

# Oakington C of E Primary School



## Attendance Policy

May 2019

Review Date: May 2021

## Aims:

- To improve the achievement of pupils through attendance at school.
- To achieve an attendance target of 96% or above.
- To work closely with the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) to monitor the attendance of children and respond to concerns about levels of absence promptly.
- To encourage parents/carers not to take their children out of school during the term time.

## Purpose:

Oakington C of E Primary School wants each and every child to have the best possible attendance at school to enable them to reach their full potential. There is a strong link between good school attendance and achieving good results for children. Children who frequently miss school may fall behind in their work which may affect their future prospects. Absence may also have an effect on friendships. Young people who are frequently absent from school are more likely to become involved in or be a victim of crime and anti-social behaviour. At the school we work closely with families to support them to achieve the best possible outcomes for our children.

## Promoting Good Attendance:

Good attendance will be celebrated on a weekly basis. Every week the class with the best attendance will be presented with a certificate identifying their attendance percentage for the previous week. Classes will compete for the highest attendance and receive points which can be exchanged for prizes at the end each term. Every half term we will hold an attendance ceremony. Pupils that have achieved 100% attendance receive a certificate.

For pupils with an attendance below 96% over 8 weeks, a letter will be sent home. The letter will report their attendance figure and asks parents/carers to be mindful of their child's attendance rate. In addition, parents/carers will be offered the opportunity to talk to the Headteacher or SENCo about their child's attendance as a means of support. For guidance, 1 session or a half days absence from school equals 2.44%.

## Monitoring Attendance:

### A. Registration

The school bell rings at 8.50am and between 8.50am and 9.00am pupils arrive in their classroom when the teacher will take the class register and mark pupils with an attendance code / and \ for pupils who are present. Afternoon registers close at 1.20pm. If a pupil is not present in the classroom they will be marked with an attendance code 'N'. The exception is if the teacher is aware the pupil has a medical appointment 'M', or knows the pupil is unwell 'I'.

A pupil who arrives at school after 9.00am but before 9.20am will be marked with the late code 'L' and pupils arriving after 9.20am will be marked as 'U', late after registers close.

Every morning and afternoon, office staff will follow up any 'N' codes or missing codes to find out from parents/carers why a pupil is not in school. Any concerns will be brought to the headteacher's attention.

### Registration Codes

|   |  |   |   |
|---|--|---|---|
| Λ | Present                                | O | Unauthorised absence                    |
| C | Other authorised circumstances         | P | Approved sporting activity              |
| D | Dual registration                      | R | Religious observance                    |
| E | Excluded                               | T | Traveller absence                       |
| G | Family Holiday (not authorised)        | U | Late                                    |
| H | Family Holiday (authorised)            | V | On school trip/visit                    |
| I | Illness                                | X | Non-compulsory absence                  |
| L | Slightly late (before registers close) | Y | Absence due to exceptional circumstance |

|   |                             |   |                       |
|---|-----------------------------|---|-----------------------|
| M | Dentist/medical appointment | Z | Pupil not yet on roll |
| N | No reason yet for absence   | # | School closed         |

Attendance records are legal documents and kept for three years from the date they were used.

## **B. School Intervention Procedure for Poor Attendance**

### **The Letter System:**

#### **Introduction:**

The letter system is intended to enable schools and colleges continuously and consistently to monitor and address poor school attendance. The system offers schools the opportunity to target non-attendance methodically and progressively up to and including the point at which a referral to the Education Welfare Service may be necessary. The system is based on two model letters which schools can send to parents/carers when there are concerns about any emerging patterns of absenteeism.

It is intended to apply essentially to absence which is unauthorised, but with some modification (and appropriate rewording of the letters) it might in certain circumstances be used to target patterns of absence which are authorised but which are beginning to cause concern. Schools should, however, decline to continue to authorise such absences once doubts arise as to their legitimacy.

#### **Key Features and Potential Benefits:**

Headteacher/SENCo can focus on the attendance of all pupils at least once a fortnight.

Headteacher/SENCo can quickly and easily identify those pupils whose attendance is becoming a cause of concern.

