

# Oak Hill C of E Primary School

## Attendance Policy

This policy was written in consultation with staff and governors

Agreed by Governors: 18 September 2017

Review Date: September 2020



Having a good education helps children have the best possible start in life. At Oak Hill School we want to ensure that our pupils are able to take the fullest possible advantages of all that we have to offer. We aim to work in partnership with parents and guardians to ensure that attendance at school by each child on roll is regular and punctual.

### RESPONSIBILITIES

Parents/carers should:

- Make sure their child attends school regularly and on time, appropriately dressed and equipped and in a fit state to learn.
- Let the school know if they are having difficulty with attendance so that any available help or support can be offered.
- Let the school know, by telephoning the office before 9a.m, on the first day of absence from school, why their child is absent and when they are expected to return. They should then phone the school on each day of absence to ensure the school is kept updated.
- Seek permission from school prior to any absence that is not medical.
- Not take their child on holiday during term-time.
- Notify school if they intend to remove their child permanently from the school for any reason.

School will:

- Make suitable arrangements for the safe, daily reception of children.
- Be consistent in their attendance practices.
- Keep and mark registers accurately.
- Follow up any unexplained absences.
- Notify parents/carers, at least annually, of their child's attendance level.
- Notify the Children and Young People's Directorate (CYPD) of pupils who have poor attendance, leave school to be educated at home, go missing, or are excluded.
- Notify the CYPD and/or the Department for Education (DfE) of absence figures for the school and, where necessary, individual pupils.

The Head Teacher will:

- Ensure that everybody at school treats attendance as a priority.
- Promote the importance of good attendance to pupils and their parents/carers.
- Be available to discuss attendance concerns with pupils, parents, staff and governors.
- Remind parents at least annually of attendance procedures.
- Analyse attendance data.
- Oversee attendance procedures.

Governors will:

- With the Head Teacher, monitor, evaluate and review the attendance procedures regularly.
- Set targets for attendance.

## REGISTRATION

School must keep attendance registers for all pupils on the school roll. The class teacher will call the register twice a day and every pupil will be marked as present, absent or engaged in an approved educational activity away from the school site. It must be shown, by the use of approved codes, whether an absence is authorised or not.

Absence, legally, has to be recorded as either authorised or unauthorised and reported on to the CYPD and DfE. Only school can decide whether an absence is authorised or not and does not have to accept the reasons given by a parent or carer.

Registers are taken twice daily at 8.50 am and 1.15 pm.

Registers close at 9.30 am and 1.30 pm. Children arriving after school starts but before 9.30 am will receive an 'L' in a circle to indicate lateness. Children arriving after registers close will receive an 'O' and an explanation will be required from parents.

If children frequently arrive late (e.g. once a week) the time they arrive will be recorded and the matter discussed with the parents.

Children sent home for any reason must be recorded at the time of leaving.

If a child is ill the parent **must** contact the school on the first day of the child's illness, by 9.30 am. Parents must tell the school why the child is not attending and are asked to phone the school or tell the teacher in person. If a message is given directly to the teacher or secretary by the parent, a 'note of absence' slip will be filled in by the person taking the message. This will then be placed in the register.

Acceptable absences are illness, dental/medical appointments, music exams, family bereavement or trauma, religious festivals or religious holidays. Shopping trips, visits to theme parks etc. during school hours are **not** considered as justified absence.

Any unexplained absence will be followed up by a phone call on the first day.

## UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE

Is when:

- A pupil is absent and no explanation or an unacceptable explanation is offered;
- A pupil arrives after the registration period has closed without an acceptable reason;
- A pupil is away from school on a family holiday for a period not previously agreed with the head teacher.

## HOLIDAYS IN TERM TIME

In 2013 The Department for Education amended the Education Regulations regarding attendance and we were advised that **no child may take holidays during term time**, unless the Head Teacher deems there to be exceptional circumstances.

Exceptional circumstances are:

1. Children whose parents/carers are in the armed forces.
2. Children whose parents/carers are dictated by their employer as to when they can take holidays e.g. police, fire service or working for a company that closes between certain dates. (These requests will however need to be accompanied by a letter from the employer as to why the family can only take a holiday during said dates term time).
3. A child with a parent/carer or sibling who has a life limiting/changing illness. (This request will need to be accompanied by a letter from a medical professional working with the family or the request will not be seen as exceptional. The request will not be deemed as exceptional if it is the illness of other extended family members).

Any parent taking a child on holiday that has not been deemed an exceptional circumstance may be expected to be referred to the Local Authority for a Fixed Penalty Notice. This could result in a fine to both parents/carers of £60 if paid within 21 days or £120 if paid between the 21<sup>st</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> day. If the fine is not paid, the Local Authority would then proceed to court for the criminal offence of non-school attendance under section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

A Warning Letter will be issued to the parents/carers who have day-to-day care and responsibility to inform them that: **'Under the Education Act 1996, parents and carers have a duty to make sure their children regularly attend school. If parents or carers fail to do this, they can be prosecuted.'**

An Educational Welfare Officer is employed by the CYPD to monitor school attendance and help parents meet their responsibilities. The E.W.O. checks registers and any concerns noted by the teachers and Head Teacher are reviewed with them who will then take the appropriate action.

## THE LAW

The law says that:

- Parents of children of compulsory school age are required to ensure that their children receive suitable full time education;
- That the CYPD must ensure that parents fulfil their legal obligations regarding their children's education;
- Schools must allow the CYPD to inspect their registers
- Schools must report to the CYPD on (most) pupil absences that are not authorised. Recent Penalty Notice protocol requires schools to notify the LA of any pupil having more than 5 days (10 sessions) of unauthorised absence in a thirteen week period particularly when this absence is on account of:
  - (a) Lateness after registration;
  - (b) Term time holidays without permission
  - (c) Avoidable absence e.g. visiting relatives, birthday treats, tiredness after a late night etc.

In these instances the CYPD will consider issuing a fixed penalty notice of £50 after only one warning. Unauthorised absence may lead to the CYPD taking full court action if attendance issues cannot be resolved.

## **Child Protection**

We use this attendance policy to support the school's ongoing work to safeguard the pupils. Attendance information can form an important part of child protection proceedings. The school's Early Help Offer (see Oak Hill's Offer of Early Help and Child Protection and Safeguarding policy) may require attendance information to be used to judge the requirement for intervention/support.