



ATTENDANCE POLICY

Introduction

The following policy is based on guidance from the DfE.

Working Together to Improve School Attendance (2022)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance>

Improving attendance is everyone's business. The barriers to accessing education are wide and complex, both within and beyond the school gates, and are often specific to individual pupils and families. The foundation of securing good attendance is that school is a calm, orderly, safe, and supportive environment where all pupils want to be and are keen and ready to learn.

Regular attendance is essential for pupils to get the most out of their school experience, including their attainment, wellbeing, and wider life chances. The pupils with the highest attainment at the end of key stage 2 and key stage 4 have higher rates of attendance over the key stage compared to those with the lowest attainment. At KS2, pupils not meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and maths had an overall absence rate of 4.7%, compared to 3.5% among those meeting the expected standard. Moreover, the overall absence rate of pupils not meeting the expected standard was higher than among those meeting the higher standard (4.7% compared to 2.7%). At KS4, pupils not achieving grade 9 to 4 in English and maths had an overall absence rate of 8.8%, compared to 5.2% among those achieving grade 41. The overall absence rate of pupils not achieving grade 9 to 4 was over twice as high as those achieving grade 9 to 5 (8.8% compared to 3.7%). (Working Together to Improve School Attendance 2022)

Philosophy

The Local Governing Body and the staff of Ovingham CE and Mickley First Schools believe that achieving a high level of attendance at school is vitally important for the attainment, life chances and employment prospects of our pupils.

In order to fulfil its responsibility to meet targets and achieve the highest possible levels of school attendance the Governing Body and the staff recognise the importance of working in partnership with parents, pupils, staff and relevant county council and external bodies to ensure high levels of attendance and thereby provide the best possible educational experience for our children. In support of this, the Local Governing Body and staff will;



Ovingham CE First and Mickley First School

- Follow school procedures for promoting, encouraging and recording school attendance;
- Comply with legislation, DCSF guidance and best practice guidelines;
- Use measures to enforce school attendance in appropriate cases;
- Encourage best practice through training and awareness raising.
- Ensure that services (Education Welfare Service, Education Other Than at School, Education Support for Looked after Children, Travellers Education Service, Parent Support Partners, staff of the Integrated FACT teams) work together with school to support implementation;
- Develop and promote innovative approaches to tackle poor attendance.

Links with other school policies

This policy is supported by the following school policies:
SEN, Single Equalities & Diversity, Child Protection, Education of Looked After Children, Education Other Than at School, Behaviour Policy

Principles

Expectations of parents, pupils and staff

All children of compulsory school age (5 -16) should receive suitable education, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

If a child is registered at school, parents have primary responsibility for ensuring that their child attends regularly. Parents are responsible for providing information, either by telephone or written note, to explain a pupil's absence from school.

All staff are responsible for ensuring that they are familiar with, and follow, the school policies and procedures that are in place for supporting, promoting and recording attendance and absence. Positive promotion of behaviour and attendance will not only impact on standards and inclusion but also in the quality of the day to day experiences for pupils and staff and requires comprehensive whole school actions.

Procedures

Schools must now set "absence targets" for future years at intervals prescribed by DCSF - The Education (School Attendance Targets) (England) Regulations 2005. School level targets should then contribute to and inform the local authority absence targets. Attendance data is collected from schools on a regular basis by both DCSF and by the local authority via the school census.

Encouraging good attendance

The school has a variety of procedures in place to support and encourage good attendance levels and help pupils and parents to understand how important this is:



Ovingham CE First and Mickley First School



- New Parents' Meeting: The Head Teacher includes information for new parents about the importance of regular attendance.
- Attendance certificates are issued at the end of each term to celebrate the achievement of pupils with 100% attendance. This is followed by a special assembly at the end of the year to acknowledge pupils with full attendance and reinforce the importance of this.
- Concerns expressed by a class teacher at any time during the year will be investigated and matters discussed with parents.
- At the end of the academic year a print out of individual attendance figures is included with every report with comments from the Head Teacher.

Recording Attendance and Absence

Under the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, the governing body is responsible for making sure that two registers are kept, one for admissions and one for attendance. The attendance register (taken on School 360 or Bromcom) is called at the start of each morning and afternoon session and shows whether each pupil registered at the school is present, attending an approved education activity such as a school trip or absent. The attendance register indicates whether the absence of a pupil of compulsory school age is authorised or unauthorised. Attendance figures are available on SIMS and are also included in, and monitored through, the Provision Management process.

Absence can only be authorised by the Head Teacher or another senior member of the teaching staff, who is acting with the Head's authority. Absence cannot be authorised by parents. All absences are treated as unauthorised unless and until the Head Teacher agrees that there is a satisfactory explanation. This means that it is important that procedures are consistently applied, for following up and, if necessary, challenging explanations and amending registers. Even when parents telephone or submit a note explaining absence, school is not obliged to authorise the absence until they are satisfied that the excuse given by the parent is valid. The reasons for absence will be recorded and parents made aware that excuses such as birthdays, shopping etc are not acceptable reasons for authorised absence.

If the reason for a pupil's absence is unknown, the class teacher, in the first instance, will endeavour to find out why. If there has been no communication to explain why the pupil is absent by 9:30 am, the Head Teacher or School Administrator will contact the parent(s) to find out why and let them know that they are missed. If the parent(s) are not contactable then additional contacts from the child's contact list may be called. If no contact can be made, the Headteacher or a senior member of staff may visit the pupil's home to ascertain why they are not at school. In the case of this providing an unsatisfactory response or no response then the Head Teacher will contact the Education Welfare Officer. All schools have a



Ovingham CE First and Mickley First School

named Education Welfare Officer and in cases where the school feels that their own input has not achieved the required change, then a referral to the Education Welfare Service will be made.

