



# **Attendance Policy**

## **October 2015**

## Introduction

Regular school attendance is essential if children are to achieve their full potential. We believe that regular school attendance is the key to enabling children to maximise the educational opportunities available to them and become emotionally resilient, confident and competent adults who are able to realise their full potential and make a positive contribution to their community. Osidge School strongly discourages absence from school unless absolutely essential, in keeping with the Local Authority's aim to maximise the potential of all pupils.

At Osidge School, we recognise that attendance is a matter for the whole school community. Attendance is also a Safeguarding (Child Protection) issue. Our Attendance Policy should not be viewed in isolation; it is a strand that runs through all aspects of school improvement, supported by our policies on safeguarding, bullying and behaviour. This policy also takes into account the Equality Act 2010.

Encouraging good attendance is the shared responsibility of the parent, the school, the pupil and also partners in the Local Authority, the police and Children's Social Care. Parents have a responsibility to see that their child receives appropriate education and it is the responsibility of the Local Authority through its Educational Welfare Service, to ensure that this happens.

	<b>Attendance</b>	<b>Punctuality</b>
<b>Excellent</b>	100%	0%
<b>Very Good</b>	97%	3% or less
<b>Good</b>	95%	3.1%-5%
<b>Satisfactory</b>	92%	5.1% - 8.0%
<b>Unsatisfactory</b>	90%	8.1% - 10%
<b>Cause for Concern</b>	Less than 90%	More than 10%

**Government expectations are that pupil school attendance should be a minimum of 95% -this applies to all children of statutory school age. Statutory school age commences the beginning of the term after a child's 5<sup>th</sup> birthday.**

**Children whose absence is greater than 9.5 days a year, will have an attendance rate of less than 95%.**

## Legal Framework

Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act states that parents must ensure that children of compulsory school age receive sufficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude to any special educational needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

A child is of compulsory school age at the beginning of the term following their 5th birthday. A child ceases to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday in June of the school year in which they reach the age of 16.

Under the Education Act 1996, the Local Authority has a statutory responsibility to ensure that parents secure education for children of compulsory school age and where necessary, use legal enforcement. The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, require all schools to take an attendance register twice a day, once at the start of the morning session and then again during the afternoon session.

The register must record whether the pupil was:

- present;
- absent;
- present at approved educational activity; or
- unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 allowed Head Teachers to grant leave of absence for the purpose of a family holiday during term time in “special circumstances” of up to ten school days leave per year. Head Teachers could also grant extended leave for more than ten school days in exceptional circumstances.

**Amendments to these 2006 regulations, which came into force on 1 September 2013**, removed references to family holiday and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of ten schooldays. The amendments make clear that – Head Teachers may not grant any leave of absence during termtime unless there are **exceptional** circumstances

## **Categorising Absence**

### **Authorised and Unauthorised Absence**

Where pupils of compulsory school age are recorded as absent, the register must show whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school as either **Authorised or Unauthorised**. This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required.

### **Authorised Absences**

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for the following reasons:

#### **Illness**

In most cases a telephone call from the parent informing the school that their child is ill is acceptable. Parents may be asked to provide medical evidence where there are repeated absences or longer periods of absence due to illness. This will usually be in the form of an appointment card, prescription etc., but could be in the form of a doctor’s note.

#### **Medical/Dental Appointments**

Parents are advised where possible to make routine medical and dental appointments outside of the school day. Where this is not possible, pupils should attend school for part of the day. Parents should show the appointment card to school. Osidge School recognises that there will be occasions when children need to attend clinical sessions on a regular basis, for example for counselling.

#### **Other Authorised Circumstances Background**

The education (pupil registration) (England) (amendment) regulations 2013, which came into force on 1 September 2013, removed references to family holidays and extended leave as well as the notional threshold of ten school days. The amendments made clear that head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless ‘exceptional circumstances’ exist. The regulations also stated that head teachers should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if leave is granted for ‘exceptional circumstances’.

The DfE advice on school attendance (November 2013) should also be considered and read in conjunction with the 2013 regulations.

Term times are for education. This is the priority. Children and families have 175 days off school to spend time together, including weekends and school holidays. We will rightly prioritise attendance. The default school policy is that absences will not be granted during term time and will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances.

