



PUPIL ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY POLICY

The rationale for this policy is to ensure every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled and that our families and pupils understand the importance of attendance and punctuality for a child's academic progress and social and emotional wellbeing.

“The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school” (Working together to improve school attendance, Statutory Guidance August 2024).

At Offenham CE First School we recognise:

- Good attendance and punctuality are vital for success at school and to establish positive habits necessary for future success.
- Regular attendance encourages children to build friendships and develop social groups, working together as a whole team, sharing ideas and developing life skills – children's social skills are similarly enhanced by regular attendance
- Non-attendees will not only miss out on essential learning but also other activities taking place which will impact on their personal development
- The school has a positive and proactive ethos that places a high value on attendance and punctuality including persistent absence.
- Partnerships with parents and building strong links with families promotes good attendance and working closely with parents is key to improving attendance and punctuality.

Aims

This policy aims to show our commitment to meeting our obligations with regards to school attendance, including those laid out in the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on working together to improve school attendance, through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- Setting high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all pupils
- Promoting good attendance and the benefits of good attendance
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensuring every pupil 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 make sure pupils have the support in place to attend school

Legislation and guidance

This policy is based on the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on working together to improve school attendance (applies from 19 August 2024) and school attendance parental responsibility measures. The guidance is based on the following pieces of legislation, which set 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, and 2016 amendments)
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013
- It also refers to:
- School census guidance
- Keeping Children Safe in Education
- Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools

TARGET

We recognise that it “is essential for pupils to get the most out of their school experience, including their attainment, wellbeing, and wider life chances. The pupils with the highest attainment at the end of key stage 2 and key stage 4 have higher rates of attendance over the key stage compared to those with the lowest attainment” (Working together to improve school attendance).

The school day runs from 8:45am until 3:15pm. The school gates open at 8:30am.

Therefore, we expect all pupils to strive for 100% attendance and to arrive punctually by 8.45am to start the school day promptly.

There is a statutory requirement for schools to set whole school attendance targets in line with national averages and Ofsted guidance. A target is set by the Senior Leadership Team and agreed and monitored by the Attendance Champion, Head Teacher and Governors each academic year. This year the attendance target has been set at 97%.

Roles and Responsibilities

The governing board

The governing board is responsible for:

Setting high expectations of all school leaders, staff, pupils and parents

Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties, including:

- Making sure the school records attendance accurately in the register, and shares the required

information with the DfE and local authority

- Making sure the school works effectively with local partners to help remove barriers to attendance, and keeps them informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate
- Recognising and promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos
- Making sure the school's attendance management processes are delivered effectively, and that consistent support is provided for pupils who need it most by prioritising staff and resources
- Making sure the school has high aspirations for all pupils, but adapts processes and support to pupils' individual needs
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data and helping school leaders focus improvement efforts on individual pupils or cohorts who need it most
- Working with school leaders to set goals or areas of focus for attendance and providing support and challenge
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school and repeatedly evaluating the effectiveness of the school's processes and improvement efforts to make sure they are meeting pupils needs
- Where the school is struggling with attendance, working with school leaders to develop a comprehensive action plan to improve attendance
- Making sure all staff receive adequate training on attendance as part of the regular continued professional development offer, so that staff understand:
 - o The importance of good attendance
 - o That absence is almost always a symptom of wider issues
 - o The school's legal requirements for keeping registers
 - o The school's strategies and procedures for tracking, following up on and improving attendance, including working with partners and keeping them informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate
- Making sure dedicated training is provided to staff with a specific attendance function in their role, including in interpreting and analysing attendance data
- Sharing effective practice on attendance management and improvement across schools]
- Holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy through the termly review of whole school attendance data

The Headteacher

The Headteacher/Designated Safeguarding Lead is responsible for:

The 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 pupils
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary.
- Working with the parents of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) to develop specific support approaches for attendance for pupils with SEND, including where school transport is regularly being missed, and where pupils with SEND face in-school barriers
- Communicating with the local authority when a pupil with an education, health and care (EHC) plan has falling attendance, or where there are barriers to attendance that relate to the pupil's needs
- Communicating the school's high expectations for attendance and punctuality regularly to pupils and parents through all available channels
- Leading, championing and improving attendance across the school
- Setting a clear vision for improving and maintaining good attendance
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having a strong grasp of absence data and oversight of absence data analysis
- Regularly monitoring and evaluating progress in attendance
- Establishing and maintaining effective systems for tackling absence, and making sure they are followed by all staff
- Liaising with pupils, parents/carers and external agencies, where needed
- Building close and productive relationships with parents to discuss and tackle attendance issues
- Creating intervention or reintegration plans in partnership with pupils and their parents/carers
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance is Jayne Nicol and can be contacted on: 01386 442038 or head@offenham.dowmat.education

