



# Attendance Policy and Procedure

Written	October 2019
Date of review	September 2021
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*May 2022 – currently under review*

## Introduction

Orion Academy is committed to providing a full and efficient education to all pupils and endeavours to provide an environment where all pupils feel valued and welcome.

For all students to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend school regularly and every student, should be at school, on time and ready to learn every day, unless the reason for absence is unavoidable. Every opportunity will be used to share with students and their parents or carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance and this will be a focus at Termly Outcome Plan meetings, Annual Reviews and noted in the Annual Reports.

It is important therefore, that you make sure that your child attends school regularly and this policy is designed to share how the school and family will work together to achieve this.

### Why is regular attendance so important?

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's education and regular absence will have a serious affect their learning and attainment. Any student's absence is a cause for concern, disrupts teaching and learning routines and may affect the learning of other students in the same class.

### Every School Day Counts - Days off school add up to lost learning

<b>175 NON SCHOOL DAYS A YEAR</b>			175 days to spend on family time, visits, holidays, shopping, household jobs, and other appointments.		
<b>190 SCHOOL DAYS IN EACH YEAR</b>	<b>10 days absence</b>	<b>19 days absence</b>	<b>29 days absence Half a term missed</b>	<b>38 days absence</b>	<b>47 days absence</b>
	<b>180 DAYS OF EDUCATION</b>	<b>171 DAYS OF EDUCATION</b>	<b>161 DAYS OF EDUCATION</b>	<b>152 DAYS OF EDUCATION</b>	<b>143 DAYS OF EDUCATION</b>
<b>190 days for your child's education</b>					
<b>100%</b>	<b>95%</b>	<b>90%</b>	<b>85%</b>	<b>80%</b>	<b>75%</b>
<b>GOOD</b> Best chance of success. Gets your child off to a flying start		<b>WORRYING</b> Less chance of success. Makes it harder to progress.		<b>SERIOUS CONCERN</b> Not fair on your child Court Action!	

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitted absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution

### **Promoting regular attendance**

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility – parents, carers, students and school staff.

To help achieve regular attendance the school will:

- Will report to you at least half termly on your child's attendance including their authorised and unauthorised absence, and punctuality
- Celebrate good attendance by sharing individual achievements
- Reward good or improving attendance through assemblies, rewards, certificates and trips

### **Understanding types of absence**

Every session (half-day) absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parent or carer), as either authorised or unauthorised. This is why information about the cause of absence is always required, preferably in writing.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for an appropriate reason such as illness, unavoidable medical or dental appointments, emergencies or other unavoidable incidents. If this occurs, the school will require evidence of the appointment to be able to authorise the absence.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Local Authority (County Attendance Team) using sanctions and/or legal proceedings.

Unauthorised attendance includes:

- Parents or carers 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 (after the register closes)
- Shopping, looking after other children or people, or birthdays
- Day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed
- Excessive illness without medical evidence (i.e. Note or certificate from a medical professional)

Whilst any student may be absent from school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school for a variety of reasons. Any problems with regular attendance should be shared with the school and discussed with the student and family to explore the difficulty and find a solution. If your child is reluctant to attend it is essential that parents and carers do not 'cover up' their absence or submit to the pressure to excuse them from attending school. By colluding with your child, it sends the message that attendance at school doesn't matter, and experience shows that this often makes the attendance difficulty worse.

You can support your child by:

- Ensuring consistent and appropriate sleep routines

- Having uniform and equipment prepared the night before
- Providing a healthy breakfast
- Reporting any social, behavioural or academic concerns to the school promptly
- Maintaining open and honest communication between school and home
- Being positive about school (even if your own experience was not positive or difficult)

### **Persistent Absenteeism (PA):**

A child becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for any reason (authorised or unauthorised). Absence at this level will have a considerable negative impact on any child's educational outcomes and prospects and the school needs full parental and carer support and co-operation to tackle this.

The school monitors all absence thoroughly. Any student that is seen to have reached the persistent absentee (PA) threshold or is at risk of moving towards that threshold is given priority and you will be informed of this immediately.

