part of the school's vision, values, ethos, and day to day life;

- the interplay between attendance and wider school improvement efforts, building it into strategies on attainment, behaviour, bullying, special educational needs support, supporting pupils with medical conditions and / or disabilities, mental health issues, safeguarding wellbeing, and support for disadvantaged pupils;

- the importance of setting high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all pupils and communicating these regularly and effectively to pupils and parents;
- that attendance is never "solved" and is a continuous process requiring revision and updating of messages, processes and strategies; and
- children missing education can act as a vital warning sign to a range of safeguarding issues, including neglect, sexual abuse and child sexual and criminal exploitation.
- The School recognises that attendance difficulties may be linked to safeguarding concerns, mental health needs, bullying, unmet SEND needs, family difficulties or medical conditions and will respond sensitively and proportionately.

Statutory Requirements

Parents are responsible by law for ensuring the regular and punctual attendance of their children. Parents should familiarise themselves with this attendance policy and should work closely with school staff to overcome any problems which may affect a pupil's attendance. Parents are asked to provide contact details on admission to school and this is revised annually, although parents are also asked to contact school immediately to inform us of any changes. Wherever possible, the School holds more than one emergency contact number for each pupil on roll.

Staff in school will monitor attendance in accordance with the legal requirements of Working together to improve school attendance to consistently work towards a goal of 100% attendance for all pupils and endeavour to keep rates of unexplained and unauthorised absenteeism to a minimum by conveying to both pupils and their parents or carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance. The School will work closely with parents to help resolve issues which may influence pupil attendance. Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together.

The School will accurately complete admission and attendance registers and have effective day to day processes in place to follow-up absence. These registers must be kept electronically.

The School will comply with current legislation and guidance including Working Together to Improve School Attendance (DfE, 2024), Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE), the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 and safeguarding duties relating to Children Missing Education (CME).

School responsibilities

The School acknowledges that attendance is the essential foundation to securing positive outcomes for all pupils and that everyone has a responsibility to take proactive steps to manage and improve attendance across the School community.

The School will consistently promote the benefits of good attendance, setting high expectations for every pupil and consistently communicating those expectations to pupils and Parents.

Where there are challenges to attendance, the School will work effectively and respectfully with pupils, their families and, where appropriate, local authorities to address them.

The School will respond to non-attendance and / or lateness proactively, firmly, consistently and with care, with appropriate reference to this policy, its safeguarding and behaviour policies and the School's terms and conditions.

The School will have robust systems in place to track and record attendance, reasons for absence and patterns at an individual level and by cohorts or groups in order to identify pupils at risk of non-attendance and those who are persistently absent and it will monitor and analyse this data regularly to facilitate early intervention to address issues.

The School will adopt a supportive and inclusive approach to improving attendance and will seek to remove barriers to attendance wherever possible.

Monitoring attendance

The School will undertake regular data analysis to identify and provide additional support to pupils that need it and to look at historic and emerging patterns and develop strategies to address them. Such analysis may include:

- monitoring and analysing weekly attendance patterns and trends and provide support in a targeted way to pupils and families;
- using this analysis to provide information to form tutors to facilitate discussions with pupils and parents and if necessary, the SENDCo and Designated Safeguarding Lead;
- conducting thorough analysis of half-termly, termly, and full year data to identify patterns and trends;
- devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified;
- monitoring persistent absence, severe absence and patterns of lateness in accordance with current DfE guidance.

Pupils with Additional Needs

The School recognises some pupils may find it harder than others to attend School, and will work with those pupils and parents to try to remove barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships and working together to put the right support in place.

The School will make reasonable adjustments where a pupil has a disability that puts them at a substantial disadvantage, in comparison with pupils without a disability, in relation to school attendance.

It will also work with parents, and where appropriate with the local authority, to develop specific support approaches for attendance for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities e.g. ensuring the provision outlined in a pupil’s Education, Health and Care Plan is accessed.

Where a pupil has an Education, Health and Care Plan, the School will communicate with the local authority where the pupil's attendance falls or the School become aware of barriers to attendance that relate to the pupil's needs.

Suitable strategies and support will also be considered for pupils with any social, emotional or mental health issue that is affecting their attendance.
Where barriers are outside of the School's control, the School will work with parents and pupils to identify alternative sources of support or consider, where appropriate, making a referral for early help.