Senior Attendance Champion

- Mrs Jayne Nicol is the Senior Attendance Champion and can be contacted at head@offenham.dowmat.education
- The Senior Attendance Champion should analyse the data each week for attendance and monitor trends for key groups or cohorts
- The Senior Attendance Champion should report weekly attendance on the school newsletter and the website

- The Senior Attendance Champion should work alongside families who are deemed as persistent absentees and hold attendance meetings with those families
- Work alongside the Worcestershire EWO team to continue to support families with attendance

Class teachers

- Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance on Arbor on a daily basis for both morning and afternoon sessions, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office within the time frame. Registers are to be closed at 9am so that office staff can follow up and absence and formally close the register at 9.15am

School Office staff

School Office staff will:

- Take calls/emails from parents about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system
- After receiving the register from teachers, the office staff will make phone calls to parents of children absent with no reason given. Calls will be made at the official close of register at 9.10am.
- Transfer calls from parents/carers to the DSL where appropriate, in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance

Pupils

- Pupils should strive to attend school every day and be on time.
- Pupils should have a clear understanding of the importance of attending school as well as acceptable and unacceptable reasons for absence.
- Pupils should tell their parents/carers or class teacher of any reason that prevents them attending/wanting to attend school.
- In instances of lateness, pupils should report to the school office upon arrival where a note will be made on Arbor outlining the number of 'minutes late' a pupil has arrived.

Parents/carers

Where this policy refers to a parent, it refers to the adult the school and/or local authority decides is most appropriate to work with, including:

- All natural parents, whether they are married or not
- All those who have parental responsibility for a child or young person
- Those who have day-to-day responsibility for the child (i.e. lives with and looks after them)

Parents are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day on time
- Call the school to report their child's absence before 8:45am on the day of the absence and on each

subsequent day of absence, and advise when they are expected to return

- Provide the school with more than one emergency contact number for their child
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day
- Seek support, where necessary, for maintaining good attendance, by contacting Jayne Nicol (Headteacher/DSL) who can be contacted via 01386 442 038 or head@offenham.dowmat.educatio

Attendance register

We will keep an electronic attendance register, and place all pupils 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, using the appropriate national attendance and absence codes from the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024, whether every pupil 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, where a pupil is attending an approved educational activity
- The nature of circumstances, where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 6 years after the date on which the entry was made.

The school day starts at 8:45am and ends at 3:15pm.

Pupils must arrive in school by 8:45am on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at 8:45 and will be kept open until 9:15am. The register for the second session will be taken at 1:15pm and will be kept open until 1:30pm.

Absence from school

Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 8:45am or as soon as practically possible, by calling the school office administrators, who can be contacted via 01386 442 038 or office@offenham.dowmat.education

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

Where the absence is longer than 5 days, or there are doubts about the authenticity of the illness, the school will ask for 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 a child is off school for a prolonged period of time with medical evidence, school will conduct regular safe and well visits to ensure the safeguarding of the child. A courtesy call will be made prior to this visit.

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

Planned absence

- Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent/carers notifies the school in advance of the appointment by contacting the school office
 - However, we encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.
 - A pupil may be absent on a day that is exclusively set apart for religious observe by the religious body the parents(s) belong to (not the parents themselves) (Working together to improve school attendance, August 2024).
 - Parents are requested to complete a Leave of Absence Request form for this from the school office.
- School will not authorise holidays during term time.
- After 10 consecutive days' absence, we are required to report this on the Worcestershire Children's Services Portal. In line with the Education Regulation Act (1996) if a child is absent from school for longer than 20 days with no authorised reason the child's name could be taken off roll.

Lateness and punctuality

A pupil 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

Following up any unexplained absence

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

- Call the pupil's parent on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the school cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts, the school may complete a safe and well check at the child's home address
- 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(s) for which the pupil was absent
- Call the parent on each day that the absence continues without explanation, to make sure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the school will consider involving an education welfare officer
- Where relevant, report the unexplained absence to the pupil's youth offending team officer
- Where appropriate, offer support to the pupil and/or their parents to improve attendance
- Identify whether the pupil needs support from wider partners, as quickly as possible, and make the necessary referrals
- Where support is not appropriate, not successful, or not engaged with issue a notice to improve, penalty notice or other legal intervention as appropriate.

Absence concerns

- Should there be frequent absence, the Senior Attendance Champion may invite parents in to create a School Attendance Agreement. This will set attendance targets and discuss how school can further support families.
- Should there be frequent absence due to illness, Headteacher and Senior Attendance Champion alongside the EWO, will ask to meet parents and may ask for 'supporting' evidence, such as prescription/prescribed medication /appointment letter/letter from GP or consultant. If these are not provided the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.
- If a pupil is going to be absent from school for a long period of time due to illness or other authorised extenuating circumstances, school will liaise with an Education Welfare Officer in order to best support the pupil.
- If any member of staff is concerned about a reason for absence, a member of the Senior Leadership Team or the Designated Safeguarding Lead should be informed.