Students identified as being persistent absentees and their parents and carers are subject to an Action Plan in the form of a Parenting Contract to identify the difficulties and support with improving attendance. The plan may include the allocation of additional support, short term target setting, individual incentive programmes and participation in intervention sessions. The County Attendance Team are automatically informed of all cases of persistent absenteeism and will challenge and support the school in securing improvements for identified students. Persistent absenteeism is classified as a safeguarding concern at Orion Academy and consideration of completing an Early Help Assessment (EHA) and implementing a Team Around the Family (TAF) will be discussed with families.

### **Absence procedures**

#### **If your child is absent from school you must:**

- Contact the school as soon as possible on the first and each subsequent day of absence (01865 771703, leave a message if there is no answer or email [office@orionacademy.co.uk](mailto:office@orionacademy.co.uk))
- For planned absence (e.g. medical appointment or funeral) notify the school as soon as possible so that this can be recorded in the register

#### **If your child is absent the school will:**

- Telephone you on the first day of absence if you have not contacted the school before 9.30am
- If the school is unable to reach you by telephone we will consider following up by text message and/or email
- If a response has not been received by the start of the afternoon session (12.05pm) and the family is open to the Early Help team or Children's Social Care the relevant worker will be informed of the absence.
- Record the reason for absence in the electronic register
- If appropriate invite you and your child in to meet with a member of SLT to discuss any concerns

### **If your child has been absent for three consecutive days without explanation we will:**

- Make all reasonable attempts to contact the family everyday for the first three days of absence. Including telephone, texting and emailing, consideration will also be made regarding making a home visit
- If there is a concern that a child is in immediate danger or risk of significant harm a referral will be made to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)
- A letter will be sent on the third day of absence, requesting that the parent contacts the school as a matter of urgency regarding their child's absence
- On the fourth day, if the case is not open to the Early Help Team or Children's Social Care the school will contact the Locality and Community Support Service (LCSS) and ask a member from the team to conduct a home visit to conduct a welfare check.
- If appropriate the school will invite you and your family to meet with a member of SLT to discuss any concerns

### **Children missing from education**

- Any student who is absent without an explanation after ten consecutive school days and the school are unable to make contact, Alan Blackmore, Pupil Tracking Officer at the Local Authority will be informed.

### **Telephone numbers:**

There are many reasons why the school will need to contact parents and carers, including absence, so it is essential that the school has your current contact numbers at all times. Please help us to support you and your child by making sure that we always have an up to date number – if we don't, something important might be missed. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year.

### **The County Attendance Team:**

Parents and carers are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be resolved using this approach, the school may refer the case to the County Attendance Team at the Local Authority. At the school's request, the team may issue a Penalty Notice (PN) per parent or carer, per child (currently £60, rising to £120 if unpaid after 21 days). If the Penalty Notice remains unpaid after 28 days a summons to Court will be issued for each unpaid Penalty Notice for prosecution in the Magistrates Court. This can result in a criminal record and a fine of up to £2,500, a Community Order, Parenting Order or ultimately a custodial sentence. This is stated in Law in the Education Act 1996 sections 444(1) and 444(1a) "If any 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 parent or carer can be issued with a penalty notice if:

- They fail to ensure that their child attends school, or other education provision regularly, usually defined as six or more unauthorised absence session (half days) over a six-week period
- They allow their child to take leave of absence during term time without the school's authorisation
- They fail to return their child to school on the agreed date after a period of authorised leave of absence

- Their child persistently arrives late for school after the registration is closed

Parents or carers that have previously been issued with the Penalty Notices for their children's absences, in the event of further unauthorised absences may receive summonses to Court.

Alternatively, parents or students may wish to contact the County Attendance Team directly to ask for help or information. The team is independent of the school and will provide impartial advice. They can be contacted on 01865 323513 or [attendance@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:attendance@oxfordshire.gov.uk).

