

# **SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY**

A model policy for schools to adapt

September 2022

To be reviewed annually: September 2023

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## **1. Introduction**

1.1 Regular school attendance is essential if children are to achieve their full potential.

1.2 Oswald Road believe that regular school attendance is the key to enabling children to maximise the educational opportunities available to them and become emotionally resilient, confident and competent adults who are able to realise their full potential and make a positive contribution to their community.

1.3 Oswald Road values all pupils. As set out in this policy, we will work with families to identify the reasons for poor attendance and try to resolve any difficulties in a trauma-informed, inclusive manner.

1.4 Oswald Road recognise that attendance is a matter for the whole school community. Our Attendance Policy should not be viewed in isolation; it is a strand that runs through all aspects of school improvement, supported by our policies on admissions, safeguarding, anti-bullying, safeguarding and behaviour and inclusive learning. This policy also takes into account the Human Rights Act 1998, the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and the Race Relations Act 2000.

## **2. Legal Framework**

2.1 Legal proceedings are a statutory intervention used by the local authority against the parents of registered pupils who fail to attend regularly at school. Parents whose children are on a school register and fail to ensure the regular and punctual attendance of their child(ren), may be guilty of an offence under Section 444(1) or 444(1A) of the Education Act 1996 and the authority may take enforcement action through the courts to secure regular attendance.

2.2 Legal proceedings are not used as a punishment to parents for their pupil's absence from school; they are a supportive measure intended to make parents realise the importance of attendance and to avoid further absence from school.

2.3 Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act states that parents must ensure that children of compulsory school age receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude to any special educational needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. A prosecution can take place against any person who has parental responsibility for the child's education or who has care of the child. Parents have a legal duty to make sure that their children are properly educated. It is the parent's responsibility to ensure that their children attend school regularly and arrive on time. If you allow your child to be absent from school without good reason, the school will not authorise the absence, you may be committing an offence, and you could be issued with a penalty notice or prosecuted.

2.4 A child is of Compulsory School Age at the beginning of the term following their 5<sup>th</sup> birthday. A child ceases to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday in June of the school year in which they reach the age of 16.

2.5 Under the Education Act 1996, the Local Authority has a statutory responsibility to ensure that parents secure education for children of compulsory school age and where necessary, use legal enforcement.

2.6 The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2013, require schools to take an attendance register twice a day, once at the start of the morning session and then again during the afternoon session.

2.7 The register must record whether the pupil was:

- present;
- absent;
- present at approved educational activity; or
- unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

### **3. Safeguarding**

3.1 Every pupil should be able learn in an enjoyable and safe environment and be protected from harm. We respect and value all children and are committed to providing a caring, friendly and safe environment for all our pupils so they can learn and participate in all school activities in a relaxed and secure atmosphere.

3.2 Attending school regularly promotes the welfare and safety of children whilst they are not in the care of their parents/carers. Safeguarding is about offering early help and support to children and families and difficulties with attendance and lateness may be signs that something is worrying the child or that there are difficulties within the family. Poor or irregular attendance, persistent lateness, or children missing from education may be considered a safeguarding matter if this places a child at risk of harm.

3.3 Safeguarding the interests of each child is everyone's responsibility and within the context of this school; safeguarding and promoting the welfare and life opportunities for children encompasses: Attendance, Behaviour Management, Health and Safety, Access to the Curriculum and Anti- bullying, protecting children from abuse and neglect, online safety, radicalisation and extremism, FGM and CSE.

3.4 More information on safeguarding and the protection of children can be found in the schools Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

3.5 In order to allow us to safeguard the children in our care it is important that parents and carers provide the school with their current contact details and provide at least three other contact numbers in case of emergency.

3.6 It is also important for parents inform the school of any specific vulnerability in relation to their child or home circumstances.

#### **4. Categorising absence**

4.1 Where pupils of compulsory school age are recorded as absent, the register must show whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.

4.2 Absence can only be authorised by the headteacher and cannot be authorised by parents. All absences will be treated as unauthorised unless a satisfactory explanation for the pupil's absence has been received.

4.3 Parents must advise the school by telephone on the first day of absence and provide the school with an expected date of return. This may be followed up in the form of a written note from the parent/carer, though verbal explanations may be acceptable where this is considered appropriate.

4.4 Absence will be categorised as follows:

4.5 Illness Parents may be asked to provide medical evidence to allow the head teacher to authorise absence where appropriate. This will usually be in the form of an appointment card, prescription etc.

4.6 Medical/Dental Appointments Parents are advised where possible to make medical and dental appointments outside of the school day. Where this is not possible, pupils must attend school for part of the day. Parents must show the appointment card to school.

