

The Oval School



Attendance Procedures

Date Reviewed: Sept 2021
Signed by:
Headteacher

Next Review Date: Sept 2022

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY

This policy relates only to children of compulsory school age unless otherwise indicated

Principles

Education is important. Missing school means missing out. Children should be at school, on time and ready to learn, every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. Permitting absence from school without a good reason is an offence by the parent that can result in legal action by the Local Authority.

Children are sometimes ill, or unhappy about attending school. Families can be going through unsettled times that can make regular school attendance difficult. Any problems with regular attendance, especially any concerns about possible bullying or learning difficulties, are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child at an early stage. It is never better to cover up children's absences or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that school attendance does not matter and may make things worse.

Every half-day absence from school has to be recorded by staff at the school as either **AUTHORISED** or **UNAUTHORISED**. This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness or other unavoidable causes.

Unauthorised absences are those which the staff at school do not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. These are an offence by the parent and include:

- keeping children off school without a good reason
- truancy before the register has been marked
- absences which have never been properly explained
- children who arrive at school too late to get a present mark
- taking holidays that have not been approved by the school in advance

It is not possible for the school to authorise absences for shopping, looking after other children, minding the house, birthdays, day trips etc. Leave may however, be granted on compassionate grounds in an emergency (e.g. after the death of close relative).

Parents are expected to contact school staff and to work with them in resolving any problems together. The Oval School will also try to resolve the situation by agreement wherever possible but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed, these Officers can use legal proceedings if required, including Penalty Notices (fines) or prosecution in the Magistrates Court.

Procedures

The school has a special responsibility to reduce the number of children whose attendance is below 90% over the school year. This adds up to missing almost half a term. These are called “persistent absentees” by the Government, whatever the reason for their absence. Special procedures may be applied to children at risk of falling into this category.

The Oval School applies the local authority Fast Track procedures in deciding how to deal with individual absences. Please see link for further information:

https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/info/20014/schools_and_learning/1502/school_attendance_advice_for_parents

Registration Times

At The Oval School we believe that punctuality is a key life skill to learn and maintain - to increase future life chances. Arriving on time at school gets the day off to a good start and puts pupils in a positive frame of mind, so that they can make the most of learning opportunities. To be punctual also helps to increase the fundamental view that education is of value to the pupil, family and whole school community.

Ultimately poor punctuality and attendance can cause children to fall behind with their studies, it can contribute to creating a bad habit that can be hard to break in the future and can lead to poor attendance. Furthermore, late marks after the register closes are counted as an unauthorised session and can lead to Fast Track proceedings and possible legal sanctions.

8.45am	Children arrive at school, school staff will be in the playground from this time
8.55am	Start of the Registration Period, all children should be in class. The registration period last for 5 minutes.
9.00am	All pupils arriving after this time will receive a Late Mark (L) in the registers. These are closely monitored.
9.15am	Pupils are now more than 20 minutes late and will receive an Unauthorised Late Mark (U). Unauthorised late marks reduce attendance percentage and can lead to legal proceedings for attendance.

Please note; If pupils arrive justifiably late due to medical appointments, when evidence is provided – the absence may not affect attendance percentage.

What to do if your child is absent from school

The school applies the following procedures in deciding how to deal with individual absences;

- Parents are expected to contact the school either by telephone (0121 464 3248 option 1) on the first day of absence to provide a suitable reason for not attending.
- Please provide a specific reason for your child's absence, e.g. vomiting, tonsillitis etc., feeling unwell is not specific enough.
- If your child's illness continues parents are asked to call school daily and leave a message on the absence line or speak to the Attendance Officer.
- If the school has not been contacted, parents will be notified either by text, telephone or home visit every day the pupil is absent, until a suitable reason has been provided. If no reason is provided the absence is recorded as unauthorised.

At The Oval School we have adopted an automated calling system called Truancy Call; if parents have not provided the school with a reason for their child's absence they may receive an automated call. Parents can leave reasons for absence on the Truancy Call system by following the prompts.

- Medical appointments, if possible, should be made outside of school time, if this is not possible parents should bring in the appointment letter to the school before the day of the appointment. At the latest, appointment cards should be provided to the school on return from the appointment.
- The school day starts at 8.55am to be punctual it is advised that pupils are in the playground between 8.45am and 8.50am where school staff are on duty. Pupils arriving after 8.55am must enter through the main office and be signed-in by an adult to receive a late mark; this ensures that the pupil is accounted for in case of an emergency

Please be aware that children arriving after 9.15am will be coded in the registers as an unauthorised absence (U code), this will be detrimental to the pupils attendance percentage.

