The Orchard Primary School

Nurture Learn Grow

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Policy Start Date	Policy Review Date	GB Committee
Spring 2026	**Spring 2028**	**Curriculum and Community**

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Regular attendance is attendance at school on each day the school is open to the pupils unless there is an authorised reason to be absent (registration regulations 2006 (amended). Section 444 of the education act 1996). "If a child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school fails to attend regularly at the school, his/her parent is guilty of an offence." A pupil's unauthorised absence is an offence for the **parent.**

As a school we aim to:

- Provide a safe, nurturing, supportive environment where students are engaged and organised to learn.
- Maintain a whole school approach and culture promoting awareness and value of full-time attendance and good punctuality.
- Inspire high standards of attendance for all pupils.
- Maintain maximum attendance for all children with an expectation of 96% school attendance.
- Reduce persistent absenteeism (under 90%) figures.
- Maintain and develop effective communication regarding attendance between home and school.
- Work with families to understand barriers to being in school.
- Help your child attain their full potential academically and socially.
- Work with other schools to share good practice / utilise further sources of attendance support.

Good attendance is important because:

- By missing school, children miss out – on learning, opportunities, social interaction and building positive relationships with peers and adults.
- Attendance data shows a direct correlation between underachievement and poor attendance.
- Regular attenders make better progress, both socially and academically
- Regular attenders cope better with school routines, schoolwork, and friendships.
- Children who attend school full-time want to be in school and find learning more satisfying.

- Children who regularly attend school develop responsible learning habits and are better prepared for both higher education and their future working life.

As a parent you can help us by:

- Ensuring your child attends school on each day the school is open to pupils unless there is an authorisable reason to be absent. Only the school can authorise absence.
- Contact Mrs Trowell in the school office with a reason for an absence on each day of absence before 9am. By phone 020 8570 6247 / email absence@tops.hounslow.sch.uk or in person.

Absence should only happen:

- When your child is significantly/symptomatically ill and therefore unfit to attend school. There should be an observable symptom - 'feeling unwell' is not enough of a reason.
- When there is an unavoidable / unforeseen reason which is causing a difficulty
- We may ask for medical verification where absence claimed as illness is frequent, prolonged or where there are absences before or after a school holiday.

Working with the school:

- If your child has a documented medical condition that hinders regular attendance, please let us know.
- A timely reason, within five days, satisfactory to the school needs to be given for an absence, otherwise the absence will remain unauthorised.
- Arranging all non-emergency medical and dental appointments out of school hours or during school holidays.
- Keeping the school updated by telephone, email, or letter of any changes in circumstances. Ensuring the school always has current contact details for your child; this includes all telephone numbers and emergency contact details.
- In addition to the Headteacher and School Attendance Officer, Mrs O'Callaghan, SENCO and Deputy Headteacher can support with attendance concerns / needs. Please contact the school office.
- **If you are leaving** the area or changing schools, please complete a **Leaver's Form** which is available from the school office. Schools and the local authority

are obliged to track pupils who are absent from school. This can be intrusive in the absence of reliable or confirmed information.

School will:

- While we expect a parent to contact us with a reason for each absence, on occasion they might forget. If so, the school will call, text, email or otherwise contact parents. Schools have a safeguarding role so on occasion, home visits may be made by school staff or by the Local Authority School Attendance Officer (SASO) if a parent cannot be otherwise contacted.
- Let you know if we have concerns regarding your child's attendance or punctuality. The school will express '**a concern'** either verbally or by letter. If attendance does not improve or explanations for absence are unsatisfactory you will be invited to a meeting. The school will also outline what the attendance expectations are and what actions will follow and we will seek to support you. You may be asked to agree to an 'Attendance Contract.' A referral may also be made to the Borough's School Attendance Service.
- Regularly remind parents of the importance of regular attendance and punctuality in the school literature, via school communications, the school website, during termly Attendance weeks, at open evenings and in pupils' annual reports.
- Publish attendance data on the school website via the newsletters.
- Acknowledge, incentivise, and reward good attendance and punctuality. The class in KS2 and KS1 with the highest attendance each week receives the 'school attendance bear' and mufti days are rewarded to classes with the highest attendance each half term.
- If your child has a documented medical condition, we will discuss this with you. A care plan will be devised with you to support your child in school - this might also require us to refer to the school nurse team.
- Where attendance concerns persist, the school will escalate the matter to the Borough School Attendance Officer; this includes unauthorised absence due to significant lateness.
- Share with parents and students the Home School Agreement which details the expectations of attendance and punctuality.