4.7 Other Authorised Circumstances This relates to where there is cause for absence due to exceptional circumstances.

4.8 Excluded (No alternative provision made) Exclusion from attending school is counted as an authorised absence. The child's class teacher/form tutor/Phase Lead will make arrangements for work to be sent home.

4.9 Parents who need to take their child out of school during term time due to exceptional circumstances must send a written request to the head teacher. Retrospective requests will not be considered and therefore will result in the absence being categorised as **unauthorised**.

4.9.1 All requests for leave of absence will be responded to in writing outlining the conditions of leave granted.

4.9.2 If a pupil fails to return and contact with the parents has not been made or received, school may take the pupil off the school's roll in compliance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2013. This means that the child will lose their school place.

4.9.3 If the permission to take leave is not granted and the parent takes their child out of school the absence will be **unauthorised**. In such cases the school may request the local authority issue a Penalty Notice or consider other legal sanctions including prosecution in the magistrates court.

4.10 Religious Observance Oswald Road acknowledges the multi-faith nature of British society and recognises that on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside school holiday periods or weekends and this necessitates a consideration by written request by the parent of authorised absence.

4.11 Study Leave Study leave may be granted for Year 11 pupils approaching GCSE examinations. School will offer in school study programmes during this period to reduce absence levels.

4.12 Traveller Absence It is expected that Traveller children, in common with all other children, are to attend school as regularly and as frequently as possible.

4.12.1 To protect Traveller parents from unreasonable prosecution for non-attendance, the Education Act 1996, section 444(6), states that a Traveller parent is safe from prosecution if their child accrues 200 attendances (i.e. 200 half days) in the year preceding the absence. This applies only when the family proves it is engaged in a trade or business that requires it to travel and when the child is attending school as regularly as that trade permits.

4.12.2 When in or around Manchester, if a family can reasonably travel back to their Base School (see below) then the expectation is that their child will attend full-time.

4.12.3 Oswald Road will be regarded as the base school if it is the school where the child normally attends when they are not travelling. However, the pupil must have attended in the last 18 months. Traveller children can register at other schools temporarily while away from their base school, in such cases, the pupil's school place at xxx will be kept open for them whilst travelling. This is to protect them from unfairly losing their place at their school of usual attendance.

4.12.4 Oswald Road can only effectively operate as the child's base school if it is engaged in on-going dialogue with Traveller families. This means that parents must:

- advise of their forthcoming travelling patterns before they happen; and
- inform the school regarding proposed return dates

4.12.5 Oswald Road will authorise absence of Traveller children if we are satisfied that a family is travelling for work or trade purposes and has given indication that they intend to return.

4.12.6 Traveller children will be recorded as attending an approved educational activity when:

- The child is on roll and attending another visited school
- Undertaking supervised educational activity under the jurisdiction of another Local Authority's Traveller Education Service
- The child is undertaking computer based distance learning that is time evidenced

4.12.7 Where Traveller children are registered pupils at a school and are known to be present either at a site (official or otherwise) or in a house and are not attending school, the absence will be investigated in the same way as that for any pupil and appropriate statutory action may be undertaken.

4.13 Registration is at staggered times at present due to Covid measures, registration opens at 8.30. Registration will close at 9.05 and between this time and 9.25 children will get a late mark. (Pupils arriving after 9.25 will be recorded as late, (code U) this is not authorised and will count as an absence for that school session and statutory action may be taken where appropriate.

4.13.1 On arrival after the close of register, pupils must immediately report to the school office to ensure that we can be responsible for their health and safety whilst they are in school.

4.13.2 The absence will only be authorised if a satisfactory explanation for the late arrival can be provided, for example, attendance at a medical appointment.

4.13.3 The absence will be recorded as **unauthorised** if the pupil has arrived late without justifiable cause.

4.14 Unauthorised absence - Absence will not be authorised unless parents have provided a satisfactory explanation and that it has been accepted as such by the head teacher/principal.

