

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 and work together to make 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 build strong relationships that 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 2024.

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.
- Facilitate any relevant pastoral support for students with medical conditions, where practicable, with the clear aim of improving attendance as much as possible whilst supporting the underlying health issue.
- 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, so as to help identify the risk of abuse and neglect, or mental health issues for example. Early intervention is essential to identify any underlying safeguarding risk and to help prevent the risks of their going missing in future.⁴
- Will determine strategies and consider adjustments to help meet the needs of students who are struggling to attend school as well as make reasonable adjustment under section 20 of the Equality Act 2010 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 Deputy Headmaster, Mr Clive Kay, (ckay@oshsch.com) oversees attendance and does this together with the DSL, Director of Safeguarding, Ms Clare Howes, (chowes@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 2024)

⁵ Working together to improve school attendance, August 2024

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.
- The attendance register will record which students are present, which are attending an approved educational activity, which are absent and which are unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.
- 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.
- We will have arrangements in place whereby the provider of any approved, organised and supervised off-site activity, notifies the school of any absence by a student engaged in that activity.
- 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 Edulink.
- 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 regulation⁸.

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.

⁶ Working together to improve school attendance, August 2024

⁷ Regulation 10 of the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024

⁸ Currently 6 years but may be longer where they are part of pupil records or for a reason such as related to safeguarding

- 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 via Edulink.
- Where absence is for a prolonged period of more than three days, parents should note this on Edulink, together with the expected date of return.

4.4. Planned absence

- For a known absence (e.g. a pre-booked doctor's appointment/music examination/university interview) parents must submit the details and attach evidence of the appointment on Edulink. We ask for at least 24 hours' notice. Exemptions for permission to miss school for these reasons may be granted by Housemasters/Heads of Year after seeking advice from the Assistant Head; Quality of Teaching & Learning/Head of Sixth Form, 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, musical or similar 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 'EduLink', and followed up.

5. Applications for Leave of Absence

- Applications for leave of absence should be made in advance by the parent who the student normally lives with.
- Leave during term time is restricted⁹ to specific circumstances and these are:
 - Taking part in a regulated performance or employment abroad
 - Attending an interview for entry into another educational institution or for future employment
 - Study leave for public examinations but not internal examinations such as mocks
 - A temporary, time-limited part-time timetable
 - Exceptional circumstances
- Leave 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 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 performance¹⁰ 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.
 - Mobile students whose families are travelling for occupational purposes.
 - Maternity leave for a student who is pregnant.
- The following are not considered acceptable reasons for absence in school hours:
 - Holidays
 - Attending leisure and other recreational events, whether participating or spectating, and this includes attending non-participating sporting or musical events or similar
 - Taking part or supporting any form of protest
 - Travel to any of the above
- 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.

⁹ Regulation 11 of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024

¹⁰ Within the meaning of section 37 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1963

6. Monitoring and Reporting Attendance

6.1. Monitoring

- The School will follow up all unexplained and unexpected absence. They will do this after morning and afternoon registration and, for those students registered as present at registration, they will also follow up any unexplained absence when taking registers 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 attendance.
- Particular attention will be paid to monitoring:
 - Persistent,¹¹ severe,¹² prolonged or repeated absence
 - Absences of students in vulnerable cohorts or who have certain protected characteristics
- Patterns of absence, unauthorised absence or recurring absences are investigated by a senior staff member¹³ 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

- 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.
- The School will comply with the requirements of the Local Authority and the DfE for providing the prescribed notification and information within the set timeframes. Data sharing is explained further in Section 8 below.

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 voluntary support has not been effective and/or has not been engaged with we will work with the Local Authority to put formal support in place. 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 such as attendance contracts or education supervision orders, issuing a notice to improve and/or a penalty notice on parents, intensifying support through statutory children's social care where there may be safeguarding concerns and where all other avenues have been exhausted, or are not deemed appropriate, this can be enforced through prosecuting parents. We will engage with parents and relevant partner organisations, as far as we reasonably can, to avoid any such action becoming necessary.

¹¹ Persistent absence - 10% or more of sessions missed, based on each student's possible sessions

¹² Severe absence - those missing 50% or more of school

¹³ 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.

8. Data Sharing¹⁴

- Schools are required to work with local authorities and other local partners and share data on individual cases where it is of benefit to the student, such as with relevant health services, social workers or in some cases the police.
- Local authorities are expected to hold regular Targeting Support Meetings and have conversations with schools, using their attendance data, to identify students and cohorts at risk of poor attendance and agree targeted actions and access to services for those students.
- To facilitate timely collaborative working across partners, all schools are also legally required to share information from their registers with the local authority, and as a minimum this will include:
 - New pupil and deletion returns when a child's name is added to or deleted from the school admission register outside of standard transition times.
 - Attendance returns, providing the names and addresses of all students of compulsory school age who fail to attend school regularly or have been absent for a continuous period of ten school days where their absence has been recorded with one or more of the codes statistically classified as unauthorised (G, N, O, and/or U).
 - Sickness returns, providing the full name and address of all students of compulsory school age who have been recorded with code I (illness) and who the school has reasonable grounds to believe will miss 15 days consecutively or cumulatively because of sickness.
- Local authorities may seek, and schools are expected to provide, more frequent or comprehensive sharing of data than the statutory minimum where it is essential to fulfilling their obligations under the Education Acts and the expectations set out in statutory guidance¹⁵
- The law also allows local authority officers access to the attendance and admission registers of all types of schools to carry out their functions under the Education Acts to support joint working between schools, trusts and local authorities. These officers are also permitted to take digital or physical extracts.
- As a state funded school, we must also provide specific student information, including attendance data, on request to the Secretary of State.¹⁶

¹⁴ Education (Information about Individual Pupils) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2024.

