

Attendance Policy

Old Park School

Person Responsible:

Headteacher (Miss J Colbourne)

Date of Policy:

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Last Updated:

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Approved by FGB:

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July 2022



1. Introduction

1.1 Good attendance helps the pupils in our school community to maximise their learning. At Old Park School, we recognise that good attendance is central to raising standards and pupil progress. Consequently, we are committed to promoting excellent levels of attendance in order to enable our pupils to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them.

1.2 We acknowledge and understand that for some pupils who attend Old Park School, in particular those with complex medical needs, attending school fulltime may not be possible or in their best interest. Where this is the case, School works proactively with families and our nursing team to identify and implement educational provision appropriate to their needs. Further information will be found in our 'Children with health needs who cannot attend school' policy.

1.3 Under the Education (Pupil Registration)(England) Regulations 2006, the governing body is responsible for making sure the school keeps an attendance register that records which pupils are present at the start of both the morning and the afternoon sessions of the school day. This register will also indicate whether an absence was authorised or unauthorised.

1.4 This policy is written in conjunction with the DfE guidance 'School attendance - Guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities'.
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/818204/School_attendance_July_2019.pdf

2. Definitions

2.1 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 guardian. For example, if a child has been unwell and the parent telephones the school to explain the absence.
- It can also be authorised when the school has given approval in advance for a pupil to be absent. Only the school may authorise an absence.

Authorised absences can include the following:

- Illness
 - Medical appointments
 - Religious festivals (parents are requested to notify the school in advance)
 - Dual registration
 - Off-site education
 - Exclusion
- Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents do not have this authority. Consequently not all absences supported by parents will be classified as authorised. For example, if a parent takes a child out of school to go shopping during school hours, this will not mean it is an authorised absence.

2.2 Unauthorised absence

- An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of both the school and a parent.
- Therefore the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

3.1 The Headteacher will oversee and co-ordinate the school's work in promoting regular and good attendance. The school is responsible for the accurate recording and monitoring of attendance and that the policy is consistently used. The Headteacher will ensure that issues are identified as quickly as possible so that support can be offered and put in place prior to attendance becoming an issue.

3.2 Parents/Carers

We ask parents to -

- Ensure their child attends school regularly and is properly equipped and in a fit state to learn every day that school is open
- Ensure that their child is punctual at the start of the school day
- Notify the school of any absences by 9.15am
- Provide the school with up to date contact details and telephone numbers for every adult with parental responsibility. If contact details change then we must be informed of new details within 24 hours
- Complete a 'Leave of Absence' request form for any time required off school that is not due to illness or medical appointments i.e. exceptional circumstances. This must be made in writing (using the application form available from the school office) to the Headteacher 15 days in advance of the proposed start date of the absence.
- Collect their child on time
- Work with the school to improve matters if attendance becomes an issue

3.3 Class Staff

We ask class staff to –

- Set a good example of punctuality and attendance
- Ensure that registers are taken at the appropriate times, are accurate and up to date
- Monitor class and individual attendance patterns
- Inform Headteacher/Phase Leader of any concerns about attendance or where attendance is impacting on a pupils' achievements or well-being
- Discuss individual pupil attendance at parent-teacher consultations
- Praise pupils for good punctuality and attendance

3.4 SLT/SMT

We ask the Senior Leadership/Management to –

- Have an identified member of SLT responsible for attendance – Headteacher
- Ensure that all school personnel, parents and governors are aware of this policy
- Set clear and challenging attendance targets as part of school self-review
- Monitor trends and arrange for letters to be sent to parents when required
- Provide targeted intervention and support for families where their child has been highlighted as having poor attendance
- Utilise the support of available specialists in relation to attendance if required including the Education Investigation Service (EIS)
- Report to the Governing body attendance figures and trends

3.5 Administration Staff

We ask the administration staff to –

- Make first day calling for children absent without explanation
- Call all numbers on the contact list in order until receiving an answer
- Leave a voice message, if there is a voicemail option
- Notify SLT if an overseas ring tone is noted and no leave of absence has been requested. This may result in EIS being contacted in line with Children Missing in Education procedures
- Monitor late entrants into school and adjust Integris accordingly along with the time of arrival
- Forward phone messages to class teachers regarding absences and record reasons on Integris
- Monitor register coding and alert staff of inconsistencies
- Produce reports as requested by EIS
- Produce attendance figures for termly reports
- Update/notify SLT of any concerns

4. Registration

4.1 Registers are completed by class teachers at 9.00am in the morning. Primary registers are completed at 12.45pm in the afternoon. Secondary and Post 16 registers are completed at 1.15pm, passing onto admin staff.

