

Oldbury Wells School

Member of the Trusted Schools Alliance

Attendance Policy

September 2024

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Statement of Intent

Improving attendance is everyone's responsibility.

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.

The school encourages all students to achieve a full attendance record and to meet, or exceed, our attendance target of 96%. This is because the pupils with the highest attainment at the end of key stage 4 have higher rates of attendance over the key stage compared to those with the lowest attainment. We wish to give all pupils the chance to succeed and get the most out of their school experience, including wider life-chances, and attendance is a key factor in this.

We will develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance. We aim for an environment which enables and encourages children to enjoy and succeed in their education.

We recognise that some children find it harder than others to attend school, therefore the school will build strong and trusting relationships with children and families to promote good attendance and remove any barriers to attendance. This is so that identification and response to barriers can be addressed in a timely manner. This will be done in a collaborative way.

Where a child is registered at Oldbury Wells, parents and carers have an additional legal duty to make sure their child attends regularly. We expect high standards of attendance, regularly monitor attendance data, listen to children and parents to understand barriers, facilitate support, formalising it when necessary. We enforce attendance through statutory intervention only when all other avenues have been exhausted.

The School Day

All students are expected to have arrived at school by 8.40am. The school day starts at 8.45am and ends at 3.15pm.

Attendance Procedures

Arrival to school and registration

Our pupil entrances are open just before 8.40am and pupils are welcomed into school by a member of the Senior Leadership Team or supporting staff who will meet and greet pupils at the gate. From there, all pupils are expected to go straight to either their tutor rooms or to line up on the playground for their assembly. A register will be taken at 8.45am. A register is a legal document and it is part of staff's duty to complete these. It is therefore important that these registers are taken promptly and accurately.

Lateness to school

Good punctuality is expected of all pupils attending Oldbury Wells School. Poor punctuality is not acceptable; it does not mirror our vision and values at Oldbury Wells of students being ready to learn. Late arrivals to school will cause disruption to both their learning and to the learning of others.

Students that arrive at school after 8.45am will be classed as late.

Late pupils must go straight to reception to sign-in.

If pupils are late to school twice in a week, they will receive a SG3 (Stage 3) after school detention. Pupils that are persistently late will receive contact from the school to inform families of the issue. If improvement is not seen, the school will direct concerns to the Education Welfare Officer.

The register closes at 9.15am (30 minutes after the start of school). If students arrive at school after the register has closed, this will be recorded as unauthorised on the register.

Reporting an Absence from School

How to report an absence

If a pupil cannot attend school for any reason, it is the duty of the parent/carer to contact school on the first day of any unplanned absence before 8.40am, or as soon as practically possible. This can be done via telephone or email.

The attendance officer can be contacted via telephone on 01746 765454 (select option 1 for the absence line) or by emailing attendance@oldburywells.com.

We ask that parents and carers continue to notify us on each day of absence, for safeguarding purposes.

We will mark absence due to illness as authorised absence unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the absence. If there is doubt, the school may ask for the student's parents/carers to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription or appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the absence, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/carers notified of this in advance.

If we are not notified of a pupil's absence, we will do all we reasonably can to establish contact with parents or carers. **If we have safeguarding concerns, we may carry out a home visit.**

We request that all pupils have at least two, preferably three, contacts so that we can contact all trusted adults in the case of an emergency.

Medical Appointments

We ask that, where possible, all medical and dental appointments are made outside of school hours. In order for medical appointments to be coded accurately on registers, please provide medical evidence. This can be a screenshot of an appointment, letter etc. Any medical appointments taken without evidence will be marked as unauthorised absence.

