



School Attendance Policy 2022 - 2023

Updated August 2022 to be reviewed August 2023

The policy must be reviewed and updated at least annually and/or following any updates to national and local guidance and procedures

Date ratified	13th September 2022
Chair of Trustees	Mr C Scrivener
Chair of RIB	Mrs J Tridgell
Designated Manager for Gallery Trust	Mrs A Beasley
Designated Trustee for Improving Attendance	Mr J Shryane

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Key contacts

Role	Name	Contact details
Executive Headteacher	Harry Paget-Wall Collins	h.paget-wallcollins@thegallerytrust.co.uk
Senior leader for attendance	Hannah Shuker	Hannah.shuker@orionacademy.co.uk
Individuals with responsibility for daily attendance	Francine Shaw	Francine.shaw@orionacademy.co.uk
RIB chair	Julie Tridgell	j.tridgell@thegallerytrust.co.uk
Designated Safeguarding Manager for Gallery Trust	Alison Beasley	a.beasley@thegallerytrust.co.uk
Oxfordshire County Council Local Authority School Attendance Team		https://schools.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/content/county-attendance-team 01865 323513
Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)		https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/child-ren-education-and-families/keeping-children-and-young-people-safe/report-child-abuse 0345 050 7666

1. Aims

At Orion Academy we are committed to meeting our obligation with regards to school attendance through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- Promoting good attendance

- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensuring every student has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence
- Building strong relationships with families to ensure students have the support in place to attend school

We will also promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

Orion Academy expects good attendance from its students, in order for them to make the most of the opportunities that the school has to offer. We rely on our partnership with parents to ensure that this is achieved. We consider good attendance to be 85% or more at this school.

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the DfE's [Working together to improve school attendance](#), Guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools, and local authorities, September 2022, and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of [The Education Act 1996](#)
- Part 3 of [The Education Act 2002](#)
- Part 7 of [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Student Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006 \(and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments\)](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 The Board of Trustees (BOT), Rapid Improvement Board (RIB), and the Senior Executive Team (SET) for The Gallery Trust are responsible for:

- Promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school
- Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance
- Holding the Executive Head Teacher to account for the implementation of this policy

3.2 The Executive Head Teacher is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the school

- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual students
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary

3.3 The designated senior leader for attendance is responsible for:

- Leading attendance across the school
- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Monitoring and analysing attendance data (see section 7)
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data
- Arranging calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to students and families
- Provide attendance data to the Senior Executive Team for The Gallery Trust
- Working with the Local Authority attendance team to tackle persistent absence
- Report concerns about attendance to the Head of School and the Senior Executive Team when appropriate

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance is Hannah Shuker (Acting Head of School) and she can be contacted via email: Hannah.shuker@orionacademy.co.uk

3.4 Class teachers/form tutors are responsible for

- Recording attendance daily, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office on the same day.

3.5 School admin/office staff will:

- Retrieve messages left on the school's main telephone number
- Take calls from parents/carers about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system
- Transfer calls from parents/carers to the Tutor/DSL/Head of School to provide them with more detailed support on attendance
- Call parents /carers to follow up on daily non-attendance
- Ensure daily attendance data is recorded and available by 10am
- Alert the Head of School immediately if a student's whereabouts are unknown (after calls home have been made)
- Alert the Head of School of any attendance concerns around individual students or alternative providers
- Follow up with alternative providers if a student's attendance has not been provided by the placement

3.6 Parents/carers are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day on time
- Call the school to report their child's absence before 9am on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence, and advise when they are expected to return
- Provide the school with **more than one** emergency contact number for their child
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day

3.7 Students are expected to:

- Attend school every day on time

4. Recording attendance

4.1 Attendance register

We will keep an attendance register and place all students onto this register. In our school we use RM Integris as our school management system.

We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark whether every student is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

See [Appendix 1: attendance codes](#) for the DfE attendance codes.

We will also record:

- Whether the absence is authorised or not
- The nature of the activity if a student is attending an approved educational activity
- The nature of circumstances where a student is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Students must arrive in school by 9.00am on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at 9.05 and will be kept open until 9.20. The register for the second session will be taken at 12.30 and will be kept open until 12.40.

4.2 Unplanned absence

The student's parent/carer must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence before 9.00am, or as soon as practically possible, by calling the school on our main number of 01865 771703 (please leave a message if there is no answer) or by sending an email to admin@orionacademy.co.uk

We will mark absence due to illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask the student's parent/carer to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/carers will be notified of this in advance.