In most cases Letter 1 brings about a rapid improvement in attendance and no further action is required.

The system provides a clear record of the school's own efforts to improve attendance should it subsequently be necessary to involve the Education Welfare Service.

As the Education Welfare Service 'School Attendance' leaflet is sent with all letters, parents are made aware of the existence and role of the Education Welfare Service prior to any subsequent involvement should this prove necessary.

The school can readily identify emerging attendance problems and therefore target support accordingly.

The school builds up a consistent record of their own attendance interventions and is able to ensure that when they do need to involve the Education Welfare Service they do this only when their own efforts have proved unsuccessful.

1. The school produces a record of attendance every fortnight for all pupils whose attendance has fallen beneath 96%.
2. These pupils are discussed fortnightly, looking for emerging trends and patterns. Families are targeted by the SENCo for support. A family worker is made available if lateness and attendance continues to be an issue.

#### **Stage 1 - Letter 1**

1. For those pupils who have been identified for the first time, a copy of Letter 1 (Appendix 1) together with a copy of the Education Welfare Service 'School Attendance' leaflet is sent to the parents/carers (and copied to the Education Welfare Officer).

2. Should the pupil's attendance improve but the improvement fail to be sustained, a further copy of Letter 1 may be sent at a later date or if felt necessary, Letter 2 (Appendix 2) may be sent.
3. This is recorded by saving a copy of the letter in the absence letters folder on the network. The file name indicating Name, Letter Type and Date. A record of each letter sent is kept in the attendance folder and on MyConcern.

### **Stage 2 - Letter 2**

4. Following the sending of Letter 1, should the pupil's attendance fail to improve, or should it fall to a lower level, a copy of Letter 2 (Appendix 2), together with a copy of the Education Welfare Service 'School Attendance' leaflet is sent to the parent (and copied to the Education Welfare Officer).
5. This letter will give a date for an attendance meeting (schools contract meeting) between the parents/carers and Headteacher and/or SENCo. During the meeting areas of concern will be discussed, support offered and smart targets must be set for improved attendance. If parents/carers do not attend the meeting, the school will send a target letter home. Medical evidence will need to be provided for all future absences for the following 8 weeks. Attendance must be over 90% for the following 8 weeks.
6. This is recorded by saving a copy of the letter in the absence letters folder on the network. The file name indicating Name, Letter Type and Date. A record of each letter sent is kept in the attendance folder and on MyConcern.

### **Stage 3**

1. Following the sending of Letter 2, should the pupil's attendance fail to improve and 8 sessions are recorded unauthorised with 90% or under attendance, parents/carers will be liable for a Penalty Notice. If this is not paid the Education Welfare Officer can refer the case to court.

Before issuing a Penalty Notice, the school will deploy other strategies to help the family improve attendance rates. Such strategies might include:

- writing to the child's parents/carers to remind them of their legal responsibilities
- meeting with the child's parents/carers; first day absence phone calls;
- setting targets for improvement;
- involvement of other services/agencies
- if a family continue to take leave of absence without authorisation by the Headteacher, then a Penalty Notice Letter will be issued.

2. This is recorded by saving a copy of the letter in the absence letters folder on the network. The file name indicating Name, Letter Type and Date. A record of each letter sent is kept in the attendance folder and on MyConcern.

## **C. Leave of Absence during Term Time**

### **Introduction**

A minority of parents/carers continue to cause disruption to their children's education by withdrawing them from school during term-time for the purpose of a family holiday. Many of these parents mistakenly believe that they have a 10-day holiday 'entitlement'. This is compounded by holiday companies offering out-of-season (i.e. outside of school holidays) bargains.

Absence during term-time as a result of term-time holidays interrupts continuity of teaching and learning, disrupts the educational progress of individual children and creates disruption in schools. Oakington C of E Primary School therefore aims to discourage parents from arranging family holidays during term time.

Whilst it is acknowledged that for some parents/carers the issue of choosing when to arrange annual family holidays may be problematic due to particular working patterns and particular restrictions on when leave can be taken in some occupations, Oakington C of E Primary School nevertheless believes that the vast and overwhelming majority of parents/carers should be able to arrange for their annual family holiday to take place within the published dates for school holidays.

