



TRUST·ED
Schools' Partnership

Attendance Policy

FREQUENCY OF REVIEW:	Annually
RATIFICATION:	Summer Term 2021
RATIFIED BY:	OWS Local Governing Body
DATE OF NEXT REVIEW:	Summer 2022 unless there is a material change
AUTHOR:	Assistant Headteacher (Pastoral – JWT)

Rationale/statement of intent:

The Department for Education states:

“Parents and carers have a legal duty to ensure that their children of compulsory school age receive a suitable full-time education. It is also vital that they encourage their child’s regular and punctual attendance at school. If a child is registered at a school then it is vital that they attend on a regular basis.”

For a pupil to reach their full educational achievement, a high level of school attendance is essential. At Oldbury Wells School, we are committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all our pupils and endeavour to provide an environment where all pupils feel valued. Every pupil has a right to access the education to which he/she is entitled. Parents and teachers share the responsibility for supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and punctuality for all.

It is our duty to consistently strive to achieve a goal of 100% attendance for all children. Every opportunity will be used to convey to pupils and their parents/carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance. For our children to take full advantage of the educational opportunities offered, it is vital pupils arrive at school on time, every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

The routines pupils develop around attendance and punctuality at school are the same as the expectations of any future employer in the world of work. High attainment, confidence with peers and staff and future aspirations depend on good attendance.

Good attendance is important because:

- Statistics show a direct link between under-achievement and absence below 95%
- Regular attenders make better progress, both socially and academically
- Regular attenders find school routines, school work and friendships easier to cope with
- Regular attenders benefit from the whole range of curricular and extra-curricular opportunities on offer
- Regular attenders find learning more satisfying
- Regular attenders are more successful in transferring between primary school, secondary school and higher education, employment or training

Promoting good attendance

The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the school, parents/carers and the pupil. The Home School Agreement contains details of how we will work with parents and our expectations of what parents/carers will need to do to ensure their child achieves good attendance. To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Report on how pupils are performing in school, what their attendance rate is and how this relates to their attainments
- Celebrate good attendance

- Reward good or improving attendance
- Set targets for the school and sometimes for classes

Roles and responsibilities

Responsibilities of the Attendance Lead

The school's Attendance Lead is Mr Jamie White (Assistant Headteacher – Pastoral). The Attendance Lead will direct and co-ordinate the school's work in promoting regular and improved attendance and will ensure the Attendance Policy is consistently applied throughout the school. It is also the responsibility of the School Attendance Lead to ensure that attendance is both recorded accurately and analysed. The Attendance Lead will work closely with pastoral staff to ensure that attendance issues are identified at an early stage and that support is put in place to deal with any difficulties. If absence is frequent or continuous, except where a pupil is clearly unwell, pastoral staff will discuss with parents/carers the need and reasons for their child's absence and will encourage them to keep absences to a minimum.

An explanation from a pupil's home does not mean an absence becomes authorised.

The decision whether or not to authorise an absence will always rest with the school.

Responsibilities of teaching staff

Teaching staff will:

- Complete the register accurately within the first 5 minutes of the lesson by calling the names of all pupils
- Only enter /, N or L codes when completing registers
- Check the register has been saved
- Use the N code if a pupil is not physically present in the lesson, even if other pupils have seen them in school
- Change the N code to an L code if a pupil arrives late, then enter the minutes late and a comment
- Email Mrs Karen Sawyer (Attendance Officer) if a pupil marked present for a previous lesson does not arrive – this should be done immediately, as there could be a safeguarding issue
- Promote good attendance of pupils at all appropriate opportunities
- Liaise with the Attendance Lead or pastoral staff on matters of attendance and punctuality
- Communicate any concerns or underlying problems that may account for a pupil's absence
- Support pupils who have been absent to engage with their learning once they are back in school

Responsibilities of pupils

Pupils should:

- Attend every day unless they are ill or have an authorised absence
- Arrive in school on time
- Arrive at registration and lessons on time
- Take responsibility for signing in or out at reception if they are late or are leaving the school site during school hours

Responsibilities of parents/carers

Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is a parent/carer's legal responsibility (Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act) and permitting absence from school that is not authorised by the school creates an offence in law.

Parents/carers will:

- Inform the school on the first day of absence
- Discuss with the school any planned absences well in advance support the school with their child in aiming for 100% attendance each year
- Make sure that any absence is clearly accounted for by telephone or email on the first and subsequent days of absence
- Avoid, whenever possible, taking their child out of school for non-urgent medical or dental appointments

Recording attendance

It is a legal requirement for pupils to be registered twice a day. This is once at the start of the school day, between 8.45am and 09.05am, and at the start of period 4 at 12.25 pm. Arrival after the close of registration will be marked as unauthorised absence and coded in-line with Department for Education guidance, using a U code. This U code shows the pupil is on site, but is legally recorded as an absence. This information may be required by the courts, should a prosecution for non-attendance or lateness be necessary. If a pupil is late due to a medical appointment, they will receive an authorised absence, with the appropriate code. Where possible, doctors and dentists appointments should be made outside of school hours or during school holidays.

