

Attendance Policy

Introduction

Our attendance policy is reviewed and updated annually by the Head Teacher and Overley Hall Attendance officer. The policy is discussed with staff and placed on the website for parents and placing authorities to view.

Attendance at school is a legal requirement between the ages of 5 – 18 years. These are children and young people of compulsory school age and must get a suitable, full-time education. Young people are entitled to formal education during this phase of their lives. It is important that they receive their entitlement for their present and prepare them for life as an adult to give them a meaningful and quality future life. Regular school attendance is vital for all children, but especially so for those with learning difficulties and autism. The structure school provides can also help to reduce their anxiety. This point is stressed to all parents and pupils, where it would be meaningful, when they are first admitted to the school. Since the children we cater for are usually several years behind their chronological age in the academic skills, we need them to be in school every day if we are to help them achieve their full potential and transfer successfully to mainstream education. Regular attendance is also a good habit to acquire – hopefully they will become reliable employees in the world of work later.

Overley Hall School believes in early intervention and that identifying and resolving issues before they become entrenched needs to be a high priority.

Overley Hall is aware that children who are missing education may be at significant risk of underachieving, being victims of harm, exploitation or radicalisation, and becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training) later in life.

Overley Hall realises that effective information sharing between parents, schools and local authorities is critical to ensuring that all children of compulsory school age are safe and receiving suitable education. Overley Hall recognises that effective relationships and communication is vital with those involved in the lives of our pupils and young people to ensure that they are safe and receiving the support needed to ensure their education care maximises opportunity and potential.

Aims

Overley Hall policy aims to:

- Emphasise the importance to all students of maximum attendance at school as an essential pre-requisite for making full use of all educational opportunities and to maximising individual achievement;

- Make explicit to all relevant parties (teachers, parents/carers, council and students) the schools expectations on attendance levels;
- Promote a consistent approach across the school towards all matters relating to attendance;
- Clarify the roles and responsibilities of all parties with respect to attendance;
- Communicate to all relevant parties the legal position with respect to attendance and the categories of absence which are deemed "authorised";
- Stress the need for home and school to work in close partnership to achieve high attendance.

Principles

The school will:

- Ensure that all staff are aware of the registration procedures and receive in-service training on registration regulations and education law,
- Complete registers accurately at the beginning of each morning and during the afternoon session,
- Stress to parents/carers the importance of contacting staff early on the first day of absence,
- Celebrate good attendance rates and reward good and improved attendance of all pupils,
- Promote positive staff attitudes to pupils returning after absence,
- Consult with all members of the school community and the Attendance Officer in developing and maintaining the whole-school attendance policy,
- Ensure regular evaluation of attendance procedures by senior managers and learning coordinator,
- Share attendance data via the website;
- Work towards ensuring that all pupils feel supported and valued. We will send a clear message that, if a pupil is absent, she/he will be missed

Legislation and Guidance

Advice has been taken from the non-statutory guidance published in the DFE School attendance Guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities dated November 2016.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/564599/school_attendance.pdf.

The guidance was produced to help schools and local authorities maintain high levels of school attendance and plan the school day and year. The document also provides information about the interventions available to address pupils' poor attendance and behaviour at school. It would be helpful to read this alongside the statutory guidance on parental measures for school attendance and behaviour. This advice summarises the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance and explains how they apply to local authorities, head teachers, school staff, governing bodies, pupils and parents. These requirements are contained in:

- The Education Act 1996 - sections 434(1) (3) (4) & (6) and 458(4) & (5)

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- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006
 - The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2010
 - The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2011
 - The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2016

Procedures

If no contact is received from the parents/carers of an absent pupil on the first morning of absence we will:

- follow 'First day contact' procedures and contact the parent by telephone, or if the parent is unavailable send a standard letter requesting information
- If first day contact is unsuccessful, inform the young person's social worker
- consider sending a second letter if an explanation has still not been received after three days of unexplained absence or send a School Attendance Letter
- Refer to the school's nominated attendance person (NAP) or Education Welfare Officer (EWO), to follow up absence if no response is received after 5 days of absence and consider a referral to the 'Children & Family Locality Services' or contact 'Family Connect' if no contact can be made with the parent
- Invite the parents into school for an 'Attendance Concern Meeting' (ACM) after a maximum of 10 days absence, unless other action is planned. This meeting should include a senior member of staff, learning coordinator and parent/carers or guardian. The aim of this meeting will be to identify and resolve the difficulties which are preventing the pupil from attending school. The parents/carers will be made aware of the legal requirements regarding school attendance
- Discuss any concerns with Family Connect 01952385385 for further guidance on available support. In order to ensure the success of this policy every member of the school staff will make attendance a priority and convey to the pupils the importance of their education
- Attendance, absence and exclusions are closely monitored. Overley Hall operates a no exclusion policy as we recognise the vulnerability of our pupils and young people (POL021). The DSL will monitor unauthorised absence and take appropriate action, particularly where children go missing on repeated occasions and/or are missing for periods during the school day
- We follow the DfE legal requirements for schools in respect of recording and reporting of children who leave school without any known destination
- Where a pupil has 10 consecutive school days of unexplained absence and all reasonable steps* have been taken by the school to establish their whereabouts without success, the school will make an immediate referral to the pupils' local authority

*Reasonable steps include:

- Discussion with the Overley Hall Registered Children's home manager
- Telephone calls to all known contacts, home, local authority representative such as social workers
- Letters home (including recorded delivery)
- Possible home visits where safe to do so

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- Enquiries to friends, neighbours etc. through school contacts
- Enquiries with any other Service known to be involved with the Pupil/family

All contacts and outcomes will be recorded on the pupil's file

The school is required by law to have an admission register and an attendance register. All pupils are to be placed on both registers.

What is an acceptable attendance rate?

Attendance is a national priority. All schools must submit data every term. It is a key indicator of an effective school and, as such, will be scrutinised by OFSTED. National data clearly shows a correlation between high attendance rates and high examination performance.

The vast majority of our students achieve over 95% attendance and this is what we expect from all of our students as a **minimum**. Sickness comes usually in a block of time over a continuous period; what we look for are unbroken weeks (i.e. those where the pupil is marked present on all ten sessions); students should **not** have more than one or two broken weeks in the course of an academic year. Regular broken weeks are a cause for concern and will be followed up by the school.

Authorised Absences

Overley Hall cannot legally authorise **any** leave of absence unless there are **exceptional circumstances**. The Department for Education (DFE) has issued guidelines to all schools detailing valid reasons for **authorised** or **justified** absences:

- (i) A child is ill or receiving medical attention;
- (ii) Days of religious observance, notified in advance;
- (iii) Absence due to family circumstances (e.g. bereavement, serious illness).

There are other absences, such as **approved sporting activities** that can be authorised and there will be events affecting families, some unforeseen, which will necessitate absence from school; professional discretion will need to be used in these cases as to whether the absence can be authorised.

We expect absences to be kept to a minimum; **routine medical and dental appointments should be arranged out of school hours wherever possible.**

Unauthorised Absences

These are absences where:

- No letter or acceptable explanation is provided by parent(s)/carers;
- The reason for the absence does not fall into one of the categories of **authorised** absence above.

DFE guidelines state that the following activities would be classified as **unauthorised**:

- Minding the house;
- Caring for relatives;
- Awaiting repair people;
- Shopping;
- A birthday or family celebration.

There are clearly some grey areas. The DFE guidelines look at the area of **Special Occasions** and make clear that only **truly exceptional** occasions should be classified as authorised; for example, absence resulting from a pupil attending the graduation of an older brother or sister could be counted as authorised; a birthday treat to a theme park would **not**.

Holidays

We strongly discourage holidays being taken in term time as learning is disrupted and the lost time is detrimental to the educational progress of the child.