Reporting to parents

The attendance of individual pupils is monitored fortnightly through automated reports from the school management information system, which highlight all children with attendance that has fallen below 95% and those where attendance has fallen below 90%.

Parents will be kept informed through letters or be invited to attend a meeting to discuss their child's attendance and any support that school can offer.

The school will also inform all parents about their child's attendance and absence levels at parent's evenings and in their end of year reports.

Authorised and unauthorised absence

The headteacher will allow pupils to be absent from the school site for certain educational activities, or to attend other schools or settings.

The headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if the request meets the specific circumstances set out in the 2024 school attendance regulations. These circumstances are:

- Attending an interview
- Study leave
- A temporary, time-limited part-time timetable
- Exceptional circumstances

A leave of absence is granted at the headteacher's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for.

We define 'exceptional circumstances' as personal circumstances outside of the control of the family which prevent attendance or require absence.

Leave of absence will not be granted for a pupil to take part in protest activity during school hours.

As a leave of absence will only be granted in exceptional circumstances, it is unlikely a leave of absence will be granted for the purposes of a family holiday.

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

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least 2 weeks before the absence, and in accordance with any leave of absence request form available from the school office (office@offenham.dowmat.education)

The headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

Other valid reasons for authorised absence include (but are not limited to):

- Illness (including mental-health 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 pupil's parent(s) belong(s). If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parent's religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart

- Parent(s) 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 pupil is attending educational provision
- If the pupil is currently suspended or excluded from school (and no alternative provision has been made)
- Other reasons the school may allow a pupil to be absent from the school site, which are not classified as absences, include (but are not limited to):
 - Attending an offsite approved educational activity, sporting activity or visit or trip arranged by the school
 - Attending another school at which the pupil is also registered (dual registration)
 - Attending provision arranged by the local authority
 - Attending work experience

If there is any other unavoidable cause for the pupil not to attend school, such as disruption to travel caused by an emergency, a lack of access arrangements, or because the school premises are closed

Sanctions

Our school will make use of the full range of potential sanctions – including, but not limited to, those listed below – to tackle poor attendance. Decisions will be made on an individual, case-by-case basis.

Penalty notices

The headteacher (or someone authorised by them), local authority or the police can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age, by issuing a penalty notice.

If the school issues a penalty notice, it will check with the local authority before doing so, and send it a copy of any penalty notice issued.

Before issuing a penalty notice, the school will consider the individual case, including:

- Whether the national threshold for considering a penalty notice has been met (10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks)
- Whether a penalty notice is the best available tool to improve attendance for that pupil
- Whether further support, a notice to improve or another legal intervention would be a more appropriate solution
- Whether any obligations that the school has under the Equality Act 2010 make issuing a penalty notice inappropriate

A penalty notice may also be issued where parents allow their child to be present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification, during the first 5 days of a suspension or exclusion (where the school has notified the parents that the pupil must not be present in a public place on that day).

Each parent who is liable for the pupil's offence(s) can be issued with a penalty notice, but this will usually only be the parent/parents who allowed the absence.

The payment must be made directly to the local authority, regardless of who issues the notice. If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

If issued with a first penalty notice, the parent must pay £80 within 21 days, or £160 within 28 days.

If a second penalty notice is issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil, the parent must pay £160 if paid within 28 days.

A third penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within 3 years of the date of the issue of the first penalty notice. In a case where the national threshold is met for a third time within those 3 years, alternative action will be taken instead.

Notices to improve

If the national threshold has been met and support is appropriate, but parents do not engage with offers of support, the school may offer a notice to improve to give parents a final chance to engage with support.

Notices to improve will be issued in line with processes set out in the local code of conduct for the local authority area in which the pupil attends school.

They will include:

- Details of the pupil's attendance record and of the offences
- The benefits of regular attendance and the duty of parents under section 7 of the Education Act 1996
- Details of the support provided so far
- Opportunities for further support, or to access previously provided support that was not engaged with
- A clear warning that a penalty notice may be issued if attendance doesn't improve within the improvement period, along with details of what sufficient improvement looks like, which will be decided on a case-by-case basis
- A clear timeframe of between 3 and 6 weeks for the improvement period
- The grounds on which a penalty notice may be issued before the end of the improvement period

