Oakwood Primary Academy & Nursery
Attendance Policy

This policy was adopted on 1st September 2026
This policy is due for review on 1st September 2027

Key contacts

Role	Name	Contact details
School Attendance Officer	Heidi Attwood/Kerry Wood	See below
Senior Attendance Champion	Kerry Wood	dsl@oakwoodpa.org.uk
Chair of Local Academy Board	Kimberley Westgate	Kwestgate@oakwoodpa.org.uk
School Improvement Partner for Safeguarding and Attendance	Heidi Attwood	hattwood@auroraacademies.org.uk

Introduction

Aurora Academies Trust gives a high priority to children's educational achievement and believes that excellent attendance and punctuality are essential in order for all pupils to achieve their full potential. This policy has been introduced in order to help our schools achieve this aim and the staff and Local Academy Board (LAB) at Oakwood Primary Academy are committed to working in partnership with parents and carers to ensure that it is effectively and appropriately implemented.

Background and Principles

The school follows the Department for Education's (DfE) statutory guidance '*Working Together to Improve School Attendance'*. This framework outlines the shared responsibilities of schools, parents and local authorities in promoting regular attendance.

There are strong and evidence-based links between pupil attendance and educational achievement. We are committed to working in partnership with the Local Authority to reduce overall absence and persistent absence. The school supports local initiatives and strives to ensure all staff, students, parents and carers place a high value on school attendance. We are committed to actively promoting Early Help and promoting multi-agency support for vulnerable children and their families.

When children are supported to attend school punctually and on a regular basis, they take an important step towards reaching their full potential, and are given the greatest opportunity to learn new things and develop their skills. Regular attenders usually leave secondary school with more qualifications and access to greater employment opportunities: this journey begins at primary school as poor attendance creates learning gaps that are hard to plug.

Parents are legally responsible for their child attending regularly

All children of compulsory school age must receive a suitable full-time education.
Parents:

- Must make sure their child is regularly attending school or 'otherwise' (i.e. another suitable alternative),
- Are guilty of an offence if their child doesn't regularly attend school.

This is set out in section 7 and section 444(1) of the Education Act (1996).
The DfE reiterates that responsibility for ensuring attendance lies with parents, including care givers or anyone with 'parental responsibility', in its statutory guidance for schools on page 5.

What is good attendance?

At Oakwood Primary Academy, we believe in developing good patterns of attendance and set high expectations for the attendance and punctuality for all our pupils from the outset. It is a central part of our school's vision, values, ethos and day to day life. We recognise the strong connections between attendance, attainment, safeguarding and wellbeing.

Good attendance will be celebrated at our school, with regular class awards presented in achievement assemblies and certificates for individual pupils. We hold a weekly draw for all pupils who have 100% attendance, of which the winner is able to select a prize from our selection box. In addition to this, we also promote half-termly incentives for all children who have 100% attendance across a half-term. This may include an experience voucher for example.

Definitions of Absence

Children should be at school, on time, every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable or has been agreed in advance by the school.

The school day begins at 8.45am and children must be in their classroom at this time. Pupils arriving after this time will be marked as late (see section on Punctuality below). To aid punctuality, we offer a soft-start drop-off period for our pupils between 8.30 – 8.45am each day.

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents/carers), as either **authorised** or **unauthorised**. This is why information and evidence about the cause of any absence is always required, preferably by phone, email or in writing.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason, such as:

- Illness,
- Medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time (for non-urgent appointments, we ask these are attended out of school),
- Emergencies or other unavoidable cause

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable. This includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily,
- Absences which have never been properly explained,
- Children who arrive at school too late to get a mark,
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays,
- Day trips and holidays in term time which have not been authorised,
- Cases of recurrent illness causing frequent absence, with no medical evidence provided, may be recorded as unauthorised.

This type of absence is likely to lead to the school referring cases to the Local Authority for fixed penalty notices and prosecution.

Absence Procedures

If your child is absent, you must:

- Contact us via phone or email before 8.15am on every day of absence (unless a medical professional has given advice to take a specified number of days absence from school and this has been shared with the school),
- Provide medical evidence if the reason for the absence is sickness and it is likely that the absence will continue for more than a week.

If your child is absent, we will:

- Text and/or telephone you on each day of absence if we have not heard from you,
- Call all authorised emergency contacts to try to establish your child's whereabouts,
- Carry out a home visit to ensure the safety of the child if no contact is made,
- Invite you in to discuss the situation if a period of absence persists or absences are regular,
- Refer the matter to the Local Authority Attendance Team if the situation does not improve.