- If an event can reasonably be scheduled outside of term time then it would not be normal to authorise absence.
- Absence during term time for holidays/vacations is therefore not considered an exceptional circumstance.
- Absences to visit family members are also not normally granted during term time if they could be scheduled for holiday periods or outside school hours. Children may however need time to visit seriously ill relatives.
- Absence for a bereavement of a close family member is usually considered an exceptional circumstance but for the funeral service only, not extended leave.
- Absences for important religious observances are often taken into account but only for the ceremony and travelling time, not extended leave. This is intended for one off situations rather than regular or recurring events.
- The needs of the families of service personnel are taken into account if they are returning from long operational tours that prevent contact during scheduled holiday time.
- We make reasonable adjustments for students with special educational needs or disabilities.
- Families may need time together to recover from trauma or crisis.

It is acceptable to take a student's previous record of attendance into account when making decisions.

By 'unavoidable' we mean an event that could not reasonably be scheduled at another time.

Parents are asked to complete the *Application for Special Leave of Absence Form (appendix A)* on such occasions.

### **Religious Observance**

Osidge School acknowledges the multi-faith nature of British society and recognises that on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside school holiday periods or weekends and this necessitates a consideration of authorised absence or special leave for religious observance. It is reasonable for a parent to allow their children not to attend school on a day of religious observance if the day is recognised by the parent's religious body.

Parents are asked to request permission to be absent for a day for reasons of religious observance by completing the *Application for Special Leave of Absence Form*.

### **Medical and Related Conditions**

At Osidge School we automatically treat illness as authorised absence and with the local authorities' help, support pupils' education throughout their illnesses. We also have an understanding and sensitive approach to children who may have periods of absence due to disability or long-term ill health. Please contact the Head Teacher, Deputy Head Teacher or SENCo if you wish to discuss your child's attendance and punctuality in this context.

### **Excluded (No alternative provision made)**

Exclusion from attending school is counted as an authorised absence. The child's class teacher will make arrangements for work to be sent home.

### **Unauthorised Absence**

Unauthorised absences are those where the parents have been unable to provide a satisfactory explanation to the school or where no permission has been granted by the school. These include the following:

### **Family Holidays and Extended Leave**

In line with the amendments to the **Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006** which came into force on 1 September 2013 (outlined in Section 2 of this Attendance and Punctuality Policy), all requests for holiday during school time will be refused. Parents taking their children out of school for the purpose of a holiday need to be aware that they may be liable for sanctions such as a Penalty Notice, a fine or a court summons issued by the Local Authority

### **Time out of school to attend privately funded tutoring/teaching/sports/music sessions and other activities**

Permission will not be given to parents wishing to take their children, during school time, to attend such sessions.

### **Absences which have not been properly explained**

All absences will be treated as unauthorised unless a satisfactory explanation for the child's absence has been received.

### **Children who arrive at school too late to get a mark on the register**

The absence will only be authorised if a satisfactory explanation for the late arrival can be provided, for example, attendance at a medical appointment. The absence will be recorded as **unauthorised** if the pupil has arrived late without justifiable cause, for example, if they woke up late.

Other examples of unsatisfactory explanations include:

- A pupil's/family member's birthday
- Having their hair cut
- Closure of a sibling's school for INSET (or other) purposes
- "Couldn't get up"
- Illness where the child is considered well enough to attend school.

### **Absence Procedures**

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

1. Contact the school as soon as possible of the first day of absence (before 9.30am) on 020 8886 7108 or call into the school office and report the absence in person

If a child is absent, the school office will telephone the parent/carer on the first day of absence if the School has not already been contacted by the parent/carer.

## **Punctuality and Lateness**

Punctuality is essential. If a child misses the start of the day they can miss important teaching and vital information concerning the school day. Children arriving late can 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 our children as they progress through their school life and out into the wider world.

### **How we manage lateness**

The school day starts at **8.55am** and we expect our pupils to be in the playground just before this time ready to line up when the school bell is rung. We remind children in assemblies that they are expected to stay on school grounds once they have come in and not to leave the school premises. We ask parents to reinforce this message. Members of the SMT stand in the front playground in the morning. Best practice is for parents to stay with their child until the teacher comes out to the line at 8.55am.

### **Late Arrival**

Registration begins at 9.00am; pupils arriving after 9.05 am will be marked as present but late. The register will close at 9.30am. Pupils arriving after the close of register will be recorded as late (unless an acceptable reason has been provided by the parent for the late arrival) and this will count as an unauthorised absence for that particular school session.

If parents know their child is going to be late for **any** reason, they should let the school office know.

On arrival, after the close of register, pupils must immediately report to the school office to ensure that we can be responsible for their health and safety whilst they are in school.