4.3 Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised if the student's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment. Please note that if students have a medical/ dental appointment, we do not expect them to take a full day off school.

All requests of leaves of absence (including for medical appointments) must be made in writing to the school.

However, we encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the student should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

The student's parent/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Please refer to section 5 to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

4.4 Lateness and punctuality

A student who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code
- After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code

Punctuality issues which arise from SEN Home to School transport will be noted and we will follow up any ongoing problems with the Home to School Transport Team.

4.5 Following up unexplained absence

Where any student we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the school will:

- Call the student's parent/carer on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the school cannot reach any of the student's emergency contacts,

the school may use follow up safeguarding measures such as making a home visit or contacting the student's social worker if they have one

- Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session
- Call the parent/carer on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary
- Consider a home visit by school staff (this will take place if there are 3 continuous days of unexplained absence)
- If absence continues, the school will consider a referral to police or the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)
- If there are more than 10 days unexplained absences, we will discuss with the Oxfordshire County Council Local Authority School Attendance Team

4.6 Reporting to parents/carers

The school will regularly inform parents about their child's attendance and absence levels. This will be via a termly update from the school about your child's attendance and absence levels. You will also receive an overall % figure for the academic year as part of your child's end of year report.

5. Authorised and unauthorised absence

5.1 Approval for term-time absence

The Head of School will only authorise a leave of absence to a student during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence will be authorised at the Head of School's discretion, including the length of time the student is authorised to be absent for. Parents or carers must apply in advance for permission.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances, and relevant context behind the request. Additional evidence may be requested to support the request.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments (see sections 4.2 and 4.3 for more detail)
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the student's parents belong.
- Traveller students travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travellers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and new travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether the student is attending educational provision.

6. Strategies for promoting attendance

At Orion Academy we recognise and applaud good attendance as part of our celebration of success strategies. We celebrate good attendance every day during in-class sessions where the whole class attendance is recognised and rewarded. We also celebrate good individual and whole-class attendance during assemblies, via praise postcards and with phone calls or emails home.

7. Attendance monitoring

Attendance is monitored and followed up daily. Percentage figures are monitored on a weekly basis. Members of our pastoral team are responsible for this monitoring.

Teachers will note both authorised and unauthorised absences in the registers and this is followed up by individualised support for students based on their circumstances.

Any concerns that the school believes needs additional support to ensure students maintain excellent attendance, will be brought to the attention of the Local Authority School Attendance Support Team, who has the authority to issue penalty notices or fines.

<https://schools.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/content/county-attendance-team>

We track individual and class data to assess the impact of any interventions or support that have been put into place for our students. We take care to ensure that students who we have identified as being particularly vulnerable are effectively tracked and monitored.

7.1 Monitoring attendance

At our school we will:

- Monitor attendance and absence data weekly, half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual student level
- Identify whether there are individual students or particular groups of students whose absences may be a cause for concern

Student-level absence data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. The school will compare attendance data to the national average and share this with the RIB and the Trustees.

7.2 Analysing attendance

At our school we will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify students or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these students and their families
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns
- Provide regular attendance reports to the RIB, Trust Senior Executive Team and Trustees.

7.3 Using data to improve attendance

At our school we will:

- Track attendance of each student to be able to identify declining attendance at an early stage.
- Provide regular attendance reports to key members of staff including the Executive Head Teacher to facilitate discussions with students and families
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies
- Work with the Local Authority School Attendance Support Team.

7.4 Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence is where a student misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a student misses 50% or more of school.

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Contact parents to discuss attendance concerns
- Work with the student and family to try and identify the cause of the absence.
- Notify the Local Authority School Attendance Support Team of any students that have missed school for 10 days or more without the absence being recorded as authorised. This will be done on a monthly basis.
- Based on an assessment of individual cases we will also consider:
 - Home visits
 - A supportive letter which makes clear the impact of high school absence
 - Meetings with the parents or carers of students who are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school
 - Working with the Local Authority School Attendance Support Team
 - Referrals to Social care e.g. Early Help Assessment
- Support the student with their re-engagement with school via a targeted programme run by one of the school's Youth Workers or Family Engagement Officers
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance

For rare cases of extreme absenteeism, we may consider commissioning a charity such as Dare2Dream or one-eighty to deliver a proven and highly bespoke re-engagement with school programme.

