



# Orion Academy

## Attendance Policy and Procedure

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<b>Signed: Head Teacher</b>	_____
<b>Chair of IEB</b>	_____

## **Introduction**

Orion Academy is committed to providing a full and efficient education to all pupils and endeavour 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 seriously 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.

Ensuring your son'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:

- The school 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 off 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 pupil 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 prospected and the schools 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.

Persistent absentee pupils and their parents and carers are subject to an Action Plan in the form of a Parenting Contract to support getting attendance back on track. 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 supporting improvements for identified students. Persistent absenteeism is a viewed as 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 are 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 every day 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 five consecutive school days and the school are unable to make contact the Pupil Tracking Officer at the Local Authority must be informed.

**Telephone numbers**

There are many times when 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 defines 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.

Alternately, 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. If your child misses the start of the day they can miss work and do not spend time with their class settling and preparing for the day ahead. Arriving late can also be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage absence. As a significant number of students travel to school by taxi, the school is sympathetic to lateness as the result of traffic and taxi difficulties.

### **How we manage lateness**

The school day starts at 9am and we expect your child to be in class at that time.

Registers are marked by 9:30am and your child will receive a late mark if they not in by this time.

At 9:35am the registers will be closed. In accordance with the Regulations, if your child arrives after that time they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will not count as a present mark and it will mean that they have an unauthorised absence.

If your child has persistent late record you will be asked to meet a member of SLT to resolve the problem, but you can approach us 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 schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking children away in school time. Remember that any savings you think you may make by taking a holiday in school time are offset by the cost to your child's education.

1. There is no automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday. It is widely known that the link between a student's attendance and attainment is undeniable.
2. Early poor attendance habits follow through into secondary school, further education and employment.

3. All schools in Oxfordshire are encouraged to adopt a policy of not authorising Exceptional Leave.
4. A senior member of staff will meet personally with every family applying for Exceptional Leave to stress the importance of good school attendance habits and links between attendance & attainment.
5. Exceptional Leave is most unlikely to be authorised in Years 6, 9 and 11
6. Exceptional leave is most unlikely to be authorised when a student's attendance is less than 95%.
7. Exceptional leave should always be refused when school is aware of any truancy.
8. Exceptional leave should always be refused when requests are regular (annual) or when patterns become identifiable.
9. Reasons for Exceptional Leave should be logged on the student's record and shared as part of the transfer/transition process.

***The County Attendance Team can issue Penalty Notices for any unauthorised 'Exceptional Leave'. Penalty Notices can be issued to each parent/carer concerned. Please note that it will be per parent per child. Payment within 21 days of receipt of notice is £60 and £120 if paid after this period but within 28 days. If the Penalty Notice remains unpaid after 28 days you will each receive a summons to Oxford Magistrates Court. If unauthorised leave is repeated the County Attendance Team may summons each parent to Court without a Penalty Notice being issued.***

### **Celebrating good attendance**

Students are praised for good attendance and we have a number of weekly awards in place for 100% attendance. There are also prizes at the end of every term for students whose attendance is consistently high or has significantly improved.

Good attendance means that students usually make good, consistent attendance in their school work.

### **Monitoring attendance**

Attendance is monitored on a daily basis and individual students' percentage figures are monitored on a weekly basis.

Teachers will note both authorised and unauthorised absences. This is followed up by the School Admin Team.

Any concern that the school believes needs additional support to ensure that students maintain excellent attendance will be brought to the attention of the school's County Attendance Officer, who has the authority to issue penalty notices and fines.

Please remember

Email [office@orionacademy.co.uk](mailto:office@orionacademy.co.uk) or ring the school on the first day of absence on 01865 771703.

### **Other relevant policies and key documents:**

Keeping Children Safe in Education  
Orion Academy Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy  
Orion Academy Behaviour Policy  
Children Missing in Education Policy