Promoting Good Attendance

In order to Aspire, Enjoy and Achieve at Oldbury Wells, good attendance is key. In building a culture of good attendance we aim to:

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

- Recognise 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 or disabilities, safeguarding, wellbeing and support for disadvantaged students (including use of pupil premium);
- Recognise improving attendance is a school leadership issue and have a designated senior leader with overall responsibility for championing and improving attendance in school. The responsibilities of the Attendance Lead will include offering a clear vision for attendance improvement, evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes, oversight of data analysis and communicating messages to pupils and parents;
- Make sure all teaching and non-teaching staff know the importance of good attendance, are consistent in their communication with pupils and parents, and receive the training and professional development they need;
- Make sure attendance support and improvement is appropriately resourced to enable pastoral staff to work with families, conduct home visits and work in partnership with the Attendance Lead and Education Welfare Officer;
- Set high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all students and communicate these regularly to students and parents through all available channels. In doing so, we will help parents to understand what is expected of them and why attendance is important to their child's attainment, wellbeing and wider development. It will also include clarity on the short and long term consequences of poor attendance;
- Visibly demonstrate the benefits of good attendance throughout school life. This will include displays, assemblies and the opportunity for students to receive rewards for good attendance. Where used sensitively and without discrimination, this will also include praising and rewarding improvements in attendance at year/form group and individual level;
- Recognise that attendance is never 'solved' and is a continuous process by regularly reviewing and updating messages, processes and strategies;
- Recognise 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.

Rewards and Incentives

We seek to reward students who attend well, or who have made improvements to their attendance. This will be through achievement points on Go4Schools, certificates, Amazon voucher prizes, random weekly prizes that align with behaviour, form prizes and weekly raffles.

Sanctions

Lateness to school is sanctioned through our behaviour policy. If a pupil is late to school twice in a week, there will be a SG2 (Stage 2) lunchtime detention. This also applies to repeated lateness to lessons.

Internal truancy is sanctioned through SG3 (Stage 3) after school detentions. Truancy is when a student does not arrive to a lesson on good time, without a valid reason.

Supporting Pupil Attendance

The school will always seek to support pupils who find attending school difficult.

We recognise that barriers are often bespoke to individuals and that they can be wide and complex.

We monitor the attendance of all pupils, at cohort and individual level, so that any patterns can be quickly identified and resolved.

We aim to build strong, trusting relationships with pupils so that communication is open.

In the first instance, appropriate and reasonable support will be put in place to address identified barriers. This might include voluntary referrals to outside agencies and services, such as Targeted Early Help.

Where absence persists or further declines, the school will work with the Educational Welfare Officer to formalise support.

Where support is not having the desired impact, or support is not being engaged with, local authority action is the next part of process. This may be a fixed penalty notice, Shropshire Attendance Panel or prosecution in the most severe cases where all reasonable routes have failed. These measures are taken to protect all children's right to receive a full education.

Safeguarding

The safeguarding of young people is everyone's responsibility.

Absence and lateness may be signs that something is worrying a child and that they, or their wider family, need support. Persistent absence or children missing education are safeguarding concerns and must act as a warning sign to a range of concerns, including neglect, sexual abuse, child sexual or child criminal exploitation and serious violence. They may also be an indication of child-on-child abuse including bullying and sexual harassment or significant mental ill health concerns. They must not be seen as purely isolated attendance concerns.

For pupils who are severely absent (under 50%), and all avenues of support have been attempted and unauthorised attendance continues, it is likely to result in a referral to children's social care.

Safe and well checks are carried out weekly for children who are not in school attendance. The frequency and criteria of these are determined by the school's own risk assessment.

Children who are severely absent will be visited weekly. Children who have unexplained absence will be seen either on the first or second day of unexplained absence, depending on the outcome of our risk assessment. Home visits are not done by appointments, they are done at any point during the school day. This will be a 'doorstep' visit in which we would expect to see that children are safe and well and we would expect to see the adult who is supervising the child. If contact cannot be established, this may lead to a children's social care referral if we have safeguarding concerns about the whereabouts of a child or if we do not feel that they are being adequately supervised.

Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 places a duty on local authorities and governing bodies to have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State regarding safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and children under the age of 18.

Please see our safeguarding policy for more information.

Vulnerable Children

It is important that vulnerable children (children with social workers or other vulnerabilities) work in partnership with families and other agencies.