We ask parents who feel it is absolutely unavoidable that they take their annual holiday (or any other proposed special occasions) during term time to notify the School, in writing, **at least four weeks in advance of the proposed date**, explaining the circumstances.

The DFE guidelines make it plain that, in the final analysis, it is the **school** that judges whether an absence is authorised or not. Amendments to the 2006 regulations remove references to family holidays and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of 10 school days. These amendments make it clear that **Head Teachers** should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted. **A note from home therefore does NOT automatically make an absence valid, justified or authorised.**

The School will **not** authorise holidays retrospectively. Any requests for term time holidays will necessitate a discussion with the Head Teacher.

Home/School Partnership

Securing a high level of attendance requires the school and home to work closely together. To this end, we ask parents/carers to:

- Do all they can to ensure their child arrives **on time** for morning and afternoon school sessions; Morning registration begins at 9.00am and afternoon registration is at 1.30pm. We will monitor persistent poor punctuality and action will be taken; **parents can be prosecuted if their child persistently arrives late**
- Notify the school **on the first day** if their child is ill with an estimation of the likely length of absence
- Send in a written note with their child on the first day s/he is back at school. This should be taken to the Admin office that will then pass it on to the Head of School. This is needed for our records and also authenticates the telephone message
- Get in touch at an early stage about any concerns they have about their child's attitude towards school.

School will:

- Contact home on day 1 of absence if no message has been received from home;
- Contact home over any unexplained absences;
- Follow up promptly any concerns parents pass on to us that may be affecting their child's attitude to, or feeling of wellbeing in, school;
- Regularly and consistently remind students of the importance of good attendance and punctuality;
- Reward excellent or improving attendance and action any concerns promptly.

Procedures for marking the register

The register is a legal document and must be marked accurately, recording pupils attendance or absence and in the latter case if authorised or unauthorised. A certified extract of the register can be used as evidence in legal proceedings against parents for failing to ensure their child's regular attendance or in seeking an Education Supervision Order.

A manual system is currently used to register pupils. This will be transferring to School Pod online.

Manual registers must be marked in ink and where an alteration is necessary this must be clearly identified showing both the original entry and change. Registers are then returned to the Learning Coordinators office at the end of the registration period. The information is then entered onto the school's overall attendance register/School Pod.

The morning register closes at 10.00. All pupil arrivals after this point are treated as absent from that session.

The afternoon register closes at 13.45 and anybody not is attendance after this point are treated as absent from the afternoon session.

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Procedures for following up absence / lateness:

L - Pupils who arrive late but their arrival is prior to lesson one, should be marked as an **L**. This is with the exception of any students for whom we know the reason for their late arrival i.e. medical/dental/illness.

U - Pupils who arrive late, after lesson one should be marked with a **U** to indicate they are late and arrived after lesson one. This is with the exception of any students for whom we know the reason for their late arrival i.e. medical/dental/illness. These absences are regarded as **unauthorised** absences if no satisfactory explanation is given in a note or by telephone by the parents/carers. Parents or carers dropping pupils off late must report to Reception and explain the reasons for lateness.

/ - Pupils who arrive into the classroom late due to their anxieties/Autism should be marked on the register as present **/** if they are working with school staff to reduce their anxieties in order to be able to reengage with learning.

It is the responsibility of the parent/carer (if the student is returning from home/carer) or care staff if the student is coming into school from Children's Home, to contact the school on the first morning of the child's absence. This can be done by leaving a message on the answer phone or phoning when the school office opens at 8.00am or by letting the tutor know.

If a parent/guardian fails to let the school know the reason for absence the school will make contact with the parent/guardian. The parents/carers will be made aware of the legal requirements regarding school attendance. This situation is very unlikely to occur here at Overley Hall School; however we can have a small number of day students.

