

Ouston Primary School

Attendance Policy



Review Date: Summer term 2023
Reviewed by: Chair of Governors/ FGB
Next Review date: Summer term 2024

Article 28 *Every child has the right to a good quality education*

Introduction

Our aims:

At Ouston Primary School we believe pupils need to attend school regularly to benefit from their education. Central to ensuring all pupils can fulfil their potential is a focus on attendance. Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind. Children with poor attendance tend to achieve less in both primary and secondary school. We have a range of ways in which we support and reward attendance which are noted in our policy. The attendance pattern for all children is monitored with the school seeking to work actively with parents to ensure a regular pattern is maintained. We expect all children on roll to attend every day, when the school is in session as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so.

One of our basic principles is to celebrate success. Good attendance is fundamental to a successful and fulfilling school experience. We actively promote 100% attendance for all our pupils and we use a variety of weekly, termly and annual awards to promote good attendance and punctuality.

We encourage children to attend, and put in place appropriate procedures to support this. We believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is development of positive attitudes towards school and learning.

Poor attendance can seriously affect each child's:

- attainment in school
- relationships with other children and their ability to form lasting friendships
- confidence to attempt new work and to learn alongside others

Rewards for Positive Attendance

The prime benefit derived from regular attendance is that continuity and progression in learning are ensured.

Individual incentives.

Where positive impact is required, all staff in contact with the child must take extra care to welcome the child each morning, praise punctual attendance and acknowledge the effort the child has made.

It is also appropriate to recognise the effort the parent has made to secure the child's attendance.

Individual sticker rewards are sometimes employed as an additional incentive where appropriate.

Achievement of 100% attendance -

- special pen for all children achieving 100% at the end of the school year
- Outstanding achievement of 100% attendance throughout whole school career, in addition to a special pen, will also be rewarded with a book token/voucher.

A celebration of attendance with a variety of incentives - for example:

- The class with the best attendance every half term will get an additional playtime.
- The class with the best attendance all year receive an additional treat at the end of the summer term.

The Governors and Headteacher, in partnership with parents have a duty to promote full attendance at school.

Parental Responsibility

Parents/Carers have a legal duty to ensure that their child attends school regularly and arrives on time. Full attendance is essential to the all-round development of a child and they should be allowed to take full advantage of educational opportunities available to them by law. Poor attendance undermines their education and sometimes, puts pupils at risk. The school shares the attendance percentage with parents/carers at the end of the year and more frequently where there are concerns.

It is the parents' responsibility to contact the school on the first day their child is absent. This is a safeguarding matter so that all parties know that your child is safe.

Pupils are expected to arrive between 8.45 and 8.55am, when the KS/R doors are open and staff are on the yards.

- **All pupils who arrive late must report to the school office where they are registered.**
- **Children must be brought into school by an adult to sign them in and give a reason for being late.**

Illness and Medical Appointments

When a child is unwell, parents should contact the school before 9.15am on the first day of absence informing the school of the reason for absence. When a child is absent, the class teacher will record the absence in the register. As part of our Safeguarding Procedures, the school office will endeavour to contact the parent or carer and other emergency contacts if no message has been received regarding the reason for the absence to check on the safety of the child.

- a) Every effort should be made to arrange medical appointments outside school hours.
- b) An appointment card or verification by the doctor/ dentist/hospital is required.
- c) If it is necessary for a child to be out of school for this reason, the child should be returned to school directly after the appointment.
- d) If your child is absent due to vomiting, they should not return to school for **the next 48 hours** after the last bout of sickness. This is to reduce the risk of infection to other children and adults at school.
- e) For more than three days of absence the school require a written explanation of why the child was absent. The school office will request this if it is not produced.
- f) Medical certificates are required for absence greater than five days.

The Role of the School Staff

The Leadership team has overall responsibility for attendance.

Class teachers complete a register at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session. Marking the attendance registers twice daily is a legal requirement. Teachers mark pupils present, absent or late. Pupil attendance is monitored weekly to highlight and take action where the attendance of individual children is causing concern.

It is the responsibility of the School Business Manager and School Secretary to ensure that attendance and lateness records are up to date.

If no reason for absence has been provided, parents are contacted on the first day of absence and a reason obtained. Where it is not possible to make contact, a text is sent to parents requesting they telephone the school to provide reasons for absence. Until the school is notified of the reason for absence, the absence will be marked as unauthorised in line with the national attendance codes.

Attendance Bands

96%+

Excellent - Well done! This will help all aspects of your child's progress and life in school. This will give them a good start in life and support a positive work ethic.

94-95%

Average - Strive to build on this. Work with parents to continue to promote full attendance to move to 96%+

85-93%

Poor - Absence is likely to affect attainment and progress at school. The current threshold for 'persistent absenteeism' is currently 90%, and therefore our aim is to support and work with parents to prevent it reaching this point. The school will contact the parent/carer directly to seek ways of working together to improve attendance. This will include telephone contact, letter and /or parent meeting.

Below 85%

Unacceptable - Absence is causing serious concern.