It is recognised that some parents/carers may persist in taking their children out of school for the purposes of a family holiday regardless of the view and response of their child's school. Oakington C of E Primary School intends to make a clear statement regarding the issue of term-time holidays, to positively and proactively ensure that the amount of teaching and learning time lost to term-time holidays is, as a result, minimised.

### **Guidance for Parents/Carers**

A child does not have a 'right' or 'entitlement' to term-time leave for the purposes of an annual family holiday and that term-time leave, like all leave, can only be authorised at the discretion of the Headteacher and must be considered exceptional.

Parents/carers should understand that any request for leave of absence in term-time leave will be treated on an individual basis. Decisions to authorise absence will be based on individual family circumstances. The school will **not**, as a rule, agree to leave of absence during term time. In all cases, absence will not be authorised unless the Exceptional Leave of Absence form has been completed by parents/carers (appendix 3) and the Headteacher deems the circumstance to be exceptional.

In line with government policy, any parent/carer who takes a child out of school for term time leave for 3 consecutive days (6 consecutive sessions) or more, not authorised by the school may receive a Penalty Notice. Such cases will have to be supported by evidence of previous unauthorised term time leave 3 consecutive days (6 consecutive sessions) taken in the last 3 years.

Oakington C of E Primary School will communicate the details of leave of absence taken in term time through:

- the school's overall attendance policy;
- the school brochure;
- school newsletters;
- translations into community languages as necessary;
- parent induction evenings/parents' evenings.

Oakington C of E Primary School will use an application for 'Exceptional Leave of Absence' form. Occasionally parents take their children on holiday without requesting a leave of absence. If the school suspect that this has happened a suspected holiday letter will be sent (Appendix 4).

### **School Response**

Oakington C of E Primary School will make clear to parents/carers the likely educational impact upon their children if extended leave is taken during term-time. The importance of being at school near and during SATs will also be stressed.

## **D. Persistent Lateness**

It is the duty of parents/carers to ensure that children attend school regularly and punctually. This encourages habits of good timekeeping and lessens any possible classroom disruption. The school gates open at 8.50am and the registers close at 9.00am. If a child arrives at school after 9.20am this will affect their attendance rate as they were absent at registration. This applies in all cases for being late, including travel delays.

The Headteacher will meet with parents of those children who are regularly late arriving at school to investigate reasons and suggest solutions to enable more punctual attendance.

If there is no improvement in punctuality then a late letter (Appendix 5) will be sent.

Signed:  Nathan Clark ..... (Headteacher)

Date: 02.05.2019 .....

Signed: ..... (Chair of Governors)

Date: .....

# APPENDIX 1

## Letter 1

Dear...

Re: Attendance Information for «First\_Name»

As you may be aware as a headteacher one of the roles I have is to monitor attendance carefully. The government benchmark for attendance is a minimum of 90% with the attendance of over 96% considered to be good.

I am writing to advise you that xxx's school attendance is causing concern as it has fallen to xxx during the period from xxx to xxx. As a result we are becoming concerned that xxx is missing a significant part of learning.

I have enclosed a copy of xxx's attendance record which shows an analysis of attendance, punctuality and whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.

Regular attendance is extremely important as missing school can have an impact on learning and I am sure you are aware it is a legal requirement. Good attendance enables students to keep up with the work required.

No child can ever help being ill and there are often extenuating circumstances but we will continue to monitor xxx's attendance over the next few weeks and I look forward to seeing an improvement. If there are any particular circumstances that the school may not be aware of which is having an influence on xxx attending school regularly, please do not hesitate to contact the school office or speak to your child's class teacher.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher

cc: Education Welfare Officer

Enc: Record of Attendance & School Attendance Leaflet

## APPENDIX 2

### Letter 2

Dear...

Re: Attendance Information for «First\_Name»

I am writing to inform you that xxx's attendance is still causing concern. We are very worried that continued poor attendance is affecting xxx's progress and we need to meet with you urgently.

