



# Oldbury Wells School Attendance Policy September 2022

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| <b>RATIFIED BY:</b>         | OWS Local Governing Body                                       |
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| <b>AUTHOR:</b>              | Assistant Headteacher (Pastoral – JWT)                         |

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## 1. Aims

We are committed to meeting our obligation with regards to school attendance through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- › Promoting good attendance
- › Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- › Ensuring every student 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 ensure students have the support in place to attend school

We will also promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

## 2. Legislation and Guidance

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 Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006 \(and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments\)](#)
- › [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)

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

## 3. Roles and Responsibilities

### 3.1 The Governing Body

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

### 3.2 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 students
- › Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- › Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary

### 3.3 The Attendance Lead (designated senior leader responsible for attendance)

The Attendance Lead 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 students and families.

The Attendance Lead is Mr Jamie White and he can be contacted via telephone or email: 01746 765454 or [jamie.white@oldburywells.com](mailto:jamie.white@oldburywells.com)

### 3.4 The Attendance Officer

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 the Education Welfare Officer to tackle persistent absence
- › Advising the Attendance Lead (authorised by the Headteacher) when to issue fixed-penalty notices.

The Attendance Officer is Mrs Karen Sawyer and she can be contacted via telephone or email: 01746 765454 or [karen.sawyer@oldburywells.com](mailto:karen.sawyer@oldburywells.com)

### 3.5 Class Teachers and Form Tutors

Class Teachers and Form Tutors are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information by completing registers using GO 4 Schools.

### **3.6 School Office Staff**

School office staff 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 Attendance Officer or pastoral staff in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance.

### **3.7 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 8.40am 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 1 emergency contact number for their child
- › Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day

### **3.8 Students**

Students are expected to:

- › Attend school every day on time
- › Attend every timetabled session on time

## **4. Recording attendance**

### **4.1 Attendance register**

We will keep an attendance register and place all students onto this register.

We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark whether every student is:

- › Present
- › Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- › Absent
- › Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- › The original entry
- › The amended entry
- › The reason for the amendment
- › The date on which the amendment was made
- › The name and position of the person who made the amendment.

See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

We will also record:

- › Whether the absence is authorised or not
- › The nature of the activity if a student is attending an approved educational activity
- › The nature of circumstances where a student is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made. Students must arrive in school by 8.40am on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at 8.45am and will be kept open until 9.05am. The register for the second session will be taken at 12.25pm and will be kept open until 12.45pm.

## 4.2 Unplanned absence

The student's parent/carer must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 8.40am or as soon as practically possible by contacting the Attendance Officer (see also section 7).

The Attendance Officer can be contacted by via telephone or email: 01746 765454 (select option 1 for the absence line) or [karen.sawyer@oldburywells.com](mailto:karen.sawyer@oldburywells.com)

We will mark absence due to illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask the student's parent/carer to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

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

## 4.3 Planned Absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the student's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment.

However, we encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the student should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

The student's parent/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Go to section 5 to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

Any requests for leave of absence should be made by contacting the Attendance Officer.

## 4.4 Lateness and punctuality

A student who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code
- After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code

If a student is late for school/lessons without good reason, this will be addressed using the school sanctions system.

## 4.5 Following up Unexplained Absence

Where any student we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the school will:

- Contact the student's parent/carer on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the school cannot reach any of the student's emergency contacts, the school may arrange a home visit or contact the police
- 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 – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session
- Call the parent/carer on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the school will consider involving the Education Welfare Officer

## 4.6 Reporting to Parents/Carers

The school will regularly inform parents about their child's attendance/absence levels through GO 4 Schools and academic progress reports.

## 5. Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

### 5.1 Approval for Term-time Absence

The Headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to a student during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the Headteacher's discretion, including the length of time the student is authorised to be absent for.

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
- › The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least six weeks before the absence, and in accordance with the leave of absence request form, accessible via <http://oldburywells.com/media/20008/leave-of-absence-form-2020.pdf>. The Headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- › Illness and medical/dental appointments (see sections 4.2 and 4.3 for more detail)
- › Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the student's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- › Traveller students travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travellers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and new travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether the student is attending educational provision.

### 5.2 Legal Sanctions

The school or local authority can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

Penalty notices can be issued by a Headteacher, Local Authority or the police.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice may take into account:

- › The number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- › One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- › Where an excluded student is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

## 6. Strategies for Promoting Attendance

Good attendance is a learned behaviour and we understand the importance of developing good patterns of attendance from the outset. We recognise that achieving good attendance is not a discrete piece of work but rather it is an integral part of the school's ethos and culture. In building a culture of good school 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.

## **7. Attendance monitoring**

### **7.1 Monitoring Attendance**

The school will:

- Monitor and analyse weekly attendance patterns and trends and deliver intervention and support in a targeted way to students and families
- Monitor attendance and absence data half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual student level
- Identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern

Student-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 Body.

### **7.2 Analysing Attendance**

The school will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify students or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these students and their families

- › Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns

### **7.3 Using Data to Improve Attendance**

The school will:

- › Provide regular attendance reports to Heads of Year and Form Tutors to facilitate discussions with students 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

### **7.4 Reducing Persistent and Severe Absence**

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

## **8. Monitoring arrangements**

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum annually by the Attendance Lead. At every review, the policy will be approved by the Governing Body.

## **9. 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)                  | Student is present at morning registration  |
| \    | Present (pm)                  | Student is present at afternoon registration                                      |
| L    | Late arrival                  | Student arrives late before register has closed                                   |
| B    | Off-site educational activity | Student is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school   |
| D    | Dual registered               | Student is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered  |
| J    | Interview                     | Student has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment    |
| P    | Sporting activity             | Student is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school |
| V    | Educational trip or visit     | Student is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school     |
| W    | Work experience               | Student is on a work experience placement   |

| Code                      | Definition                  | Scenario   |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------|--|
| <b>Authorised absence</b> |                             |  |
| C                         | Authorised leave of absence | Student has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances |
| E                         | Excluded                    | Student has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made         |
| H                         | Authorised holiday          | Student has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances   |

|                             |                                   |   |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|
| <b>I</b>                    | Illness                           | School has been notified that a student will be absent due to illness   |
| <b>M</b>                    | Medical/dental appointment        | Student is at a medical or dental appointment   |
| <b>R</b>                    | Religious observance              | Student is taking part in a day of religious observance   |
| <b>S</b>                    | Study leave                       | Year 11 student is on study leave during their public examinations  |
| <b>T</b>                    | Gypsy, Roma and traveller absence | Student from a traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school   |
| <b>Unauthorised absence</b> |                                   |   |
| <b>G</b>                    | Unauthorised holiday              | Student is on a holiday that was not approved by the school   |
| <b>N</b>                    | Reason not provided               | Student is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time) |
| <b>O</b>                    | Unauthorised absence              | School is not satisfied with reason for student's absence   |
| <b>U</b>                    | Arrival after registration        | Student arrived at school after the register closed   |

| <b>Code</b> | <b>Definition</b>                                 | <b>Scenario</b>  |
|-------------|---|--|
| <b>X</b>    | Not required to be in school                      | Student of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend   |
| <b>Y</b>    | Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances | School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or student is in custody |
| <b>Z</b>    | Student not on admission register                 | Register set up but student has not yet joined the school  |
| <b>#</b>    | Planned school closure                            | Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day  |