

Attendance Policy for Students including Leave of Absence during Term Time¹

1. Introduction

- 1.1. OSH has high expectations of students and is committed in enabling them to achieve their full potential. Students need to attend regularly to benefit from their education and to gain full advantage from the range of opportunities available to them, both inside and outside the classroom.
- 1.2. We aim to foster a calm, orderly, safe and supportive environment and a vibrant, welcoming and inclusive community which encourages students to come to school, to learn and develop as a person, and become resilient, confident and competent young people.

2. Improving attendance

- 2.1. Everyone needs to know that regular school attendance is the key to enabling students to maximise the educational and wider opportunities available to them and that irregular attendance undermines this and can lead to students falling behind in their studies and to educational disadvantage.
- 2.2. It should also be clearly understood that improving attendance benefits more than just the student concerned because absence affects not only their learning, social interaction and participation in the wider curriculum, it also affects the education of fellow students because of the inevitable need for teachers to spend additional time with students who have missed work. The School has a duty to educate all of its students therefore it is essential to minimise the disruption to the school day and extra-curricular programme.
- 2.3. Improved school attendance can only be achieved if staff, governors, parents, students and the wider school community take shared responsibility for making it better.
- 2.4. Parents have a duty to ensure that their children receive suitable full time education whilst they are of compulsory school age.² If this is in a school they have the responsibility, primarily, to ensure that their children attend school every day and promote good attendance behaviour in their children. However, the School has a responsibility to support attendance and to investigate and take seriously any problems that may lead to poor or non-attendance so we:
 - Will make sure our students and their parents know that we have high expectations of attendance and that our values and ethos can help create an inclusive and caring learning environment.
 - Will educate our students to understand the benefits of coming to school and the impact not coming to school has on them and on others.
 - Have built into our expectations of student conduct, a behaviour curriculum that builds orderly routines and the expectation that students should make it easy for everyone to learn so for example, the importance of prompt attendance to each lesson so that planned teaching can be delivered in that period.
 - Will encourage students and families to engage with us to identify barriers to attendance that a student may face, listen to them and work with them to find how these may be overcome.
 - Will follow up any concerns we have over the reason for an absence.

¹ In accordance with the relevant provisions of the Education Act 1996 and the Education (Pupil Registration)(England) Regulations 2006 as amended.

² A child is of Compulsory School Age at the beginning of the term following their 5th birthday. A child ceases to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday in June of the school year in which they reach the age of 16.

- Maintain the School's high expectations with regard to attendance for all of our Sixth Form students even though post-16 education is non-compulsory because this is a whole school policy and we expect the older students to become good role models for those lower in the school and, irrespective of age, educational and wider curriculum advantage can only be gained if a student attends.
- Recognise that there will be exceptional circumstances in which parents³ will need to request leave of absence for their child, although it is expected that a request for leave of absence will be an exception rather than a routine occurrence.
- Expect all of our staff, including volunteers, to understand the importance of attendance for promoting student learning, welfare and well-being and to be responsible for modelling good attendance behaviours themselves and implementing this policy.
- Will use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance so we can try to address them before they become entrenched.
- Will consider the reasons or potential reasons where absence becomes more persistent and look how support can be provided to address issues or break down barriers rather than reaching immediately for punitive approaches because we understand that schools can be a place of safety and support for children who might be facing difficulties.
- Recognise that where absence becomes severe these students may find it more difficult to be in school or face bigger barriers to their regular attendance and as such are likely to need more intensive support across a range of partners.
- Will signpost and support students and parents to access any required services and, or, make referrals to services and organisations that can provide support where appropriate.
- Will work with relevant agencies and partners, share information and work collaboratively where appropriate.
- Are committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare and well-being of our students. The School has a Safeguarding Policy in place and its procedures will be followed where children go missing from education, particularly on repeat occasions, or where certain patterns of absence emerge, to help identify the risk of abuse and neglect and to help prevent the risks of their going missing in future.⁴
- Will ensure that in accordance with the School's Equality and Diversity Policy there must be no differentiation between students in the application of the Attendance Policy on the basis of any of the protected characteristics and we will, as far as possible, determine strategies and make reasonable adjustment to help children with more challenging circumstances or disabilities be able to attend school.