Leave in Term Time

The Oval School strongly discourage families removing pupils from school for the purposes of a holiday, visits abroad or any other extended period of leave being taken during term time, The Oval School have adopted the Birmingham City Council guidelines on 'leave in term time' and this is available following this link - https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/info/20014/schools_and_learning/1502/school_attendance_advice_for_parents

If parents intend to remove their child or children from school for the purpose of a holiday, visits abroad or any other extended period of leave they must complete a 'Leave in Term Time Request Form' prior to the intended leave date (available from the school office or on the school website).

The Oval School and Birmingham Local Authority will consider legal proceedings and issuing penalty notices for families removing pupils from school during term time, when a pupil has been absent either;

- For a minimum of 5 school days of unauthorised leave (G Code) and has had 5 school days of other unauthorised absence in the previous calendar month;

Or;

- For at least 10 school days of unauthorised leave (G Code), where there has been no other unauthorised absence in the previous 12 calendar months

Penalty Notices are issued to each parent for each child.

Penalty Notice Issued	£60 per parent per child
If not paid by 22nd day of receipt	£120 per parent per child
If not paid by 28th day of receipt	Parents generally prosecuted in court.

Please note that a request for a term-time holiday is NOT a parental right. Leave *may* be granted in exceptional circumstances but arrangements should not be made without the school's agreement in advance. Taking leave without permission is "unauthorised" absence and may be subject to a Penalty Notice fine or other legal proceedings by the Local Authority.

Medical appointments

Parents are asked to make routine medical and dental appointments outside school time wherever possible. Where such appointments in school time are unavoidable, staff should be informed in advance if at all possible. A “present” mark may still be awarded if the child attends for as much of the session as they can. It is always better to attend for some of the time, rather than missing the whole day.

- If medical appointments are at the start of the school day (i.e. 9 – 9.30am) it is appropriate for parents to bring their child in to school at the earliest opportunity following the appointment.

Please provide the Administrative Office with evidence of the appointment – usually, an appointment card or letter will suffice. If this is not done beforehand please ensure it is presented when the pupil arrives at school.

- If a pupil needs to be removed for medical appointments during the school day, the time spent outside of school must be kept to a minimum.

Please provide the Administrative Office with evidence of the appointment – usually, an appointment card or letter will suffice. This should happen before the child is removed from school.

- Often parents ask to remove brothers and sisters from school due to their sibling’s medical appointment. This is not appropriate and will only be permitted in exceptional circumstance. If a sibling is removed due to a medical appointment that is not their own, this is considered an unauthorised absence.

Attendance and Safeguarding

Safeguarding is defined as;

- Protecting children from maltreatment
- Preventing impairment of children's health and/or development
- Ensuring that children are growing up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care, and
- Taking action to enable all children to have the best life chances.

With this in mind, school attendance, and particularly school absence, plays a large role in identifying and supporting the safeguarding of all children. Monitoring absence and reasons for absence is carried out on a continual basis and is therefore an excellent mechanism to identify children who may benefit from early help.

Furthermore, failing to attend school regularly or failing to arrive at school punctually can be considered as a safeguarding matter.

- When attendance falls below 90% or there is a pattern of continual absence on certain days, the case will be discussed with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL). This is to ascertain whether there are any concerns regarding the individual in terms of safeguarding or special educational need and disability (SEND).
- The attendance of all children considered as vulnerable or potentially vulnerable will be checked on a daily basis by a nominated member of staff, normally the Attendance Officer, to safeguard the children and to maintain an up to date analysis. If no contact is made by the school the DSL will assess if further action is required; this may include carrying out a visit to the pupil's home or contacting external agencies.
- All applications for Leave in Term-Time (holidays in the school year) will be assessed on an individual basis in terms of safeguarding risks. This particularly includes the risks of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) or being exposed to Radicalisation or Extremism (see The Prevent Duty, 2015). Any applications considered to be a risk will be discussed with the DSL and you may be invited to a meeting to discuss these concerns.
- It can be considered a safeguarding matter when children are not collected from school or school activities at the agreed time or continually collected after the agreed time. In this instance at The Oval School we follow Birmingham City Councils policy 'Emergency Procedures when a child is not collected' (April 2016). This can be found on https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/downloads/file/3458/emergency_procedures_when_a_child_is_not_collected
- When a pupil has not been at school for a number of school days the Attendance Officer may decide that it is important to carry out a home visit. This could be to find the whereabouts of the child, check the health or condition of the child and follow Safeguarding Guidelines set out in Children Missing Education (Sept 2016).