Punctuality also applies to parents picking up children at the end of the day. The end of the school day is **3.30pm**, and if a child is not picked up by 3.40pm, the class teacher will bring the child to sit in the school office.

If a child is collected late from school a record will be kept by the school.

### **Persistent Lateness**

Parents of children who persistently arrive or are collected late will:

- Be sent a letter asking the parent to explain the lateness and requesting that punctuality is maintained
- Be invited to a meeting with the Head Teacher and the Attendance Officer if there is no improvement
- Be referred to the Education Welfare Officer and/or Social Services where persistent lateness occurs without an acceptable reason.

## The Education Welfare Service (EWS)

The Education Welfare Service is responsible for supporting good school attendance and high standards of pupil welfare. They have a duty on behalf of the Local Authority to ensure that parents/carers make sure that their children attend school regularly.

The school is nearly always successful in resolving issues of absence/lateness with parents/carers before the school's designated Education Welfare Officer has to become involved. However, if such issues cannot be resolved the school will discuss the case with the EWO.

It is the EWO who supports the school with individuals who are having difficulties with attendance or punctuality and together we will decide on what appropriate action should be taken e.g. meeting in school, phone call, letter or referral. The EWO will then be involved with monitoring the situation with the school until attendance or time keeping improves or the decision is taken for further action to be undertaken by the Local Authority. This can include Penalty Notices, Education Supervision Orders in the Family Proceedings Court, Prosecution in the Magistrates Court and deletion of the child from the school register.

### Monitoring of Absence

- Pupil attendance data is uploaded daily onto Integris (the school's information managementsystem)
- Weekly attendance figures for each class are reported to the Head Teacher
- The Head Teacher checks attendance data for individuals with the Attendance Officer each month
- The Local Authority EWO visits the school termly
- Pupil attendance data is referred to at Pupil Progress meetings
- Attendance causing concern is reported to parents at Parent Consultations
- Monthly figures including pupil groups – e.g – Pupil Premium are recorded and tracked
- When requested the school sends figures to Barnet
- The Head Teacher reports termly to the Governing Body
- Each child's % attendance is recorded on their end of year report
- **Attendance under 95%:** Action to be taken by the school - where children have an attendance rate which is less than 95%, the school will send a letter informing them that their child's attendance is below 95% and asking them to take steps to improve attendance
- **Attendance between 85% and 90%:** Action to be taken by the school - where children have an attendance rate which is less than 90%, the school will send a letter informing them that their child's attendance is below 90% and asking them to take steps to improve attendance. The letter will explain that if there is no improvement then action involving the EWO may need to be taken.
- **Attendance under 85%:** Action to be taken by the school - where children have an attendance rate which is less than 85%, the school will contact the parent by telephone and invite them in for a meeting with the Head Teacher and the Attendance Officer. Children with attendance below 85% will automatically be reported to the EWO.

Referrals to the EWO will also be made in the following circumstances:

- After 10 consecutive days of unauthorised absence
- For any pupil with below 85% attendance where at least some of this is unauthorised
- After 15 sessions of authorised absence in a 5-week period that is not supported by medical evidence. The EWO will take such a referral on the condition that no further absence will be authorised by the school
- When a pupil fails to return after 5 days following a fixed term exclusion
- For any child on the Child Protection Register with unauthorised absence of 5 days, or when the designated teacher for Child Protection has any concern at all about the reasons given by the parent for absence, or immediately if concerns warrant it
- When parents have notified the school in writing that they are educating the child at home
- Where the school has been notified that the pupil will be unable to attend school for a period of time due to medical reasons. This may include pupils who have undergone surgery or are about to be discharged from hospital and who will not be well enough to attend school for a period of time. In such circumstances, the LEA may provide home tuition (a consultant's letter indicating that the pupil is not likely going to be able to attend school is usually required).

## **Rewarding & Encouraging Attendance**

- Attendance as a class is recorded in the weekly newsletter each week.
- The class who has the best attendance each month is rewarded with a best attendance certificate.
- 100% attendance for individuals is rewarded at the end of term with an 'Excellent Attendance' sticker and a Gold Certificate.
- Pupils with 97% to 99.9% attendance will be awarded at the end of term with an 'Excellent Attendance' sticker and a Silver Certificate.
- Pupils with 95% to 96.9% attendance will be awarded at the end of term with an 'Excellent Attendance' sticker and a Bronze Certificate.
- 100% attendance is rewarded at the end of the school year with a 100% certificate and a metal badge.
- Information about attendance and its link with progress and attainment is published regularly in the newsletter.
- Letters and information about attendance are sent home to parents regularly
- The attendance policy is available on the website

## **The Referral Process**

Referrals to the EWO from the school will be made in writing or in electronic format (CAF) and will be accompanied with a completed attendance record.

