

Oxclose Primary Academy
Discover Learning Trust



Attendance & Punctuality
Policy

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Head Teacher signed:	
Chair of Governors signed:	

INTRODUCTION

“Central to raising standards in education and ensuring all pupils can fulfil their potential is an assumption so widely understood that it is insufficiently stated – pupils need to attend school regularly to benefit from their education. Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind. Children with poor attendance tend to achieve less in both primary and secondary school”. **School attendance - Departmental advice for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities (DfE October 2014)**

The Government expects Schools and Local Authorities to:

- Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence (PA);
- Ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled; and,
- act early to address patterns of absence.
- Parents to perform their legal duty by ensuring their children of compulsory school age who are registered at school attend regularly.
- All pupils to be punctual to their lessons.

Good attendance and punctuality are important because:

- Statistics show a direct link between under-achievement and poor attendance
- Regular attenders make better progress, both socially and academically
- Regular attenders find school routines and school work easier to cope with
- Regular attenders find learning more satisfying
- Regular attenders have an easier transfer to secondary school

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance and good punctuality is everybody's responsibility; parents/carers, pupils and all members of school staff and Governors.

AIMS

Oxclose Primary Academy expects the highest attendance and punctuality from all pupils, at all times. As a school we do all that we can to ensure maximum attendance for all pupils. At Oxclose Primary Academy we are continuously working towards our goal of 100% attendance for all pupils.

Our aims are:

- To ensure that every child is safeguarded and their right to education is protected.
- To encourage full attendance and punctuality
- To ensure the school attendance target is achieved, through rewards and incentives for good attendance and punctuality
- To raise standards and ensure every child reaches their full educational potential, through a high level of school attendance and punctuality
- To keep accurate, up-to-date records and have a robust and rigorous system for recording and analysing attendance.
- To acknowledge and celebrate a successful record of attendance and punctuality
- To ensure a consistent approach throughout the school
- To make attendance and punctuality a priority for those associated with the school including pupils, parents/carers, staff and Governors and ensure they receive regular communication, about the importance of good attendance and punctuality
- To identify causes of low attendance/punctuality with individuals, classes and groups of pupils and address them
- Let you know if we have concerns regarding your child's attendance and/or punctuality and provide support, advice and guidance to parents/carers and pupils
- To work effectively with other services and agencies in order to address barriers to attendance and overcome them

TYPES OF ABSENCE

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not parents/carers), as either authorised or unauthorised. This is why details about the reason for any absence is always required, preferably in writing.

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Authorised Absence

Some absences are allowed by law and are known as 'authorised absences'. Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause. School does realise that there are exceptional circumstances when there may be a particular problem that causes a pupil to be absent. We will try to deal with these cases sympathetically if parents/carers advise us.

Unauthorised Absence

There are times when pupils are absent for reasons which are not permitted by law. These are known as 'unauthorised absences'. Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Local Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. Examples of unauthorised absence are:

- A family day out
- Sleeping in after a late night
- Because it is your child's birthday
- Going shopping or for a hair cut
- Holidays
- Where there is no explanation for the absence or where the explanation or reason for the absence is considered unsatisfactory

Persistent Absence (PA)

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year **for whatever reason, authorised and/or unauthorised**. Absence at this level does considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need the fullest support of parents/carers and co-operation to tackle this. Any pupil whose attendance has reached, or is at risk of reaching the PA mark (attendance of below 90%) is monitored on a daily basis. All PA pupils are also automatically made known to the LA Attendance Team.

Whilst any pupil may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents/carers and the pupil. If your child is reluctant to attend, it is never advisable to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually make things worse.

Absence Procedures and Monitoring at Oxclose Primary Academy:

Parents/carers must:

- Contact us by 9.00am on the first day of absence, and no later than 9.30am, with the reason and saying when the pupil will return;
- Contact school regularly - keeping school updated by telephone or letter if there is an extended period of absence due to illness.
- throughout the absence to keep school up to date;
- Send a note in on the first day they return with an explanation of the absence – you must do this even if you have already telephoned us or, you can call into school and report to the Admin Team, who will arrange for a member of staff to speak with you if required.