### **Lateness:**

Poor punctuality is not acceptable; however, the school is aware that sometimes lateness is attributable to educational transport; this will be reported and followed up as a matter of urgency. Arriving late and missing the start of the day can be unsettling for the student and the class as a whole. This can be disruptive to lessons, can be anxiety provoking and embarrassing for the student and can also encourage further absence.

### **How lateness is managed at Orion Academy:**

The school starts at **9am** and it is expected that your child is at school and goes to class for that time.

Registers are marked by **9.30am** and your child will receive a late mark (L) if they arrive between **9.05am** and **9.30am**.

At **9.30am**, the registers will be closed. In accordance with the Regulations, if your child arrives after this time they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site (U) but this will not count as a present mark and it will mean that they have a unauthorised absence recorded. If this pattern of attendance persists you could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice.

Afternoon registration opens at **12.05pm** and closed at **12.35pm**. If your child arrives between these times they will receive a late mark (L). The register closes at **12.35pm**, in accordance with the Regulations, your child will receive a mark that shows them to be on site (U) but this will not count as a present mark and it will mean that they have an unauthorised absence recorded.

If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with a member of the leadership team and/or Attendance Officer to resolve the problem. You can approach the school team at any time if you are having difficulties getting your child to school on time.

### **Exceptional leave**

Taking holidays in term time will affect your child's education as much as any other absence and Orion Academy expects parents and carers to support their child's education by not taking children away in school time. Any financial savings you may make by taking a holiday in school time are offset by the cost to your child's education and outcomes.

There is **no** automatic entitlement in law to time off in term time to go on holiday. We know:

- That the link between a student's attendance and attainment is irrefutable
- Early poor attendance habits follow through into secondary school, further education and employment
- All schools in Oxfordshire are encouraged to adopt a policy of not authorising Exceptional Leave and applying Penalty Notices
- The Head Teacher will discuss requests for Exceptional Leave with families to stress the importance of good school attendance habits and links between attendance and attainment
- Exceptional leave is most unlikely to be authorised when a student's attendance is less than 95%
- Exceptional leave will be refused when the school is aware of any truancy
- Exceptional leave will be refused when requests are regular (annual) or when patterns become identifiable

*The County Attendance Team can issue penalty notices for any unauthorised 'Exceptional Leave'. Penalty notices can be issued to each parent or carer concerned and that this will be issued per parent, per child. Payment within 21 days of receipt of the notice is £60 and £120 if paid after this period but within 28 days. If the penalty notice remains unpaid after 28 days parents or carers will each receive a summons to Oxford Magistrates Court. If unauthorised leave is repeated the County Attendance Team can summons each parent or carer to Court without first issuing a Penalty Notice.*

**Those with responsibility for attendance at Orion Academy are:**

The Deputy Head Teacher

The Head Teacher

The IEB member with responsibility for behaviour and attendance

**Summary**

Orion Academy has a legal duty to publish its absence figures and its attendance policy to parents and carers and to promote attendance. School attendance data must be available to the Local Authority and the Department for Education (DfE). Equally parents and carers have a duty to make sure that their children attend school regularly.

Staff at the Orion Academy are committed to working together with parents, carers and students to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible. Regular attendance optimises your child's attainment.

## Annex A

### Flowchart of Actions

#### All students

Individual attendance targets set for all students in week 4 of term

Regular monitoring highlights students with attendance below 90%

At the end of each short term (6 times a year) Letter and attendance certificate sent to all parents and carers sharing attendance statistics and attendance targets.

Reward lottery for students with 100% for the week  
Reward lottery for students with 100% attendance for the term  
Certificates for 100% of the term

#### Students of Concern

Letter and copy of attendance certificate send to parent/carers.  
Target set for 90% over the next 10-20 days

Letter sent to parents/carers at the end of the monitoring period

Improvement

Continuing concerns

Internal monitoring

Initial consultation with the County Attendance team

Further target set for 10 -20 days

Improvement

Continuing concerns

Internal Monitoring

Discussion with SLT  
Parenting Contract  
20 day target set

Improvement

Continuing concerns

Internal Monitoring

-Early Help Assessment  
-Referral to County Attendance Team  
-Team Around the Family  
-Legal processes