4.14.1 Examples of unsatisfactory explanations include:

- A pupil's/family member's birthday
- Shopping for uniforms
- Having their hair cut
- Closure of a sibling's school for INSET (or other) purposes
- "Couldn't get up"
- Illness where the child is considered well enough to attend school
- Family holidays

## **5. Deletions from the Register**

5.1 In accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2013, pupils will only be deleted from the register when one of the following circumstances applies:

- The school is replaced by another school on a School Attendance Order
- The School Attendance Order is revoked by the local authority
- The pupil has ceased to be of compulsory school age
- Permanent exclusion has occurred and procedures have been completed
- Death of a pupil
- Transfer between schools
- Pupil withdrawn to be educated outside the school system
- Failure to return from an extended holiday after both the school and the local authority have tried to locate the pupil
- A medical condition prevents their attendance and return to the school before ending compulsory school-age
- In custody for more than four months (in discussion with The Youth Offending Team)
- 20 days continuous unauthorised absence and both the local authority and school have tried to locate the pupil
- Left the school but not known where he/she has gone after both the school and the local authority have tried to locate the pupil

5.2.1 Oswald Road will follow Manchester City Council's Children Missing Education Protocol when a pupil's whereabouts is unknown.

## **6. Roles and Responsibilities**

6.1 Oswald Road believe that improved school attendance can only be achieved if it is viewed as a shared responsibility of the school staff, governors, parents, pupils and the wider school community.

As such, the Governing Body will:

- Ensure that the importance and value of good attendance is promoted to pupils and their parents
- Annually review the school's Attendance Policy and ensure the required resources are available to fully implement the policy
- All members of the governing body may ask questions on attendance matters



- Ensure that the Registration Regulations, England, 2013 and other attendance related legislation is complied with
- Agree school attendance targets and submit these to the Local Authority within the agreed timescale each year and where appropriate link these to the Performance Management of Senior Leadership within the school
- Monitor the school's attendance and related issues through termly reporting at Governing Body Meetings
- Ensure that attendance data is reported to the Local Authority or Department for Education as required and on time
- Ensure that there is a named senior manager to lead on attendance
- Ensure that the school has clear systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site
- Ensure that there are procedures for collecting and analysing attendance data frequently to identify causes and patterns of absence
- Ensure that data is understood and used to devise solutions and to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions

6.2 The Leadership Team will:

- Actively promote the importance and value of good attendance to pupils and their parents
- Form positive relationships with pupils and parents
- Ensure that there is a whole school approach which reinforces good school attendance; with good teaching and learning experiences that encourage all pupils to attend and to achieve
- Monitor the implementation of the Attendance Policy and ensure that the policy is reviewed annually
- Ensure that all staff are aware of the Attendance Policy and adequately trained to address attendance issues
- Ensure that the Registration Regulations, England, 2013 and other attendance related legislation is complied with
- Ensure that there is a named senior manager to lead on attendance and allocate sufficient time and resource
- Return school attendance data to the Local Authority and the Department for Education as required and on time
- Report the school's attendance and related issues through termly reporting to the Governing Body and on a half termly basis to the lead governor for attendance

- Ensure that systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site are implemented
- Ensure that attendance data is collected and analysed frequently to identify causes and patterns of absence
- Interpret the data to devise solutions and to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions
- Develop a multi-agency response to improve attendance and support pupils and their families
- Document interventions used to a standard required by the local authority should legal proceedings be instigated

6.3 Attendance Lead will (with the support of relevant staff):

- Actively promote the importance and value of good attendance to pupils and their parents
- Form positive relationships with pupils and parents
- Contribute to a whole school approach which reinforces good school attendance; with good teaching and learning experiences that encourage all pupils to attend and to achieve
- Comply with the Registration Regulations, England, 2013 and other attendance related legislation
- Implement systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site
- Analyse attendance data to identify causes and patterns of absence
- Contribute to the evaluation of school strategies and interventions
- Work with other agencies to improve attendance and support pupils and their families
- Document interventions used to a standard required by the local authority should legal proceedings be instigated

6.4 Request that Parents will:

- Talk to their child about school and what goes on there. Take a positive interest in their child's work and educational progress
- Instil the value of education and regular school attendance within the home environment
- Encourage their child to look to the future and have aspirations
- Contact the school if their child is absent to let them know the reason why and the expected date of return. Often parents will be asked for daily updates.

- Try to avoid unnecessary absences. Wherever possible make appointments for the Doctors, Dentists etc. outside of school hours
- Ask the school for help if their child is experiencing difficulties
- Inform the school of any change in circumstances that may impact on their child's attendance
- Support the school; take every opportunity to get involved in their child's education, form a positive relationship with school and acknowledge the importance of children receiving the same messages from both school and home
- Encourage routine at home, for example, bed times, home work, preparing school bag and uniform the evening before
- Not keep their child off school to go shopping, to help at home or to look after other members of the family
- Avoid taking their child out of school during term-time, where this is unavoidable, and only in exceptional circumstances send a written leave request to the Head Teacher.

