



# **Oakgrove School**

## **Attendance Policy**

# OAKGROVE SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY

## ADOPTION AND AMENDMENTS TO ATTENDANCE POLICY

Written June 2005

Section	Governors' Meeting or Committee
Whole Document	Curriculum 3 July 2007
Whole Document	ADW <sup>1</sup> 13 May 2010
Whole Document	ADW 10 June 2011
Whole Document	FGB 16 June 2011
Whole Document	ADW 12 June 2014
Primary phase review	ADW 3 March 2016
Whole Document	ADW 15 June 2017
Whole Document	ADW 9th June 2020
Whole Document	ADW 8 <sup>th</sup> February 2023
Interim review	LGB, 15 <sup>th</sup> February 2024
Whole Document – rewritten	ADW, 12 <sup>th</sup> June 2024
Whole Document	LGB, 6 May 2025
Whole Document	LGB 12 March 2026
Next review: 2026/2027	

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<sup>1</sup> ADW is the Admissions, Discipline & Welfare Committee

# OAKGROVE SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY

## **Rationale:**

Oakgrove School is a successful school and every child on roll plays their part in making it so. We aim for an environment which enables and encourages all members of the school community to reach out for excellence. For our pupils to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and every child should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

Oakgrove School pupils are expected to attend school regularly and on time. This policy aims to make clear the importance of maximum attendance at school to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them and become confident, independent and forward-thinking adults who are able to realise their full potential and make a positive contribution to their community. This is every child's fundamental right, and every effort will be made to help pupils to engage in their education in a positive and rewarding way. In order to achieve this aim, school and home need to work together so that:

- Pupils are committed to their education and understand the importance of good attendance;
- Parents/Carers instil in their child the expectation to attend school every day, and support school if it becomes necessary to monitor attendance, as it is their legal duty;
- School has clear lines of responsibility for dealing with attendance and are consistent in the implementation of the policy, including a wide range of positive intervention strategies if concerns continue.

At Oakgrove School we recognise that there is a strong connection between attendance and achievement; pupils with the highest attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 have the higher rates of attendance over the Key Stage, compared to those with the lowest attainment. For the most vulnerable pupils, regular attendance is an important protective factor; research has shown associations between regular absence from school and a number of extra familial harms, including crime and serious crime.

Oakgrove School values all pupils. As set out in this policy, we will work with families to identify the reasons for poor attendance and try to resolve any difficulties.

Oakgrove School recognises that attendance is a matter for the whole school community. Our Attendance Policy should not be viewed in isolation; it is a strand that runs through all aspects of school improvement, supported by our practices and policies including the Curriculum Policy, the KET Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, the SEND Policy, the Behaviour Policy and the Teaching and Learning Policy. This policy also takes into account the Human Rights Act 1998, the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and the Race Relations Act 2000.

The Local Governing Body will monitor attendance and be aware of the reasons for change and actions taken.

## **Legal Framework**

Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act states that parents/carers must ensure that children of compulsory school age receive efficient 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

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16. Parents have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends school regularly. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a smaller number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school.

Since September 2013 there is no entitlement to parents/carers to take their child on a family holiday during term time, and to do so could result in the Local Authority issuing a fixed penalty notice. Schools are open 190 days per year, plus with an additional 5 for training days, the remaining days are weekends and school holidays.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, require 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.

### **Home and School Partnership:**

Oakgrove School wants to take every care to maintain the positive relationship we have with parents/carers and ensure that you feel able to communicate honestly with us without fear of being fined for an absence you feel is justified.

Oakgrove School's position is:

- No request for holidays will be authorised. You may choose to take your child out of school but this will be recorded on your child's attendance record as unauthorised absence.
- If you take your child out of school for an accumulation of 5 days or more (10 sessions) of unauthorised absence over a period of 10 weeks, we are obliged to refer this to the Local Authority and you will be at risk of incurring a Penalty Notice. This risk increases if there are existing concerns in relation to your child's attendance and intervention programmes have been in place.
- Your child's attendance will be closely monitored and attendance letters will be sent home and /or meetings in school will be requested when there is cause for concern.
- Parents/Carers asking for consideration for absence where special circumstances apply will be informed by the Attendance Officer if this has been authorised after deliberation by the Attendance Lead/Headteacher.

Securing a high level of attendance requires the school and home to work closely together. We seek parents/carers support to:

- Ensure your child arrives to school on time each school day: this is 08:40 for Oakgrove Primary (08:50 for Foundation) and 08:30 for Oakgrove Secondary. Pupils failing to arrive on time will be sanctioned. Arrival 30 minutes after the start times means your child will be recorded as late after the register closes, which is an unauthorised absence.
- Notify the school of your child's absence as early as possible on each day of absence by using the dedicated absence reporting systems (include pupil name, year/form/class group and a detailed reason for the absence):

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For Oakgrove Secondary: telephone 01908 545300 extension 2102, or send a text to 07860 097184 (for absences only) or email [lee@oakgrove.school](mailto:lee@oakgrove.school) or [secondaryabsences@oakgrove.school](mailto:secondaryabsences@oakgrove.school)

For Oakgrove Primary: telephone 01908 545300 option 5, or email [primaryabsences@oakgrove.school](mailto:primaryabsences@oakgrove.school)

- Get in touch at an early stage about any concerns you have about your child's attitude to school. Failing to attend school can be indicative of underlying stress or concerns, and it is important to try to resolve this before a pattern of poor attendance develops. Please contact your child's form tutor/class teacher or Head of Year in the first instance.
- Use the absence request form which is on the school's website.