Authorised and unauthorised Absence "Leave" in relation to a school means leave granted by any person authorised to do so by the Head of the School. The Head of School will only consider authorising an absence during term time where an application has been made in advance and where they are satisfied that there are exceptional or special circumstances to justify the request.

The DfES (2013) now state that leave of absence requests for holidays should not be granted. It is acknowledged that due to individual needs of pupils at Overley Hall School, the Head teacher may apply special consideration to requests for compassionate leave and where a parent/carer can demonstrate external funding has been awarded to a family for a holiday.

Targets are not needed to be set annually for attendance figures as attendance is excellent due to our close working relationships with Overley Hall Children's Home and parents. We also believe the positive attitude towards school motivates our young people to want to attend. After monitoring attendance figures if it was felt attendance was a problem then Overley Hall would set challenging attendance targets. We aim for 97% attendance or above per term. Overley Hall analyses attendance to look for patterns across groups of young people. Such groups may include Day vs

Residential; LAC vs non LAC; Girls vs Boys; School vs Sixth form etc. Any patterns established would lead to action, targeted through the school development plan.

Attendance is published in Annual Reviews and Personal Education Plans. Overall attendance is also published on the Website.

Attendance and punctuality are not awarded certificates as it is an expectation that students attend and are punctual. If a child becomes anxious and becomes reluctant to come to school as a result of their autism, an award may be given out to celebrate an improvement in punctuality and reduction in anxiety.

Roles and Responsibilities

Once your child is registered at Overley Hall School you are responsible for supporting Overley Hall to ensure your child attends regularly. We recognise that parents have a vital role to play and that there is a need to establish strong home- school links and communication systems that can be utilised whenever there are concerns about attendance. It is rare there is a problem with attendance or punctuality as most children are residents of the children's home situated very close to Overley Hall School. There is the potential to have a small number of day students at Overley Hall School and the policy offers guidance on the key roles and responsibilities of those involved with the young people.

Council

Authorities who place their children and young people with us by law are responsible for making sure that registered pupils of compulsory age regularly attend school. The Government also has a priority in reducing unnecessary absence from school. Pupils attending Overley Hall School are more vulnerable and have greater needs than the majority of their mainstream counterparts. This means that they may have more genuine absences from school for medical reasons or experience greater social need than others. It is our responsibility as educators to do all we can to encourage and support regular and frequent school attendance. Parents and carers are also responsible for ensuring their children attend school.

Overley Hall recognises that the council is responsible for making sure that parents and Overley Hall School fulfil their responsibilities to ensure attendance is very high. Councils have services available to help parents meet their obligations placed on them by successive Education Acts and Child care legislation such as 'The Education Access Service'. If required the council can allocate an Education Welfare Officer (EWO) to advise in the managing of whole school attendance. At Overley hall we are aware that EWOs have the right to monitor the whole school attendance on a regular basis and may request information on all children with less than 87% attendance.

EWOs work with:

- parents/carers

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- pupils
- school staff
- education support staff
- psychologists
- social workers
- police
- health personnel
- other voluntary and statutory agencies

Tutors will:

Keep an accurate and up-to-date attendance register of their Tutor Group (see details on marking the register above)

Correct any inaccuracies which may occur in the attendance register/ or notify the Learning Coordinator who will then make the alterations needed

Follow up absences as outlined above (see “Following up absences”)

Liaise with the Pastoral Deputy about attendance

Inform Learning Coordinator if they receive any communication that a pupil will need to leave the school premises part way through the day by prior arrangement e.g. for a medical appointment

Telephone pupils’ homes or Children’s Home as necessary re attendance

Pass on information re attendance to the relevant staff

Keep records and inform outside agencies as necessary to comply with local and national policy and procedures

Monitor pupils’ attendance and punctuality to lessons

Inform senior members immediately if a pupil leaves a lesson without permission and does not return within a short period

Pick up and mark registers at the start of the day and period 5

Keep records of pupils who arrive late and note down reason

Learning Coordinator will:

Transfer class register information into a whole school register and keep this up to date, this will soon be on School Pod online.

