



Oakridge Primary School

Attendance Policy

Adopted:	March 2020
Chair of Health and Safety Committee:	Mrs K Lincoln
Next review date:	March 2022

This document

- describes the key features of student attendance across Staffordshire schools
- describes actions taken by schools, Staffordshire Education Welfare Service, Behaviour and Attendance Consultants and other LA support services to encourage and maintain high levels of attendance in Staffordshire.
- Set out L.A. priorities for action related to school attendance

Legislation and guidance is taken from

- The Education Act 1996
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 and amendments
- The Education (School Day and School Year) (England) Regulations 1999
- The Education Act 2002
- The Changing of School Session Times (England) (Revocation) Regulations 2011
- Crime and Disorder Act 1998
- The Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003
- The Education Act 2005
- The Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The Education (Parenting Contracts and Parenting Orders) (England) Regulations 2007
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007 and amendments
- The Education and Skills Act 2008
- School attendance: Statutory guidance 2013
- Staffordshire County Council guidance 2017

Introduction

Promoting positive behaviour and excellent attendance is the responsibility of the whole school community. Regular school attendance which has been defined by the Government, following the Isle of Wight case as 'In accordance to the 'rules of the

school,' is the key to enabling children and young people to maximise the educational opportunities available to them and become emotionally resilient, confident and competent adults who are able to realise their full potential and make a positive contribution to their community. All children should be at school, on time, every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

Regular attendance is defined as per Staffordshire County Council's Code of Conduct and at Oakridge a pupil will be marked as having an unauthorised absence, irrespective of a child's current attendance, if not previously authorised by the head teacher or in excess of the period authorised by the head teacher (e.g. family holiday).

Good attendance is important because:

- Statistics show a direct link between under-achievement and poor attendance.
- 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 settle into Secondary school more easily.

Procedures

The school applies the following procedures in deciding how to deal with individual absences:

Your child's Individual School Attendance Target is at least 95% - but the higher the better!

**Throughout this policy any reference to 'parent/s' refers to the person or people with Parental Responsibility.*

As a parent you can help us by:

- Ensuring your child attends school regularly. Absence should only happen when your child is significantly ill and therefore unfit to attend school, or if there is an unavoidable/unforeseen reason or circumstance which is causing a difficulty/period of difficulty.
- If a child is ill or has an appointment then it is the responsibility of the child's parent to inform the school by 9:00am. This can be done through the parent mail app. If they do not have access to this then parents should contact school through the main telephone number (01785 337300) on each day of any absence to give us the reason and tell us when the child is likely to return to school. Making contact with the school in this way is a requirement that you must fulfil if your child is absent – and it must be done on every day of your child's absence.
- It is important that parents inform school on a daily basis if their child is going to be absent unless during the first call they are able to specify a longer period. An example of this would be if a child had chicken pox or had been admitted to hospital. If there is no contact from a child's parent then they will be marked as an Unauthorised absence.

- Arranging all non-emergency medical appointments out of school hours or during school holidays. For any medical / dental appointments that are unable to occur out of school hours, please provide proof of the appointment letter/card to the school.
- Frequent absence claimed as illness must be supported by medical evidence. This can be in the form of a medical appointment card or sight of the child's medication (as advised by the Department for Education.). Without proof your child will be marked as unauthorised.
- Making sure we always have your current contact numbers; this includes all telephone numbers, child minders and emergency contact details.

We shall:

- Follow up all unexplained absences. If the school has received no notification of why a child is absent by the time the register is closed at 9:10 am then the school will contact the parent / guardian by text or email by 9:30 to ensure that the child is safe and at home for a legitimate reason. If there is no response within 15 minutes then a phone call will be made directly to the parent / guardian and if there is still no response then the school safeguarding lead will be informed who may contact First Response. Please be aware that if we are unable to establish the reason for your child's absence from school, this is considered a safeguarding matter of your child which we, as a school, have to act upon.
- Remind parents of the importance of regular attendance and punctuality in our school correspondence (e.g. newsletters).
- Publish our attendance rate in the school profile each year.
- Publish your child's attendance rate on her/his pupil reports.
- Contact parents if we have concerns regarding your child's attendance and punctuality, particularly if your child's attendance falls below the target level.
- If we continue to have concerns we may make a referral to our Independent Attendance Consultant or to the Local Authority Education Welfare Worker. These officers may visit you at home to investigate the reasons for your child's poor attendance.