Pupil expectations

- Will support and sign the Home School Agreement that details the value of good attendance and the importance of attending school each day, arriving on time.

Authorised Absence

- Some absences are allowed by law and are known as "authorised absences." That is when the school accepts a reason given for absence.
- We understand that there are rare, unavoidable occasions when there might be a particular situation that causes your child to be absent such as sudden bereavement, unexpected parental illness, or a family crisis. If this happens, please let us know and we shall try to deal with the matter sympathetically. Following such incidents, parents are expected to make any necessary arrangements for their child to return to school as soon as possible (ideally the next day). If the absence is likely to be prolonged, parents must contact the school / the Headteacher providing the reasons. *A 'Term Time Leave' form is available from the school office for this purpose*.
- Please note that when illness is a frequent reason claimed for absence, the school will ask for evidence other than a parent's word to further allow authorisation.

Unauthorised Absence

There are times when children are absent for reasons which are not permitted by law. These are known as "unauthorised absences." Examples of unauthorised absence are:

- Waiting for a delivery or repair
- Going for a family day out
- Interpreting or supporting a parent at a meeting
- Sleeping in after a late night
- Because it is your child's birthday
- Term time holiday
- Parent's illness (other than in an emergency)

Unauthorised absences are reported to the Local Authority. The School Attendance Service may contact you where unauthorised absence continues to be a problem**.** The school will then work in partnership with you until attendance improves.

Unauthorised absence could result in a Fixed Penalty Fine or other legal action. Sanctions for continued, unauthorised absence include warnings, penalty notices (fines) prosecution in the magistrate's court or an education supervision order through the family proceedings court.

The National Framework for Penalty Notices (2024)

- This new framework states a threshold of 10 sessions of unauthorised absences (within a rolling 10 school week period) with considerations for penalty notices and issuing fines
- Notices to Improve (NTIs) are part of the new national guidance following provision of support
- It details penalty amounts and how many notices can be issued, when support is not engaged with or proves unsuccessful, before legal action is considered.

Persistent Absence

Once a child's attendance falls to below 90% for whatever reason, he/she is automatically defined by the Department for Education (DfE) irrespective of the reason for absence, as a **Persistent Absentee.** Persistent absence is a serious problem for pupils. Much of the work they miss when they are off school is never made up; these gaps in their learning leave children at a considerable disadvantage for the remainder of their school career. Statistics show a direct link between poor attendance and under-achievement particularly at GCSE level.

Attendance data from Arbor (the school's MIS) is analysed weekly by the school, local authority and the Department for Education (DfE). The school regularly meets for a Targeting Support Meeting with its local authority School Attendance Support Officer (SASO) to ensure that school attendance, specific cohorts such as SEND, Pupil Premium, FSM, disadvantaged, EAL, year groups is tracked and makes use of the DfE View Your Education Data tool to compare attendance. By this, patterns of absence can be observed, individual targeted interventions and support put in place and effective strategies to improve learning can be implemented.

Such low attendance is well below our expectations and as such, the school will work in partnership with the parents to improve matters. In such cases, parents might be invited to agree an 'Attendance Contract' with the school at an attendance meeting agreeing the steps to support an improvement with attendance.

Severe Absence

Once a child's attendance falls to below 50% for whatever reason, he/she is automatically defined by the Department for Education (DfE) irrespective of the reason for absence, as a **Severe Absentee.** The school, with a whole-school approach, will look to better understand barriers for pupils being in school (such as health, SEND and wellbeing) and to build relationships with family members, working in partnership with the parents to improve matters.

Early help from the school, in the form of individual targeted attendance support, where necessary is followed by formal support from the local authority and partner agencies which may include consideration for an education, health and care plan (EHCP) or an alternative form of educational provision. If severe absence persists, individual cases escalate to statutory interventions.

Exceptional Leave - Term Time Leave of Absence

Amendments to the 2006 School Attendance Regulations make it clear that a Headteacher may not grant any leave of absence during term time for holidays. Leave of absence is only granted in exceptional circumstances (e.g., if there is an emergency) at the discretion of the Headteacher and in accordance with the school policy as agreed by the governing body.