Any pattern of regular absentees will be identified and support will be offered by the school, in finding solutions for raising attendance. Many problems such as bullying or family difficulties can therefore be detected early and support given to students and parents to address these issues swiftly.

7.5 Penalty Notices and Legal Action

The Law: The Education Act 1996 Part 1, Section 7 states:

“The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall ensure they receive efficient full-time education suitable-

[a] To their age, ability and aptitude and

[b] To any special needs he may have, either by regular attendance at school or by education otherwise.

For educational purposes the term parent is used to include those that have parental responsibility and/or those that have the day-to-day care of the child.

The legislation that appertains to students who are of compulsory school age and are registered at school is contained within this Act.

Part V1 Section 444 contains the details of when an offence is committed if a child fails to attend school”

In cases of persistent absenteeism, the school reserves the right to ask the County Attendance Team to either issue a Penalty Notice Warning, which could result in a fine or further legal action through the courts.

A Penalty Notice is a fine that the County Attendance Team may decide to issue instead of taking legal action through the Magistrates’ Court system.

A Parent/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 sessions 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 registration is closed.

A student becomes a ‘persistent absentee’ (PA) when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child’s educational prospects and we need parents’ fullest support and cooperation to tackle this.

Students who are deemed to be a persistent absentee are tracked and monitored carefully by the school and a parenting contract meeting may be offered between parent, student and the school to try and help resolve any issues. Individual cases of persistent absenteeism may be discussed and referred to the Local Authority School Attendance Support Team and if necessary, they have a range of legal powers open to them to enforce attendance including parenting orders, education supervision orders and prosecutions. If convicted of an offence a parent could face a fine of up to £2,500 per parent and/or 3 months imprisonment.

As a restorative school we will always do our best to work with families and students to address attendance concerns without the need for legal intervention, but parents and carers must note that where all avenues of support have been facilitated by the school, local authorities, and other partners and persistent or severe absence for unauthorised reasons continues this may be the only available course of action.

8. Response to unexplained absence

First Day Response

If a student is absent from school and we have **not** been informed, either by telephone, email or letter, a phone call home will be made to establish the reasons for the absence. This will happen on the **first day of your child's absence from school**.

If the parent cannot be contacted, the school will call other emergency contacts that have been provided to the school to try and establish the safety and whereabouts of the student.

A home visit may take place if there are concerns about the wellbeing of the student.

All phone calls are made with the utmost consideration of the needs and feelings of the recipient and politeness is a primary factor.

A follow up email or letter will be sent requesting an explanation for the absence.

Third Day Response

For safeguarding reasons, we will make a home visit (this may have already been carried out previously). However, if we are unable to get a response then we will report it to the police as your child will then be classed as a 'missing child'.

Student Missing from Education

Any student who is absent without an explanation after 5 consecutive school days and if the school is unable to make contact with the family this must be referred to the LCSS. LCSS will visit the home. If this is unsuccessful then the police will visit the home. If the student cannot be located, a MP1 form must be completed and sent to the Students Missing Education Administrator

Ongoing considerations

On each day that a student is absent we will consider any additional vulnerabilities or concerns that we may have around the individual and make an assessment of risk. This may mean that actions are taken sooner, for example contact with police or social care on day one of absence where no explanation is provided.

9. Equality Statement

We understand our obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. We understand the individual needs of our students, and we always take these into consideration when working with our students and families.

10. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum annually by The Designated Safeguarding Manager for The Gallery Trust and the

Head of School for Orion Academy. At every review, the policy will be approved by the Trustees.

11. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Behaviour Policy.

Appendix 1: attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Student is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Student is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Student arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Student is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Student is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Student has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Student is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Student is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Student is on a work experience placement

Code	Definition	Scenario
Authorised absence		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Student has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Student has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Student has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	School has been notified that a Student will be absent due to illness
M	Medical/dental appointment	Student is at a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance	Student is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Year 11 Student is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma and traveller absence	Student from a traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
Unauthorised absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Student is on a holiday that was not approved by the school

N	Reason not provided	Student is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for Student's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Student arrived at school after the register closed

Code	Definition	Scenario
X	Not required to be in school	Student of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or Student is in custody
Z	Student not on admission register	Register set up but Student has not yet joined the school
#	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day