2.5. Attendance is a whole school priority as part of the school's behaviour curriculum. The Second Deputy, Mrs Jane Epton, (jlepton@oshsch.com), oversees attendance and does this together with the DSL, Mr Clive Kay, (ckay@oshsch.com) where safeguarding concerns arise.

2.6. Applications for planned leave and reporting of unplanned leave are set out in section 4 below.

2.7. Complaints arising under this Policy will be dealt with through the School's Complaints Policy.

2.8. This Policy is written in conjunction with DfE guidance⁵ and the Schools policies on Safeguarding and on Behaviour.

³ Any reference to parents includes carers and guardians

⁴ Keeping Children Safe in Education (September 2022)

⁵ Working together to improve school attendance, May 2022, effective September 2022

3. Registration

3.1. Registration times are:

	<u>Morning School</u>	<u>Afternoon School</u>
Registration	08.30	13.50
Registers close	08.50	14.10

3.2. Registration is taken promptly. Students who are late or miss registration must report to Reception before joining their class.

4. Recording Attendance

4.1. Attendance register

- The School will keep and maintain both an admission register and an attendance register in the prescribed format and include the required information for all students, regardless of their age, on both of them.
- Attendance will be recorded in the register by Tutors at morning registration. Afternoon registration for Years 7-11 will be taken by class teachers before the start of period 5. For Years 12-13 afternoon registration will be taken at the end of period 4.
- Attendance and absence will be categorised and recorded in accordance with DfE guidance⁶ and using the codes as set out in Appendix A. Where an entry in the attendance register is amended the original entry must remain. Reasons for the amendment should be clearly recorded including when the amendment was made and by whom.
- Registration will also be taken for each lesson period by class teachers via Satchel One.
- Attendance during any period of remote learning will be similarly monitored.
- Student's names will remain in the attendance register unless and until there is reason to delete the student's name from the admission register. Grounds for deletion are prescribed by regulation⁷ which the School will follow.
- Parents are asked to keep the School informed of any change of address, contact details and, where applicable, with which parent the student will normally be living with so that the information in the admissions register remains current.
- Attendance records are maintained on the School's information management system (SIMS) and retained for a period in accordance with regulation.

4.2. Absence

- Authorised absence means that the School has either given approval in advance for a student of compulsory school age to be away, or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as justification for absence.
- All other absence will be unauthorised.
- Parents are asked to note the forthcoming dates of terms, half terms and out weekends carefully and to make travel arrangements in good time to avoid possible requests for permission to leave early at the end of a term or return late at the beginning of a term.
- As far as possible, parents should try to book medical and dental appointments outside of school hours.

4.3. Unplanned absence (e.g. illness):

- The student's parents must notify the School of any unplanned absence, the reason for absence and an expected date of return by 08:30 on the first morning of absence. This can be done by

⁶ Working together to improve school attendance, May 2022, effective September 2022

⁷ Regulation 8 of the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006

emailing reception@oshsch.com or by calling the absence line on 01384 817300 and leaving a message.

- Where absence is for a prolonged period of more than three days, parents should write to the Housemaster, or for day students, to their Head of Year, explaining the reasons for absence, as soon as possible after a student's return to School.

4.4. Planned absence

- For a known absence (e.g. a pre-booked doctor's appointment/music examination/university interview) students must present a parental note or evidence of the appointment to their Housemaster, or for day students, to their Head of Year with a completed exeat form. We ask for at least 24 hours' notice. Exeats for permission to miss school for these reasons may be granted by Housemasters/Heads of Year after seeking advice from the Second Deputy, Deputy Headmaster and Headmaster, where appropriate. Only the Headmaster can give leave of absence which involves missing lessons other than for routine medical reasons.
- In very exceptional circumstances, where it is in a student's best interests, there may be a need for a temporary part-time timetable to meet their individual needs (for example, where a medical condition prevents them from attending full-time education). This will be reviewed at regular intervals with the aim of bringing the student back into full time education where possible. In agreeing to a part-time timetable, the School will have agreed to the student being absent from school for part of the week or day and the period of absence will then be treated as authorised absence.
- Attendance at an approved supervised off-site educational activity or taking part in a field trip or doing approved work experience for example, where the activity takes place in a school session and is supervised by someone authorised by the school, will be an authorised absence.
- Taking part in a sporting activity that has been approved by the school, where the activity takes place in a school session, may be an authorised absence however, the final decision on approving the activity rests with the Headmaster who will take into account the effect on the student's general education in making his decision.
- Section 5 explains applications for leave of absence.