4.2 All pupils are then entered onto the Integris information management system by the school office administrative team.

4.3 Pupils are marked late if they arrive more than 15 minutes after these times (L). Registers are officially closed half an hour after these times and pupils are then marked as 'Unauthorised absence' (U) if they arrive later during the session, unless an acceptable authorised reason is given. All late arrivals must report to the school office.

5. If a Child is Absent

5.1 The parent will:

- Notify the school by telephone as soon as possible to the start of the school day by calling the main office on 01384 818905. Parents may leave a message on the answerphone in the first instance.
- Give a reason for the absence.
- Give the expected return date.
- Provide, on request, evidence of medical appointments – such as a hospital or dentist appointment letter/card.
- Parents should not pass messages about an absence through their child's transport escort.

5.2 The class teacher will:

- Class teacher will record the absence in the register.
- When a pupil is absent and there have been issues raised through Team Around the Child logs on CPOMS or during family support meetings in regards to potential causes for concern i.e changes to home circumstances, sudden disengagement with school, high levels of unexplained absence, then a priority call list form must be completed by the teacher or other nominated member of staff.

5.3 The school office staff will:

- Record any telephone notifications of absence from parents on the Integris system.
- If notification is not received, telephone parents/carers by 10am on the first day of absence and record the outcome of the call. A priority call list will include concerns raised by class staff and those pupils for whom attendance has fallen below 85%.
- Maintain regular contact with parents/carers throughout the pupil's absence.
- Keep written notification from parents/carers on file.
- Write to parents/carers requesting a reason for absence if it has not been provided.
- Record any absences as authorised or unauthorised according to current DfE guidelines.

6. Requests for leave of absence

6.1 We believe that where possible children need to be in school for all sessions, so that they can make the most progress possible. However, we do understand that there are circumstances where a parent may wish to request leave of absence for a child to attend, for example, a significant event. We expect parents to contact the school at least 15 days in advance. Consideration will be given but leave is only granted in exceptional circumstances. What is exceptional is at the Head teacher's discretion.

6.2 Requests for authorised 'Leave of Absence' will not usually be approved if:

- the child's attendance in the previous school year was less than 90%
- the child's attendance at the time of the request is less than 90%

Parents/Carers will be informed of the school's decision as soon as possible.

6.3 Parents do not have the right to withdraw their children from school for up to ten days for an annual holiday. Since September 2013 there have been significant changes to attendance regulations for pupils at school. The Department for Education has instructed thus:

'Amendments to the 2006 regulations remove references to family holiday and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days. The amendments make clear that Head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.' It is upto the Head teacher to decide what constitutes 'exceptional circumstances'. In this context it shall mean significant emotional, educational, cultural and/or spiritual value to the child or children, which outweigh(s) the loss of teaching time. It will be important to review each case individually and parents and carers who wish to request annual leave for 'exceptional circumstances' should apply in writing to the Head teacher.'

6.4 All staff are trained and made aware about possible reasons for extended absence from school. One of these could be Female genital mutilation (FGM), which is a form of child abuse common to some African, Asian and Middle Eastern communities in the UK. The age at which girls are subject to FGM varies greatly from shortly after birth to any time up to adulthood. Victims are usually aged between four and ten, primary school age. It is illegal in the UK to subject a child to female genital mutilation (FGM) or to take a child abroad to undergo the procedure – Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003.

Any information or concern that a child is at immediate risk of or has undergone FGM or forced marriage will result in a child protection referral under school procedures to the Designated Senior Person in the first instance and then to Children's Social Care Services and/or the Child Protection Team, West Midlands Police Service. Records of all incidents will be kept following the same procedure as for all other child protection concerns in school in line with current policy.