Roles and Responsibilities

Senior Leader with responsibility for attendance:	Rebecca Lawson
Supporting the Senior Leader in attendance:	Terry Cowburn
Attendance Officer:	Dominique Wilson
Designated Safeguarding Leader:	Rebecca Lawson
Safeguarding and Welfare Officer:	Sarah Barlow
SENDCO:	Catherine Morgan
Mental Health and Wellbeing Leader:	Rebecca Lawson

Role of Form Tutor

- To take an accurate register each morning in tutor time.
- Form relationships with children and families so that communication of any issues pertaining to attendance can be dealt with quickly. Have those conversations with pupils and families about attendance concerns.
- Be curious about absence of children.
- Support children who are struggling to attend school.
- Report safeguarding concerns to the safeguarding lead.

Role of the Head of Year

- Monitor patterns of attendance for their cohort and at individual level.
- Work in partnership with families to remove barriers to attendance using reasonable means.
- Liaise with professionals both in and outside of school and the Educational Welfare Officer as appropriate.

Types of Absence

Authorised absence

This is an absence where the school has either given permission in advance of absence or where explanation of absence is accepted as justified. Examples of which as follows:

- Illness
- Medical appointments which could not be made outside of the school day
- Days of religious or cultural observance
- Unavoidable cause and exceptional circumstance
- Other exceptional circumstances at the discretion of the headteacher (i.e. funerals).

Unauthorised absence

This is an absence where no reason has been given or where explanation given is not considered acceptable. This includes:

- Keeping a child off school unnecessarily or without reason
- Children who arrive to school after 9.15am without reasonable explanation
- Day trips and holidays which have not been agreed
- Days off for birthdays or other such events
- Leaving the school during the school day (absconding)
- Pupils with persistent or severe absence with unsatisfactory explanation/lack of medical or professional evidence
- When a pupil is on a local authority final warning, the school will mark all absence without medical evidence as unauthorised.

Leave in term time

There is no entitlement in law for any leave of absence, therefore we ask all parents/carers to pay careful attention to our academic calendar.

- All applications for leave of absence must be made in advance to the headteacher. Leave will only be considered in exceptional circumstances. Each case for leave will be considered individually.
- Taking leave in term time will impact on a child's learning.
- Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school will be unauthorised.

Elective Home Education (EHE)

Please see *Elective Home Education: Guidance for Parents 2019 (DfE)* [Elective home education: guide for parents \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/414212/elective-home-education-guidance-for-parents-2019.pdf)

Elective home education is when parents or carers have made the decision to provide education for their children at home, instead of sending them into full-time schooling. The DfE guidance sets out the roles and responsibilities of all those involved in this process. The school will follow all local authority guidance and protocols for all children who are home educated. It is important that parents/carers read the guidance so that decisions are fully informed. The school will endeavour to undertake the following process where a parent or pupil is considering Elective Home Education:

1. If a parent or pupil raises that EHE is being considered, the school will seek to arrange a supportive meeting to discuss this. The aim of the meeting is to understand why EHE is being considered, to explore if there is anything the school can reasonably do to allow the pupil to overcome any barriers, and to signpost parents to Shropshire and DfE guidance so that all information is known.
2. The DSL will confirm if there are any safeguarding concerns that need to be considered and if any other professional agencies need to be informed, such as a child's social worker.
3. If the decision for EHE remains, a parent/carer must notify the school in writing of their decision to EHE.

4. The school will notify the Education Welfare Officer and Local Authority. The school will highlight, through the completion of local authority notification paperwork, any concerns they have around a pupil moving to EHE.

Information and contact details for EHE in Shropshire can be found on their website: *Elective home education | Shropshire Council*.

Children Missing in Education (CME)

Please see *Children Missing Education: Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities September 2024* (DfE website). [Children Missing Education - Guidance for Local authorities \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

The named officer in Shropshire for CME is Christine Kerry.

Children Missing in Education are children of a compulsory school age who are not registered pupils at a school and are not receiving suitable education otherwise than at a school. Children who are already identified as vulnerable, are known to children's social care or are in the care of the local authority are additionally vulnerable and need robust protection.

Children missing education are at significant risk of underachieving, being victims of harm, exploitation or radicalisation and becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training) later in life.

