

All Saints CofE Junior School

Attendance Policy 2023-2024

1. Introduction

We believe that for children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and that children should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class. Children are best safeguarded from exploitation and other risks in the wider community by attending school regularly where they are supervised by qualified and caring professionals. Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is the legal responsibility of parents and registered carers and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution. It is very important therefore that parents and registered carers make sure that the children they are responsible for attend school regularly and this guidance sets out how together, we will achieve this.

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

- Promoting 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 ensure pupils have the support in place to attend school

We will also promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

2. Legislation and Guidance

This policy guidance meets the requirements of the [working together to improve school attendance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of [The Education Act 1996](#)
- Part 3 of [The Education Act 2002](#)
- Part 7 of [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006 \(and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments\)](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)

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

3. Definitions

- Where the term "relevant body" has been used within this policy guidance, this means the Board of Trustees of ODST. The relevant body has chosen to delegate some of its functions to Local Governing Bodies (LGBs) as set out in this procedure.
- Unless indicated otherwise, all references to "school" include both schools and academies
- Unless indicated otherwise, all references to "teacher" include the Headteacher, Executive Headteacher, Principal or Head of School
- Unless indicated otherwise. All references to "Headteacher" include Executive Headteacher, Principal or Head of School
- Unless indicated otherwise, all references to 'staff' include both teaching and support staff

4. Consistency of Treatment and Fairness

The relevant body is committed to ensuring consistency of treatment and fairness and will abide by all relevant employment and equality legislation.

5. Monitoring and Evaluation

Any feedback or concerns from ODST schools regarding this policy guidance will be reported back in the first instance to the ODST Education, Quality, Standards and Impact (EQSI) Committee.

6. Date of Review

The procedure will be reviewed as required by the Education, Quality, Standards and Impact (EQSI) Committee of the Board of Trustees of ODST to take account of any revised guidance, legislative changes and / or national policy development.

7. Roles and Responsibilities

7.1 The Board of Trustees of Oxford Diocesan Schools Trust

The Board of Trustees is responsible for:

- Promoting a culture that sets high expectations for attendance across all ODST schools
- Supporting schools to prioritise attendance
- Ensuring that school leaders are able to fulfill high expectations and statutory duties
- Regularly reviewing attendance data from across the Trust and directing school improvement resource to help school leaders focus support on the pupils who need it

7.2 The Local Governing Body

The Local Governing Body is responsible for:

- Promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school
- Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance
- Holding the headteacher and attendance officer to account for the implementation of a policy based on this guidance

7.3 The Headteacher

The Headteacher is responsible for:

- Implementation of a policy based on this guidance at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to the Local Governing Body and to the ODSST School Improvement Team.
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary

7.4 Attendance officer, Class teachers and teaching assistants

Attendance officer is a member of the SLT who closely monitors, implements and reports on whole school attendance. Class teachers and teaching assistants are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office on the same day.

7.5 School office staff

School office staff will:

- Take calls from parents and registered carers about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system

7.6 Parents/carers

Parents/carers are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends school every day on time
- Call the school to report their child's absence as soon as possible 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 1 emergency contact number for their child
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day

7.7 Pupils

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school every day on time

8. Recording Attendance

8.1 Attendance register

- We will keep an attendance register and enter 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 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:

- For pupils of compulsory school age, whether the absence is authorised or not
- The nature of the activity if 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 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Pupils must arrive in school between 8.30- 8.40am on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at 8.45am and will be kept open until 8.50am. The register for the second session will be taken at 1.15pm and will be kept open until 1.20pm.

8.2 Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 9.15am or as soon as practically possible by **calling the school**. Messages can be left on our absence line by **calling 01628 622596** and selecting the relevant option.

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

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

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

8.3 Planned absence

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

Parents should use a leave of absence form (collect from the office) to notify the school of medical or dental appointments. Medical/Dental appointments must be accompanied by an appointment card or other written confirmation.

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.

The pupil's parent/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Go to section 9.1 to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

8.4 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

A pupil who arrives late but before the register has closed will be treated, for statistical purposes, as present, but will be coded as late (L) before registers close. If they arrive after the registers close, they are recorded as unauthorised (U). A pupil who arrives after the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code.

8.5 Following up unexplained absence

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

On the First Day Absence:

- Parents/carers must give a written or verbal explanation, by ringing or emailing the school office.
- If parents have not called the office and/or their child is not present in registration, they will receive a text asking to contact the school office to explain the absence.
- If the School still does not hear from the parents, it will call all contacts listed.
- If the School fails to get a response or a satisfactory reason for absence, in line with Safeguarding procedures, we will refer to the necessary agencies.