Please note that teachers and members of staff with teaching responsibilities have a specific legal duty to act with regards to concerns about female genital mutilation and must personally report to the police a disclosure that FGM has been carried out, in addition to liaising with the DSL/Children's social care.

6.5 'Religious Observance' requests will usually be granted for a maximum of three days during a year for, "a day exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parent belongs" (Pupil Registration Regulations 2006). These days should relate to significant festivals in the relevant faith calendar. Again, the school will decide whether or not to authorise requests and cases will be considered on their individual merits. Parents/Carers will be informed of the school's decision as soon as possible.

7. Persistent Absence

7.1 Since 2015 'a pupil enrolment is identified as a persistent absentee if they miss 10% or more of their possible sessions' as defined by the DfE. Based on this definition, 2017/2018 national data reported that 23.1% of pupils with SLD and 44.6% of pupils with PMLD were classed as persistently absent.

7.2 At Old Park School we monitor attendance rates at 95%, 90% and 85%, with each case being reviewed based on individual circumstances.

7.3 When concerns have been raised the school's first course of action is to contact the parents to see if there are specific problems, either at home or in school, that can be easily remedied. Old Park School's Family Support Worker is available to support this process. The attendance rate is then monitored by the school and if attendance improves significantly no further action is taken. If the problems persist then the Headteacher (with the support of the Education Investigation Service if appropriate) will consider other strategies.

7.4 The school uses the statutory EIS provision to respond to significant 'Unauthorised' absence concerns. There is a 'tiered' system of interventions, leading up to legal proceedings, to protect the pupil's educational development. Attendance concerns may result in a referral to the Education Investigation Service and an Education Investigation Officer may make a home visit.

7.5 An overview of the monitoring and intervention processes can be found in Appendix 2.

8. Rewards for Good Attendance

8.1 All the children who have 100 per cent attendance each half term receive an attendance sticker, awarded in the phase well done assembly. A letter is also sent to parents. We also recognise those pupils with the most improved attendance within each phase.

9. Collection and Use of Data

9.1 Schools are legally required to record pupil attendance information, and to report absences accurately to the DfE. At Old Park School we utilise the RM Integris attendance module to record this information. All information is processed in line with GDPR and school data retention schedules. The school will keep accurate attendance records on file for a minimum period of three years.

This policy will be reviewed every two years, or earlier if considered necessary.

J.Colbourne

April 2020

Appendix 1 - Absence and Attendance Codes

The national codes enable schools to record and monitor attendance and absence in a consistent way which complies with the regulations. They are also used for collecting statistics through the School Census System. The data helps schools, local authorities and the Government to gain a greater understanding of the level of, and the reasons for, absence. The codes are:

Present at School

Registration Code / \: Present in school / = am \ = pm

Pupils must not be marked present if they were not in school during registration. If a pupil were to leave the school premises after registration they would still be counted as present for statistical purposes.

Present in school during registration.

Code L: Late arrival before the register has closed

Schools should have a policy on how long registers should be kept open; this should be for a reasonable length of time but not that registers are to be kept open for the whole session. A pupil arriving after the register has closed should be marked absent with code U, or with another absence code if that is more appropriate.

Present at an Approved Off-Site Educational Activity

An approved educational activity is where a pupil is taking part in supervised educational activity such as field trips, educational visits, work experience or alternative provision. Pupils can only be recorded as receiving off-site educational activity if the activity meets the requirements prescribed in regulation 6(4) of the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006. The activity must be of an educational nature approved by the school and supervised by someone authorised by the school. The activity must take place during the session for which the mark is recorded.

Attendance codes for when pupils are present at approved off-site educational activity are as follows:

Code B: Off-site educational activity

This code should be used when pupils are present at an off-site educational activity that has been approved by the school. Ultimately schools are responsible for the safeguarding and welfare of pupils educated off-site. Therefore by using code B, schools are certifying that the education is supervised and measures have been taken to safeguard pupils. This code should not be used for any unsupervised educational activity or where a pupil is at home doing school work. Schools should ensure that they have in place arrangements whereby the provider of the alternative activity notifies the school of any absences by individual pupils. The school should record the pupil's absence using the relevant absence code.

