

Aireborough Learning Partnership Trust &
St Oswald's C of E Primary School

Attendance Policy

2023- 2024



"At St Oswald's School, our mission is to inspire and empower every child to reach their full potential, both personally and educationally. This will equip them with the skills to keep on learning throughout their lives and enable them to become active, compassionate, responsible citizens in God's world."

This school is committed to safeguarding and promoting the well-being of all children and expect our staff and volunteers to share this commitment.

Date Approved: October 2023

Date to be Reviewed: October 2024

Responsible Officers: Headteacher and Attendance Team

1. Introduction, Ethos and Background

This policy sets out the procedures through which we seek to raise attendance, improve punctuality and, as a result, raise levels of achievement.

This policy is based on the Department for Education's guidance, [Working together to improve school attendance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/542212/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance.pdf) 2022

The Education Act 1996 states that:

- All pupils of compulsory school age receive a suitable full-time education by regular attendance at school or otherwise.
- The Local Authority must provide school places to parents who wish their children to be educated at school.
- The school must complete attendance registers at the beginning of the morning session and during the afternoon session.
- The school must report to the Local Authority pupils who are absent for more than ten days without explanation.
- The Local Authority has a duty to ensure that parents fulfil their legal responsibilities.
- Failure by parents to ensure the regular attendance at school of a registered pupil is an offence punishable by law.

[Education Act 1996 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/56/part-6) - Part 6

[Education Act 2002 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/26/part-3) - Part 3

We believe that there is a clear link between attendance and positive outcomes for children and young people. Research findings and learning from best practice shows that:

- Children must attend regularly to achieve their full potential;
- Children who miss school can feel vulnerable and left behind;
- Leave in term time is disruptive and can seriously affect your child's education;
- Children who consistently miss 17+ days in a school year lose one full grade in their GCSEs;
- Unauthorised absence can lead to prosecution.

The following shows the link between % attendance at school and number of days absent:

- 98% = Fewer than 4 days absent in one school year.
- 95% = Fewer than 10 days absent in one school year.
- 90% = 4 weeks (20 days) absent in one school year.
- 85% = 5½ weeks (28 days) absent in one school year.
- 80% = 7½ weeks (38 days) absent in one school year.

Over a period of 5 school years, children with an average attendance of 85- 90% will have missed half a school year of education while children with an average attendance of 80% over the same period will have missed a whole school year.

Our aim is to therefore is to encourage full attendance for all children at St Oswald's C of E Primary School.

We do this by:

- Creating a warm and welcoming environment;
- Ensuring that children always feel safe;
- Developing a strong sense of citizenship within our children;
- Offering a curriculum that engages and inspires;

- Ensuring high quality teaching at all times;
- Encouraging, praising, and celebrating achievement and success

This policy outlines the process by which parents/carers can request leave under exceptional circumstances for their child/ren. In addition, this policy provides clear procedures regarding absence through illness and the school's response to illness and absence. This policy follows the latest Government legislation and guidelines and is the culmination of detailed consultation with Leeds City Council to ensure consistency, fairness and clear decision making in relation to school attendance.

Safeguarding

Your child may be at risk of harm if they do not attend school regularly. Safeguarding the interests of each child is everyone's responsibility and within the context of this school, promoting the welfare and life opportunities for your child encompasses:

- Attendance
- Behaviour Management
- Health & Safety
- Access to the curriculum
- Anti-Bullying

Failing to attend school on a regular basis will be considered as a safeguarding matter. Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everyone's responsibility – parents/carers, pupils, and all members of school staff.

2. Roles and Responsibilities

At St Oswald's C of E Primary School, we are clear that attendance is everybody's responsibility. By working in partnership with parents, carers, children, and other professionals, we seek to ensure every child has an attendance that meets or exceeds our school target of 97%. Outlined below are the roles and responsibilities of key staff within school and how they will help to ensure this target is achieved:

Governing Body

The governing body are responsible for monitoring attendance and punctuality within school. The designated governor for attendance and punctuality will support the Head teacher and Attendance Team to ensure that procedures are followed, and parents/carers are clear about their responsibilities.

