Attendance Policy

Document Control - Document Details	
Document Name	Attendance Policy
Purpose of Document	
Document Version number	I
Document Owner	Ms E Green Assistant Headteacher
Prepared by	S Watkin
Document location	Shared network drive and website
Date of first draft	July 2018
Date Approved	17.09.18
Approved by	Governing Body
Next scheduled review date	September 2021

Version History		
Version number	Date Approved	Change/Reasons for Change/Comments
I	17.09.18	New Policy
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		

Distribution list		
Governors		
Head		
Leadership Team		

Oathall Community College
Attendance Policy

The Governing Body of Oathall Community College adopted the Attendance Policy on 16th July 2018

1.   Statement of Principle:

• The college aims to provide a safe and secure environment where students can enjoy their education and feel valued, safe and secure.

• The college will work with students, parents and the Pupil Entitlement: Investigation Team to ensure policy and procedure support a consistently high level of attendance.

• The college expects all students to be at college, and in class, on time and prepared for their lessons.

• Good attendance means at least 96%.

1a   Policy Statement

The policy sets out the roles and responsibilities of the whole college community in maintaining high levels of attendance. The principles have been agreed with all secondary schools in this area.

1b   Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the school attendance guidance from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on school attendance parental responsibility measures. These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- The Education Act 1996
- The Education Act 2002
- The Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2010
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2011
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2016
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.

2.   Attendance register

By law, all schools (except those where all pupils are boarders) are required to keep an attendance register, and all pupils must be placed on this register.
The attendance register will be taken at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark whether every pupil is:

Present
Attending an approved off-site educational activity
Absent
Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

  The original entry
  The amended entry
  The reason for the amendment
  The date on which the amendment was made
  The name and position of the person who made the amendment

See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

Every entry in the attendance register will be preserved for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Pupils must arrive in school by **8.40** on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at **8.45** and will be kept open until **9.00 am**.The register for the second session will be taken at **1.50** and will be kept open until **2.10.**

2a   Unplanned absence

Parents must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence – for example, if their child is unable to attend due to ill health – by **9.00am** or as soon as practically possible (see also section 6).

Absence due to illness will be authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask parents to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents will be notified of this in advance.

2b   Authorisation of Absences

• No holidays will be authorised for any year group unless there are exceptional circumstances agreed by the Headteacher or the designated Senior Teacher (eg military leave).

• Unauthorised holidays (coded G) may be subject to a Fixed Penalty Notice.

• Unauthorised absences of 10 or more sessions may be subject to a Fixed Penalty Notice or referral to the Education Welfare Service.

2c   Medical or dental appointments

Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence; advance notice is required for authorising these absences.

However, we encourage parents to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

Please contact Mrs Hunter in advance of the appointment by email (shunter@oathall.org or phone (01444414001) or letter so she can code the register correctly and be aware that your son/daughter may need to sign in or out.

Applications for other types of absence in term time must also be made in advance. Information relating to whether the school can authorise such absences can be found in section 4.

2d   Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late but before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code.

A pupil who arrives after the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code.

Repeated lateness to school will result in House or SLT detentions and may lead to further consequences if the issue persists. It could also contribute to a Fixed Penalty Notice if the lateness affects lesson time.

2e   Following up absence
The school will follow up any absences to ascertain the reason, ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary, identify whether the absence is approved or not and identify the correct attendance code to use.

3.   Authorised and unauthorised absence

3a   Granting approval for term-time absence

Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence to pupils during term time unless they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'.

We define 'exceptional circumstances' as a reason that prevents the leave of absence being taken during normal holiday times and where the timings are out of the parent/carers control.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the headteacher's discretion.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:
- Illness and medical/dental appointments – as explained in sections 3.2 and 3.3

- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart

- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a Traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision

- Study leave is not granted by default. Students will be expected to continue to attend school and lessons or study rooms until May half term.
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3b   Legal sanctions

Schools can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

If issued with a penalty notice, parents must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice ultimately rests with the headteacher, following the local authority's code of conduct for issuing penalty notices. This may take into account:

- A number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason
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If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute the parent or withdraw the notice.

4.   Attendance monitoring

The attendance officer monitors pupil absence on a daily basis.

Parents are expected to call the school in the morning if their child is going to be absent due to ill health (see section 2a).

Parents are expected to do this on each day of absence.

If a pupil's absence goes below 93% we will notify parents, if attendance remains a concern parents / carers will be invited to a meeting to discuss the reasons for the poor attendance. If after contacting parents a pupil's absence continue to rise, we will consider involving an the Pupil Entitlement Investigation team (PE:I) by completing a referral. The persistent absence threshold is 10%. If a pupil's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 10%, the pupil will be classified as a persistent absentee.

Pupil-level absence data is collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. We compare our attendance data to the national average, and share this with governors.

5.   Roles and Responsibilities

5a   The governing board

The governing board is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school on at least a termly basis. It also holds the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

5b   The headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented consistently across the school, and for monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors.

The headteacher also supports other staff in monitoring the attendance of individual pupils and issues fixed-penalty notices, where necessary.

5c   The Form Tutor at Years 7 to 11 is responsible for:

- marking the electronic register accurately;
- in cases of absence the form tutor has the first line of responsibility in requesting an explanation;
- reading all letters of explanation concerning absence and making the correct insertion in the register;
- discussing attendance procedures and issues with members of the tutor group, notifying the Attendance Officer/HOH / AHOH after unexplained absence.
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5d   The Head of House (with the assistance of the Assistant Head of House AHOH) is responsible for:

- checking any suspected truancy;
- employing a range of early intervention/preventative strategies and work with disaffected students;
- working with students, parents, form tutors, PE-I and other agencies to introduce and support strategies for maintaining high levels of attendance;
- in the case of long term medical absence the HOH should:
- notify staff of any expected absence of a prolonged period;
- liaise with parents, Heads of Faculty and teaching staff and outside agencies where appropriate to ensure that appropriate support for learning is given.
- when a student returns from a long absence, every effort is made to help him/her reintegrate easily and catch up with work missed. Form Tutors and subject teachers are instrumental in assisting students to settle again quickly and easily.
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5e. Subject teachers are responsible for:

- recording attendance of students at every lesson; 3.2 ensuring FT, AHOH or HOH is informed of any unexplained absence;
- providing work for students identified in 2.4 above.

5f. Assistant Heads of House are responsible for:

- liaising with HOH ;
- producing RAG statistics for HOHs and Attendance lead at fortnightly intervals.
- producing RAG letters for HOHs at half termly intervals or as required

5g The Attendance Officer is responsible for:

- first day contact and informing HOHs of reasons for absence;
- monitoring and ensuring speedy and accurate processing of registration procedures (registers/absence reports etc);
- producing attendance letters for unexplained absences at weekly intervals;
- producing attendance statistics and reports on request (internally or outside agencies);
- compiling whole school attendance data monthly;
- signing in students who are late.

5h Senior staff are responsible for:

- agreeing strategies with HOH etc;
- arranging 'random' checks with HOHs;
- reporting on whole school attendance data as required;
- completing LEA attendance statistics;
- the Headteacher or designated Senior Teacher is responsible for approving holiday absence requests.

5i   Parents are responsible for:

- ensuring their son/daughter comes to college on time in uniform and with all the equipment they need;
- informing college of any absence by telephone or in writing

Appendix 1: attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
****	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Pupil is on a work experience placement

Code	Definition	Scenario
Authorised absence		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance

S	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence	Pupil from a Traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
Unauthorised absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
N	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed

Code	Definition	Scenario
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody
Z	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
#	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day