Code D: Dual Registered - at another educational establishment

This code is not counted as a possible attendance in the School Census. The law allows for dual registration of pupils at more than one school. This code is used to indicate that the pupil was not expected to attend the session in question because they were scheduled to attend the other school at which they are registered. The main examples of dual registration are pupils who are attending a pupil referral unit, a hospital school or a special school on a temporary basis. It can also be used when the pupil is known to be registered at another school during the session in question. Each school should only record the pupil's attendance

and absence for those sessions that the pupil is scheduled to attend their school. Schools should ensure that they have in place arrangements whereby all unexplained and unexpected absence is followed up in a timely manner.

Code J: At an interview with prospective employers, or another educational establishment
This code should be used to record time spent in interviews with prospective employers or another educational establishment. Schools should be satisfied that the interview is linked to employment prospects, further education or transfer to another educational establishment.

Code P: Participating in a supervised sporting activity
This code should be used to record the sessions when a pupil is taking part in a sporting activity that has been approved by the school and supervised by someone authorised by the school.

Code V: Educational visit or trip
This code should be used for attendance at an organised trip or visit, including residential trips organised by the school, or attendance at a supervised trip of a strictly educational nature arranged by an organisation approved by the school.

Code W: Work experience
Work experience is for pupils in the final two years of compulsory education. Schools should ensure that they have in place arrangements whereby the work experience placement provider notifies the school of any absences by individual pupils. Any absence should be recorded using the relevant code.

Authorised Absence from School

Absence codes when pupils are not present in school are as follows:

Code C: Leave of absence authorised by the school
Only exceptional circumstances warrant an authorised leave of absence. Schools should consider each application individually taking into account the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind the request.

Code E: Excluded but no alternative provision made
If no alternative provision is made for a pupil to continue their education whilst they are excluded but still on the admission register, they should be marked absent in the attendance register using Code E. Alternative provision must be arranged for each excluded pupil from the sixth consecutive day of any fixed period or permanent exclusion. Where alternative provision is made they should be marked using the appropriate attendance code.

Code H: Holiday authorised by the school
Head teachers should not grant leave of absence unless there are exceptional circumstances. The application must be made in advance and the head teacher must be satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances based on the individual facts and circumstances of the case which warrant the leave. Where a leave of absence is granted, the head teacher will determine the number of days a pupil can be away from school. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the head teacher's discretion.

Code I: Illness (not medical or dental appointments)
Schools should advise parents to notify them on the first day the child is unable to attend due to illness. Schools should authorise absences due to illness unless they have genuine cause

for concern about the veracity of an illness. If the authenticity of illness is in doubt, schools can request parents to provide medical evidence to support illness. Schools can record the absence as unauthorised if not satisfied of the authenticity of the illness but should advise parents of their intention. Schools are advised not to request medical evidence unnecessarily. Medical evidence can take the form of prescriptions, appointment cards, etc. rather than doctors' notes.

Code M: Medical or dental appointments

Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorized absence. Schools should, however, encourage parents to make appointments out of school hours. Where this is not possible, the pupil should only be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary for the appointment.

Code R: Religious observance

Schools must treat absence as authorised when it is due to religious observance. The day must be exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parents belong. Where necessary, schools should seek advice from the parents' religious body about whether it has set the day apart for religious observance.

Code S: Study leave

Schools must record study leave as authorised absence. Study leave should be used sparingly and only granted to Year 11 pupils during public examinations. Provision should still be made available for those pupils who want to continue to come into school to revise.

Code T: Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence

A number of different groups are covered by the generic term Traveller – Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers.

This code should be used when Traveller families are known to be travelling for occupational purposes and have agreed this with the school but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision. It should not be used for any other types of absence by these groups. To help ensure continuity of education for Traveller children it is expected that the child should attend school elsewhere when their family is travelling and be dual registered at that school and the main school. Children from these groups whose families do not travel are expected to register at a school and attend as normal. They are subject to the same rules as other children in terms of the requirement to attend school regularly once registered at a school.