Persistent lateness and absence by pupils can disrupt educational achievement and may lead to serious attendance problems. Registers will be kept open for a maximum of five minutes after the beginning of registration and arrival after the closure of the register should be recorded as an unauthorised absence. Systems are in place to ensure that there is clear indication about who is on and not on the school premises should there be an emergency.

Where absence is authorised, the County Council has no power to enforce attendance through the courts.

Absence for family holidays

Head teachers and teachers are rightly concerned at the level of absence caused by parents removing their children from school for the purpose of a holiday in term time. From 1st September 2013 the right of Head Teachers to authorise up to 10 days absence a year specifically for holidays if special circumstances exist will be abolished.

The new regulations provide that schools can authorise leave of absence - whether for holidays or any other reason - for such period as they determine if they are satisfied exceptional circumstances exist. In other words, holiday absence requests will no longer be treated as a separate category of leave request which have their own rules.

Leave of absence must be applied for and the decision to authorise absence for holidays rests entirely with the Head Teacher who will determine if the request is reasonable and judge each request on a case by case basis.

Department for Education Guidance

The main guidance from the government on the subject of Leave of Absence can be found in the publication *School Attendance (2018)*.

Code C: Leave of absence authorised by the school

Only exceptional circumstances warrant an authorised leave of absence. Schools should consider each request individually taking into account the circumstances, such as: the nature of the event for which leave is sought; the frequency of the request; whether the parent gave advance notice; and the pupil's attainment, attendance and ability to catch up on missed schooling.

Determining leave of absence requests



Ovingham CE First and Mickley First School

There is no definitive list of the scenarios in which Leave of Absence might be granted. However, we would suggest the following are key questions to ask:

- (1) Is the reason for which leave of absence is sought sufficiently important to outweigh the negative impact upon the child's education (taking into account the pupil's attainment, attendance and ability to catch up on missed schooling)
- (2) Is the school satisfied that the activity for which leave of absence is sought could not reasonably have been arranged to take place during the school holidays?
- (3) If the answer to (1) and (2) is yes, is the duration of the leave of absence requested reasonable or should only part of the absence be authorised? (see below)

Family holidays

We would anticipate that it will be extremely rare for leave of absence for a holiday in term time to be authorised. Schools are now required to treat holiday in term time leave requests in the same way as any other leave requests and only grant them in exceptional circumstances.

Possible examples of where leave might be granted would include where a parent's employment prevents the taking of leave in the school holidays (though it would be reasonable for the school to seek evidence in the form of an employer's letter) or where a family needs to have a holiday as a result of a family crisis (though the school would need to be satisfied that the holiday could not wait until the school holidays).

It is clear that the lower cost of holidays in school term times, better weather at certain times of year or overlap with the start or end of term will not constitute exceptional circumstances.

If the Head Teacher does not agree the absence and the pupil goes on holiday or if parents keep a child away from school longer than was originally agreed, the absence, or extra time, will be categorised as unauthorised. The school will then write to the parent to give a warning that further formal action will be taken if this happens again. The Education Welfare Service will also be notified.

Regular absence from school

If a pupil of compulsory school age fails to attend school regularly the Head Teacher will notify the relevant local authority services. In these cases, the County Council can issue a penalty notice or prosecute the parent unless the parent can show that;

- the pupil was absent with leave agreed by school staff;
- the pupil was ill or prevented from attending by any unavoidable course;



Ovingham CE First and Mickley First School

- o the absence was on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the parent belongs;
- the pupil's parents are travellers;
- the school is not within walking distance of the child's home and the County Council has made no suitable arrangements for transport, boarding accommodation or enabling the child to attend a school nearer the home.

On conviction, the offence carries a fine up to a maximum of £1,000 per parent for each absent child and in "aggravated" offences the fine rises to a maximum of £2,500 and a prison term not exceeding three months. The same penalty applies to convictions for parents who fail to comply with the School Attendance Order. In addition, magistrates may impose a custodial sentence on the parents and/or a parenting order.

The Local Authority is also empowered to issue notices to the parents of pupils who do not attend school regularly. This provides parents with an opportunity to pay a penalty fine instead of being prosecuted for the offence. The amount of the penalty is £50 if paid within 28 days rising to £100 if paid within 28 to 42 days. Parents who fail to pay the penalty fine are prosecuted for the original offence.

Removal from school roll

School registration plays a crucial role in the monitoring and tracking of children in need and those at risk of significant harm thus it is extremely important that pupils are not removed from the school register except in the circumstances listed in The Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006. The Head Teacher will actively consult with the Education Welfare Officer, an Officer of the County Council or the police if there is any doubt whatsoever as to an individual child's whereabouts or safety.

Attendance difficulties and disaffection

The Governing Body and staff of Ovingham CE First School recognise that certain pupils are at particular risk of disaffection and attendance difficulties and, in line with the DCSF, has identified the following:

- those with special educational needs
- children in the care of local authorities
- minority ethnic children
- travellers
- young carers
- those from families under stress
- pregnant schoolgirls and teenage mothers



Ovingham CE First and Mickley First School



School policies are in place to support work with pupils who fall into the above categories. The Governing Body and staff will work with the support services dedicated to the above groups in order to ensure that their individual circumstances do not jeopardise their attendance at school and levels of attainment.

Performance

- This policy is reviewed and evaluated bi-annually
- School attendance figures are reported annually to the whole governing body and targets and strategies discussed and agreed.
- A review of attendance figures/attendance RAG with the school EWO is done annually.
- Individual concerns regarding pupils are discussed with the EWO on an as-and-when- needed basis.

Policy adopted: November 2022

To be reviewed: Bi-annually

Signed: L.Ward / A. Hudson