



# Orchard Partnership Academies Attendance Policy



Reviewed: Autumn 2021

Mr Alex Davies

# **1. Background**

## **1.1. Philosophy**

- 1.1.1. Orchard Partnership Academies we promote a culture in which children enjoy coming to school. We are committed to providing a full and efficient education to all pupils and embrace the concept of equal opportunities for all. We will endeavour to provide an environment where all pupils feel valued and welcome.
- 1.1.2. For a child to reach their full potential a high level of school attendance is essential. We consistently aim for maximum attendance for all children. Every opportunity will be used to convey to pupils and their parents or carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance. We aim to provide sensitive and appropriate guidance to parents and carers concerning pupil attendance, taking into account guidance from the Department for Education.
- 1.1.3. Orchard Partnership Academies has high expectations for attendance. Every child should attend every day that they are required to attend. We are committed to providing an education of the highest standard for all its pupils and recognises this can only be achieved by supporting and promoting excellent school attendance. This is based on the belief that only by attending school regularly and punctually will pupils be able to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. High attainment and good progress depend on good attendance.

## **1.2. Statutory duty of schools**

- 1.2.1. The Education Act 1996 requires parents and carers to ensure their children receive efficient, full-time education, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. Schools are responsible for recording pupil attendance twice a day: once at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session.
- 1.2.2. The Government expects that:
  - Schools will promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence.
  - Schools will ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled and act early to address patterns of absence, by working in partnership with parents.
  - Parents and carers will perform their legal duty by ensuring their children of compulsory school age who are registered at school attend regularly in accordance with the school's home/school agreement.
  - All pupils will be punctual for their lessons.

## **1.3. Purpose of this document**

- 1.3.1. Pupils, parents and carers, teaching staff, support staff and school governors have a responsibility for ensuring good school attendance and have important roles to play. The purpose of the policy is to clarify everyone's part in this and the policies that underpin it.
- 1.3.2. The policy has been drawn up based on current Government and Local Authority

guidance, and statutory regulations. The school will ensure that all members of the school community have access to this policy.

## **2. Responsibilities**

### **2.1. School's responsibilities**

2.1.1. Orchard Partnership Academies has a key role to play in supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and will work to provide an environment in which all our pupils are eager to learn, feel valued members of the school community and look forward to coming to school every day. Staff also have a responsibility to set a good example in matters relating to their own attendance and punctuality.

2.1.2. The Head teacher will oversee, direct and co-ordinate the school's work in promoting regular and improved attendance and will ensure the Attendance Policy is consistently applied throughout the school.

2.1.3. The school will:

- work towards ensuring that all pupils feel supported and valued;
- send a clear message that if a pupil is absent the reason for the absence will be pursued;
- work with all members of the school community, the school's support staff and the Local Authority in developing and maintaining the whole school attendance policy; and
- encourage parents and carers to be actively involved in promoting their child's attendance.

2.1.4. Regular information will be sent to parents and pupils informing them of attendance rates and related issues. Every pupil will receive a school report which includes attendance information.

### **2.2. Parents' and carers' responsibilities**

2.2.1. Parents and carers are legally responsible for ensuring that a child of compulsory school age attends school regularly.

2.2.2. The school expects that parents and carers will ensure that:

- their children attend school regularly and punctually;
- pupils report to the school office if they are late;
- they support their children's attendance by keeping requests for absence to a minimum;
- they contact school on every day of absence or give the duration of the absence if known in advance;
- their children arrive at school on time and are collected on time, properly dressed and with the right equipment for the day; and
- they work in partnership with the school, for example by attending parents' meetings and consultations, taking an interest in their children's work and activities; and
- contact the school immediately if they are concerned about any aspects of their children's school lives.

### **2.3. Pupils' responsibilities**

- 2.3.1. All pupils should be aware of the importance of regular school attendance. If they are having difficulties that may prevent them from attending school regularly, they should speak to their class teacher or support staff.
- 2.3.2. Pupils should attend all their lessons on time, ready to learn. Parents have a responsibility to escort Pupils into school to report to the school office if they arrive late. A reason for the late arrival will be requested.

### **2.4. Governors' responsibilities**

- 2.4.1. The Governing Body will oversee, support and challenge the leadership team in ensuring excellent attendance with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of pupils at the school.