Strategies for promoting attendance

- Offenham CE First School recognises the importance of attendance at school and punctuality as a whole school priority and promotes this with our pupils and families
- A weekly attendance Teddy is presented to the class with the highest attendance each week
- The whole school and class attendance is reported to parents on the school newsletter every week
- Lessons that a child misses due to absence are recorded in the child's books to make it clear where learning has been missed
- Same day phone calls are made to families who have not given a reason for non-attendance so that children and parents can be supported with any issues
- If no contact is made with a family a home visit will take place
- Attendance Support Plans will be used to support families where attendance is falling to ensure the best possible support is put in place
- Children who have ongoing health needs will have an Individual Health Care plan to plan school and homes approach to support children where medical needs may impact attendance

Supporting Pupils who are absent or returning to school

Pupils absent due to complex barriers to attendance including those with mental or physical ill health and/or SEND and those returning to school after a lengthy or unavoidable period of absence

Where a pupil has been absent from school we recognise that time away from school can increase anxiety about returning. Offenham CE First School will work closely with families to ensure that a unique and appropriate package of support is in place for a child returning to school after a period of absence. This process may include but are not limited to the following strategies:

- The development of an Early Help Assessment working with the family and any other professionals to ensure the barriers to attendance have been accurately identified and can be addressed
- Signposting to other out of school services which may be able to offer emotional and wellbeing support through the school Family Support Offer
- The implementation of a short term reduced timetable with a clear end point and return to full time attendance
- Access to an emotionally available adult in school
- A key person to meet and greet and support transition into school each day
- Transitional objects or other resources which travel between home and school to offer comfort and support
- A home school diary
- Individual provision during class sessions agreed with the class teacher.

Where a child has SEND needs they will have an individual Provision Map which sets out their needs and measures how they are progressing.

Where a pupil has an education health and care (EHC) plan and their attendance falls, or the school becomes aware of barriers to attendance that related to the pupil's needs, the school will inform the local authority.

PUNCTUALITY

- Pupils are expected to arrive at school by 8.45 a.m, arriving between 8.45 a.m. and 9.15 a.m. will be considered as late. This will be marked on Arbor.
- Pupils arriving after 8.45 a.m. must report to the School Office so that their attendance and 'minutes late' can be recorded.
- Pupils arriving after 9.15 a.m. will receive an unauthorised late mark unless a satisfactory reason is given. This results in the pupil being absent on the attendance report for the morning session.
- Action to address lateness will be the responsibility of the Attendance Lead. Class registers MUST reflect the correct late code ('L' to be used prior to 9.15am, 'U' to be used after 9.15am and 'M' to be used if a medical appointment has resulted in the late arrival of a pupil).
- Valid reasons for lateness could include medical appointments, which have been agreed with school prior to the appointment.

Attendance monitoring

The school will monitor attendance and absence data (including punctuality) fortnightly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil, year group and cohort level.

Specific pupil information will be shared with the DfE on request. The school has granted the DfE access to its management information system so the data can be accessed regularly and securely.

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 benchmark its attendance data at whole school, year group and cohort level against local, regional, and national levels to identify areas of focus for improvement, and share this with the governing board.

Analysing attendance

The school will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils, groups or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and
- Identify pupils whose absences may be a cause for concern, especially those who demonstrate patterns of persistent or severe absence
- Conduct thorough analysis of half-termly, termly, and full-year data to identify patterns and trends

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

Using data to improve attendance

The school will:

- Develop targeted actions to address patterns of absence (of all severities) of individual pupils, groups or cohorts that it has identified via data analysis
- Provide targeted support to the pupils it has identified whose absences may be a cause for concern, especially those who demonstrate patterns of persistent or severe absence, and their families
- Provide regular attendance reports to staff, to facilitate discussions with pupils and families, and to the governing board and school leaders (including the special educational needs co-ordinator, designated safeguarding leads and pupil premium lead)
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies
- Share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities and other partners where a pupil's absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe, including keeping them informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate

Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school. Reducing persistent and severe absence is central to the school's strategy for improving attendance.

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Consider potential safeguarding issues and, where suspected or present, address them in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education
- Hold regular meetings, including Early Help Assessments, with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable or at risk of persistent or severe absence, or who are persistently or severely absent, to:
 - o Discuss attendance and engagement at school
 - o Listen, and understand barriers to attendance
 - o Explain the help that is available
 - o Explain the potential consequences of, and sanctions for, persistent and severe absence
 - o Review any existing actions or interventions
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance, in conjunction with the local authority, where relevant
- Consider alternative support that could be put in place to remove any barriers to attendance and re-engage these pupils. In doing so, the school will sensitively consider some of the reasons for absence
- Implement sanctions, where necessary

Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority and/or DfE is updated, and as a minimum bi-annually by Jayne Nicol (Headteacher) At every review, the policy will be approved by the full governing board.

Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

Child protection and safeguarding policy

Behaviour policy