Headteacher (Attendance)

The Headteacher will provide a strategic lead throughout the school by line managing key members of staff, supporting other school leaders in the effective deployment of resources, ensuring compliance with the policy outlined and having oversight of cases that are being prepared for formal prosecution. The Attendance team will be responsible for initial data analysis, reporting to the Head Teacher who will support any actions required and report to the Governors.

Attendance Team

The team with the Headteacher, will have an overview of attendance and priorities within the school over the school year, including punctuality. They will be instrumental in identifying attendance trends for both individuals and cohorts of pupils. Where absence is ongoing, the Attendance/Pastoral Team will provide a bridge between home and school and will develop an understanding of the barriers to attendance and, through liaison with other colleagues in school, plan to overcome those barriers.

The Attendance Team will ensure attendance remains a priority for staff and children in all classes and will do so through regular communication, sharing of data, supporting difficult cases, and rewarding excellent attendance as well as improvements.

The Attendance team will also be responsible for data analysis and reporting to the Senior Leadership Team and Governing Body. They will work directly with children to assess and review attendance, set targets, complete attendance trackers and review progress. The team will also be integral to supporting, and challenging, parent of children with poor punctuality

The Attendance Team plays a critical role in the management of absence through illness, leave or other means. They are the key point of contact between home and school and will ensure contact is made in all cases on the first day of absence – school will aim to make calls by 10am.

The Attendance Team will ensure that registers are completed and that follow-up systems are enacted where there are any concerns. They will respond to any gaps in attendance by instigating safeguarding checks and notifying parents in the case of any unaccounted absence or other concerns. In line with our Safeguarding and Child Protection policy, they may make a home visit.

The Attendance Team will lead on the 'Fast Track' part of the attendance system by monitoring data and trends, issuing warning letters, monitoring for improvement, and following up the appropriate course of action.

The Attendance Team will identify a 'casework' cohort where additional support is required. In these cases, the Attendance team will track and log all actions and interventions and, where attendance remains low, they will prepare the evidence for prosecutions. They will also be responsible for reporting children absent from education where this is appropriate.

All Attendance Team communication will be logged on CPOMS.

Class Teachers

Class teachers have a critical role in supporting their pupils with regards to attendance and punctuality. The register will be completed within the first five minutes of each session without exception. As well as taking the register for morning and afternoon registration they should be aware of general attendance patterns, reasons for absence, who the persistent absentees are in their class and support all efforts to improve attendance.

Where appropriate, class teachers will escalate concerns with regards to absence.

Supporting Attendance

To support great attendance, we will record two attendance sessions a day (AM and PM). Pupils with good attendance will be acknowledged and celebrated. Pupils who we feel need to improve their attendance, the family will be supported in identifying the barriers to attendance and, wherever possible, removing or overcoming these barriers.

Attendance data will be used to plan for effective strategies, analyse the impact of the school's work and identify priorities and areas for improvement. Data will be used to:

- Monitor individual absence and lateness
- Identify patterns and trends in attendance and punctuality
- Identify children who should be celebrated for great attendance or significant improvement

Absence Procedures

If a child is absent the parent/carer must follow the following procedures

- Contact school as soon as possible on the first day of absence (by 9.30am)

- The school has an answer phone available to leave a message if nobody is available to take the call – stating Child's name, class, reason for absence and expected date of return
- Or parents/carers can call into school and report to reception

If a child is absent school will

- Telephone or text parents/carers on the first day absence if we have not heard from them:
- Invite parents/carers in to discuss the situation with the Attendance Team/Pastoral Team/Head teacher if absence persists
- After third day of illness, school may make a home visit

Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If a child misses the start of the day, they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Pupils arriving late may also disrupt lessons, it can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage absence. Good time keeping is a vital life skill, which will help children as they progress through their school life and out into the wider world.

How we manage lateness

We begin the school day at 9.00 am and expect our children to be here ready to come in. The main gates open from 8.40am, with children arriving and expected to be in school with doors closed by 9.00am. Registers are marked at 9.00am and a child will receive a late mark if they are not in by that time. Any late arrivals must enter school via the front office and children must be signed in by a parent/carer with the reason for lateness recorded.

At 9.30am the registers will be closed. In accordance with regulations, if a 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 they have an unauthorised absence for that session unless evidence can be shown for example, that there has been an emergency such as a visit to the GP.

If a child has a persistent late record parents/carers will be asked to meet with the attendance team, Headteacher to resolve the problem, but parents/carers can approach the school at any time if they are having problems getting their child to school on time.

