



## **Attendance Policy**

### **Good attendance at Oakhill Primary School**

Good attendance and punctuality (being in school on time) are vital to pupils reaching their full potential. Oakhill Primary School define good attendance as 97% or above. This means having no more than 1 day per half term off school where possible. The aim for all pupils and parents should be 100%.

At Oakhill, our vision is to develop pupils both academically and personally in order to give the best possible start we can to then go on and achieve well in the future. In order to do this, we need them in school every day. At Oakhill, we want to do everything we can to support parents in ensuring their children have good attendance and the aim of this policy is to set out how we can do this together.

### **Impact of absence on attainment (how well pupils do academically)**

The table below shows the impact that having time off school has on the academic achievement of pupils. The figures clearly show that the more pupils are in school, the higher marks they achieve. It is important to understand that whilst a figure of 85% or 90% as a test score would be an excellent score, it is not good in terms of attendance. Anything less than 97% will cause pupils to begin to fall behind their peers.

This table shows the average test scores in our assessments in June 2023:

<b>Attendance of pupils (Academic Year 2022-2023)</b>	<b>Average reading test score (June 2023 assessment)</b>
<b>97% or more 0 – 5 days off per year</b>	<b>66%</b>
<b>95% - 96% 6 – 8 days off per year</b>	<b>55%</b>
<b>90% - 94% 9 – 25 days off per year</b>	<b>46%</b>
<b>Less than 90% 26 or more days off per year</b>	<b>33%</b>

### **Other impact of absence**

As well as the academic problems caused by poor attendance, pupils can also experience other issues. Pupils can find it emotionally challenging to return to school after a period of absence as they don't know what has happened whilst they have been off. This can then lead to a situation where by getting pupils back into school is difficult. They may also have missed important work that they needed to do in order to access the following day's work and again this can cause upset. Finally, research shows that pupils with poor attendance have more social difficulties and problems making and maintaining friendships than those with good attendance.

### **School Routines**

Improving attendance is in everyone's interest. School and parents want the same thing for the children at Oakhill – for them to do as well as they can both personally and academically. This is why it is vital for us to work closely together to improve attendance. All staff at Oakhill understand the importance of good attendance and will regularly speak to children and parents about this.

Oakhill take our responsibility for safeguarding extremely seriously and there is a clear link between attendance and safeguarding. School will always report high periods or numbers of absences and unexplained absences to the relevant agencies including Education Welfare and Social Care and will support them to take the relevant action.

#### School start and end times

- School breakfast club opens at 7.30am if parents require this. This does not have to be pre booked (details here: <https://www.oakhillprimaryschool.co.uk/breakfast-club/>)
- School opens for all pupils at 8.40am
- All pupils should be in school by 8.50am and are classed as late if arriving after this time
- Children arriving after this time must report to the rear main entrance where they will be registered via the Class Mark in system at the school office. The parents / carer will complete a form to explain the lateness. They will receive a late mark in their class register
- Registers close at 9.10am. If pupils are not in school by this time they are classed as absent for the morning session
- School finishes at 3.10pm for all pupils (the doors open to collect Nursery and Reception children from 3.00pm)
- Treehouse After School Club runs until 6pm if parents require this. This must be pre booked (details here: <https://www.oakhillprimaryschool.co.uk/treehouse-after-school-club/>)

#### Oakhill's attendance team

- Senior Attendance Champion: Mrs H Dodd (Deputy Head). Please email the school office should you need to speak to Mrs Dodd: [office@oakhill.orchardct.org.uk](mailto:office@oakhill.orchardct.org.uk) or 01782 235238
- Attendance Team: Mrs H Dodd (Deputy Head), Mr S Smith (Headteacher), Ms J Somogy (Lead Learning Mentor), Mrs T Middleweek (Education Welfare Officer)

It is important that parents know who the best person is to speak to should you require support around attendance.

Should you require any support in improving your child's attendance or need someone to talk to about issues around attendance please contact Ms Somogy in the first instance, either via Dojo, telephone or by arranging a face to face appointment.

Where attendance is a concern and more formal support is required it will be Mrs T Middleweek who will contact you regarding this.

If you have a complaint about attendance or wish to speak to a member of the senior leadership team then Mrs H Dodd should be contacted either via Dojo, telephone or by arranging a face to face appointment.

#### How to report absence

We understand that there are times when pupils will need to be absent from school. When this happens it is vital that we still continue to work together by reporting absence in the correct way.

All absence must be reported to school by 9am on the first day of absence. By far the easiest and most reliable way to do this is via Arbor. If your child is absent for more than 2 days please update school at least every other day.

Other ways to report absence are as follows:

- By telephone (01782 235238)
- By email to [office@oakhill.orchardct.org.uk](mailto:office@oakhill.orchardct.org.uk)
- By letter, delivered to the school office
- In person, at the school office
- By showing an appointment card or letter in advance, at the school office.
- By completing an application of leave of absence in exceptional circumstances in term time, which is available from the school office.

