

Oak Farm Primary School

Attendance Policy



OAK FARM
PRIMARY SCHOOL

Approved by: Oak Farm School GB

Date: September 2023

Last reviewed on:
November 2022

Next review due by: September 2024

Introduction

At Oak Farm Primary School, attendance and punctuality are very high priorities. We want motivated enthusiastic learners who get to school on time, ready to learn and who thus establish good habits for lifelong learning. For our children to take full advantage of the educational opportunities offered it is vital your child is at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. The routines children develop around attendance and punctuality at school are the same as the expectations of any future employer in the world of work. High attainment, confidence with peers and staff, and future aspirations depend on good attendance.

Parents and carers have a legal responsibility to make sure that children come to school regularly and on time. The schools have a legal duty to mark the register and record the attendance of every child on its roll and to specifically code which children are absent or late and why. There is now a statutory requirement that schools publish statistics about their attendance rates. We have challenging targets set each year against both local and national averages. The schools submit attendance data to Hillingdon each month.

Good attendance is important because:

- statistics show a direct link between under-achievement and absence below 96%
- regular attenders make better progress, both socially and academically
- regular attenders find school routines, school work and friendships easier to cope with
- regular attenders find learning more satisfying
- regular attenders are more successful in transferring between primary school, secondary school, and higher education, employment or training.

The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the school, parents and the child.

Absences fall into two groups: authorised and unauthorised.

Authorised absences

Authorised absences involve children having time out of school for approved reasons, for example: illness, urgent medical appointments, attendance at funerals, religious observance or visits to new schools.

- The school will need an explanation from parents or guardians if they are to authorise the child's absence. For an illness absence parents are required to call the school and leave a message confirming the name of the child and the specific type of illness. For any other absence an application in writing must be completed for the Headteacher to review
- Children suffering from sickness or diarrhoea should be kept at home for 48 hours following the last bout of illness
- Absences are then coded appropriately in the register.
- Absences can only be approved by the school, not by the parents. The school is not obliged to accept the offered explanation as a valid reason for absence. If there are doubts about the explanation offered or there is no explanation offered, the absence will be treated as unauthorised.
- Parents and carers are expected to make every effort to arrange routine dentists and GP appointments outside school hours. However, it is understood that specialist hospital or clinic appointments may have to be made during school hours.

Exceptional authorised leave

Parents who wish to take their children out of school for any other reason during school time are asked to make this request to the Headteacher, in writing. It is important to make the request in good time – at least two weeks - **before the period of requested leave**. The Headteacher can only consider a request if it is made by a parent with whom the child normally resides. Each request for exceptional leave will be considered as a separate case and the Headteacher's decision will take into account the following:

- The reason for the leave and why it could not be taken in school holidays;
- The number of days requested;
- Previous requests for leave during term-time;
- The child's attendance and punctuality record
- The age of the child;
- The time of year proposed for the trip;
- The child's stage of education, any additional needs they may have, their current attainment and level of progress and any impact the leave will have on their learning

In addition:

- It is widely known that the link between a pupils' attendance and attainment is irrefutable.
- Early poor attendance habits follow through into secondary school and employment.
- Graduates earn, on average, double that of young people that leave school with no qualifications.
- All Hillingdon schools are encouraged to adopt a policy of not authorising leave unless for reasons the Headteacher deems Exceptional.
- The attendance officer will have a discussion with every family applying for Exceptional Leave to stress the importance of good school attendance habits and links between attendance and attainment.
- Exceptional Leave will always be refused in Year 2 and Year 6.
- Exceptional leave will always be refused when a pupil's attendance is less than 96%.
- Exceptional leave will always be refused when school is aware of any truancy.
- Exceptional leave will always be refused when requests are regular (annual) or when patterns become identifiable.
- The school may request proof of travel arrangements to confirm when bookings were made.

What are unauthorised absences?

Unauthorised absences involve children having time out of school without explanation, or where the reason for absence is one that the school cannot authorise, for example: shopping trips, birthday celebrations, baby-sitting for younger children, tiredness, late night due to family celebration, not realising a term had started or because other members of the family are ill.

If the Headteacher does not authorise exceptional leave in term time, and it is still taken this is always classified as unauthorised. Parents/carers of pupils who have a period of five or more days unauthorised absence are liable to receive a fixed penalty notice of £60 per parent per child to be paid within 21 days or £120 per parent per children if paid within 28 days. If the penalty is not paid in full by the end of the 28-day period the Local Authority must prosecute the recipient for failing to ensure regular school attendance under section 444 Education Act 1996.