Punctuality

While all families may on rare occasions be unavoidably late, general poor punctuality is not acceptable. The school day begins at 8.45am and children must be in their classroom at this time

How we manage punctuality:

- Children arriving after the start time need to be taken to the office and signed in,
- Office staff will enter each child onto the appropriate class register with a 'L' (late) mark,
- Children arriving more than 30 minutes after close of registers (8.45am) need to be taken to the office however the mark entered into the register will be a 'U' which means that although a child is now present in school the absence will count as a half day unauthorised absence. Obviously if there was a genuine need to be late (ie something medical) then the lateness would be authorised as described above,
- If your child is persistently late, you will be contacted by the school Attendance Officer who will discuss the concerns with you. Any child who continues to be late after this meeting may be referred to the Local Authority Attendance Team resulting in a fixed penalty notice.

Persistent Absenteeism

A pupil is defined as a 'Persistent Absentee' if they miss 10% or more of all possible school sessions, regardless of whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.

If a child has attendance that has fallen below 93%, their parents will be notified that this is a cause for concern and their attendance will be regularly monitored, to prevent them becoming a Persistent Absentee. If attendance does not improve, the school will follow attendance management procedures - this will involve raising awareness of the attendance concern with parents/carers, seeking medical evidence to explain low attendance, consistently reviewing attendance every two weeks, and inviting parents to attend an Attendance Support Meeting to discuss concerns.

Attendance Support Meetings will be used to explore barriers to attendance, both in and out of school, agreeing actions or interventions to address them. This may include referrals to services and organisations that can provide support to the child in school, or Early Help intervention if the needs are wider and whole family support is more appropriate.

Parents and carers will receive standard letters at every stage in the process to inform them of the school's concerns and any potential consequences of a failure to improve attendance. If there is little or no improvement in attendance, despite the intervention and support detailed above, the school's Attendance Officer will refer the case to the Local Authority Attendance Team to request that a fixed penalty notice be issued.

Support For Pupils with Medical Needs, or Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.

Some pupils will face greater barriers to school attendance than their peers. These include children with physical and mental health conditions and special educational needs and disabilities. Their right to an education is the same as any child, therefore our attendance ambition is the same as for any other pupil. However, we recognise that additional support may be needed to enable them to access their full-time education. This may include:

- Making reasonable adjustments and putting an Individual Health Care plan in place where needed,
- Accessing additional support from external partners (including the local authority or health services) where appropriate, making referrals in a timely manner and working together with those services,
- Working with parents to develop specific support approaches for attendance for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities, including (where applicable) ensuring the provision outlined in the pupil's Education, Health and Care Plan is accessed,
- Strategies to reduce in-school barriers such concessions regarding uniform, access to support during the school day, break and lunch time arrangements,
- Joined-up pastoral care, especially for those affected by anxiety around school attendance.

Part-time timetables may be considered in exceptional circumstances, for example, as part of a re-integration package to support a pupil returning from long-term sickness absence. However, this should be in place for the shortest time possible and not used as a long-term solution. There will be formal arrangements in place to regularly review this with the pupil and parents/carers, with a time-limit when the pupil will be expected to return to school full-time.

Leave of Absence Requests/Term Time Absence

The Head Teacher can only authorise absence in exceptional circumstances (see below). Each request will be reviewed on an individual basis by the school's Attendance Officer who has oversight for attendance. If a parent feels there is an exceptional reason for which their child needs to be granted leave from school, permission must be sought 2 weeks before the planned absence (contact the school office on 01323 501251 or email OPAoffice@oakwoodpa.org.uk . No absence can be authorised retrospectively. We reserve the right to contact a school where a sibling may attend e.g., a secondary school.

Fixed Penalty Notices

The school adheres to the Local Authority's Code of Conduct and the National Framework with regards to pupil attendance and Fixed Penalty Notices. Sanctions may include issuing each parent (for each child) with a Penalty Notice for £160, reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days (for the first offence). A second Penalty Notice issued within a three year period will result in a fine of £160 per parent, per child. If a third offence is committed the matter may be referred to the local authority for consideration of prosecution via the Magistrates Court. If prosecution is instigated for irregular school attendance, each parent may receive a fine of up to £2500 and/or up to 3 months in prison. If a parent is found guilty in court, they will receive a criminal conviction.

Circumstances when penalty notices might be issued

Unauthorised Absence/Truancy:

- Persistent late arrival at school (after the register has closed amounting to 10 more sessions in 10 weeks).
- Pupils whose attendance has not reached a satisfactory level following intensive support.
- Where parents allow their child to be present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification in a fixed term suspension or permanent exclusion.
- Persistent absence (below 90% over a period of time with no reasonable or medical explanation).

Unauthorised Leave:

- Penalty notices **will always be** issued for **all unauthorised leave taken during term time, where the absence amounts to 5 days (10 sessions).** These do not have to be consecutive, but a total of 10 sessions within 10 weeks. Unauthorised absences will be issued with a fixed penalty notice to any adult with parental responsibility who takes the child out of school for the absence (in cases where parents are separated: one separated parent will not be fined for the action of the other separated parent).
- This includes excessive delayed return from holiday without prior school agreement (beyond one additional school day).