The School will make a sickness return to the local authority if a pupil is recorded in the attendance register as absent using the national absence code I (unable to attend because of sickness) and there are reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil will have to miss 15 consecutive or cumulative school days or more for illness or the pupil's total number of school days missed during the current school year because of illness (whether consecutive or cumulative) will reach or exceed 15 school days.

Where attendance concerns may indicate safeguarding risks, the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) will be informed and safeguarding procedures followed where appropriate.

Procedures

The school maintains an attendance register in accordance with the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024. Attendance is recorded at the beginning of each morning session and once during each afternoon session for every pupil on roll.

Registration

Registration is carried out twice daily at 8.50 am (prep and seniors) and at 1.15 (prep) or 3.40 pm (seniors). Registers will be marked promptly at these times. Registration will close at 8.55 am each morning. The register will remain open for 15 minutes after the start of registration. Pupils arriving after the register has closed will be marked U, which counts as an unauthorised absence for the session.

Pupils arriving late

Pupils arriving after registration has begun but before it closes will be marked with code L (late). Pupils who are late after the close of registration should sign in at the school office where their late mark will be placed in the register. Lateness should be indicated in the register with the letter L.

Absences

All absences must be explained by a parent or carer and recorded using the current national attendance codes applicable to the circumstances. Oakhill will not use an informal mark or an obsolete code as the final register entry. Common codes include:

I - illness

M - approved medical or dental appointment

C - leave of absence for exceptional circumstances, used only where no more specific code applies

G - family holiday not granted by the School

J1 - approved interview

P - approved sporting activity

V - educational visit or trip

Code C will be used restrictively and only for leave granted because of exceptional circumstances where no more specific code applies. The Principal will consider each request individually, determine the permitted duration and record the particular circumstances, decision and rationale. Code C2 will identify a temporary part-time timetable where applicable; a part-time timetable will not be used to manage behaviour. All absences must be explained with a parental note, email or phone call where appropriate. Parents are asked to telephone the school office as soon as possible everyday of absence.

Attendance codes will be used in accordance with the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 and DfE guidance.

Unauthorised Absence
Should the school not receive an explanation for an absence or should the explanation be deemed unsatisfactory then that absence will be deemed as unauthorised. Ongoing absences may require further evidence to be provided in order for the school to authorise them. The Principal will decide ultimately whether an absence is authorised or unauthorised. Form tutors should refer any suspected unauthorised absences or truancy immediately to the Vice Principal.

First Day Calling
If a pupil is absent from morning registration and this has not been explained in advance or during the morning, the school secretary will make contact with parents.

Where the School is unable to establish contact and there are safeguarding concerns, appropriate safeguarding procedures will be followed.

Extended Absence
In the case of any further absence lasting more than 3 days without contact from parents the Vice Principal or Principal will contact parents by telephone. Any absence of 10 consecutive days will be reported to the local authority.

Term Time Holidays
The school strongly urges parents to avoid booking family holidays during term time. Leave for holidays will only be granted in exceptional circumstances. Holidays taken in term time will be recorded as unauthorised absences, in line with government guidance.

If a parent would like to make a request for leave of absence, they must apply in writing to the Principal, or by email to principal@oakhillschool.co.uk . The Principal will make decisions about leave of absence and inform the Form Tutor as appropriate.

Requests for leave of absence will be considered in line with current DfE guidance and the individual circumstances of the pupil and family.

Responsibilities and Roles

Pupils

School attendance is important to pupil attainment, wellbeing and development. The School therefore has high expectations of pupils as to their attendance and has systems in place to reward good attendance and manage poor attendance.

Pupils should be aware that:

- they are expected to be present in-person for the duration of each School day;
- they are expected to arrive on time and attend all timetabled lessons;
- they should not leave a lesson or the School site without permission or otherwise in accordance with School rules;
- they should engage with the School's arrangements for recording and managing attendance as set out in this policy;
- any unexplained absence will be followed up;
- persistent lateness or non-attendance will result in action being taken by the School. This may take the form of:
  - → offers of support to seek to identify and address any barriers to attendance;
  - → communication with parents;

If pupils are having difficulties that might discourage or prevent them from attending School or specific lessons regularly, they may speak to any member of staff, although the School encourages them to speak to their form tutor in the first instance. Pupils are entitled to expect this information to be managed sensitively.