You are required to attend a meet with either myself or the SENCo to discuss this matter further at the date and time below:

Date:

Time:

Should xxx's attendance remain irregular, the Local Authority may be requested to take more formal action. This could result in a Penalty Notice and/or prosecution through the Magistrates Court for failing to ensure regular school attendance of your child under Section 444 Education Act 1996, and a fine of up to £2500 and/or 3 months in prison.

Medical evidence is now required for any future absences to be authorised with immediate effect.

We look forward to meeting you to discuss any concerns you may have so we can continue to support our students in making good progress and I hope that you will work with us to improve xxx's attendance and therefore avoid the need for legal proceedings to be implemented. If you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact me on the above number.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher

cc: Education Welfare Officer

Enc: Record of Attendance & School Attendance Leaflet

## APPENDIX 3

### REQUEST FOR EXCEPTIONAL LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Please complete this form and return it to the school office giving as much notice as possible. Please note that holidays in term time will not be authorized by the school. If you choose to take a child on holiday during term time, it will be recorded as an 'unauthorised absence' in the register.

| <b>To be completed by the parent/carer:</b> |                      |
|---|----------------------|
| Name of child:                              | Class:               |
| First day of absence:                       | Last day of absence: |
| Total number of days:                       |                      |
| Reason for absence:                         |                      |
|   |                      |
| Name of parent/carer:                       | Date:                |

#### **NOTE TO PARENTS/CARERS**

The law does not grant parents/carers an automatic right to take their children out of school during term time. If the request is for an absence in term time you must have Parental Responsibility and be the parent/carer with whom the child normally lives. Permission must be sought in advance.

**Warning:** If the school refuses your request and the child is still taken out of school, this will be recorded as an unauthorised absence. Any parent who takes a child out of school for at least three consecutive school days or more, may be liable to a Penalty Notice\* for each child, payable by each parent/carer, or the subject of court proceedings which could result in a fine.

\*Penalty Notice £60 if paid within 21 days, increasing to £120 if paid after 21 days and before 28 days.

## APPENDIX 4

### Suspected Holiday Letter

Dear...

I am writing with regards to <pupil's name> absence from school from <date> to <date>.

From information received from other sources, we believe that the absence was due to a family holiday. This means that you have not followed the correct procedure for requesting leave of absence during term time. Please note that we understand that for a range of reasons, families are compelled to book a holiday in term time. However, government guidelines indicate that leave of absence can only be granted in exceptional circumstances. We urge that families are truthful regarding their intentions.

We would be grateful if you could confirm the reason for the absence within 7 days of the date of this letter so this period can be recorded appropriately on the attendance register. However, if the absence was not due to a family holiday and it was due to illness, please provide medical evidence to support this.

If we do not hear from you within the next 7 days, <pupil's name> absence will be recorded as 'G' denoting an unauthorised family holiday.

If unauthorised absences are recorded a Penalty Notice can be issued by the Local Authority to each parent/carer in respect of each child who is absent from school. However, if a Penalty Notice is not issued, your child's attendance will be monitored and this, along with any further unauthorised absences, would be discussed with you which may lead to legal action being taken under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 if the attendance fails to improve.

Yours sincerely,

Headteacher

cc: Education Welfare Officer

Enc: Record of Attendance & School Attendance Leaflet

## APPENDIX 5

### Late Letter

Dear ...

Re: «First\_Name»

As part of my role as headteacher I am expected to review both attendance and lateness to ensure that children have the very best opportunity to succeed at school.

I have noted during a recent attendance review that your child is beginning to show a pattern of persistent lateness.

I am sure that you will be aware that it is the duty of parents/carers to ensure that children attend school regularly and punctually. This encourages habits of good timekeeping, lessons and possible classroom disruption and ensures that children are present for the start of lessons so that they do not miss anything.

I will continue to monitor over the next few weeks and hope to see an improvement.

Please note that if your child arrives after registers close this will be recorded as an unauthorised absence.

If you are experiencing any difficulties regarding your child's education, I would welcome the opportunity of meeting with you to discuss this.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher

cc: Education Welfare Officer

Enc: Record of Attendance & School Attendance Leaflet