Make any corrections in registers and sign them

Advise teaching staff of current codes and ensure register of absences is correct

Complete LA1 forms for all students

Provide attendance data for reviews and authorities upon request

Supply attendance data for LAC pupils

Record attendance percentage data for monitoring including any absences

Provide comparison data for school records and website

Alert Head Teacher of any concerns linked to attendance or punctuality

Head Teacher will:

Notify the safeguarding team of absences of vulnerable pupils

Send out letters each term whose family's attendance falls below 95%

Inform the local authority of any pupil with 10 continuous days of unauthorised absence

Notify the authority of any pupil who fails to attend regularly

Note the authority of any deletion from the school register where the school that the pupil is moving to is not known.

Parents/Carers:

Parents/Carers are responsible for:

Ensuring that their child attends school regularly and punctually unless prevented from doing so by illness or attendance at a medical appointment,

Contacting the school office on the first morning of absence,

Informing the school in advance of any medical appointments in school time,

Making requests for authorised absence in term time, only if absolutely necessary as these are not automatically authorised,

Talking to the school as soon as possible about a child's reluctance to come to school so that problems can be quickly identified and dealt with;

The government expects:

Schools and local authorities to:

Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence;

Ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled; and act early to address patterns of absence. Parents to perform their legal duty by ensuring their children of compulsory school age who are registered at school attend regularly;

All pupils to be punctual to their lessons;

All children, regardless of their circumstances, are entitled to an efficient, full time education which is suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have.

Codes:

Registration codes

Code Description / Present (AM) \ Present (PM)

Codes can be found on the inside cover of each register

Any queries on codes can be clarified by Learning Coordinator or Head of School

Codes attached at Appendix 2.

Addressing Attendance Concerns

The school expects attendance of at least 95%. It is important for children to establish good attendance habits early on in their school career. It is the responsibility of the Head teacher and Learning coordinator to support good attendance and to identify and address attendance concerns promptly. In school we rely upon parents to ensure their child attends school regularly and punctually and therefore where there are concerns regarding attendance, parents are always informed of our concerns. Initially concerns about attendance are raised with parents via letters which are sent home. There will be opportunities for the parent/carer to discuss reasons for absence and support to be given by the school with the aim to improve attendance. Where a child's attendance record does not improve over a period of time then the school has a responsibility to make a referral to the Educational Welfare Service.

The Education Welfare Service (EWS) will issue penalty notices to parents where there has been a referral to EWS from the school as part of the school's processes to address poor attendance patterns. In addition, education-related parenting orders are available by direct application by a school or LA to the Magistrates' Court as an ancillary order following a successful prosecution by the LA for irregular attendance or breach of a school attendance order. The Education works with the school to improve attendance and may issue fixed penalty fines if attendance support meetings held by the school do not improve attendance.

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Help and Intervention

Early intervention is proven to ensure that attendance remains a high priority by school staff and parents and helps to identify and resolve issues before they become entrenched.

Education Welfare Officers work closely with:

1. Parents/carers
2. Pupils
3. School staff
4. Education support staff
5. Psychologists
6. Social workers
7. Police
8. Health personnel
9. Other voluntary and statutory agencies

A Final Word

We feel attendance levels are an indicator of how effective and caring a school is. Failure to attend can be an indication that all is not well at home so that there is a welfare aspect to attendance as well. Equally, it is clear that regular, consistent attendance is an essential pre-requisite for effective learning.

We take attendance seriously across the school and have put a lot of time and support into getting our procedures as efficient and effective as possible. We urge you to give this matter the priority it deserves.

The school recognises that each placing authority has valuable guidance on matters relating to attendance. If parents have any concerns or need further clarification, we would suggest they contact their relevant council websites for respective local authority policy.