On returning to school there is no need for the child to provide a note as the school has already been informed of the absence

Supporting and encouraging your child's school attendance

All children are sometimes reluctant to attend school. Any problems that arise with attendance are best resolved between the school, the parents and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and may make things worse. Permitting absence from school without a good reason is an offence by the parent. Parents whose children are experiencing difficulties should contact the school at an early stage and work together with the staff in resolving any problems. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school or the parent may refer the

child to the Education Welfare Worker from the County Council. Alternatively, parents or children may wish to contact the Education Welfare Worker themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is available from the school office or by contacting the Local Education Authority.

School Registers

School registers are a legal document and we are required to take an attendance register twice a day, and this shows whether the pupil is present, engaged in an approved educational activity off-site, or absent. The register is taken at 8:55 and closed by 9.10. Any child arriving after this time without a valid explanation such as a Doctor's appointment will be marked as Unauthorised and this will count towards their attendance. Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school, as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. Only school can authorise the absence, not parents. This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required, preferably in writing via a text message.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This includes:

- holidays in term time / cheap flights
- parents keeping children off school unnecessarily
- truancy before or during the school day
- absences which have never been properly explained
- children who arrive at school too late to get a mark
- waiting for a delivery
- going for a family day out
- going shopping or for a hair cut
- because it is your child's birthday
- parent's illness

Safeguarding

Our attendance policy includes procedural referral agreements that are designed to promote and safeguard the welfare of pupils.

Schools have a duty in law to refer any absence of 10 days or more where they have been unable to make contact with the parent/child or have general concerns about the absence to the Local Authority Safeguarding team / Education Welfare Worker. However school will contact the Local Support Team (*A Local Support Team is a team of experienced children's service professionals from a variety of services who work with children, young people and families living within a particular geographical area. Members of the team include professionals such as Education Welfare Officers and Parent Support Workers.*)

and follow safeguarding procedures where an absence creates a particular cause for concern.

Our first day contact procedures ensure that by contacting parents to establish the reason for your child's absence, parents are made aware that the child is absent from school. Therefore this enables the parent where necessary to establish their

child is safe. This is why our system of requesting parents contact our school on each day of absence, prior to 9.00am is of the paramount importance.

Persistent Absence and Termly monitoring

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more of their schooling across the school year for whatever reason. This is defined by the Department for Education. Where there is persistent absence which is defined as children who have an attendance record of less than 90% a referral to the Local Support Team may be made. Where a child's attendance due to medical reasons does fall below 90%, then medical evidence may be requested by the school. Each term all parents of children whose attendance falls below 90% receive a letter detailing their child's attendance record for the proceeding period and warning them of further action which may well be taken by the Local Authority (LA). Children who are persistently late after the registers have closed may also be referred to the EWW / Local Support Team when they have ten sessions of late arrivals within a 12 week period.

Exceptional Leave - Leave of absence during term time

Requesting a holiday or leave of absence during term time

The school follows the Government and LA policy with regards to holiday requests and leave of absence. All parents must complete a leave of absence request form at least two week's before the first date of leave. Please return this form in an envelope marked for the attention of the Headteacher. We will then send out a letter authorising, or not, the absence request.

Amendments to the 2006 regulations remove references to family holiday and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days. The amendments make clear that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Headteachers should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted. At Oakridge this would be decided on a case by case basis.

In brief this means that:

- parents CANNOT demand a leave of absence as an automatic right.
- holidays in term time will not be authorised
- parental requests MUST be in writing using the holiday request form and should be submitted at least two weeks prior to the event
- schools CANNOT apply blanket policies to approve/reject all applications.
- all requests MUST be considered on their own merits
- extended periods of absence will be granted ONLY in exceptional circumstances
- the power to authorise/unauthorise a leave of absence belongs to the head teacher.

If term time leave is taken without prior permission from the school, the absence will be unauthorised and you may be liable for a penalty notice fine (issued by the Local

Authority). If you choose not to pay the fine you may face prosecution if the absence meets the criteria set out in the Local Authorities Code of Conduct.

You have the right to make representations to the Chair of Governors if you feel the Head teacher's decision is unjust, however the final decision lies with the Head teacher and the Local Authority

Medical and dental appointments

We ask that all non-emergency medical and dental appointments are arranged out of school hours or during school holidays. Where this is not possible, proof of the appointment card / letter will be required. Leave may be granted in an emergency (e.g. bereavement) or for medical appointments which must be in school time.