Pupils who leave The Oval School

If parents are considering moving or withdrawing their child or children from education at The Oval School it is essential that we are notified in writing before the last date of attendance at the school.

PLEASE NOTE: In order to prevent children from becoming Missing from Education, the school is legally required to notify the local authority of **all children removed from our registers outside normal transfer times**, whatever the reason. Parents are requested to provide the school with all the necessary information about future addresses, new schools etc. in the event of planned changes of address etc. Any information the school holds will be passed to the relevant local authorities as required.

School Attendance Targets and Special incentives

The school has adopted the following attendance targets and special incentives:

The Oval Schools attendance target is to achieve greater than 96 % attendance. Central Government believe primary age pupils should exceed 96%.

We believe that it is the duty of parents to ensure their child is in attendance at school, it is the law, and is not a choice.

Therefore, we do not reward attendance; instead we celebrate achievements in attendance. For example, when pupils achieve 100% in a term they will receive a certificate, badge and a prize.

Additionally, we celebrate the best class attendance in the Reception, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 groups. The class with the highest weekly attendance will win special treats on the last Friday of ter,.

The school and the Attendance Officer may consider introducing additional rewards and incentives to individual families and pupils, classes, year groups or the whole school as we move through the school year.

Everyone has a responsibility in Attendance matters

1. The Pupil:

- To attend school on time every day and understand why this benefits them
- To adhere to systems of attendance, including late procedures
- To make the most of your right to education by attending school
- Acknowledge that you have responsibilities to help your own school attendance i.e. going to bed at an appropriate time, getting-up and leaving the house prepared for the day, talk to a member of staff if you are having problems at school or at home, do not tell your parents you are too unwell to go to school when you are not
- Do not truant from school, this includes missing lessons by hiding around the school

2. The Parent:

- As a parent, you are Legally Responsible in ensuring your child attends school regularly
- Help your child arrive at school on time and be punctual everyday
- Informing the school of any absences by telephone or email on the first day
- Keep the school up-to-date on periods of absence over 3 days in length
- To avoid taking 'leave in term time' wherever possible
- Adhere to all procedures laid down within this attendance policy, including; late procedures, 'leave in term time' procedures, daily absence procedures
- To discuss any concerns regarding attendance with the school
- To co-operate with the school in promoting and improving attendance, by; attending meetings, supporting action plans and providing evidence for absence when necessary.

3. The School:

- The Headteacher has overall responsibility for ensuring that there are appropriate and efficient systems in place to promote and support the school attendance policy, that these are adhered to and training is given where appropriate.
- The school will provide a relevant, exciting and engaging curriculum that will develop the strengths and weaknesses of all pupils
- All class teachers have daily attendance responsibilities for their class, assuring that recording and monitoring of attendance is carried out twice daily; at the start of each session
- Providing a safe and welcoming learning environment for all pupils
- Providing a sympathetic response to any pupil's concerns
- Being aware of factors that can contribute to non-attendance
- Being aware of the role all staff can play in ensuring attendance is seen as important for all pupils
- Be proactive in communicating with children, parents and professionals about attendance matters

4. The Pastoral Worker and Attendance Administrator:

- Monitors daily whole school attendance and contacts parents if a pupil is absent with no reason provided for absence

- Has responsibility for monitoring and tracking attendance trends on a whole school level and will contact parents when attendance difficulties become apparent
- Is responsible for working with pupils, families and external agencies to resolve issues of poor school attendance, reduce the number of persistent absentees and for increasing attendance percentages
- Has management of the Fast Track process and fines for unauthorised 'leave in term-time'
- Will consider appropriate rewards and incentives on an individual, class or whole school level.

5. The Governing Body;

- Ensure compliance with The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, as amended
- Adopt the Attendance Policy and review it annually
- Agree targets for attendance at The Oval School
- Ensure that they receive reports regarding school attendance as part of the school monitoring or school profiling exercise
- Promote the strong link between attendance, educational attainment and social and emotional development to parents and pupils where appropriate
- Authorise the Headteacher (or other designated person) to consider and make decisions regarding leave of absence requests

6. The Education Welfare Service;

- Undertake proceedings on behalf of the Local Authority, in respect of parents who do not ensure their children's regular attendance at school or enrol them at school
- Make relevant assessments and action plans in partnership with pupils, parent(s), school staff and other relevant parties, concerning attendance at school
- Consider the use of legal action against parents as part of a planned intervention with families
- Must ensure accountability for cases taken to court and liaise with schools concerning such cases
- Offer information to parents and pupils about rights and responsibilities concerning attendance and the legal process

Summary

The school has a legal duty to promote good attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend regularly. School staff are committed to working closely with parents as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible. Please work with us.