It is requested that reasons for absence are not sent as a message via a child or another parent/carer as they may not be passed on.

School will always follow up any absence that is not reported. This is known as 'First Day Contacts'.

#### Authorised absence

The Headteacher has the ultimate responsibility for authorising absences and will do so when a valid reason is given for the child's absence such as:

- Illness (medical evidence may be requested)
- Funeral – up to one day

#### Unauthorised absence

An unauthorised absence will be given when a child does not attend school and a valid reason is not given for the absence. Holidays will almost always be classed as unauthorised leave and fines will be issued as per the Stoke on Trent Local Authority updated guidance found at the end of this policy.

#### Other reasons for absence: Medical and dental appointments

We expect parents to make medical and dental appointments for their children before or after school or during school holidays whenever possible. If this is not possible then authorisation will be given where confirmation of the appointment is received through an appointment card or hospital letter. Children are expected to attend school prior to the appointment and parents are expected to return their children to school following the appointment whenever possible. Half a day absence is much better than a full day in these circumstances.

#### Other reasons for absence: Special occasions

A request to attend a special occasion during school time e.g. family wedding must be made in advance and the Headteacher will make the decision as to whether to authorise the absence. Parents will be notified of the head's decision. This will not be authorised for more than one day in any circumstance.

#### Other reasons for absence: Bereavement

The school is sensitive to family requests for a child's attendance at funerals or associated events. The Headteacher will offer the family advice over absence in this instance.

#### Other reasons for absence: Days of religious observance

Attendance at a religious observance held by a religious body will be granted as authorised absence. The Headteacher should be consulted in advance of the event. It is at the Headteacher's discretion as to how long will be granted as authorised absence. School must be informed of this absence in advance.

#### Holidays

Taking holidays in term time will affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking children away in school time. Holidays will almost always be classed as unauthorised leave and fines will be issued as per the Stoke on Trent Local Authority guidance found at the end of this policy. Parents must complete a leave of absence form (obtained from the school office) and give this into the school office at least 4 weeks prior to the planned holiday.

- There is no automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday. A parent must obtain prior written permission from the head teacher of the school where the child is registered as a pupil if they want to take their child out of school during term time. They can only do this if:

- A parent the child normally lives with makes a written application to the head teacher at least four weeks in advance of the proposed absence during term time.
- The head teacher (or an authorised deputy) has absolute discretion regarding whether or not a child's absence from school is to be permitted during term time and if so, the period of absence to be permitted.
- The Headteacher / Deputy Headteacher will discuss each case requesting holiday in term time with the school's Education Welfare Officer. Absence will always be unauthorised for holiday in term time but when a child has attendance above 96%, and the holiday is 4 days or less, the school will not issue a penalty notice.
- Parents can be fined for taking a child on holiday during term time without the prior written permission of the head teacher (or an authorised deputy or assistant head teacher) at the school where the child is registered as a pupil.
- Where school believe a child is on holiday, door step visits will be completed.

#### Leave of Absence in Exceptional Circumstances

The law states that parents do not have an automatic right to take their child out of school in term-time. However, parents apply for Leave of Absence in Exceptional Circumstances if needed. This will be considered in line with Government and Local Authority guidance. The parent/carer should apply for a leave of absence by completing and returning an Application for Leave of Absence in Exceptional Circumstances in Term Time form, available from the school office. This form needs to be returned to school at least 4 term-time weeks prior to requested leave and will then be considered. A guidance sheet explaining this process can be found here: <https://tinyurl.com/oakhillleave1>

#### Penalty Notices

The Local Authority may issue a fine for leave of absence during term time. Further details can be found here: <https://tinyurl.com/newsotcode>

A brief information sheet about these notices can be found here: <https://tinyurl.com/sotpenalties24>

#### Data and Monitoring

At Oakhill, our attendance team work closely together to track the attendance of all pupils daily, weekly and half termly. We meet every half term to review all of our systems and to ensure our work remains effective.

All parents are informed, via the half termly and annual reports, of their child's overall attendance and their attendance compared to the average for the school as well as the impact this has. Regular discussions are held with pupils (both individually and as a whole class). The Deputy Headteacher contacts all parents to update them on current attendance each half term and sends individual emails to parents of pupils with attendance below expectations as well as to those with improving attendance.

Pupils subject to Child in Need or Child Protection plans may receive a 'door step' visit from a member of the pupil support team if they are absent for 2 or more days. This is to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the pupils and families.

The following information explains how we collect data on attendance and what we do with this.

In managing the attendance and punctuality of its pupils, the school will:

1. **Keep appropriate records:** registers are taken at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session on the Scholar Pack. Marks are automatically transferred on to the computerised register on the office computer. 'First Day Contacts' are completed by the pupil support team each day for any absence that has not been reported. Accurate information on attendance is available to designated employees and data gathered will be used to inform the governing body of attendance and punctuality trends. This information will enable governors and senior staff to effectively target attendance and punctuality as necessary. The

Attendance Team will monitor and review the requests for Leave of Absence in Exceptional Circumstances in Term Time.