Third Day Absence:

- If no explanation has been received, further investigation will take place, which could include a home visit or referrals to other agencies as appropriate.
- Parents are expected to ring school every day with an explanation for absence.
- We notify social services if there is an unexplained absence of more than two days of a pupil who is on a child protection plan.

Frequent Absence:

- In cases where a pupil begins to develop a pattern of absence, the school will try to resolve any concerns with parent/s.
- The Attendance Officer/Lead (part of SLT) will liaise with the Education Welfare Service or other relevant agencies to ensure necessary action is taken when incidents of poor attendance and/or punctuality are identified.
- Where incidents of poor attendance and/or lateness are identified through monitoring, parents/carers will be notified in writing that this is a cause for concern. If this continues, the School will invite parents/carers in to discuss causes and ways forward. Go to 11.3 to see how persistent/severe absence procedures.

8.6 Reporting to parents/carers

The school will inform parents about their child's attendance and absence levels three times a year alongside an assessment from Autumn term, Spring term and the final report in the summer. In addition we will update

9. Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

9.1 Approval for term-time absence

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

We define 'exceptional circumstances' as:

- Funeral of parent, grandparent or sibling – discretion will include travel to the venue, the nature of the funeral arrangements and taking into account the distance to be travelled.
- Sudden loss of housing through eviction or domestic violence- up to a maximum of 3 days.
- Serious illness of a close relative – but only if the Headteacher is satisfied that the circumstances are truly exceptional.
- Out of school programmes such as music, arts or sport operating at a high standard of achievement
- Achieving for Children/Children's Services can advise schools on individual circumstances if required.
- Time- off relating to Child Entertainment Performances, subject to a license being issued by Education Social Work Service
- Religious observance – The Education Act 1996 S444(3) (c), states "on any day exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which his/her parent belongs". This would include the Islamic Eids, as well as religious observance days of the orthodox Christian, Jewish and other religions.
- Weddings of parents and siblings – weddings can be arranged at weekends or during school holidays; however, we acknowledge that there are times when the dates are dependent on other factors, such as the needs of the couple getting married. Leave should only be authorised for this purpose when a Headteacher is satisfied that there is a persuasive reason for holding the wedding during term time. In difficult family situations the Headteacher may use his/her discretion in granting leave, for example where natural parents are separated, and in new relationships and it may cause a child further difficulty if he/she is excluded from a wedding. Each case should be addressed on its individual merits, considering the overall welfare of the child.

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

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least two weeks before the absence, and in accordance with any leave of absence request form, accessible via the school office. The headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments (see section 8.3)
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travellers, 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

9.2 Legal sanctions

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

If issued with a fine, or penalty notice, each parent must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

Penalty notices can be issued by a Headteacher, **following the procedures set out in the local authority policy, by a local authority officer or by the police.**

The decision on whether to issue a penalty notice may take into account:

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

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

10. Strategies for Promoting Attendance

The promotion of a pattern of regular attendance is the responsibility of parents, pupils, all members of school staff and the Local Governing Body.

The good attendance of a pupil contributes to the overall attendance of their class: the class with the best attendance in any given week is recognised in the newsletter and awarded a trophy. Attendance is recognized on all school reports. Class attendance is displayed in school corridor.

11. Attendance Monitoring

The school will:

- Monitor attendance and absence data half-termly, termly, and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil level
- Identify whether there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern

Pupil-level absence data will be collected each term, reported to relevant body, and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. The school will compare attendance data to the ODST and national average and share this with the Local Governing Body. Our school attendance officer will meet with the attendance lead on SLT once every term to analyse data and look at next steps.

11.1 Analysing attendance

The school will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these pupils and their families
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns
- Meet with Our school attendance officer from the local authority once every term to analyse data and look at next steps.

11.2 Using data to improve attendance

The school will:

- Provide regular attendance reports to class teachers and other school leaders, to facilitate discussions with pupils and families

- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place to modify them and inform future strategies

11.3 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.

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance

12. Attendance Policy Monitoring Arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from ODST, the local authority or the DfE is updated, and as a minimum every three years by the Headteacher. At every review, the policy will be approved by the Local Governing Body.

13. Links with other Policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- L2 ODST Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- School Behaviour Policy