Term Time Absence and Requests for Leave

Parents/Carers do not have the right to remove their children from school during term time without prior permission and agreement by the Headteacher or those granted that level of authorisation by the Headteacher. In the event of exceptional circumstances parents may request leave during term time in writing and using an Exceptional Circumstances request form available on the school website/school office. Each application will be considered by the Headteacher, or the member of Senior Leadership with delegated responsibility, who will decide whether, the absence is to be authorised and the number of days. **Please note leave will not be considered retrospectively.**

If unauthorised leave is taken, then the school will consider a fixed penalty fine.

Please note, it has been agreed across the Aireborough Trust that we cannot take into consideration the impact of other Local Authority school holidays, continental shift patterns or public service shift patterns when considering holiday and leave requests.

Fixed Penalty Fines

Under the latest Government Legislation parents / carers who take their children out of school during term time, without authorisation, may be issued with a fixed penalty fine by the Local Authority and could face possible prosecution in court.

In Leeds, a penalty notice will be issued for unauthorised absences of 10 sessions (5 days) or more within a twelve-week period and as an Aireborough Learning Partnership Trust School we are fully committed to this policy.

The penalty notice includes absences for holidays as well as other unauthorised absence. If a penalty notice is issued, it will be for the whole period of absence. So, the penalty would be the same for an absence of five days or ten days.

£60 fines are issued for each parent and each child so, for example, a family of four with two parents and two children will be fined a total of £240.

School Responses to Absence

At St Oswald's C of E Primary School, we value great attendance and work in close partnership with parents and carers to ensure every child is accessing their education. As with every school, and in line with DFE guidance, we make a distinction between 'authorised absence' and 'unauthorised absence.' Below are some examples of both, but please be aware this list is not exhaustive:

Authorised Absence	Unauthorised absence
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Medical appointment (with letter)• Family bereavement• Religious observance (2 days max)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Unexplained absences• Family holiday in term time• Truancy• Birthdays• Illness when overall attendance is less than 90% and there is no medical evidence provided

Our responses to non-attendance are evidence based and intended to be implemented at the point of most impact. Below are the key stages for parents and carers to be aware of:

- 95% +** Attendance is positive and a cause of celebration. Our school target for good attendance is aspirational at 97%
- 93% - 95%** Attendance is reasonable but could be improved. School will monitor
- 90 - 93%** Attendance is becoming a concern. A letter outlining the risk of persistent absence will be issued other than in exceptional circumstances
- <90%** Attendance will no longer be authorised without a medical note
- 75% - 90%** In the event that attendance is between 75% and 89.9% **or** if there are ten missed sessions over a twelve-week period, the school will undertake a risk assessment and, unless there is absolute satisfaction that the absences were unavoidable, school will undertake the 'FastTrack' initiative in line with DFE guidance. This will then lead to a period of monitoring for twenty days and if there is no immediate improvement, a School Attendance Panel will be convened, and a fixed penalty notice warning letter may be issued. Once a fixed penalty notice is issued, any further unauthorised absence could lead to a fixed penalty fine.
- <75%** Where attendance is below 75% there will be an ongoing risk assessment of whether to recommend a 'FastTrack' process or pursue further levels of prosecution. Only cases that

have unavoidable circumstances or those that have shown significant improvement over a six-week period will avoid recommendations for prosecution.

Although we are aware that there are times absence may be inevitable or unavoidable, we commit to undertaking a thorough risk assessment process for cases under 90% to ensure that our decision making is fair and consistent.

Appendix 1: Guidance on authorising absence / leave requests

Leave categorisation	Authorised?	Number of days	Other information?
Death of close family member	Yes	5 + 1	5 days + one day for funeral with additional consideration where required
Death of extended family member	Yes	1 + 1	One day + one day for funeral
Religious Observance	Yes	2	2 days i.e. Eid = one day for each observance. If in doubt, consult with local place of worship
Hospital Appointment	Yes	1	Only authorised with letter from hospital / professional
Medical / Dental Appointment	Yes	0.5	Unauthorised without letter
Sports and Performing Arts related activities	Yes*	HT's Discretion	External examinations and representation at city, regional and national levels.
Graduation	Yes	1	One day for immediate family