## **7. Using Attendance Data**

7.1 Pupil's attendance will be monitored and may be shared with the Local Authority and other agencies if a pupil's attendance is a cause for concern.

7.2 Every term The Attendance Administrator/Manager will provide all class teachers with attendance data for the pupils within their class. The list will be presented in numerical descending order with the highest attenders at the top.

7.3 The Senior Leadership Team will receive a complete set of data.

7.4 Phase Leads will receive a complete set of data for their year groups.

7.5 This pupil level data will be used to trigger school action as set out in the escalation of intervention (Appendix 1).

7.6 Attendance data will also be used to identify emerging patterns and trends to inform whole school strategies to improve attendance and attainment.

7.7 Oswald Road will share attendance data with the Department for Education and the local authority as required.

7.8 All information shared will be done so in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

## **8. Support Systems**

8.1 School recognise that poor attendance is often an indication of difficulties and trauma in a child's life. This may be related to problems at home and/or in school. Parents should make school aware of any difficulties or changes in circumstances that may affect their child's attendance and or behaviour in school, for example, bereavement, divorce/separation, incidents of domestic abuse. This will help the school identify any additional support that may be required. It is expected that the child and their family work collaboratively with school to identify the anxiety based school avoidance resources most appropriate for support and to accept the support that is offered or advised.

8.2 Oswald Road also recognise that some pupils are more likely to require additional support to attain good attendance, for example, those pupils with special educational needs, those with physical or mental health needs, migrant and refugee pupils and looked after children.

8.3 The school will implement a range of strategies to support improved attendance. Strategies used will include:

- Discussion with parents and pupils
- Referrals to support agencies
- Pastoral support
- Pupil Voice Activities
- Friendship groups
- PSHE
- Anxiety-based attendance avoidance materials
- Trauma-informed approaches
- Early help referral options
- Family learning
- Reward systems
- Time limited part time time-tables
- Additional learning support (where possible)
- Behaviour support
- Inclusion resources
- Reintegration support packages

8.4 Support offered to families will be child centred, trauma-informed and inclusive; planned in discussion and agreement with both parents and pupils.

8.5 Where parents fail or refuse to engage with the support offered and further unauthorised absence occurs, Oswald Road will consider the use of legal sanctions.

## **9. Legal Interventions**

9.1 Prosecution Where intervention fails to bring about an improvement in attendance, the Local Authority will be notified and legal action in the Magistrates' Court may be taken. The school will provide the Local Authority with evidence required for a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 and will appear as a prosecution witness if required by the court. This is to ensure that parents realise their own responsibilities in ensuring attendance at school and most importantly about returning children to education.

9.1.1 Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 states that if a parent fails to ensure the regular school attendance of their child if he/she is a registered pupil at a school and is of compulsory school age, then they are guilty of an offence.

9.1.2 A parent found guilty of this offence can be fined up to £2500 and or be imprisoned for a period of up to three months.

9.1.3 Alternatives to Section 444 prosecution are Parenting Contracts, Penalty Notices or an Education Supervision Order.

9.2 Parenting Contracts (Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003) A Parenting contract is a voluntary agreement between school and the parent, it can also be extended to include the child and any other agencies offering support to resolve any difficulties leading to improved attendance.

9.2.1 The contract will outline attendance targets and will detail agreed actions that will help to achieve the target. The contract will be reviewed regularly.

9.2.2 The contract can be used as evidence in a prosecution should parents fail to carry out agreed actions.

9.2.3 Parenting Contracts will be used in accordance with Manchester City Council's Parenting Contract Protocol.

9.3 Penalty Notices (Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003) Penalty Notices will be considered when:

- A pupil is absent from school and the absence has not been authorised by the school
- A pupil has accrued unauthorised absence without reasons provided and/or accepted as exceptional by the headteacher/principal.

9.3.1 A Penalty Notice gives the parent the opportunity to discharge themselves of their legal responsibility if a £120 fine is paid within 28 days, reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days of the date the Notice was issued.

9.3.2 Failure to pay the Penalty Notice may result in a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

9.3.3 Penalty Notices will be used in accordance with Manchester City Council's Penalty Notice Protocol.

## Appendix 1

### Escalation of Attendance Interventions

#### **Good Attendance: pupils with attendance between 100% to 97%**

Pupils with this level of termly attendance will receive a certificate of achievement.

Names of children will be recorded on attendance stars which will be displayed on the classroom door half-termly and the Class Teacher will draw attention to this as appropriate.

*Note: Due to the current pandemic, the school will not celebrate good attendance until further notice. This is so children do not feel excluded if they have been absent for Covid-related reasons.*

#### **Families Causing Concern (FCC)**

A letter will be sent to parents/guardians informing them of the pupil's attendance figure for the term and reinforcing expectations and responsibilities with regards to child's attendance.