Also:

- Arrange dental and doctor's appointments out of school hours or during school breaks wherever possible
- Arranging for children to take holidays during designated school closure times

If your child is absent school will:

- Telephone and/or text you on the first day of absence, and every subsequent day if we have not heard from you by 9am; if there is no reply a letter will be sent out on the 3rd day
- If a pupil is subject to CP (or the school has Safeguarding concerns) the Head Teacher will inform relevant professionals (e.g. Social Worker)
- Arrange for the Head Teacher to complete a Home Visit to collect pupils where there are concerns e.g. Safeguarding concerns, attendance concerns.
- Follow the 'Traffic Light' system.

- Refer the matter to the LA Attendance Team if attendance becomes a serious concern.

THE TRAFFIC LIGHT SYSTEM

At Oxclose Primary Academy we use the 'Traffic Light' system to support us in improving attendance. The system ensures a simple yet effective and consistent approach, ensuring that statutory attendance and punctuality duties are fulfilled. It enables school to help identify the need for support for parents/carers at an early stage in attendance concerns. This system can also generate an automatic referral to the Local Authority Attendance Team who can then visit or contact the family to offer independent support or advice.

Attendance at Oxclose Primary Academy is monitored formally on a fortnightly basis for any emerging patterns below 95%, and more regularly for Persistent Absentees (PA). Parents will be routinely contacted if attendance falls below 95%. 'Green' certificates for good and outstanding attendance are presented to pupils on a six weekly cycle. However attendance letters are sent out if pupils attendance falls below 95%, these pupils will continue to be monitored until attendance returns to 95% or above.

- Green letter: pupil's attendance drops below the minimum expectation of 95%.
- Amber letter: pupils' attendance is falling towards 90% (below 90% and pupils become Persistent Absentees)
- Red letter (Referral to the LA Attendance Team): if pupil's attendance drops below 90% and/or there are 5 unauthorised absences within a 10 week period.

Pupils who fail to improve their attendance percentage or who fall within the Amber and/or Red criteria will be monitored using the following strategies:

- Monitoring by the Head Teacher/Office Manager
- Invitation to parent/carer to meet with the Head Teacher to discuss and implement strategies to improve attendance
- Possible referral to the Local Authority Attendance Team

All cases will be assessed individually as it is understood that there can be exceptional circumstances for children's absences.

Key benefits of the Attendance Traffic Light System

- A rolling programme allowing school and the Local Authority Attendance Team to identify attendance concerns at regular stages throughout the school year
- Ensures schools and parents/carers have full involvement at all stages
- A tool for early intervention – highlighting concerns earlier to allow issues to be addressed/support to be offered
- Aims to prevent prosecution
- A structured and consistent approach to monitoring school attendance
- A visual aid for parents and children to acknowledge the child's attendance
- A method of engaging further with families in order to ensure that children are receiving appropriate levels of support
- Encourages parents/carers to keep in close contact with school to provide reasons for absences, developing good home/school relationships
- Easy tool to monitor positive outcomes

PUNCTUALITY

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If a pupil misses the start of the day, they can miss work and time spent getting vital information and news for the day. If a pupil misses this short but vital session, their work for the whole day may be affected. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons, can be embarrassing for the pupil involved and can also encourage absence.

Punctuality Procedures at Oxclose Primary Academy:

- Morning registration is at 8.55am. This is the time pupils must be in the classroom; pupils should be coming through the school gate by 8.45/50am. The school doors open from 8.50am until 9.00am. Doors close and registration ends promptly at 9.00am.

- Afternoon registration is at 12.55pm for KS2 and 1.10pm for KS1.
- Pupils are marked 'late' if they arrive after the close of registration.
- Parents/carers must sign in the 'Late Book' stating the reason for lateness.
- Pupils who are late after the registers have closed at 9.30am (DfE state 30 minutes after the end of registration) will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will not count as a present mark and it will mean they have an absence entered in the register with the appropriate code.
- School will support parents/carers in certain circumstances by collecting pupils and bringing them into school (in line with Safeguarding procedures) to ensure pupils lateness is minimised.

Punctuality Monitoring at Oxclose Primary Academy:

- Punctuality is monitored daily by the Admin Team, who look for patterns across a two week period.
- Parents/carers of pupils who are late three or more times across a fortnight will be asked to make an appointment with the Head Teacher to discuss the reasons for lateness, any issues and any support that may be required.
- Parents/carers of pupil who are regularly late but do not hit the trigger of three times in a fortnight will receive a letter regarding the concerns of the school. If the poor punctuality continues they will be asked to make an appointment with the Head Teacher to discuss the reasons for lateness, any issues and any support that may be required.
- Pupils who have 100% punctuality (are never late) receive a certificate and sticker as a reward.