There is no entitlement to time off during term time.

Only in an exceptional circumstance will term time leave be considered. All leave is granted at the Headteacher's discretion. Parents wishing to apply for leave of absence need to fill in an application form well in advance and prior to booking tickets or making travel arrangements. 'Term Time Leave' forms are available at the school office.

- If a child goes abroad during a school holiday period, the parent must make definite arrangements so that they return in good time for school re-opening. Absence claimed as illness before or after a school holiday must be reported during the period of absence and medical evidence produced on return to school. Otherwise, the absence will be regarded as unauthorised leave.
- If you experience unexpected delays in returning from a trip abroad or within the UK, for whatever reason, the school will require documentary evidence accompanied by proof of original return dates i.e., tickets or an official travel plan showing intent to return on time. Medical documentation should be in English. In certain circumstances if a child remains abroad at the beginning of a school term and absence is extended, their school place may be at risk.

- If term time leave is taken without prior permission from the school, the absence will be unauthorised, and you may be liable for a fixed penalty fine. Where a child's whereabouts cannot be established, he/she may be regarded as a 'Child Missing Education.'
- Except as in the case of an emergency, retrospective approval cannot be given without an application having been made. Satisfactory evidence of an emergency will need to be provided.

Punctuality

Good punctuality is essential for good learning and shows respect between pupils, family, and school.

- Parents remain responsible for their child's punctuality. Being late for school means your child misses important social times with friends before the school day begins as well as vital information at the beginning of the first lesson making it harder to learn. Arriving late at school on a consistent basis can have longer-term academic effects.
- Late arrivals are disruptive to the whole class and often embarrassing for the child. If showing up late to school becomes a habit, children may develop the incorrect notion that lateness is acceptable behaviour. This belief can negatively impact their future work ethic and employment opportunities.
- You need to aim for your child to be at the school gate by 8.45am ready to come into school when the gates open.

  Morning registration closes for Key Stage 2 (Years 3, 4, 5 and 6) at 8.55 am.

  Morning registration closes for Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 at 9am.

  Morning registration closes for Nursery at 8.55am.

  Afternoon registration for Nursery is 12.45pm.
- Children who arrive late after registration closes, without an acceptable reason, can be marked as an 'unauthorised absence.' Arrival after the close of registration (particularly if the lateness is frequent or persistent and there is not an acceptable reason) will be marked as unauthorised absence code 'U' in line with the DfE guidance; this has the value of an unauthorised absence. When late arrivals are frequent or persistent the school will wish to discuss this with you.
- All lateness is recorded daily. The number of minutes late and the reason for lateness, if known, will also be noted. This information can be made available to

the courts in the form of a report should a prosecution be the outcome of repeated lateness.

- Please remember that absence for whatever reason disadvantages a child by creating gaps in his/her learning. A satisfactory understanding of learning and good progress can only take place when the child is in the classroom regularly and on time.
- School closes at 3.30pm.

Leavers

If your child is leaving our school parents are asked to:

- Give the school comprehensive information about your plans, including any date of the move and your new address and telephone numbers, your child's new school and the start date when known. This should be submitted to school in writing with good notice. (A destination country or another named Local Authority without other details is not sufficient).
- When a child leaves and we do not have information about where they have gone/will be educated, then he/she is considered to be a 'Child Missing Education' (CME). This means that the Local Authority has a legal duty to conduct investigations, which will include liaising with Hounslow Children's Integrated Response Service, the Police, benefits/council tax records, and other agencies, to try to locate your child. By giving us the above information, these investigations can be avoided.

Withdrawals:

- Parents who remain resident locally can only withdraw their children from school if they have a confirmed start date at another school or are undertaking to educate the child at home (Home Education). If the latter, this must be confirmed in writing to the school by the parent. Pupils remain registered at school until such conditions are satisfied.

Legal Note

- Parents have a legal duty to ensure efficient and full-time attendance at school of registered pupils of statutory school age (Education Act 1996). This is the legal requirement. The School Attendance Service aims to work with schools and families to promote good attendance, support barriers for absence and avoid legal action. However, in some cases, parents are prosecuted (taken to court) or must pay a Fixed Penalty (fine).