Unauthorised Absence from School

Unauthorised absence is where a school is not satisfied with the reasons given for the absence. Absence codes are as follows:

Code G: Holiday not authorised by the school or in excess of the period determined by the head teacher.

If a school does not authorise a leave of absence for the purpose of a holiday but the parents still take the child out of school, or the child is kept away for longer than was agreed, the absence is unauthorised. The regulations do not allow schools to give retrospective approval. If the parents did not apply for leave of absence in advance, the absence must be recorded as unauthorised.

Code N: Reason for absence not yet provided

Schools should follow up all unexplained and unexpected absences in a timely manner. Every effort should be made to establish the reason for a pupil's absence. When the reason for the pupil's absence has been established the register should be amended. This code should not be left on a pupil's attendance record indefinitely; if no reason for absence is provided after a reasonable amount of time it should be replaced with code O (absent from school without authorisation).

Code O: Absent from school without authorisation

If the school is not satisfied with the reason given for absence they should record it as unauthorised.

Code U: Arrived in school after registration closed

Schools should actively discourage late arrival, be alert to patterns of late arrival and seek an explanation from the parent.

Administrative Codes

The following codes are not counted as a possible attendance in the School Census:

Code X: Not required to be in school

This code is used to record sessions that non-compulsory school age children are not expected to attend.

Code Y: Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

This code can be used where a pupil is unable to attend because:

- The school site, or part of it, is closed due to an unavoidable cause; or
- The transport provided by the school or a local authority is not available and where the pupil's home is not within walking distance; or
- A local or national emergency has resulted in widespread disruption to travel which has prevented the pupil from attending school.

This code can also be used where a pupil is unable to attend because:

- The pupil is in custody; detained for a period of less than four months. If the school has evidence from the place of custody that the pupil is attending educational activities then they can record those sessions as code B (present at approved educational activity).

This code is collected in the School Census for statistical purposes.

Code Z: Pupil not on admission register

This code is available to enable schools to set up registers in advance of pupils joining the school to ease administration burdens. Schools must put pupils on the admission register from the first day that the school has agreed, or been notified, that the pupil will attend the school.

Code #: Planned whole or partial school closure

This code should be used for whole or partial school closures that are known or planned in advance such as: between terms; half terms; occasional days (for example, bank holidays); weekends (where it is required by the management information system); up to five non-educational days to be used for curriculum planning/training; and use of schools as polling stations.

Appendix 2 – Attendance Monitoring

The following sequence illustrates the monitoring and intervention procedures followed by the school:

Daily Monitoring

1. Morning and afternoon register entries by class teacher
2. Received absence messages noted on register log in Integris
3. Daily register check for uninformed absences
4. Priority call list actioned
5. 1st day of absence if no message: Phone parent/carer. Leave message if no reply. Send parentmail
6. 2nd day of absence if no message: Phone parent/carer. Phone emergency contacts if no reply
7. If no contact made, consider school home visit/seeking advice from MASH team
8. If a message is received, enter it into log and update register code

SLT Monitoring

1. Headteacher to complete monthly analysis of attendance data
2. Discussion with class teachers/family support/health about pupils where there are concerns or where attendance has declined
3. Discussion with office staff about parental compliance with school policy
4. Priority list data shared with school personnel as appropriate
5. Headteacher to complete half termly analysis of attendance data
6. Parental letters sent – 100% attendance, monitoring, improvement
7. Actions updated on CPOMS for monitoring
8. Attendance stickers presented to pupils
9. Discussion/report to Governors for review

EIS Involvement

If 12 'Unauthorised' sessions in the last 6 school weeks, or 10 consecutive days absence without contact from Parent/Carer, a referral will be made to the EIS for statutory involvement.

Prior to the referral to Education Investigation Services:

- School will inform parents of their child's attendance progress in writing, offering them to contact the school to discuss reasons impacting on their attendance.
- If there has been no improvement, the school will write to parents informing them that a referral to Dudley Council, EIS will be made and may result in a Fixed Penalty Fine or legal action if unauthorized absences continue to occur.