Attendance policy

STATUS: **Approved**

REVIEW DATE: **September 2023**

"The Academy believes that inclusive practice is central to developing quality teaching and learning. As such, we endeavour to provide a supportive framework that responds to pupils' needs and overcomes potential barriers for individuals and groups of pupils and to ensure that pupils of all abilities and needs are fully included in the life of the school. The ethos of this statement underpins all Oldbury Academy's policies. "

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1. Aims

We are committed to meeting our obligation with regards to school attendance through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

> Promoting good attendance

> Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence

> Ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled

> Acting early to address patterns of absence

> Building strong relationships with families to ensure pupils have the support in place to attend school

We will also promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the working together to improve school attendance from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on school attendance parental responsibility measures. These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

> Part 6 of The Education Act 1996

> Part 3 of The Education Act 2002

> Part 7 of The Education and Inspections Act 2006

> The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments)

> The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 The governing board

The governing board is responsible for:

> Promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos

> Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties

> Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data

> Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school

> Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance

> Holding the Headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy

3.2 The Headteacher

The Headteacher is responsible for:

> Implementation of this policy at the school

> Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors

> Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils

> Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies

> Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary

3.3 The designated senior leader responsible for attendance

The designated senior leader is responsible for:

> Leading attendance across the school

> Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement

> Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes

> Having an oversight of data analysis

> Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data

> Arranging calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues

> Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance is Mr Peter Davis and can be contacted via 0121 533 3750 or p.davis@oldburyacademy.org.uk.

3.4 The attendance officer

The school attendance officer is responsible for:

> Monitoring and analysing attendance data (see section 7)

> Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement

> Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance and the Headteacher

> Working with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence

> Advising the Headteacher/ designated senior leader when to issue fixed-penalty notices

The attendance officer is Ms Nichola Lewis and can be contacted via 0121 533 3750 or Nichola.lewis@oldburyacademy.org.uk.

3.5 Form Tutors & Class teachers

Form tutors are are responsible for recording attendance during the morning registration session, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office before the end of the designated form time, which ends at 9.15am. Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance in the first 15 minutes of all periods during the day. Lesson registers for period 4 are used for the afternoon registration session.

3.6 School Attendance Office staff

School Attendance Office staff will:

> Take calls from parents about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system

> Transfer calls from parents to the appropriate pastoral team in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance

3.7 Parents/carers

Parents/carers are expected to:

> Make sure their child attends every day, on time

> Call the school to report their child's absence before 8.50am on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence, and advise when they are expected to return

> Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child

> Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day

3.8 Pupils

Pupils are expected to:

> Attend school every day, on time

4. Recording attendance

4.1 Attendance register

We will keep an attendance register, and place all pupils onto this register.

We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark whether every pupil is:

> Present

> Attending an approved off-site educational activity

> Absent

> Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

> The original entry

> The amended entry

> The reason for the amendment

> The date on which the amendment was made

> The name and position of the person who made the amendment

See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

We will also record:

> For pupils of compulsory school age, whether the absence is authorised or not

> The nature of the activity if a pupil is attending an approved educational activity

> The nature of circumstances where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Pupils must arrive in school by 8.50am on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at 8.50am and will be kept open until 9.15am. The register for the second session will be taken at 1.45pm and will be kept open until 2.15pm.

4.2 Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 8.50am or as soon as practically possible by calling the school Attendance Admin Team staff (see also section 7).

Parents should call the school on 0121 533 3750 and leave the following information:

- Your child's name and form

- The reason for their absence
- Their expected return date

We will mark absence due to illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask the pupil's parent/carer to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/carers will be notified of this in advance.

4.3 Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment

Leave of Absence request forms can be requested from the Attendance Admin Team.

However, we encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary. We encourage pupils to attend school prior to morning appointments, where possible.

The pupil's parent/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Go to section 5 to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

4.4 Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late:

> Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code

> After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code

Parents will be informed on the same day if their child was late to school. Repeat offenders will be subject to sanctions for persistent violation of school rules, as they will not be deemed to be ready for learning.

Where poor punctuality continues to be a cause for concern, parents will be invited to meet with school staff to identify any potential barriers to good timekeeping. We will support with the removal of these barriers where possible, however parents will be asked to sign parenting contracts in relation to poor punctuality.

Should this still continue to cause concern, it is very likely to be having a detrimental effect on overall attendance levels and therefore likely to result in a referral to the LA Attendance Support Team.

