

ATTENDANCE & PUNCTUALITY POLICY

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FULL TRUSTEE BODY/

A&C COMMITTEE/

HR & FINANCE COMMITTEE/

BH&S COMMITTEE

EXECUTIVE PRINCIPAL

Aim

Education provides a means of advancement for all young people to improve their life chances. Regular school attendance is a legal requirement for those registered at a school. Without it, the efforts of the best teachers and schools will come to nothing.

Pupils need to attend regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. Irregular attendance undermines that educational process and leads to educational disadvantage. The Supreme Court Judgement on 6 April 2017 defined “regular” attendance as being in school every day that the school is open. This is therefore the expectation for all children attending Oxley Park Academy. Situations beyond the control of students and/or parents/carers may impact on attendance. We will, with the agreement and support of parents/carers, work in partnership with external agencies to resolve these.

Organisation

The class register is to be completed every morning and every afternoon.

Any late-comers will be marked in the register appropriately:

L Code on our registers - late **8:40am up until 9.00am** classed as present
U Code on our registers - **after 9:00am, classed as unauthorised absence**

Adults must sign late-comers in at the Welcome Centre at both campuses.

Good time-keeping is a vital life skill which will help our children as they progress through their school life and out into the wider world. Arriving late causes disruption to the school, teachers, and pupils. Children who are persistently late miss a significant amount of learning and time with their class teacher getting vital information for the day.

Responding to non-attendance

When a child does not attend, the school needs to respond effectively, for safeguarding purposes.

Families are asked to inform the school on each day of absence before 8.40am. If contact has not been made with the school, families will be contacted by us via telephone on each day of absence. Unexplained absences can be marked as unauthorised. An accumulation of unauthorised absences may result in a Fixed Penalty Notice being issued.

When a student is late to school, i.e. after 8:40am, they must be signed in with the office. They will receive a late mark in the register.

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Where we are unable to speak to families by telephone, we will leave a message asking the family to call the school. We will also send a text message if necessary.

If families fail to communicate the reason for their child's absence, they may be subject to a home visit by a member of the Senior Leadership Team to establish the cause of absence and the whereabouts of the child.

Absence Management

It is the school that authorises absence. Families provide a reason for children being absent from school. It is at the discretion of the school as to whether this reason is acceptable or not. The school may issue a Fixed Penalty Notice to each parent or carer who fails to ensure the regular attendance of their child. This currently stands at £60 if paid within 21 days but rises to £120 if paid between 22 and 28 days. Oxley Park Academy follows the Milton Keynes School Attendance Fixed Penalty Notices Code of Conduct to ensure a consistent approach across the school.

Authorising Absence

Authorised absence is where the school has either given approval in advance for a child to be away or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as a satisfactory reason for absence. An absence can only be authorised for the following reasons:

- Illness of the student concerned (not of the parent or other family member)
- A medical or dental appointment
- For the purpose of religious observance (one day authorised only)
- An educational event/trip
- Family bereavement
- Fixed term suspension
- Permanent exclusion until removed from roll or re-instated

In cases of medical absence, where the school has initially authorised the absence, but the issue persists, the school may request the family to complete a GP stamp form or request other GP/medical proof of absence from the family. This change should be communicated to the family in writing or included as part of a meeting with the school.

Holidays and requests for leave of absence during term time

We advise families that Oxley Park Academy follows the guidance which can be found at www.education.gov.uk:

Families who wish to request a leave of absence during term time are asked to complete a Leave of Absence request form and submit any supporting evidence with it. Forms can be obtained from the school office.

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Unauthorised Absence

Absence will not be authorised under the following circumstances:

- Birthdays
- Holidays in term time
- Minding the house or looking after siblings
- Lateness after 9.00am
- Medical appointments that cannot be verified
- No reason given for absence
- School staff have cause to believe that the note or reason given for absence is not genuine.

Monitoring Attendance

Attendance of all children is monitored by the school office. On a weekly basis, every child's attendance is considered and an overall percentage figure is created based on attendance during this academic year.

Dealing with absence

Attendance below 95% - Families will be contacted by the class teacher to discuss attendance. If there is no improvement in attendance, the Associate Principal will phone the family. This call will be followed by a letter outlining the decline in attendance and the offer of support to the family.

Attendance below 90% - Families will be contacted with a letter to outline the decline in attendance and the offer of support to the family. This letter will also identify procedures that will be followed should the attendance figure continue to drop. A child attending school only 90% of the time or less is considered to be persistently absent according to the Government's expectations of attendance.

Attendance of 85% or less – If a child's attendance reaches this level, families will receive a phone call outlining the school's concerns. Depending on the circumstances surrounding the attendance figure, an action plan may be set up. The school may ask for medical evidence to support the reasons for failing to attend school.

Fixed Penalty Warning Letters and Prosecutions – A FPN warning letter will be issued where there are at least 10 unauthorised sessions over 12 school weeks. The warning letter is effective for 12 school weeks, but the FPN cannot be issued for at least three weeks after the warning to give time for attendance to improve.

For the standard S.444 (1) prosecutions, there is a requirement for an overall attendance of below 90% with some unauthorised in the last four weeks. There are no limits to the number of times a warning letter can be sent. For the higher level, also known as "aggravated offence" a 444 (1A) letter needs to be issued. In these cases, there is a requirement for the family to have knowledge of the offence.

If the issuing of warning letters does not lead to the desired improvement the Senior Attendance Officer Legal Interventions at Milton Keynes Council, should be contacted. At this stage, documented evidence of interventions already attempted should be provided by the school. If it meets the criteria, an FPN will be issued and a copy sent to the school. The family could be invited to an Attendance Interview. At that meeting, families will be advised that if no improvement is made they will be written to again and invited to a PACE interview and advised of their rights to legal representation.

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The PACE interview will be carried out following the guidelines given to the Local Authorities by the DfE. A police caution will be given to families in accordance with Code C of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE).

Following the interview, the case will be booked into court.

Punctuality

The school day begins at 8:40am and it is made clear to children that they must be present to be registered at that time.

Children arriving after this time will be marked late on the register and will need to enter each campus via Reception. Any child that arrives after 9.00am will receive an unauthorised late mark. If these are accumulated, it could result in an FPN being issued, or legal intervention.

Oxley Park Academy discourages late arrivals at school by challenging those who are persistently late or arrive late without reasonable explanation. The school will notify families of children who are persistently late.

The school may issue an FPN to each family where the child has persistent late arrival at school after the register has closed. The school works within the guidelines set out in the Milton Keynes School Attendance Fixed Penalty Notices Code of Conduct.

If a child's punctuality is a concern, families will receive a phone call outlining the school's concerns. Depending on the circumstances surrounding the punctuality figure, an action plan may be set up and families may be invited to school to discuss the situation in greater detail. Families will be informed that should their child continue to arrive late for school, they may be subject to a fine. Ten unauthorised lates, where a child arrives at school after 9.00am, over 12 school weeks, may result in a fine. This currently stands at £60 if paid within 21 days but rises to £120 if paid between 22 and 28 days.

Ensuring information is up to date

Schools should ensure, as far as possible, that the information they hold on children and families is accurate and up to date. This will help ensure that contact with families is productive and that referrals to other agencies are effective. Principle 4 of the Data Protection Act 1998 states "personal data shall be accurate and where necessary kept up to date".

Families are requested to complete an appropriate sheet annually during the autumn term to confirm or amend any changes to contact information. It is the responsibility of the family to inform the office of any changes as they happen.