Information about individual school targets, projects and special initiatives

The school has adopted the following attendance targets:

The Governors have set a target of 98% attendance for 2017/2018. School administrative staff or support staff contact parents by text after registers close at 9:10 on any day a registered pupil of compulsory school age is absent without explanation. If we do not receive a reply we phone the parents to explain the absence. By contacting the parent the school also ensure that the parent is aware their child is not in school enabling the parent where necessary to establish their child is safe. If there is still no explanation then the office staff refer this to the school safeguarding lead who may contact First Response.

Attendance 2019 – 2020 – Due to the lockdown of schools data for 19 – 20 is not available

Attendance Rates (2018/19)			
	2017/18 Actual	2018/19 Target	2018/19 Actual
Overall Attendance rate	97.4%	98.0%	97.5%
Persistent Absence rate	1.4%	0.0%	2.2%
Authorised absence due to illness	1.9%		2.2%
Unauthorised absence due to family holidays	0.6%		0.3%

Penalty Notices

Penalty Notices are fines, only issued by the Locality Support Team, on behalf of the Local Authority, for a child's unauthorised absence from school. They are not issued by the school.

Penalty Notices can be issued to each parent liable for the attendance offence. (£60 per parent, per child).

The penalty is £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt, rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days. The payment must be paid direct to the local authority.

There is no right of appeal by parents against a penalty notice. If the penalty notice is not paid in full by the end of the 28 day period, the local authority will prosecute for the original offence, unless there are grounds to withdraw the notice.

Changes to penalty notices for absences from school January 2018

Following the Supreme Court ruling on attendance in June all schools have now been issued with new attendance guidance which will come into place from January 2018. As a result of this ruling the school Governors have amended the school attendance policy to ensure that it meets the new guidelines that have been issued. On behalf of all the staff and Governors can we thank parents for their support with this policy which is reflected in last year's school attendance which was our highest in ten years.

Penalty Notices for Persistent Absence.

Oakridge follows the Staffordshire Local Authority code of conduct for the procedures of Penalty Notices. Details of this can be obtained from:

<http://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/education/welfareservice/Attendance/home.aspx>

The Local Authority will continue to monitor all school attendance and take appropriate action for absences during term time, both to support head teachers in their role and in challenging the small minority of parents that choose to disregard the law.

Penalty Notice for leave of absence (holiday) in term time

From 1 January 2018 **any** period of unauthorised leave may result in you as a parent receiving a penalty notice fine. The head teacher will continue to be the only person able to authorise leave in term time, but this will apply only in exceptional circumstances. Any unauthorised absence will be referred by your head teacher to the local authority.

Penalty Notice for persistent lateness

Previously a pupil had to achieve 20 unauthorised late marks before a penalty notice warning could be issued. **This has now changed to 10 marks**, and late marks do not have to be one after the other in order for the penalty notice to be issued. You are therefore encouraged where possible to ensure your child attends school on time. However, if your child is late you must inform the school of the reason(s) why, as they may be able to offer you some form of advice or support.

Period of time used to measure persistent absence and lateness

If your child has had 10 days unauthorised absence or is late 10 times over a twelve week period, you may receive a penalty warning notice and also potentially a fine.

Leavers

If your child is leaving our school (other than at the end of Year 6 to go to High School) parents are asked to:

- Give the school comprehensive information about their plans including any date of a move and your new address and telephone numbers, your child's new school and the start date when known. This should be submitted to our school in writing.

When pupils leave and we do not have information, about where they have gone, then your child is considered to be a 'Child Missing Education'. This means that the Local Authority has a legal duty to carry out investigations, which will include liaising

with Children’s Services (formerly Social Services), the Police and other agencies, to try and locate your child.
By giving us the above information, these investigations can be avoided

Colour Coded Attendance Guidance

We have adopted the below colour coded guidance for a child's school attendance. We have found this to be a good visual indicator to parents of the meaning of their child's level of attendance. We would like all of our pupils to achieve the 'green' category of attendance, where possible. Our aim for this high level of attendance links the importance of attendance with children's potential learning and attainment.