In terms of pupils on the Child Protection Register, the school will not delay in making a referral simply because the referral form has not been completed. A telephone referral will be made in these particular circumstances; this call will then be followed up by a written referral.



## Using Attendance Data

Pupil's attendance will be monitored regularly by the EWO and the school's Attendance Officer. Attendance will be discussed at Senior Management Team meetings and at Governing Body meetings each term. Information may be shared with the Local Authority and other agencies if a pupil's attendance is a cause for concern.

The Attendance Officer will provide the Head Teacher, with monthly class attendance data and individual attendance data for each pupil. This pupil level data will be used to trigger school action. Attendance and punctuality data will also be used to identify emerging patterns and trends to inform whole school strategies to improve attendance and attainment. These will be monitored and evaluated by the school's Governing Body.

We will share attendance data with the Department for Children, Schools and Families and the Local Authority as required. All information shared will be done so in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

## Support Systems

At Osidge School, we recognise that poor attendance is often an indication of difficulties in a child's life. This may be related to problems at home and/or in school. Parents should make us aware of any difficulties or changes in circumstances that may affect their child's attendance and or behaviour in school, for example, bereavement, divorce/separation, incidents of domestic abuse. This will help us to identify any additional support that may be required.

We also recognise that some pupils are more likely to require additional support to attain/maintain good attendance, for example, those pupils with special educational needs, those with physical or mental health needs, migrant and refugee pupils and looked after children.

We will implement a range of strategies to support improved attendance, these will include:

- Discussion with parents and pupils
- Referrals to support agencies
- Friendship groups
- PSHE
- Family learning
- Reward systems.

## Roles and Responsibilities

At Osidge School we believe that improved school attendance can only be achieved if it is viewed as a shared responsibility of the school staff, governors, parents, pupils and the wider school community.

The Governing Body will:

- Ensure that the importance and value of good attendance is promoted to pupils and their parents
- Annually review the school's Attendance Policy and ensure the required resources are available to fully implement the policy
- Ensure that parents are aware of the Attendance Policy
- Identify a member of the governing body to lead on attendance
- Ensure that the Registration Regulations, England, 2006 and other attendance related legislation is complied with
- Agree school attendance targets each year
- Monitor the school's attendance and related issues through termly reporting at Governing Body Meetings

- Ensure that attendance data is reported to the Local Authority or Department of Children, Schools and Families as required and on time
- Ensure that the Senior Management Team lead on attendance
- Ensure that the school has clear systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site
- Ensure that there are procedures for collecting and analysing attendance data frequently to identify causes and patterns of absence
- Ensure that data is understood and used to devise solutions and to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions

The Senior Leadership Team will:

- Actively promote the importance and value of good attendance to pupils and their parents
- Form positive relationships with pupils and parents
- Ensure that there is a whole school approach which reinforces good school attendance; with good teaching and learning experiences that encourage all pupils to attend and to achieve
- Monitor the implementation of the Attendance Policy and ensure that the policy is reviewed annually
- Ensure that all staff are aware of the Attendance Policy and are adequately trained to address attendance issues
- Ensure that all parents are aware of the Attendance Policy
- Ensure that the Registration Regulations, England, 2006 and other attendance related legislation is complied with
- Ensure that the Senior Management Team lead on attendance and allocate sufficient time and resource
- Return school attendance data to the Local Authority and the Department for Children, Schools and Families as required and on time
- Ensure that systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site are implemented
- Ensure that attendance data is collected and analysed frequently to identify causes and patterns of absence
- Interpret the data to devise solutions and to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions
- Develop a multi-agency response to improve attendance and support pupils and their families
- Document interventions used to a standard required by the local authority should legal proceedings be instigated

Parents should:

- Contact the school if their child is absent to let them know the reason why and the expected date of return
- Avoid unnecessary absences; wherever possible make appointments for the Doctors, Dentists etc. outside of school hours
- Ask the school for help if their child is experiencing difficulties
- Inform the school of any change in circumstances that may impact on their child's attendance
- Support the school; take every opportunity to get involved in their child's education, form a positive relationship with school and acknowledge the importance of children receiving the same messages from both school and home
- Encourage routine at home, for example, bed times, homework, preparing school bag and uniform the evening before
- Not keep their child off school to go shopping, to help at home or to look after other members of the family
- Not take their child on holiday during term-time

Where parents fail or refuse to engage with the support offered and further unauthorised absence occurs, the Local Authority will consider the use of legal sanctions.