It is important for pupils to be on time for registration and lessons. Pupils who are consistently late will miss lesson time and vital information from their teachers. When a pupil arrives late, they disrupt not only their own education, but also that of the other pupils. Parents/carers of pupils who have patterns of lateness will be contacted to discuss the importance of good time keeping and how this might be achieved. If lateness persists parents/carers will be invited to attend the school and discuss the issue.

Education Welfare Officer

The Education Welfare Officer (EWO) enforces the law regarding school attendance. The EWO for Oldbury Wells School is Mrs Emma Chafer. Our EWO meets regularly with the Attendance Lead, Heads of Year and Pastoral Support Workers to monitor all pupils whose attendance is lower than expected. If a Form Tutor has any concerns regarding a pupils' attendance, they are required to inform the Head of Year, who will liaise with the Attendance Lead and EWO.

Pupil Absence

If a pupil is not attending school, this is considered a safeguarding issue, so information about the cause of any absence is always required.

If a child is absent, parents/carers must:

- Contact the school by 8.45am on the first day of absence
- Provide an explanation of the absence by telephone or email

If a child is absent, school will:

- Send a text message on the first day of absence, if we have not been contacted by parents/carers – this is because we have a duty to ensure all pupils' safety, as well as their regular school attendance
- Invite parents/carers into school to discuss the situation, if absences persist
- Refer the matter to the EWO, if absence is unauthorised or attendance falls below an acceptable level

The school Attendance Officer (Mrs Karen Sawyer) will oversee the daily attendance checks and report any concerns to the Attendance Lead.

If a child is not seen in school and contact has not been established with any of the named parents/carers after three days of absence, the school is required to start Child Missing Education procedures. We will make all reasonable enquiries to establish contact with parents/carers and the pupil, including contacting known friends, wider family. The EWO or school staff may visit the family home to try to establish contact.

Continued or ongoing absence

If a pupil's attendance falls below 90%, they are defined as being persistently absent. School monitor all absence thoroughly to identify any pupils who are persistently absent and may require support to attend school. If a child has had absence and their attendance level is falling towards 90%, school will contact parents/carers. The Attendance Lead meets with the EWO regularly to analyse relevant attendance data and to ensure pupils who are failing to attend school are identified. Planning meetings will be held to address persistent absence, if attendance fails to improve. The Attendance Lead, Heads of Year, Pastoral Support Workers and the EWO will work jointly to support poor or non-attendance. If a pupil's attendance falls below an acceptable level, parents/carers will receive an EWO1 letter from school. Should the pupil's attendance fail to improve, parents/carers will receive a warning letter (EWO2) from the EWO. If there is no improvement in attendance following the EWO2

letter, a 'Fast Track Meeting' may be arranged. This will involve parents/carers meeting with the EWO and Attendance Lead and/or Head of Year. Following a 'Fast Track Meeting', the pupil will be given six weeks to improve their attendance. A 'Final Warning' letter will be issued if attendance does not improve and further action will be taken if the pupil does not attend school on a regular basis (e.g. a fixed penalty notice or prosecution of parents/carers).

Request for leave of absence

Oldbury Wells School is proactive in discouraging parents/carers from taking pupils out of school for holidays during term time. We consider this action inappropriate and harmful to the education of the pupils.

With effect from April 2018, there has been a change in the School Attendance Regulations. Where there was previously the option for Headteachers to grant leave of absence, for the purpose of a family holiday during the term time in "special circumstances", this has been removed.

Headteachers are now only allowed to authorise any leave of absence when an application has been made in advance and it is felt to be for an exceptional circumstance. An annual family holiday is not deemed an exceptional circumstance, nor is the cost or convenience of a holiday.

Advice from Shropshire Council is that "exceptional circumstances" include where:

- It is unlikely that the event will occur again in a child's school life
- It is necessary for the child to be in attendance at the event
- The event cannot be organised outside of the school term
- The event is necessary to the health and wellbeing of the child
- Taking part in the event will be of greater educational value to the child than attending school

All applications for leave in term time are considered by the Headteacher, in consultation with the Attendance Lead. However, only in very exceptional circumstances will leave of absence be authorised. Requests for leave of absence which have not been authorised will be recorded as "unauthorised" on a pupil's registration certificate. This will then be followed up by the EWO, who could issue a warning notice or fine.

Requests for leave in term time must be submitted on the Leave of Absence Form (which is available on the school's website) well in advance of the requested date(s). Accommodation, flights or other arrangements should not be booked until authorisation has been confirmed.