**No. of days absent from
Attendance %
school**

0 days	100 %	Outstanding Attendance	Gives a child the very best chance of success.
9.5 days	95%	Satisfactory Attendance	Few interruptions to learning – a good chance of success.
13.3 days	93%	Worrying attendance	Your child has missed almost 3 weeks of learning.
19 days (or more)	90% or less	Serious concern	Persistent Absence Pupil (as defined by the DfE.) This is seriously worrying attendance. A child has had the equivalent of one day off school every fortnight / almost 4 weeks off school (or more). It is less likely that good progress in learning can be made.

Monitoring of attendance data

We conduct a full attendance review of our school at least every half term of all pupils. We also receive a regular visit from the school Education Welfare Worker who will also monitor all pupils’ attendance including children who have arrived late. We analyse class attendance, whole school attendance, annual / termly attendance, vulnerable groups and we conduct a code analysis for comparative purposes of specific coded absences.

Persistent Absence pupils are tracked and procedures are in place to ensure we are aware of the circumstances of the pupil's poor attendance and that support processes are in place to tackle the issues.

We also compare our attendance data with other similar schools via ASP.

We analyse whole school attendance and report this to Governors every term in the Headteacher's report. Persistent Absence pupils and vulnerable groups are monitored closely and support is put in place where necessary. Our attendance figures are published publicly and our Ofsted report is also available for parents to view.

School Staff Responsible for Attendance matters are:

Those people responsible for attendance matters in this school are:

- Mr Fisher
- Miss Homer
- Your child's class teacher
- Mrs Thomas
- The School Attendance Officer
- School Governors

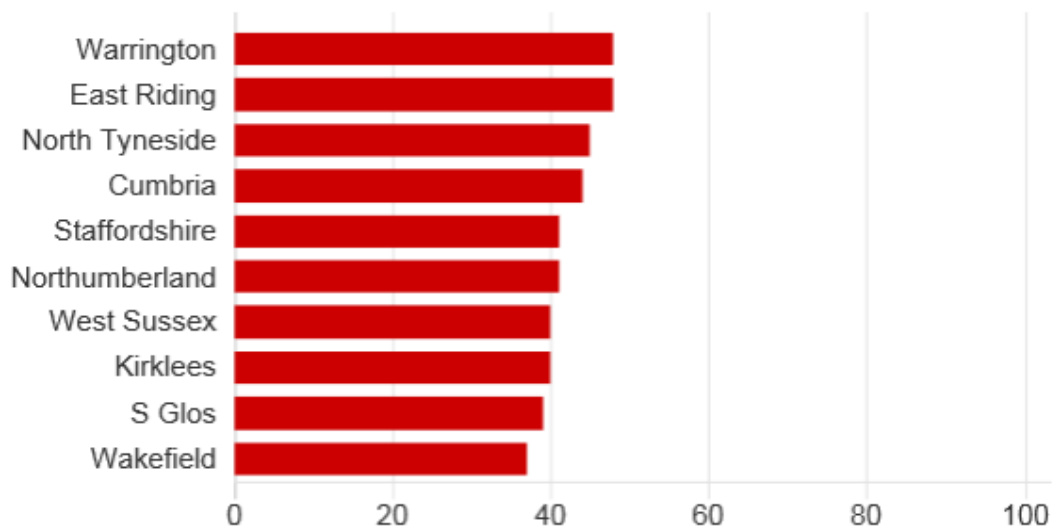
Summary

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend. School staff are committed to working with parents supportively to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

We value your support in helping us to maintain the high standards to which we always aspire.

Areas with holidays as the highest share of absence

■ % of all unauthorised absence



Source: DfE

BBC

Oakridge Primary School

Silvester Way

Stafford

ST17 0PR

Telephone: 01785 337300

www.oakridge.staffs.sch.uk



Leave of Absence Request Form

We want all of our pupils in school for as much time as possible in order to maximise their learning time and opportunities. We strongly discourage term time breaks and holidays and we ask parents not to request them unless they are for truly exceptional circumstances (see below).