¹⁵ Working together to improve school attendance, August 2024

¹⁶ Sharing daily pupil attendance data Guidance for schools, academy trusts, local authorities and management information system (MIS) suppliers. April 2024 explains the statutory right to collect this data

Attendance Codes, Descriptions & Meanings

Code	Brief Description	Statistical Meaning
Attending the school		
/ \	Present at the school: / = am \ = pm	Attending
L	Late arrival before the register is closed	Attending
Attending a place other than the school		
K	Attending education provision arranged by the local authority <i>This differs from attending provision arranged by the school rather than the local authority – they are codes P or B instead</i>	Attending an approved educational activity
V	Attending an educational visit or trip <i>Attending a place, other than the school or any other school at which they are a registered pupil, for an educational visit or trip arranged by or on behalf of the school and supervised by a member of school staff</i>	Attending an approved educational activity
P	Participating in a sporting activity <i>Attending a place for an approved educational activity that is a sporting activity, that takes place during the session for which it is recorded</i>	Attending an approved educational activity
W	Attending work experience <i>Approved and supervised placements</i>	Attending and approved educational activity
B	Attending any other approved educational activity <i>Approved and supervised educational activity that is not a sporting activity or work experience that takes place during the session for which it is recorded</i>	Attending an approved educational activity
Absent - leave of absence		
C1	Leave of absence for the purpose of participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad	Authorised absence
M	Leave of absence for the purpose of attending a medical or dental appointment <i>If present at registration but then leaves the school to attend a medical or dental appointment during the session in question, no absence needs be recorded for that session</i>	Authorised absence
J1	Leave of absence for the purpose of attending an interview for employment or for admission to another educational institution	Authorised absence
S	Leave of absence for the purpose of studying for a public examination	Authorised absence
X	Noon-compulsory school age pupil not required to attend school <i>Where their timetable does not require them to attend</i>	Not a possible attendance
C2	Leave of absence for a compulsory school age pupil subject to a part-time timetable <i>Not to be used for a student in full time education but only part time in this school</i>	Authorised absence
D	Dual registered at another school <i>The law allows a student to be registered at more than one school - 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</i>	Not a possible attendance
C	Leave of absence for exceptional circumstances	Authorised absence
Absent – other authorised reasons		
T	Parent travelling for occupational purposes <i>Parent travelling for occupational purposes and the school has granted a leave of absence - code is not be used to record any other types of absence by these groups</i>	Authorised absence
R	Religious observance	Authorised absence
I	Illness (not medical or dental appointments) <i>Unable to attend due to illness (both physical and mental health related)</i>	Authorised absence

Code	Brief Description	Statistical Meaning
E	Suspended or permanently excluded <i>Suspended or permanently excluded from school on disciplinary grounds, but their name is still entered in the admission register, and no alternative provision has been made for them to continue their education</i>	Authorised absence
Absent - unable to attend school because of unavoidable cause		
Q	Unable to attend the school because of a lack of access arrangements <i>Only used where absent because the local authority has a legal duty to arrange home-to-school travel and they have not done so, or because the student has no choice but to attend a school that does not qualify for such travel arrangements and is more than walking distance from where they live</i>	Not a possible attendance
Y1	Unable to attend due to transport normally provided not being available <i>Unable to attend because the school is not within walking distance of their home and the transport to and from the school that is normally provided for the student by the school or local authority is not available.</i>	Not a possible attendance
Y2	Unable to attend due to widespread disruption to travel <i>Widespread disruption to travel caused by a local, national, or international emergency</i>	Not a possible attendance
Y3	Unable to attend due to part of the school premises being closed	Not a possible attendance
Y4	Unable to attend due to the whole school site being unexpectedly closed <i>e.g. adverse weather</i>	Not a possible attendance
Y5	Unable to attend as pupil is in criminal justice detention <i>Unable to attend the school because they are in police detention or remanded to youth detention, awaiting trial or sentencing, or detained under a sentence of detention</i>	Not a possible attendance
Y6	Unable to attend in accordance with public health guidance or law <i>Well enough to attend but there are Government rules or guidance to limit the spread of infection or disease which say they should not attend.</i>	Not a possible attendance
Y7	Unable to attend because of any other unavoidable cause <i>An unavoidable cause, that is not covered by one of the other 'unable to attend' codes detailed above, is preventing the pupil from attending the school and the unavoidable cause must be something that affects the pupil, not the parent.</i>	Not a possible attendance
Absent - unauthorised absence		
G	Holiday not granted by the school	Unauthorised absence
N	Reason for absence not yet established <i>Update to correct code within 5 days when reason established unless no reason is established when it should be changed to Code O</i>	Unauthorised absence
O	Absent in other or unknown circumstances <i>Where no reason for absence is established</i>	Unauthorised absence
U	Arrived in school after registration closed <i>Arrived late after the register has closed but before the end of session</i>	Unauthorised absence
Administrative codes		
Z	Prospective student not yet on roll <i>To enable registers to be set up in advance of students joining the school</i>	Not collected for statistical purposes
#	Planned whole school closure <i>Whole school closures that are known and planned in advance such as days between terms, occasional days such as bank holidays and use of the whole school as a polling station</i>	Not collected for statistical purposes