We do recognise that there may be specific circumstances regarding an absence and these will always be taken into consideration when reviewing a child's attendance.

*Note: Due to the pandemic, letters/emails will only be sent out to parents where a concern has been identified.*

Class Teachers will speak to the pupil to:

- Welcome the pupil back to school after any period of absence
- Update the pupil on other work they have missed and support any catch up required

Additionally, where absences are sporadic/of greater concern, Attendance Lead will speak to the parent/guardian via a routine phone call to:

- Confirm with the parent the reason for absence and outline the parent's responsibilities where absences have been unauthorised, as well as offer support/intervention to improve child's attendance
- Review at half term

Where improvement has not occurred following this intervention, attendance will continue to be monitored by Attendance Lead and any further concerns will be logged and followed up.

Attendance Lead will keep records of meetings/phone calls with parents/carers and any attendance targets set.

Records will be copied to a member of the Senior Leadership Team every term.

A member of the Senior Leadership Team will monitor the effectiveness of interventions. This will be used to review and inform whole school strategies and will also have links to performance management.

### **Families Causing Concern – where school has further concerns**

All of the above, plus the following (below).

A decision will be made half termly whether or not to invite parents/carers to a meeting, either in person or via Zoom.

In the meeting, the Attendance Lead with a member of pastoral staff or Phase Lead will speak to the parent to:

- Identify underlying home/school issues that may be causing the pupil's absence
- Review the pupil's academic progress and make links to the pupil's attendance e.g. If you attended all your classes you could achieve...
- Implement a Pastoral Support Plan if appropriate or review other existing pupil plan to include support to improve attendance
- Set an individual attendance target for the pupil using sessions rather than percentages that will see the pupil move to the band above
- Agree a review date

If improvement has not occurred following this intervention, parents will be invited to a meeting where the possible outcomes will be:

- All parties confident that issues have been resolved and the attendance will improve.
- Penalty Notice 15 school day monitoring period commences
- Agree a review date

Where parents fail to attend the meeting without a satisfactory reason and unauthorised absence has occurred, the penalty notice monitoring period will automatically commence.

Where these interventions have already been implemented and have had unsatisfactory impact, the parent will be invited to an Attendance Panel where the possible outcomes will be:

- Complete an EHA leading to multi agency support
- Refer to the Local Authority to initiate legal proceedings



Where a parent fails to attend the meeting without providing a satisfactory reason, a minimum of two home visits with the purpose to engage with the parent will be carried out prior to referral to the Local Authority.

Attendance Lead to keep records of any standard actions/interventions that have occurred as a result of the pupil dropping into this category.

A member of the Senior Leadership Team with the Phase Leaders will monitor the effectiveness of interventions. This will be used to review and inform whole school strategies and will also have links to performance management.

### **Persistent Absence (PA): pupils with attendance below 90%**

Pupils who have attendance below 90% are considered to be persistently absent from school. To ensure that intervention is focused and meets the needs of individuals, as always, the child's needs will be considered holistically and the most appropriate staff member will support the Attendance Lead. For example, if the child has SEND, the school SENDCo or Inclusion Lead will support the Attendance Lead as appropriate.

The following will be put into place:

- Ensure that the pupil has already spoken to a member of staff at the stages proceeding PA intervention (FCC intervention will occur in cases where the pupil has immediately fallen from Good into PA)
- Obtain records of previous contact and interventions as set out in FCC and escalate accordingly
- Contact parents to discuss any arising issues and to provide feedback on their child's attendance, behaviour and academic progress
- Set an individual attendance target for the pupil that will see the pupil move to the band above
- Review existing plans and co-ordinate school resources to support the pupil's attendance and any additional needs
- Be the key contact person for any external agency working with the pupil
- Input into whole school strategies to address the needs of pupils within their group
- Half termly meetings with Attendance Lead until an improvement is seen.

Each identified member of staff will be responsible for all action at this level and will record all intervention and outcomes. Records will be copied to a member of the Senior Leadership Team/Headteacher.

A member of the Senior Leadership Team/Phase Leader will monitor the effectiveness of interventions. This will be used to review and inform whole school strategies and will also have links to performance management.

Attendance will be formally discussed during a half termly meeting with the Attendance Lead and Headteacher where the progress of these groups will be reported and the effectiveness

of interventions measured. This will be used to review and inform whole school strategies and will also have links to performance management.

The Headteacher will report termly to the Governing Body.