4.5. Lateness and punctuality

- Where a student has arrived at school late and after registers have closed, and the School is not satisfied the reason for lateness is an authorised absence, the attendance is recorded as 'U' (Late after registers have closed).
- The School's Rules in the Behaviour Policy are clear that students should attend all lessons, activities and meals, arriving punctually and with the correct equipment. Prompt attendance is not only polite but will help make it easy for everyone to access the planned teaching in that session.
- Through the School's behaviour system students are aware that their actions have consequences and being late, without good reason, is a reason for a teacher to issue a sanction in accordance with that policy.

4.6. Following up unexplained absence

- Any unaccounted absences of boarding students are referred back to Housemasters who investigate and report back to Reception who update the registers.
- Any unaccounted absences of day students are followed up with Tutors, the Head of the Day House, and/or parents as appropriate, from which information Reception update the registers.
- Students recorded as being in school but who do not turn up at lessons will be reported, via 'Satchel One', and followed up.

5. Applications for Leave of Absence

- Applications for leave of absence should be applied for in advance by the parent who the student normally lives with.
- In accordance with the September 2013 amendment to The Education (Student Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 headteachers no longer have the discretion to authorise holidays during term time. Parents should plan their holidays around school breaks and avoid seeking permission from schools to take their children out of school during term time unless it is absolutely unavoidable.
- Leave during term time is granted entirely at the Headmaster's discretion and will only be authorised:
 - In exceptional circumstances, for example bereavement or serious family illness. Each application for a leave of absence will be considered individually taking into account the specific facts and the circumstances and relevant background context behind each request.
 - Where the application is for leave of absence for a student to undertake employment during school hours for the purpose of taking part in a performance⁸ for which the student has been granted the appropriate licence or other relevant approval by the Local Authority for that performance and the Headmaster is satisfied that this will not have a negative effect on the student's education.
 - For other valid reasons which may include:
 - Religious observance where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the student and their parents belong.
 - Traveller students who are travelling for occupational purposes.
 - Maternity leave for a student who is pregnant.
- Where a leave of absence is granted, the Headmaster will determine the number of days the student can be absent from school.
- Study leave will not be granted once tuition of the exam specification is complete as a general rule but may be granted for eligible school Years at the sole discretion of the Headmaster. Where study leave is not granted the School will offer in-school study programmes and revision space to reduce absence levels. Where study leave is granted the School will still offer revision support and space for those who want to continue to come into school.
- If term time leave is not granted, taking a student out of school will be recorded as an unauthorised absence. Leave of absence cannot be granted retrospectively.

6. Monitoring and Reporting Attendance

6.1. Monitoring

- The School will follow up all unexplained and unexpected absence. They will do this by following up all unexplained absence at morning and afternoon registration and, for those students registered as present at registration, they will also follow up any unexplained absence when taking 'Satchel One' during each teaching period.
- Attendance data is a key element in our attitude to learning KPI's and this is regularly reported to parents.
- Attendance and absence data and reasons for absence are analysed regularly to identify and then provide targeted support and interventions to students that need it, engaging with their parents in seeking to improve their attendance.

⁸ Within the meaning of section 37 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1963

- Particular attention will be paid to monitoring:
 - Both persistent⁹ and severe¹⁰ absence
 - Absences of students in vulnerable cohorts or who have protected characteristics
- Patterns of absence, unauthorised absence or recurring absences are investigated by a senior staff member¹¹ who liaises with parents. Historic and emerging patterns across the school are considered and, where needed, strategies are developed and employed to address these. Outside agencies are involved as appropriate.
- We will use absence and attendance data to evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place and to inform future strategies.