## **3. Recording attendance**

### **3.1. Registration**

- 3.1.1. There are two sessions per school day. The register is twice a day, every morning at 09:00 and every afternoon at 13:15 (13:00 at Canon Pyon).
- 3.1.2. Pupils arriving after 09:05 will be recorded as L for late before the register closes and must enter school via the main reception area, where the reason for lateness will be recorded. The class registers will remain open until 09:30 and any pupil arriving after this time will be marked as U late after the register closed. This is considered an unauthorised absence. Parents or carers will be asked to explain persistent lateness and asked to remedy the cause.
- 3.1.3. It is a statutory obligation for parents/carers to inform the school of the reasons for absence. If a pupil is unfit for school, parents or carers are asked to contact the school on each morning of absence by 09:00. If a pupil is absent at morning registration and the school has not received an explanation by the close of registration, the office staff will be informed and will contact the parents or carers to establish the reason for the absence.
- 3.1.4. In cases where the absence at registration is due to an early morning medical appointment, the absence will be recorded as authorised long as prior notification has been received. Evidence of appointments will be required to support the absence. Appointment cards or a letter would support this. Parents are encouraged to make appointments out of school hours wherever possible. Parents are requested that their child attends prior to an appointment and to return their child to school immediately afterwards. Evidence will be requested to support a necessary absence.

### **3.2. Absence from school**

- 3.2.1. At Orchard Partnership Academies we recognise the clear links between attendance and progress and attendance and safeguarding children. Pupil's attendance rates will be monitored.

- 3.2.2. If there is a problem with a pupil's attendance, the parents or carers will be informed of the school's concerns and will be encouraged to keep absences to a minimum. The school will always work with parents and carers and pupils to try to remedy the problem.
- 3.2.3. At registration each morning and afternoon, any child who is not present will be marked as an "unauthorised absence", unless leave has been granted by the school in advance or the reason for absence is already known and accepted by the school as legitimate. Where a reason for absence is given and accepted by the school at a later stage, the register will be amended in such a way that the original entry and the amendment or correction is distinguishable. The decision about whether the absence should be authorised or unauthorised rests with the Head teacher. A note or explanation from a pupil's home does not mean an absence becomes authorised. The decision whether or not to authorise an absence will always rest with the school.

### **3.3. Illness**

- 3.3.1. Where illness is of a concern, parents and carers will be asked to grant permission for the school to consult the medical practitioner concerned. In cases of recurring absences through illness parents may be asked to produce supporting evidence.
- 3.3.2. If the authenticity of illness is in doubt, the school can request parents that provide medical evidence to support illness. The school can record the absence as unauthorised if it is not satisfied of the authenticity of the illness but should advise parents of their intention. Medical evidence can take the form of prescriptions or appointment cards.

### **3.4. Exceptional circumstances**

- 3.4.1. If absence is required in exceptional circumstances parents or carers must apply in writing to the Head teacher for permission for that absence. This must be done at least six weeks in advance of the planned absence and include the reasons for absence. The Head teacher will inform the parents or carers of the decision in writing.
- 3.4.2. Authorised absence will only be granted where the correct procedures have been followed and the permission given. It will not be granted retrospectively and remains at the discretion of the Head teacher.

### **3.5. Holidays**

- 3.5.1. Holidays should not be taken in term time. Absence for leave in term time may only be authorised in exceptional circumstances. The application for leave must be made six weeks in advance and the Head teacher must be satisfied that there are truly exceptional circumstances based on the individual facts and circumstances of the case. Where a leave of absence is granted, the Head teacher will determine the number of days a pupil can be away from school. Any absences incurred prior to and following the request dates will be coded as unauthorised unless supported by evidence.
- 3.5.2. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the Head teacher's discretion. If the Head teacher does not authorise the absence and parents or carers still choose to go on

holiday this will then be deemed unauthorised absence. As a result, a referral may be submitted to Gloucestershire Council, who may initiate legal proceedings.

### **3.6. A welcome back**

- 3.6.1. At Orchard Partnership Academies we promote positive staff attitudes to pupils returning after absence. It is important that on return from an absence that all pupils are made to feel welcome. This should include ensuring that the pupil is helped to catch up on missed work and brought up to date on any information that has been passed to the other pupils.

## **4. Unauthorised absence**

### **4.1. Next steps**

- 4.1.1. In cases where a pupil begins to develop a pattern of absences, the school will try to resolve the problem with the parents or carers. If this is unsuccessful and the problem appears to be a medical one, the school may liaise with the school health adviser. In other cases, the school will work with the family and agree strategies to help overcome attendance and late issues.
- 4.1.2. If there continues to be unauthorised absences the matter may be referred to the Education Welfare Officer. This may result in a referral to Gloucestershire Council, who may initiate legal proceedings.

### **4.2. Children missing in education**

When pupils leave the school and no information has been received by the school regarding their new placement and parents/carers are unable to be contacted, the school has a duty of care regarding safeguarding and must contact the Local Authority. The child will be considered to be a **Child Missing in Education**. This means that the Local Authority has a legal duty to investigate, which will include liaising with Social Services, the Police and other agencies, to try to track and locate the child. By giving the school details of the child's new school and location, unnecessary investigations can be avoided.

### **Contact Information**

It is paramount that parent/carers keep school updated with all new contact details of change of address and landline or mobile telephone numbers. If you start a new job and have a work contact number, please let us know immediately. This is to ensure we can contact you in an emergency.

Please refer to our school website for updates regarding Covid19.