2. **Monitor patterns of attendance.** The Attendance Team regularly review registers in order to support families whose patterns of attendance or punctuality are unsatisfactory.
3. **Working together.** The attendance team meet regularly to discuss issues surrounding attendance and punctuality and work together to prevent children becoming Persistent Absentees (PA) with attendances of below 90%. In order to prevent children becoming PA and to involve parents and keep them informed the following framework will be followed:
  - In the first instance an attendance 'letter 1' will be sent when a child's attendance drops below 97%
  - 'Letter 2' will be sent once a child's attendance drops below 95%.
  - Early Helps will be used to support parents as needed.
  - If a child's attendance drops below 92% the education welfare officer will make contact with parents either by phone or inviting them to attend a meeting in school.
  - Attendance contracts will be discussed and agreed with parents and the EWO should attendance continue to be a concern.
  - If issues have not been resolved and a child's attendance continues to fall a Notice to Improve letter will be sent
  - Once the Educational Welfare Officer is involved the parents may incur fines for non-attendance of their child at school.
  - The Local Authority will be informed where pupils have been absent due to illness for 15 or more days.

#### Strategies for improving attendance and punctuality

There are a variety of rewards schemes at the school to encourage and promote good attendance and punctuality. The Home School Agreement which is signed by the Headteacher and parents contains a section specifically relating to attendance and punctuality.

- Attendance is given a high priority in all classrooms and is regularly discussed with pupils.
- Attendance is discussed at pupil progress meetings with teachers and senior leaders.
- The Deputy Headteacher contacts all parents to update them on current attendance each half term.
- The attendance team (including the EWO) meet every half term to discuss individual children/classes on concern and allocate actions to the relevant staff member to address these/
- The team point system links into attendance, behaviour and uniform. Children receive one point each day for each of these three things, points accumulate towards a range of prizes using the Dojo and Acorns system.
- There is a system in each classroom called 'Attend to Achieve' whereby the class earns 1 letter of the words 'Attend to Achieve' for each day they have 100% attendance. Once they have all of the letters they win a class treat (for example: an extra playtime).

### Escalation of procedures

At Oakhill, we want to support parents in any way possible to ensure attendance remains high. However, if after this support has been put in place attendance remains a concern then support will intensify and become more formal. The following table shows what will happen when pupils' attendance is at different levels.

Attendance	What will happen?
<b>97% - 100%</b> <b>0 – 5 days off per year</b>	<b>We will celebrate good attendance with you and your child. Your child is more likely to do well in school both academically and personally.</b>
<b>93% - 96.9%</b> <b>6 – 17 days off per year</b>	<b>Informal support. Contact will be made with parents to inform them of the attendance. Attendance will be tracked weekly and support offered including Early Help support to identify areas of support needed.</b>
<b>90% - 92.9%</b> <b>19 – 25 day off per year</b>	<b>Formal support. Contact will be made with parents to inform them of the attendance. Attendance will be tracked weekly and support offered including an agreed attendance contract. A letter will be sent home explaining the possibility of fines. Referrals may be made to the relevant agencies (including Social Care where appropriate) for further support. No absences will be authorised without evidence (for example, medical evidence).</b>
<b>Below 90%</b> <b>26 or more days off per year</b>	<b>Formal support. This is a cause for concern and referrals will be made to the relevant agencies (including Social Care where appropriate) for further support. Attendance will be tracked weekly by the EWO who will contact the parents each week and hold attendance clinics for further support. No absences will be authorised without evidence (for example, medical evidence). Notice to Improve letters will be sent and fines issued where no further improvement.</b>

### Children Missing in Education (CME)

This policy has been written in accordance to the guidance set out in the Stoke-on-Trent Council Promoting Regular School Attendance – Children Missing Education (CME) which can be found here: <https://tinyurl.com/cmestoke1>

The sections above explain how the school ensure that all children are accounted for. If pupils are not in school for more than three days and parents/carers are unable to be contacted then the school will first conduct a home visit. Should the child and parents/carers still not be able to be located the school will follow the procedures set out in the Stoke-on-Trent Council Promoting Regular School Attendance – Children Missing Education (CME) guidance. This includes completing one of the two forms found in the Children Missing in Education policy that are then sent to the relevant agencies including the Educational Welfare Service. When pupils move to a new school we always contact the new school to ensure that they have started as planned and to organise the transfer of all relevant safeguarding documentation.

### Links to other documents

This policy has been written in accordance with the guidance set out in the DFE Guidance: Working Together to Improve School Attendance which can be found here:

<https://tinyurl.com/dfeattendance>

The school also follows this policy alongside the Stoke-on-Trent City Council Code of Conduct for the issuing of Penalty Notices 2024. This can be found as appendix 1 which is linked here:

<https://tinyurl.com/newsotcode>

**REVIEW & AMEND AS NECESSARY ANNUALLY – SEPTEMBER 2025 (MOST RECENT REVISION SEPTEMBER 2024)**