## Legal Sanctions

Where poor attendance continues, even after the interventions outlined in this policy, the Local Authority will apply the following legal sanctions:

**Fixed Penalty Notices (Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003)** - Section 23 of this Act gives powers to the Local Authority and other designated bodies to issue Penalty Notices where a parent/carer is considered capable but unwilling to secure an improvement in their child's school attendance.

All schools have the authority to recommend their Local Authority issue parents with a Fixed Penalty Notice when they take children out of school without authorisation.

Penalty Notices will be considered when:

- A pupil is absent from school for the purpose of a holiday in term time
- A pupil has accumulated 20 sessions of unauthorised absence in any six-week period
- A pupil has been late (after 9.30am) for 12 or more sessions in any six-week period and further unauthorised absence/lateness has occurred following written warning to improve

The penalty is £120 per child, per parent (reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days). There is no legal right to appeal.

If the notice remains unpaid after 28 days, the Local Authority prosecutes the parent in the Magistrates' Court for the original non-attendance offence under the Education Act 1996, section 444, and not for non-payment of the penalty notice.

If found guilty this can attract a range of fines up to £1,000 and/or a range of disposals such as Parenting Orders, Community Sentences or custody, depending upon circumstances. Parents will receive a criminal record and be required to pay costs to the Local Authority.

### **Application to the Family court for an Education Supervision Order**

This can be granted for up to 12 months. Parents will be legally obliged to comply with the directions/advice given by the Education Welfare Officer and if they do not, the matter may be referred to the Magistrates Court. The consequence of this could include a fine or in an aggravated offence imprisonment. In addition, if there is a persistent non-compliance with directions/advice, then it is a legal requirement that the Local Authority Children's Social Care Department investigate.

### **Prosecution**

Where all other intervention, including Penalty notices and/or Education Supervision Orders, fail to bring about an improvement in attendance, the Local Authority will be notified and legal action in the Magistrates' Court may be taken. The school will provide the Local Authority with evidence required for a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 and will appear as a prosecution witness if required by the court.

This is to ensure that parents realise their own responsibilities in ensuring attendance at school and most importantly about returning children to education. Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 states that if a parent fails to ensure the regular school attendance of their child and if he/she is a registered pupil at a school and is of compulsory school age, and then they are guilty of an offence.

**Fines are as follows:**

Education Act 1996 s.444 (1) - Magistrates can fine each parent up to £1,000 per child, plus prosecution costs and impose a Parenting Order.

Education Act 1996 s.444 (1A) - Persistent Absence - Magistrates can fine each parent up to £2,500 per child, impose Parenting Orders/Community Rehabilitation Order and/or impose a period of imprisonment of up to 3 months.

**Signature:**.....

**Name:** .....

**Date:** .....

**Chair of Governors**

**Signature:** .....

**Name:** .....

**Date:** .....

**Head Teacher**

Date for Review: October 2016

**APPENDIX A**

**APPLICATION FOR SPECIAL LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

As a parent/carer you should fill in this form if you wish to take your child out of school during term time.

**Please note that all family holidays during term time will be unauthorised.**

Parents should refer to the school's attendance policy before requesting leave of absence. By requesting permission for your child to be excused from school, you are agreeing to abide by the decision of the Head Teacher. The Head Teacher may want to discuss with you the arrangements which will need to be made. You must provide relevant information and not make travel plans before receiving permission. **If your request is not agreed, your child must attend school, or you may be liable to a fixed penalty notice.**

You should be aware that if the school approves this absence, your child will be expected to return on the date specified on the form. Failure to do so will result in any extra time being classified as an unauthorised absence.

**Absence from school is governed by the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, and as amended, 2010.** Parents should be aware that failure to request leave of absence or defying the decision of the Head Teacher could lead to the issuing of Fixed-Penalty Notices (FPN) of up to £120 per parent per child.

Child's Name: .....	Class:.....
My child does/does not* have a sibling in another Barnet School.	
Name of Sibling: .....	School:.....
I request that my child be granted special leave of absence.	
From (date) .....	To (date) .....
Reason	
.....	
.....	
.....Signature of Parent/Carer	

<b>For office use:</b>	
Permission granted      Yes / No	Date: .....
.....	

Reason for decision: .....

Signed: ..... Date: .....