Points to remember

- The Government has made it clear that parents **do not** have an automatic right to withdraw their child from school during term time
- The Government has made it clear that Headteachers **no longer have the discretion** to authorise term time absence, **unless it is due to exceptional circumstances**
- Taking a pupil out of school during term time disrupts their learning and may cause them to fall behind their peers. Absence can also affect a child's relationships with others
- Term time breaks when added to unpredictable absences e.g. for medical reasons all add up. Learning time lost from school cannot be replaced!
- If the absence is not authorised and the holiday / time is taken anyway, the case maybe referred to the Education Welfare Services who may issue a penalty notice to each parent for each child taken out of school

Examples of exceptional circumstance maybe:

- Religious observance
- Family bereavements
- Service personnel prevented from term time holidays
- Family crisis/serious issues meaning family needs to spend time together
- Certain exams and recognised short time sporting/cultural activities (evidence needed)

Each request will be considered by the Headteacher. Term time holidays because they are cheaper out of school holiday term do not constitute exceptional circumstances and will not be authorised. Absence forms are not needed for illness – usual procedures should be followed

Name of child	
Class	
First day of Absence	
Date of return	
Number of days requested	
Has leave of absence been requested in term time before ?	<i>Please give details</i>
Details of the exceptional reasons for this request	<i>Please give details</i>

A separate form should be completed for each child requesting an absence

Signed : _____ Name : _____ Date: _____

Please give at least two week's notice of absence requests. Please return this form in an envelope marked for the attention of the Headteacher.

We will then send out a letter authorising, or not, the absence request.

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Stafford

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(Parent/carer(s) name and address)

Date

Dear (Parent/carer(s) name)

(Child's name and date of birth)

Thank you for your letter dated (date) requesting permission for (pupil's name) to be absent from school from to

You will be aware that the Department of Education made important changes to the law for families wanting to request leave of absence in term time. The changes made it clear that head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. The Local Authority and school governors support this; therefore students will only be given permission to take leave in term time if there are exceptional circumstances.

Having looked at your application, I feel that your request can be supported in this instance. **Therefore, the absence to include the dates requested will be authorised.**

Our key priority is to ensure that your child(ren) are as successful as possible and are able to achieve (his/her) full potential. I would therefore ask that you support your child in catching up on the time they will miss in school.

Please note: If your child does not return to school on the date agreed above then you will need to provide a further reason for this absence otherwise it will be recorded as unauthorised and you may then be liable to receive a Penalty Notice.

Yours sincerely

P FISHER
Headteacher

Oakridge Primary School

Silvester Way

Stafford

ST17 0PR

Telephone: 01785 337300

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Date

Dear (Parent/carer(s) name)

Thank you for your letter dated (date) requesting permission for (pupil's name) to be absent from school from to

You will be aware that the Department of Education made important changes to the law for families wanting to request leave of absence in term time. The changes made it clear that head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. The Local Authority and school governors support this; therefore students will only be given permission to take leave in term time if there are exceptional circumstances.

I have considered your application very carefully. Although I understand the reason for your request, I am unable to approve leave of absence in this instance, as I believe the circumstances are not exceptional. **Therefore, if your child is away from school during this period it will be recorded as Unauthorised Absence.**

As a school we are obliged to inform you that you may be subject to a Penalty Notice if your child's absence from school is unauthorised. This is in line with Staffordshire County Councils Code of Conduct.

The Penalty Notice fine would be :-

- £60 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days, rising to
- £120 per parent, per child if paid between 21-28 days.
- If the fine is not paid within 28 days you may be prosecuted under S444.1 of the Education Act 1996.

I must advise you that if the prosecution takes place, the maximum fine is £1,000 per parent, per child. This reflects the seriousness of unauthorised absence from school.

Our key priority is to ensure your child(ren) are as successful as possible, are able to reach his/her full potential and gains maximum benefits from his/her educational experience.

I would hope that upon reflection you are able to support this decision in line with the Local Authority and Government policy, that leave should be restricted to the 13 weeks school holidays except in exceptional circumstances.

Yours sincerely

P FISHER
Headteacher

Oakridge Primary School

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Telephone: 01785 337300
www.oakridge.staffs.sch.uk



09 November 2020

Childs name~ Class

Dear

ABSENCES FROM SCHOOL

Regular school attendance is the key to enabling children and young people to maximise the educational opportunities available to them and become emotionally resilient, confident and competent adults who are able to realise their full potential and make a positive contribution to their community. All children should be at school, on time, every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. During a recent inspection of school registers, which includes an attendance check, undertaken by an Education Welfare Officer it was noticed that xxxxxx has had frequent and regular absences. During the last term xxxxxx attendance has been less than 90% and is currently xxxx%. I have enclosed a copy of the attendance record to date for your information.

Future attendance will be closely monitored and we know that you will make every attempt to improve on xxxxxx attendance record.

The Education Welfare Officer is obviously aware of the situation but for the time being will take no further action.

Yours sincerely

P FISHER
Headteacher