4.5 Following up unexplained absence

Where any pupil we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the school will:

> Call the pupil's parent/carer on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the school cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts, the school may refer this for support from appropriate agencies, including but not limited to Sandwell Children's Trust (or other neighbouring Local Authorities) or West Midlands Police.

> Identify whether the absence is approved or not

> Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session

> Call the parent/carer on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the school will consider involving an education welfare officer

4.6 Reporting to parents/carers

The school will regularly inform parents about their child's attendance and absence levels via a range of communication channels. This data is included in progress reports shared with parents and parents will be informed swiftly and systematically, in writing, if attendance levels show any cause for concern for their child.

5. Authorised and unauthorised absence

5.1 Approval for term-time absence

The Headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the headteacher's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for.

We define 'exceptional circumstances' as something that is either unavoidable or by not taking this leave of absence, it is likely to have a significant impact on the student or their family.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated before the absence, and in accordance with any leave of absence request form, accessible via the school office. The Headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

> Illness and medical/dental appointments (see sections 4.2 and 4.3 for more detail)

> Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart. One day of absence will be authorized to celebrate Eid

> Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travellers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and new travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision

> Other possible 'exceptional circumstances' where the Headteacher may grant term-time holiday

> Study leave

> Part-time Timetable arrangements, as agreed by Senior Leadership Members with specific responsibility for pastoral care. These must be time limited and reviewed regularly.

5.2 Legal sanctions

The school or local authority can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

If issued with a fine, or penalty notice, each parent must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

Penalty notices can be issued by a Headteacher, local authority officer or the police.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice 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 an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

6. Strategies for promoting attendance

Attendance is promoted through a range of strategies, including but not limited to, the following:

> Attendance is a high priority focus in all strategic plans across all teams in the school including a specific Attendance Improvement Plan, the School Improvement Plan and Faculty/Pastoral Improvement Plans.

> Regular communication is sent to parents about both the importance of good attendance and punctuality and also their child's attendance and punctuality record.

> Attendance and punctuality are addressed regularly by form tutors and pastoral teams through daily form time sessions and assemblies.

> Class teachers are provided with regular updates on attendance to their subject areas to ensure appropriate dialogue can take place to

> All reward opportunities in the school include attendance and punctuality as part of the set criteria.

7. Attendance monitoring

Attendance data is generated weekly and shared with post holders across the academy. This allows people to have access to live attendance data for all students with particular reference to their cohorts i.e. year teams, form tutor groups, specific vulnerable groups and at faculty and individual teacher level.

Specific staff in school have responsibility for monitoring the attendance levels of key groups in school, including but not limited to:

1. Students with allocated Social Workers

2. Students with a history of persistent or severe absenteeism

3. Students with identified SEND, where they have an Education * Health Care Plan or receive support from external agencies, at SENEA level.

Daily attendance marks will be checked to ensure all absences are

> 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 an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

7.1 Monitoring attendance

School staff will:

> Monitor attendance and absence data half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil level

> Identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern

Pupil-level absence data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. The school will compare attendance data to the national average, and share this with the governing board.

7.2 Analysing attendance

School staff will:

> Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these pupils and their families

> Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns

7.3 Using data to improve attendance

School staff will:

> Provide regular attendance reports to all postholders, and other school leaders, to facilitate discussions with pupils and families

> Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies
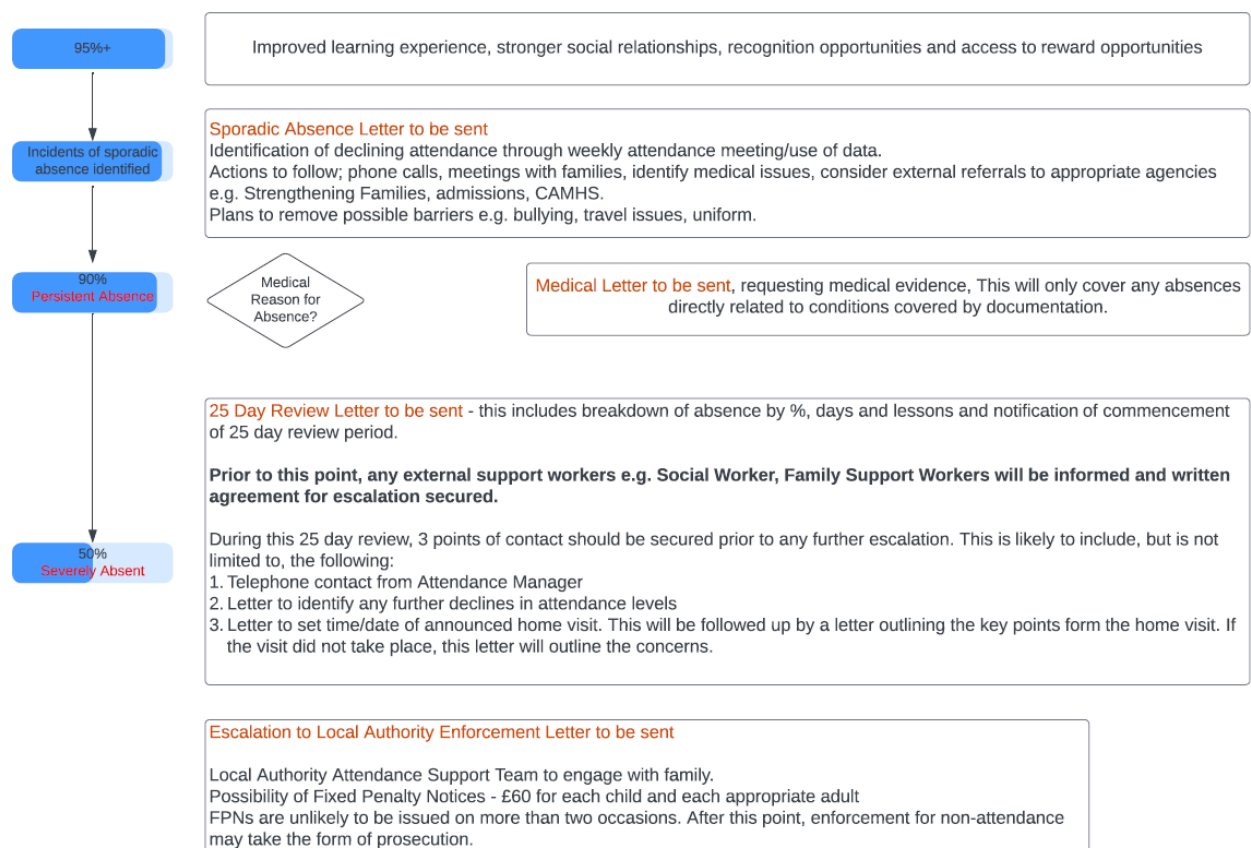
7.4 Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school.

The school will:

> Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence

> Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school

> Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance.

School responses to decreasing attendance levels can be seen below:

95%+
Improved learning experience, stronger social relationships, recognition opportunities and access to reward opportunities

Incidents of sporadic absence identified
Sporadic Absence Letter to be sent
Identification of declining attendance through weekly attendance meeting/use of data.
Actions to follow; phone calls, meetings with families, identify medical issues, consider external referrals to appropriate agencies e.g. Strengthening Families, admissions, CAMHS.
Plans to remove possible barriers e.g. bullying, travel issues, uniform.

90% Persistent Absence
Medical Reason for Absence?
Medical Letter to be sent, requesting medical evidence, This will only cover any absences directly related to conditions covered by documentation.

25 Day Review Letter to be sent - this includes breakdown of absence by %, days and lessons and notification of commencement of 25 day review period.

Prior to this point, any external support workers e.g. Social Worker, Family Support Workers will be informed and written agreement for escalation secured.

During this 25 day review, 3 points of contact should be secured prior to any further escalation. This is likely to include, but is not limited to, the following:
1. Telephone contact from Attendance Manager
2. Letter to identify any further declines in attendance levels
3. Letter to set time/date of announced home visit. This will be followed up by a letter outlining the key points form the home visit. If the visit did not take place, this letter will outline the concerns.

50% Severely Absent

Escalation to Local Authority Enforcement Letter to be sent

Local Authority Attendance Support Team to engage with family.
Possibility of Fixed Penalty Notices - £60 for each child and each appropriate adult
FPNs are unlikely to be issued on more than two occasions. After this point, enforcement for non-attendance may take the form of prosecution.

8. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum every 12 months by Mr P Davis, Deputy Headteacher. At every review, the local governing board will approve the policy.

9. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

> Child protection and safeguarding policy

> Behaviour policy

Appendix 1: attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
****	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Pupil is on a work experience placement

Code	Definition	Scenario
	Authorised absence	
C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness

M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma and traveller absence	Pupil from a traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
Unauthorised absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
N	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed

Code	Definition	Scenario
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody
Z	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
#	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day