There is no entitlement in law for pupils to take time off during the term to go on holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure or recreation, or to take part in protest activity in school hours.

The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 set out the statutory requirements for schools. All references to family holidays and extended leave have been removed. The amendments specify that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are "exceptional circumstances" and they do not have any discretion to authorise up to ten days of absence each academic year.

It is a rule of this school that a leave of absence shall not be granted in term time unless there are reasons considered to be exceptional by the Headteacher, irrespective of the child's overall attendance. Only the Headteacher or his/her designate (not the local authority) may authorise such a request and all applications for a leave of absence must be made in writing, in advance, on the prescribed form provided by us. We will usually consider that the parent who has made the application is therefore allowing the leave of absence, and also that all parents who are on the holiday are allowing the leave. Where a parent removes a child after their application for leave was

refused or where no application was made to the school, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. It is likely that penalty notices will be requested, in line with the National Framework and local authority Code of Conduct, in respect of each parent believed to have allowed the absence.

We will authorise absence for significant religious festivals (e.g. Eid; Hannukah) as per the DfE's statutory guidelines, which allows for one day per school year for Religious Observance. We cannot authorise a **holiday** to celebrate religious festivals (i.e. travelling to spend Eid with family).

Withdrawal of Penalty Notice

Penalty notices may only be withdrawn in the following circumstances:

- When it is issued to the wrong person,
- When issued outside the terms of the Local Authority Code of Conduct,
- When an offence has not been committed,
- If a parent can prove it was delivered to the wrong address,
- If there are unforeseen exceptional circumstances and the leave of absence becomes authorised.

Prosecution For Non-Payment of a Fine

The prosecution would not be for non-payment of the fine, but for the original offence of failing to ensure child's regular attendance at school. The Council may use the fact that a penalty notice has been issued and remains unpaid as evidence. The Council's Legal Intervention team would look at all the circumstances of the case when assessing the likelihood of securing a conviction for the original attendance offence.

Summary of Responsibilities

Pupils will:

- Attend school regularly.
- Arrive on time.
- Be appropriately prepared for the school day.
- Tell a member of staff about any problem which is making it hard for them to attend school regularly.

Parents/carers will:

- Encourage their children to attend school every day and on time.
- Ensure that they contact the school by 8.15am whenever their child is unable to attend school.
- Ensure that their children arrive in school fully prepared for the school day.
- Provide the school with up-to-date home, work and emergency contact numbers.
- Request absence in exceptional circumstances at least 2 weeks in advance (unless an emergency) via the school office (OPAoffice@oakwoodpa.org.uk).
- Make arrangements to complete curriculum work if an extended period of absence has been agreed.

Teachers will:

- Ensure that registers are completed accurately and on time at the start of each morning and afternoon session.
- Promote good attendance and punctuality within the class.
- Ensure all notes and messages received are sent to the office.
- Report any concerns relating to attendance to the school Attendance Officer/Head teacher/DSL as appropriate.
- Inform parents/carers of attendance percentages for their child/children via the annual report.
- Maintain positive links with parents whilst communicating concerns.

School Attendance Officer will:

- Monitor all pupils whose attendance has fallen below 93%.
- Generate absence/punctuality letters to parents/carers and organise Attendance Support Meetings with parents/carers.
- Support the Head Teacher/school attendance leads in monitoring and identifying levels of absence/lateness causing concern.
- Liaise with the Head Teacher/DSL to refer children and parents/carers to appropriate agencies for intervention and support where needed, eg Early Help services.
- Liaise with the Local Authority Attendance Team to issue fixed penalty notices.
- Positively promote good attendance within the school.
- Generate awards/certificates etc to celebrate good attendance.

The Head Teacher will:

- Set annual targets for attendance.
- Positively promote good attendance within the school.
- Oversee the implementation of the attendance policy and procedure.
- Ensure the collection of accurate statistical data.
- Develop efficient monitoring and evaluation systems.
- Report to the Local Academy Board.

The Local Academy Board (LAB) will:

- Review termly reports from the Head Teacher in respect of attendance data and trends.
- Monitor the effectiveness of the whole school policy.

The Trustees will:

- Ensure that ensure that each Aurora school has a whole school attendance policy in place
- Review termly reports from all schools in respect of attendance data and trends.

The Local Authority will:

- Support and challenge schools to improve attendance and reduce persistent absence.
- Upon the request of the school, the Local Authority has the power to issue parents or carers with a fine for unauthorised absence under section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003.
- The Local Authority also has the power to prosecute parents or carers under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, if the fine is not paid.