



ATTENDANCE POLICY

REFERENCE: FIR.SP.003

Approval date: November 2022

Review date: September 2025

Fir Tree Junior School

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Attendance Policy

This guidance meets the requirements of [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](#).

1. Introduction

We believe that for children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and that children should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class. Children are best safeguarded from exploitation and other risks in the wider community by attending school regularly where they are supervised by qualified and caring professionals. Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is the legal responsibility of parents and registered carers and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution. It is very important therefore that parents and registered carers make sure that the children they are responsible for attend school regularly and this guidance sets out how together, we will achieve this.

We are committed to meeting our obligation with regards to school attendance through a 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 guidance 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. Definitions

- Where the term "relevant body" has been used within this policy guidance, this means the Board of Trustees of ODST. The relevant body has chosen to delegate some of its functions to Local Governing Bodies (LGBs) as set out in this procedure.
- Unless indicated otherwise, all references to "school" include both schools and academies

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- Unless indicated otherwise, all references to “teacher” include the Headteacher, Executive Headteacher, Principal or Head of School
- Unless indicated otherwise. All references to “Headteacher” include Executive Headteacher, Principal or Head of School
- Unless indicated otherwise, all references to ‘staff’ include both teaching and support staff

4. Consistency of Treatment and Fairness

The relevant body is committed to ensuring consistency of treatment and fairness and will abide by all relevant employment and equality legislation.

5. Monitoring and Evaluation

Any feedback or concerns from ODST schools regarding this policy guidance will be reported back in the first instance to the ODST Education, Quality, Standards and Impact (EQSI) Committee.

6. Date of Review

The procedure will be reviewed as required by the Education, Quality, Standards and Impact (EQSI) Committee of the Board of Trustees of ODST to take account of any revised guidance, legislative changes and / or national policy development.

7. Roles and Responsibilities

7.1 The Board of Trustees of Oxford Diocesan Schools Trust

The Board of Trustees is responsible for:

- Promoting a culture that sets high expectations for attendance across all ODST schools
- Supporting schools to prioritise attendance
- Ensuring that school leaders are able to fulfill high expectations and statutory duties
- Regularly reviewing attendance data from across the Trust and directing school improvement resource to help school leaders focus support on the pupils who need it

7.2 The Local Governing Body

The Local Governing Body 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 a policy based on this guidance

7.3 The Headteacher

The Headteacher is responsible for:

- Implementation of a policy based on this guidance at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to the Local Governing Body and to the ODST School Improvement Team.

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- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary

7.4 Class teachers and teaching assistants

Class teachers and teaching assistants are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office on the same day.

7.5 School office staff

School office staff will:

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

7.6 Parents/carers

Parents/carers are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends school every day on time
- Call the school to report their child's absence as soon as possible on the day of the absence and on 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

7.7 Pupils

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school every day on time

8. Recording Attendance

8.1 Attendance register

- We will keep an attendance register and enter 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.

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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 08.45 on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken and will be kept open until 09:00. The register for the second session will be taken at 13:00 and will be kept open until 13:10.

8.2 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 09:00 or as soon as practically possible by calling the school on 01491 836341, leaving an answer phone message if before school hours. Alternatively, you can email office.2578@fir-tree.oxon.sch.uk

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.

8.3 Planned absence

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

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.

Parents requesting a half-day absence or longer must complete a request form, available from the School Office. This includes absence request for medical appointments

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 9.1 to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

8.4 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

Ongoing punctuality issues will be addressed through a meeting with the Headteacher and potential referral to the County Attendance Team.

8.5 Following up unexplained absence

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

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- Call or text 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 the matter to the Police, the County Safeguarding Team, County Attendance Team, or Children Missing Education team.
- 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

8.6 Reporting to parents/carers

We conduct attendance monitoring half-termly, and will contact parents should a child's attendance cause concern. Any child's attendance below 90% will alert a cause for concern.

9. Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

9.1 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 **extreme, unplanned family emergencies, where all efforts to support school attendance have been considered in the first instance.**

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 and, where possible, at least 2 weeks 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.

Other valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments (see section 8.3)
- 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
- 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

9.2 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 Oxfordshire County attendance Team

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The decision on whether 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.

10. Strategies for Promoting Attendance

The promotion of a pattern of regular attendance is the responsibility of parents, pupils, all members of school staff and the Local Governing Body.

We ensure attendance is discussed within regular parent communications e.g. newsletter, attendance monitoring processes, support meetings, Parent Teacher meetings and working with the County Attendance Team.

We work to support parents to remove barriers to attendance difficulties and urge parents to discuss these with us at the earliest opportunity should they arise.

We may refer parents to further support within the County Attendance Team.

11. Attendance Monitoring

The school will:

- Monitor attendance and absence data half-termly, termly, and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil level
- Identify whether there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern

Pupil-level absence data will be collected each term, reported to relevant body, 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 ODST and national average and share this with the Local Governing Body.

11.1 Analysing attendance

The school 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

11.2 Using data to improve attendance

The school will:

- Provide regular attendance reports to class teachers and other school leaders, to facilitate discussions with pupils and families

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- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place to modify them and inform future strategies

11.3 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
- Offer Attendance Contracts to monitor attendance together with parents, within a structure of careful support

12. Attendance Policy Monitoring Arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from ODST, the local authority or the DfE is updated, and as a minimum every three years by the Headteacher. At every review, the policy will be approved by the Local Governing Body.

13. Links with other Policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- ODST Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- ODST and School Behaviour Policy