At this point school works closely with parents/carers to look at the ways to improve attendance as this level of attendance is of great concern for the child's wellbeing and education. The aim at this point is to support the child, and their family, to improve attendance. By setting achievable targets, as well as support, we aim to help pupils be in the school environment. These measures include:

- Parent contracts
- Team around Family (TAF) set up where appropriate
- Target setting measures in place
- Enforcement action by the Local Education Authority
- Involvement in Stronger Families if the criteria are met

Children Missing From Education

If families move away from the area, or wish to transfer their child to another school, the Headteacher must be informed in writing. Children cannot be removed from the school roll until we have been notified by another school that a place has been offered and accepted. Children who stop attending and who cannot be traced cannot be removed from the school roll. They are reported to the local authority Attendance Service. Where a child is missing from education, Local Authority guidance will be followed.

Lateness

The class register is taken at 8.55 am and at the start of the afternoon session. Pupils arriving after these times must enter school by the main entrance and report to reception where their name and reason for lateness will be recorded. The pupil will be marked as late before registration has closed (Code 'L').

The register will close at 9.15am. Pupils arriving after the register has closed will be marked as late after registration (Code 'U') This national code counts as an unauthorised absence.

Frequent lateness is disruptive to learning, both for the child concerned and the class. Parents/carers of frequently late children will be offered a support meeting with the Headteacher /Deputy headteacher to work together to overcome the problem.

Definitions

Every half-day absence has to be classified by the school (not by the parents) as either **AUTHORISED** or **UNAUTHORISED**. This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required.

Authorised Absence

An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or carer. For example, if a child has been unwell and the parent writes a note or telephones the school to explain the absence.

Unauthorised Absence

An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the Headteacher.

Unauthorised absences are those, which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'authorisation has been given. This includes:

Parents keeping children off school unnecessarily.

Truancy during the school day.

Absences that have never been properly explained.

Holidays in term time

Authorising Absence

Only the Headteacher can authorise absence for approved reasons. The absence must be unavoidable. The Headteacher is not obliged to accept a parent's explanation and if the absence is not authorised, parents will be notified.

Authorised absence codes will only be used after there has been some communication between the parent and school. The following reasons are examples of the kinds of absence that **will usually not be authorised**:

- Persistent non-specific illness e.g. poorly/unwell
- Absence of siblings if one child is ill
- Parental illness [alternative arrangements should be made to get children to school - emergencies excepted]
- Oversleeping
- Issues with transport to school
- Inadequate clothing/uniform
- Confusion over school dates
- Medical/dental appointments of more than half a day without very good reasons
- Child's/family birthday
- Shopping trip
- Holidays in term time

What is the government perspective on attendance:

The government expects schools and local authorities to ensure attendance is a priority through the following measures:

- Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence;
- Ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled;
- 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.

Requests for absence/holidays:

Holidays in term time are strongly discouraged as this leads to disruption in a child's education. In the vast majority of cases, holidays in term time will not be authorised. Any requests must be submitted on a Leave of Absence request form and only in **exceptional** circumstances will this be granted. Exceptional circumstances include:

- The funeral of a close relative
- The wedding of a close relative
- Absences for other important religious observances are often taken into account but only for the ceremony and travelling time, not extended leave. This is intended for one off situations rather than regular or recurring events.
- Taking the needs of the families of service personnel into account if they are returning from long operational tours that prevent contact during scheduled holiday time and there is evidence that the parent concerned will not be in receipt of leave in the near future within school holidays.
- Families needing time together to recover from trauma or crisis.

The school will consider each request of absence individually; taking into account the circumstances, such as; the nature of the event for which leave is sought, the pupil's prior attendance and any important events taking place in school at that time e.g. termly tests.

It is important to note that head teachers can determine the length of the authorised absence as well as whether absence is authorised at all. Any examples

provided are illustrative rather than exhaustive. The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are rare, significant, unavoidable and short. And by 'unavoidable' we mean an event that could not reasonably be scheduled outside of school hours/term dates.

In most cases, evidence will be requested

If a child is absent from school for a holiday, homework will not be issued.

You can be fined for taking your child on holiday during term time without the school's permission.

Ouston Primary School follow Durham County Council's Fixed Penalty Notice Protocol which acknowledges that regular and punctual attendance at school is both a legal requirement and essential for pupils to maximise their educational opportunities.

Circumstances where a Penalty Notice might be issued include unauthorised leave of absence in term time, or other parentally condoned absence where the absence amounts to **seven school days or more in a minimum twelve rolling school week period**. You can be prosecuted if you receive a fixed penalty notice and it is not paid.

Under the Education Act 1996, parents commit an offence if they fail to ensure their child's regular school attendance. Taking a child out of school for a leave of absence without permission, and where the absence amounts to seven school days or more of unauthorised absence in a minimum twelve week rolling term is viewed as failing to ensure your child's regular attendance at school.

Payment of a Penalty Notice, where offered, is an alternative to prosecution. If unpaid, prosecution for the Education Act offence may therefore ensue. A fixed penalty notice will be issued to **each person with parental responsibility** for the child / children who is deemed liable for the offence / offences.

What does the law say and what do we have to do?

This advice summarises the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance and explains how they apply to local authorities, head teachers, school staff, governing bodies, pupils and parents.

These requirements are contained in:

- The Education Act 1996 - sections 434(1)(3)(4)&(6) and 458(4)&(5)
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2010
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2011
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013