Where a pupil has not returned to school for ten days after an authorised absence or is absent from school without authorisation for twenty consecutive school days, the pupil can be removed from the admission register when the school and the local authority have failed, after jointly making reasonable enquiries, to establish the whereabouts of the child. This only applies if the school does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil is unable to attend because of sickness or unavoidable cause.

Children at Particular Risk of Missing Education

There are many circumstances where a child may become missing from education, so it is vital that local authorities make judgements on a case-by-case basis. Although not exhaustive, the list below presents some of the circumstances that local authorities should consider when establishing their CME policies and procedures:

Pupils at risk of harm/neglect

Children may be missing from education because they are suffering from abuse or neglect. Where this is suspected, schools should follow local child protection procedures, however, if a child is in immediate danger or at risk of harm, a referral should be made immediately to children's social care (and the police if appropriate). Local authority officers responsible for CME should check that a referral has been made and, if not, they should alert children's social care. The Department's statutory guidance *Keeping Children Safe in Education* provides further advice for schools and colleges on safeguarding children.

Children of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) families

Research has shown that many children from these families can become disengaged from education, particularly during the secondary school phase. It is therefore important that schools inform the local authority when a GRT pupil leaves the school without identifying a new destination school, particularly in the transition from primary to secondary so that they

can attempt to facilitate continuity of the child's education. Although many are settled, some GRT families move regularly and their children can be at increased risk of missing education. Local authority Traveller Education Support Services (TESS), where these exist, or the named CME officer within the local authority, can advise schools on the best strategies for ensuring the minimum disruption to GRT pupils' education, for example dual registration with other schools or the provision of electronic or distance learning packages where these are available.

Children of service personnel

Families of members of the Armed Forces are likely to move frequently, both in the UK and overseas and often at short notice. Schools and local authorities should contact the MoD Children's Education Advisory Service (CEAS) on 01980 618244 for advice on making arrangements to ensure continuity of education for those children when the family moves.

Missing children and runaways

Children who go missing or run away from home or care may be in serious danger and are vulnerable to crime, sexual exploitation or abduction as well as missing education. Further sources of information about missing children are listed at the back of this document.

Children and young people supervised by the Youth Justice System

Children who have offended or are at risk of doing so are also at risk of disengaging from education. Local authority Youth Offending Teams (YOTs) are responsible for supervising those young people (aged 8 to 18). YOTs should work with the local authority CME officer to ensure that children are receiving, or return to, appropriate full-time education. Where a child is registered at a school and is given a custodial sentence, the school may be required to keep their name on the admission register where there are reasonable grounds to believe they will return to the school after they cease to be detained. As set out in the '*Working together to improve school attendance*' guidance, in determining whether the pupil will return to the school, it is expected that school will discuss this with the pupil's youth offending team worker.

Schools are expected to communicate with the pupil's Youth Offending Team worker while the pupil is in custody and remains on the school roll to discuss the pupil's educational needs, progress and return to the school upon their release where appropriate.

Children who cease to attend a school

There are many reasons why a child stops attending a school. It could be because the parent chooses to home educate their child, however, where the reason for a child who has stopped attending a school is not known, the local authority should investigate the case and satisfy itself that the child is receiving suitable education.

Children of new migrant families

Children of new migrant families may not have yet settled into a fixed address or may have arrived into a local authority area without the authority becoming aware, therefore increasing the risk of the child missing education.

Suspension or Permanent Exclusions

All incidents where a child is sent home due to poor behaviour, will be coded on the register as a suspension, even if pre-agreed with a parent, i.e. children being sent home during lunch times. If an exclusion is for part of the day (including lunchtime), it will be noted as a half day exclusion. All suspensions count as an authorised absence.