TERM TIME LEAVE OF ABSENCE

We are always concerned about the amount of time pupils miss as a result of holidays. Taking holidays in term time affects pupils schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents/carers to help us by not taking children away on holiday in school time. Significant changes to attendance regulations for pupils at school were introduced in September 2013. The most important of these was in relation to term-time holidays. DfE stated:

*'Amendments to the 2006 regulations **remove** references to family holiday and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days. The amendments make clear that Head Teachers **may not grant any** leave of absence during term time unless there are **exceptional** circumstances.'*

There are many situations that may constitute exceptional circumstances, but as a generality we interpret 'exceptional' in this context as being of unique and significant emotional, educational or spiritual value to a pupil, which outweighs the loss of teaching time. This interpretation will have different parameters from one case to another, and whilst it will be important to look at the whole situation in making decisions about any individual request, the normality will be that requests will be refused. School asks that parents/carers respect these new regulations under which we must now work, and that if you do need to take your child out of school during term time, you make very clear in a written request to the Head Teacher, how the circumstances are exceptional. If this is not clear, then under the new legislation, the Head Teacher will not be allowed to authorise leave.

Our policy states that:

- Requests for holidays during term time will not be authorised once children reach statutory school age. Absence taken and not authorised could be liable for a Fixed Penalty fine.
- Parents wishing to take their children on holiday during term-time need to make an appointment with the Head Teacher or member of the Senior Leadership Team who will discuss the situation and advise parents of the likely consequences.
- Parents should avoid taking a holiday in September as it is very unsettling for a child to miss the start of the school year. Also avoid holidays during May (SATS in Years 2 and 6).
- In the majority of cases absence as a result of term time holidays will be unauthorised.
- Please remember the more time your child misses from school, the more difficult it is for them to catch up with their work. Valuable learning time is lost. A good understanding of the work can only take place when the child is in the classroom.

LEAVERS

If your child is leaving other than at the end of Year 6 to go to Secondary School, parents/carers are asked to:

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- Give us full information about their plans, including the date of move, new address (if applicable), new school and proposed start date. The Head Teacher of Oxclose Primary Academy will then complete a transfer form which is forwarded to the school your child is transferring to. These arrangements apply to transfers between Sunderland Local Authority schools only.
- Please speak to us if you think that you may be moving outside of the Sunderland Local Authority and we will ensure all appropriate records are forwarded to your child's new school.

PUPILS SUBJECT TO A CHILD PROTECTION PLAN OR LOOKED AFTER BY A LOCAL AUTHORITY

Pupils who are subject to a Child Protection Plan or identified as a Child in Need will have their attendance carefully monitored and reported at Core Group/Care Team meetings. Similarly, for pupils who are Looked After by a Local Authority their attendance is also monitored carefully and reported at Personal Education Plan (PEP) meetings.

PUPILS WHO ATTEND AN ALTERNATIVE LEARNING PROVISION

If a pupil attends alternative provision for part of the week, close links will be maintained between the two providers. The providers will inform each other of any absence. It is important parents contact the school if their child is absent.

CHILDREN MISSING FROM EDUCATION

When pupils leave and parents have not given us the above information and we are unable to contact parents, then the child is considered to be a Child Missing Education. This means that the Local Authority has a legal duty to carry out investigations, which will include liaising with Children's Services (formerly Social Services), the Police and other agencies, to track and locate the child. By giving us the required information, unnecessary investigations can be avoided.

Legal Note

Parents have a legal duty to ensure the regular and full time attendance at school of registered pupils (Education Act 1996). This policy is based on the law and on best practice guidance produced by the Department for Education and the Local Authority. The School Attendance Service aims to work with schools and families to promote good attendance and avoid legal action. However, in some cases parents are prosecuted (taken to court) or have to pay a Fixed Penalty (fine) if unauthorised absences continue.

THE LA ATTENDANCE TEAM

Parents/carers are expected to contact school at an early stage in the traffic light system and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the child to the LA Attendance Team. The LA Attendance Team will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed and unauthorised absences persist, the LA Attendance Team can use sanctions such as Education Supervision Orders or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court. Full details of the options open to enforce attendance at school are available from the Local Authority. Alternatively, parents/carers may wish to contact the LA Attendance Team themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is available from the school office or by contacting the Local Authority.