Parents

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.

This means pupils 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.

The School will help parents to understand what is expected of them and why attendance is important to their child's attainment, wellbeing, and wider development and provide clarity on the short and long term consequences of poor attendance.

Parents are legally responsible for ensuring their child’s regular and punctual attendance and:

- Are responsible for immediately informing school by 9am, of the reason for any absence by phone (01254 823 546) or email absence@oakhillschool.co.uk

- Will avoid arranging family holidays during term time;
- Can expect the school to keep them fully informed of their child's attendance record.

Staff Roles

The School ensures that **all teaching and non-teaching staff** know the importance of good attendance and are consistent in their communication with pupils and Parents about it.

The **Form Tutor** should:

- Provide a good example by always being punctual to registration;
- Carry out registration in the correct manner, and complete the register accurately;
- Check all notes from parents and chase notes where necessary;
- Monitor pupil attendance and inform the Vice Principal of any concerns;
- Inform the Vice Principal of any suspected cases of truancy or unauthorised absences;
- Offer praise to individual students whose attendance is excellent and where attendance or punctuality improves;
- Ensure accurate attendance figures are included in school reports;

The **Vice Principal in the Preparatory School** and the **Vice Principal in the Senior School** should:

- Monitor attendance on a regular basis, and liaise with Form Tutors as appropriate;
- Make regular checks for unauthorised absences and any concerning absence patterns;
- Liaise with parents where necessary to address any problems which cause frequent absences

The **Principal** will:

- Monitor absences with the assistance of Form Tutors and Vice Principals;
- Approve requests for leave from parents;
- Liaise with parents where necessary to address problems which cause significant absences;
- Contact parents if absence is a cause for concern
- Decide, where necessary, whether an absence is deemed as unauthorised, and make appropriate contact with parents, and take necessary action as required.

The **School Attendance Champion** will:

- set a clear vision for improving and maintaining good attendance
- establish and maintain effective systems for tackling absence and make sure they are followed by all staff

- have a strong grasp of absence data to focus the collective efforts of the school.
- regularly monitor and evaluate progress, including the efficacy of the school's strategies and processes.

The School Attendance champion is the Principal who can be contacted on principal@oakhillschool.co.uk

Information sharing

Personal information on attendance will only be shared in line with legal obligations and having regard to government guidance on attendance, safeguarding and children missing education.

The School, local authorities and other local partners should work jointly and share data on individual cases where it is of benefit to a pupil (e.g. health services where there are medical conditions or the police where there are extra-familiar harms).

Where appropriate the schools will attend regular targeting support meetings.

The School is legally required to share information from the registers with the local authority. As a minimum this includes:

- New pupil and deletion returns;
- Attendance returns ;
- Sickness returns.

The law allows local authority officers access to the attendance and admission registers of all types of schools to carry out their functions under the Education Acts to support joint working between schools and local authorities. These officers are also permitted to take digital or physical extracts of the School's registers.

The School must provide specific pupil information on request to the Secretary of State.

Where appropriate, the School is expected to inform a pupil's social worker and/or youth offending team worker if there are unexplained absences.

Record keeping and confidentiality

All records created under this policy will be stored securely and managed in accordance with data-protection law and Oakhill's retention schedule. Admission and attendance register entries, including preserved corrections, will be retained for six years from the date of entry. Supporting attendance, safeguarding and early-help records will be retained in accordance with the applicable school retention schedule.

The information created in connection with this policy may contain personal data. The School's use of this personal data will be in accordance with data protection law. The School has published privacy notices on its website which explain how the School will use personal data.

Attendance information will be processed in accordance with UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018.

Further Information

This policy has regard to the following guidance and advice:

- Working together to improve school attendance (DfE, August 2024);
- Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance (DfE, August 2024);
- Guidance for Parents on school attendance (Office of the Children's Commissioner, July 2024);
- 'Is my child too ill for school?' guidance (NHS, April 2024);
- Supporting pupils with medical conditions at school (DfE, August 2017);
- Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools (DfE, February 2023);
- Support for pupils where a mental health issue is affecting attendance (DfE, February 2023);

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