Telford and Wrekin Council

Attendance Support Team

Telford & Wrekin Council

Darby House

Lawn Central

Telford

TF3 4JA

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Telephone: 01952 385220

Email: attendancesupportteam@telford.gov.uk

Shropshire Council

Further information can be found at <https://www.shropshire.gov.uk/schools/school-attendance/>

- [Attendance Strategy](#) (pdf - 36kb)
- [Shropshire Attendance Policy](#) (pdf - 100kb)
- [Roles And Responsibilities for School Attendance](#) (pdf - 18kb)

For more advice, you may wish to contact the Education Access Service

educationaccessservice@shropshire.gov.uk Tel: 01743 254397

Shropshire Council
Shirehall
Abbey Foregate
Shrewsbury
Shropshire
SY2 6ND

Staffordshire

<https://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/education/welfareservice/Attendance/Attendance-Policy-and-Guidance.pdf>

Wolverhampton

www.wolverhampton.gov.uk

Central Bedfordshire

<http://centralbedfordshire.gov.uk>

Northamptonshire

www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/attendance

Lincolnshire

<https://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/parents/schools/at-school/school-attendance-and-penalty-notice/131943.article>

Norfolk

<http://www.schools.norfolk.gov.uk/Behaviour-and-safety/School-attendance/index.htm>

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Appendix 1

Staff Guide to Registers and Associated Procedures: Updated May 2018

This section complements the Attendance Policy and should be read in conjunction with it. It deals with the practicalities of completing the registers and associated procedures to do with attendance. Registers are important legal documents and we rely on accurate input in order to follow up any concerns as well as for data analysis.

Marking the register

Class Tutors will be responsible for following up absences and communicating reasons to the Head of School/Learning Coordinator.

Reading the registers

The registers information is read every morning after registration (period 1). It is imperative that the data entered is accurate and that there is a mark for **EVERY** pupil (everyone **must** fall into one of the three categories of present, absent or late!). Staff must enter either 'present', 'absent' or 'late'. **Schools have a responsibility for safeguarding the children in their care and it is vital that the information we have is as accurate as possible.**

We operate a policy of First day response regarding absence across the school. The tutor's team phone parents of any child not registered in Lesson 1.

Communication with/from parents

The DFE guidance strongly recommends a policy of same-day contact as this has been shown to be the single most effective strategy in improving rates of attendance; it is also important from a Child Protection perspective.

We have stressed to parents the importance of their contacting the school as early as possible on the **first** day of absence to notify us of their child's absence; there is a dedicated line on which parents can leave messages about absence.

We do, however, require **ALL** absences to be covered by a letter, e-mail, phone call or note in logbook from parents/guardians in addition to the initial telephone contact (texts not accepted). Communication is required for every day of a period of absence. All absence notes should be initialled and dated by the form tutor when received and should relate to precise periods of absence. **All notes must be sent directly to the Head of School.**

Use of Form Time for Attendance Matters

Housekeeping procedures:

- Take accurate registers during am and pm registration, making use of appropriate codes (present, absent, late).
- Monitor attendance of individuals.

- Raise issues of attendance and punctuality with student, parents and Head of School as necessary.

Appendix 2

Status	Code
Present	am / pm \
Late arriving prior to lesson 1	L
Late arriving after lesson 1 (This is an unauthorised absence)	U
Educated off-site i.e. College	B
Attending an interview with a college or prospective employer	J
Participating in a supervised sporting activity	P
Educational visit or trip (supervised) i.e. community outing	V
Work experience	W
Leave of absence authorised by school	C
Excluded but no alternative provision is made	E
Holiday leave approved in advance	H
Illness	I
Medical or Dental appointment	M
Religious observance	R
Unauthorised holiday/leave	G
Reason for absence not yet provided	N
Absent from school without authorisation	O
Not required to be in school, planned whole or partial school closure i.e. PD Day	X
Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstance i.e. taxi did not arrive, school closed due to bad weather, national/local emergency.	Y

Pupil not on admission register	Z
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