Routines for managing and improving attendance

Parents are asked to telephone the school before 9.30 to inform staff that their child will not be attending and give a reason for absence. Parents are required to contact the school for every day of their child's absence.

If a child is not in school, a member of the school office staff will contact parents before 11.00am to establish why the child is not in school. If we have not heard from you after three days of absence we will email you and write to the main home address if we do not receive a response via email.

Notes of phone calls received and made are kept on SIMs.

It is ultimately up to the Headteacher's discretion as to whether or not to authorise an absence. Letters will be sent to all parents of children whose attendance figure is below 96%. The letter reminds parents of their responsibility in ensuring their children attend regularly and punctually. Letters are also sent each half term to parents of children who are consistently late arriving at school or have sustained periods of illness absence.

Routines for managing Persistent Absences

Children whose attendance is below 90% are considered Persistent Absentees:

If a child's attendance falls below 96% parents will be sent a letter advising them that their child's attendance is being closely monitored by the school.

If a child's attendance still continues to decline and falls below 92% parents will be sent a 2nd letter inviting them to a meeting with the Attendance Officer and Designated Safeguarding Lead to discuss the reasons for absence. A six week period of monitoring will follow this meeting during which time no absences will be authorised unless proof of illness is provided eg GP appointment card, evidence of a prescription.

At the end of this period, a letter will be sent confirming that attendance has either improved and no further action will be taken or, if there has been no improvement, parents will receive a 3rd letter informing them that a referral will be made to the Participation Team.

Children Missing Education

Oak Farm School recognise that attendance is often an indicator of other issues which may well constitute safeguarding concerns, therefore there are strong links between the Designated Safeguarding Lead and the Attendance Officer. Where reasonably possible, we hold more than one emergency contact number for each pupil. Schools have a statutory responsibility to report children missing education.

- When admitting pupils to the school, we always ensure that the Local Authority admissions team are aware of any pupils either starting at the school or leaving the school;
- On a regular basis, the Attendance Officer supplies the Senior Leaders with a list of pupils absent from school;
- Where the school is not informed of a reason for absence, we attempt to make contact with parents/carers to find the reason for the absence;
- If there is a persistent concern in regards to attendance, then we will make a referral to Hillingdon's Participation Team.
- Where concerns about attendance persist, we will refer to MASH or call a Team around the Child (TAC) meeting to explore the concerns;

- Should pupils be absent for 20 consecutive school days without authorisation, and despite our best efforts, we do not know where that pupil is, we will complete a Children Missing Education form and refer to the Local Authority (Children Missing Education, Sept 2016). Children's Services staff will visit the last known address and alert key services to locate the child. So help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have an up-to-date contact number. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year.

Performance Licenses

If you are requesting leave for your child to take part in a performance, we will consider authorising the absence as long as:

1. You provide us with a copy of the performance license.
2. Your child's attendance at school during the current academic year is over 96%
3. Your child is making the expected levels of progress

Routines for managing and improving punctuality

Punctuality is very important and sets important lifelong habits. The table below sets out the expectations for all children at Oak Farm School:

Soft start: children are able to enter their classrooms from **8.40am**

All children should be in class ready for registration at **8.50am**

A child is marked as 'Late' if they arrive after 9am

Registers close and a child is marked as U after 9.20am

All lateness is recorded daily. This information will be required by the courts, should a prosecution for non-attendance or lateness be necessary.

All registers will be considered 'closed' at 9.20. Any children arriving after this and who do not have a good reason for doing so (for example a dental appointment) are marked as an unauthorised absence in line with Department for Education guidance. This mark shows them to be on site, but it is legally recorded as an absence.

Involvement of Hillingdon's Participation Officer

The school makes written referrals to the Participation Officer where there are considerable concerns about attendance or punctuality and there is unwillingness for parents to engage with the school to rectify the situation. This will not simply be due to relatively low attendance figures; if there are patterns e.g. taking holidays in term-time every year, regularly missing a particular day, taking long weekends, persistent suspect illness or always returning to school late after a school break then a referral will be made.

If attendance and punctuality concerns persist for a significant length of time, and parents make no effort to work with the school and local authority to make improvement, the school supports the Local Authority's right to issue Fixed Penalty Notices to parents and if necessary to take court action.

The Attendance Officers for the school is:

Miss E Fisk – Attendance Officer

Ms R Frempong – Designated Safeguarding Lead

Mrs Veale – Headteacher

Governing Body Standards Committee

Hillingdon Participation Officers

Collection at the end of the day

Please collect your child promptly at the end of the school day. Where late collection is persistent and/or significantly late, ie, after 5pm, Hillingdon Children's Services will be contacted.

This policy links closely to our Safeguarding Policy.