Children with Medical Conditions or Special Educational Needs or Disabilities

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. Their right to an education is the same as any other pupil and therefore the attendance ambition for these pupils should be the same as they are for any other pupil. That said, in working with their parents to improve attendance, we are mindful of the barriers these pupils face and will put additional support in place where necessary to help them access their full-time education. This should include:

- Having sensitive conversations and developing good support for pupils with physical or mental health conditions. For example, making reasonable adjustments where a pupil has a disability or putting in place an individual healthcare plan where needed. Considering whether additional support from external partners (including the local authority or health services) would be appropriate, making referrals in a timely manner and working together with those services to deliver any subsequent support.
- Working with parents to develop specific support approaches for attendance for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities, including where applicable ensuring the provision outlined in the pupil's education, health and care plan is accessed.
- Establish strategies for removing the in-school barriers these pupils face, including considering support or reasonable adjustments. This might include referral to the wellbeing team, support from a pastoral support officer, a move of form/class if appropriate, access to quiet social time spaces, a medical/toilet pass, or through to helping a family complete a voluntary early help assessment where a whole family response would be helpful. The school will also signpost parents/carers to external support where appropriate.
- Ensure joined up pastoral care is in place where needed and consider whether a time-limited phased return to school would be appropriate, for example for those affected by anxiety about school attendance.
- Ensure data is regularly monitored for these groups, including at board and governing body meetings.
- Pupils with long term illnesses or other health needs may need additional support to continue their education, such as alternative provision provided by the local authority. Local authorities are responsible for arranging suitable education for children of compulsory school age who, because of health reasons, would otherwise not receive suitable education. Please see further information on supporting pupils with medical conditions at school.

Part-Time Timetables

All pupils of compulsory school age are entitled to a full-time education. In very exceptional circumstances, where it is in a pupil's best interests, there may be a need for a temporary part time timetable to meet their individual needs. For example, where a medical condition prevents a pupil from attending full-time education and a part-time timetable is considered as part of a reintegration package.

A part-time timetable should not be used to manage a pupil's behaviour.

A part-time timetable must only be in place for the shortest time necessary and not be treated as a long-term solution.

Any pastoral support programme or other agreement should have a time limit by which point the pupil is expected to attend full-time, either at school or a registered alternative provision, under local authority direction where medical evidence recommends such education. There should also be formal arrangements in place for regularly reviewing it with the pupil and their parents.

In agreeing to a part-time timetable, a school has agreed to a pupil being absent from school for part of the week or day and therefore must treat absence as authorised. There will be an identified lead for a part-time table. Parents/carers will need to complete a risk assessment with the school and stipulate who is supervising the child when they are not in school attendance.

Part time timetables will be terminated if the agreed hours are not followed, or if a pupil is not adequately supervised.

Part time timetables for pupils with an EHC plan will not be issued until consultation with the local authority SEND team has taken place and part-time arrangements agreed.

On Roll

Oldbury Wells School keeps an admission register and attendance register. This includes the following information:

- All children on roll, including date of admission.
- All children's personal details.
- At least two contacts for trusted adults.
- Details of the school(s) last attended.

Pupils are entered on roll on the first day of their admission. All register codes used are in line with national codes. A child's name can only be deleted from the admission register for a reason set out in Regulation 8 of the *Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006* as amended.

Other Relevant Guidance and Advice

- Keeping Children Safe in Education Sept 2024 - statutory guidance for schools
- Working together to safeguard children – statutory guidance for safeguarding partners.
- The Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Code of Practice 0-25 years
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006
- Working together to improve school attendance May 2022
- Looked After Children
- Ensuring a good education for children who cannot attend school because of health needs
- Statutory guidance for local authorities January 2013
- Children Missing Education Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities Sept 2016
- Gypsy, Roma and Traveler Children: supporting access to education.
- General information and advice for academies can also be found in the Government's
- Publication Missing Children and Adults – A Cross Government Strategy.
- Statutory Guidance on Children who run away or go missing from home or care.

- Child sexual exploitation: Definition and a guide for practitioners, local leaders and decision
- Makers working to protect children from child sexual exploitation Department for Education
- NSPCC Protecting children from sexual exploitation
- Elective home education guidance for local authorities April 2019 Attendance Policy
- Elective home education – a guide for parents April 2019
- Alternative Provision Statutory guidance for local authorities Jan 2013.