6.2. Reporting

- The School will comply with the requirements of the Local Authority for providing the prescribed notification and information within the set timeframes:
 - On adding a student's name to the admission's register.
 - On deletion of a student's name from the school register.
 - For students with irregular attendance or unauthorised absence for a period of 10 days or more.
 - On receiving notification to home educate.
- Attendance reports are shared with pastoral and tutor teams, including the SENCO and DSL where necessary, to facilitate discussion with students and encourage engagement and co-operation.
- Data and reports are produced as required and at least annually for the Governing Body.

7. Sanctions

- 7.1. Students who are persistently absent may lose their right to be entered for examinations in the School.
- 7.2. Students who are late to lessons without good reason may be sanctioned in accordance with the School's Behaviour Policy.
- 7.3. The School will work together with other relevant partners to understand the barriers to attendance and provide support and interventions. Where this is not appropriate or not successful or is not engaged with, the law protects the rights of students of compulsory school age to an education and provides a range of legal interventions to formalise attendance improvement efforts, and where all other avenues have been exhausted, this can be enforced through prosecuting parents.
- 7.4. As an alternative to prosecution and to prevent the need for court action, parents may be served a fixed penalty notice if it is thought that this would change attitudes and behaviour towards absence and secure regular attendance. Any decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice, will be made on an individual case by case basis and 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 a student is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason during the first five days of a suspension or permanent exclusion.

We will engage with parents and relevant partner organisations, as far as we reasonably can, to avoid any such action becoming necessary.

⁹ Persistent absence - 10% or more of sessions missed, based on each student's possible sessions

¹⁰ Severe absence - those missing 50% or more of school

¹¹ This may be a Deputy Head (including an acting deputy or second deputy), the Head of Sixth Form, or, depending on the particular case, another nominated member of staff.

Attendance Codes, Descriptions & Meanings

Code	Brief Description	Statistical Meaning	Legal Meaning
Present			
/\	Present in school: / = am \ = pm	Present	Present
L	Late (Before registration closed)	Present	Present
B	Off-site educational activity (Approved off-site educational activity but NOT dual registration. This code is NOT to be used for any unsupervised educational activity)	Approved educational activity	Attending approved educational activity
D	Dual registration (Use this code to indicate that the student was not expected to attend the school because they were scheduled to attend the other school at which they are registered)	Approved educational activity	Attending approved educational activity
J	Interview with a prospective employer or another educational establishment	Approved educational activity	Attending approved educational activity
P	Participating in an approved and supervised sporting activity	Approved educational activity	Attending approved educational activity
V	Attending an approved organised educational visit or trip	Approved educational activity	Attending approved educational activity
W	Work experience (Approved placements)	Approved educational activity	Attending approved educational activity
Authorised absence			
C	Leave of absence authorised by the school	Authorised absence	Absent
E	Suspended or excluded and no alternative provision made	Authorised absence	Absent
H	Holiday approved by the school	Authorised absence	Absent
I	Illness (NOT medical or dental appointments)	Authorised absence	Absent
M	Medical/dental appointments	Authorised absence	Absent
R	Religious observance	Authorised absence	Out for whole session
S	Study leave	Authorised absence	Absent
T	Traveller absence (Parent travelling for occupational purposes and the school has granted a leave of absence following a request from the parent. This code is NOT be used to record any other types of absence by these groups)	Authorised absence	Absent
Unauthorised absence			
G	Holiday NOT authorised by the school or in excess of the period agreed	Unauthorised absence	Absent
N	No reason yet provided for absence (Update to correct code within 5 days when reason established unless nor reason is established when it should be changed to Code O)	Unauthorised absence	Absent

Code	Brief Description	Statistical Meaning	Legal Meaning
O	Unauthorised Absence (Not covered by any other code/description or school not satisfied that the reason given is an authorised absence)	Unauthorised absence	Absent
U	Late (After registration closed and school not satisfied that the reason for lateness is an authorised absence)	Unauthorised absence	Absent
X	Not required to be in school (Non-compulsory school-age absence)	Not counted in possible attendances	Absent
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances (Closure or partial closure, widespread travel disruption, student in custody)	Not counted in possible attendances	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances
Z	Prospective student not yet on roll (To enable registers to be set up in advance of students joining the school)	Not counted in possible attendances	Student not registered at the school
#	School closed to students (Planned whole or partial school closure)	Not counted in possible attendances	No session held or not attending because the students have a different school year to other students in the school.