In return the school will:

1. Email/text home for every pupil who is absent if parents/carers have not already contacted us. If we cannot make contact with a parent/carer after three days we will arrange a home visit.
2. Contact home regarding any outstanding unexplained absences.
3. Make home visit/video or telephone contact with home on the third day of absence if we have not been contacted by parents/carers. We will contact parents/carers beforehand and explain that we must see their child on the visit/video call face to face, or speak to them in person on the telephone.
4. Follow up promptly any concerns that parents/carers pass on to us that may be affecting their child's attitude to, or feeling of well-being in school.
5. Involve the Pastoral, Safeguarding and SEN Teams as appropriate to help pupils re-integrate into school after illness or individual circumstances.
6. Regularly and consistently remind pupils of the importance of good attendance and punctuality.
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8. Reward good or improving attendance and action any concerns promptly.
9. Work with parents/carers to identify other agencies who might be able to support the child and family.
10. Keep parents/carers up to date with attendance information and expectations about school holiday start dates, return to school dates, seasonal illnesses and religious observance dates.
11. Attendance of pupils will be reported to parent/carers on the Interim reports, the annual subject reports and via the ParentApp.
12. For pupils not attending school for a prolonged time (this may be result of physical or mental illness) a member of school staff will conduct regular welfare checks with the child via online or face to face meetings.

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### **Absence Categories:**

**Illness:** in most cases a telephone call/text message from the parent/carer informing the school that their child is ill will be acceptable. For illness absences over 5 days, you may be asked to provide medical evidence (this could be a doctor's appointment card, prescription, hospital letter). You may also be asked to provide evidence where there is repeated absence due to reported illness. Oakgrove School has a Health Coordinator who can be contacted/could call to gain more information to support a pupil to attend school despite an illness.

Where a pupil has 15 days or more absence due to a health need, the school will support the pupil in a variety of ways which could include the school's EBSA (Emotional Based School Avoidance) guidance and process. All Milton Keynes children who are unable to attend school because of health reasons (both mental and physical health), which have been recognised by the health services, should not be at home or in hospital without access to education for more than 15 days in an academic year. Therefore, a partnership approach to resourcing will be necessary between the school and the Local Authority. For some cases of absence, the School will complete a Section 19 referral to the Local Authority. The Local Authority takes responsibility. The school will ensure the pupil has access to several online learning platforms for core subjects during their absence.

**Medical/dental appointments:** where possible it is advised to make such appointments out of school hours. Where this is not possible, pupils should attend school for part of the day. The appointment card should be emailed to school.

**Fixed term suspension (no alternative provision made):** A fixed term suspension from school is recorded as an authorised absence.

**Late arrival:** Registration begins at 08:30 (Secondary) and 08:40 (Primary). Pupils arriving after this time, will be marked as present but arriving late and must register in the school's main reception. The register will close 30 mins later. Pupils arriving after this time will be recorded as late (after the register closed) which will be an unauthorised absence for that session. Parents/Carers are notified daily via email of how late the student was unless a note is provided when the student signs in.

**Unauthorised absence:** Absence will be unauthorised if parents/carers have not provided a satisfactory explanation that has been accepted by the school. Examples of unsatisfactory explanations could include: a pupil's/family member's birthday, a shopping trip, 'could not get up' or 'over slept', illness where the child is considered well enough to be in school.

**Family holidays and extended leave:** Holiday during term time will not be authorised. Parents are strongly advised to avoid taking their children on holiday during term time. Parents/carers do not have an automatic right to remove their child from school during term time for the purpose of a holiday and should be made aware that if their child is absent for 10 school days they will miss 5% of their education during that academic year. If permission to take leave is not granted and the pupil still goes on holiday, the absence will be unauthorised. In such cases the school may refer the matter to the School Attendance, Education Sufficiency and Access department at Milton Keynes Council who may issue a Penalty Notice (Anti-social Act 444 (1) 2003). Only in exceptional circumstances will absence be agreed. This is at the discretion of the Headteacher/Attendance Lead. In such cases, consideration will also be given to cultural needs and family circumstances.

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**Religious Observance:** Oakgrove 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/carer to allow their children not to attend school for one day of religious observance if recognised by the parent's religious body. Parents/carers are requested to give advance notice to the school if they intend their child to be absent. Any extended time taken will not be authorised'.

If your child has less than 90% attendance they will be categorised as PA or persistently absent. If attendance falls below 50% attendance will be categorised as SA severe absence.

### **Deletions from the Register:**

In accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, pupils will only be deleted from the register when one of the following circumstances applies:

- The school is replaced by another school on a School Attendance Order
- The School Attendance Order is revoked by the local authority.
- The pupil has ceased to be of compulsory school age.
- Permanent exclusion has occurred and procedures have been completed.
- Death of a pupil.
- Transfer between schools.
- When a parent/carer informs the school in writing that the pupil is to be withdrawn to be educated outside the school system – Elected Home Education.
- The pupil is withdrawn to be educated outside the school system.
- Failure to return from an extended holiday after both the school and the local authority have tried to locate the pupil.
- A medical condition prevents their attendance and return to the school before ending compulsory school-age.
- In custody for more than four months (in discussion with The Youth Offending Team).
- 20 days continuous unauthorised absence and both the local authority and school have tried to locate the pupil.
- Left the school but not known where he/she has gone after both the school and the local authority have tried to locate the pupil.
- Oakgrove School will follow Milton Keynes Council's Children Missing Education Protocol when a pupil's whereabouts is unknown.

### **Using Attendance Data:**

Pupil's attendance will be monitored and will be shared with the Local Authority and other agencies if a pupil's attendance is a cause for concern.

Every week the Attendance Officer will provide all HOYs/ Attendance Lead with attendance data for the previous 6 weeks for each pupil within their Key Stage/Year Group. This pupil level data will be used to trigger school action of intervention. Attendance data will also be used to identify emerging patterns and trends to inform whole school strategies to improve attendance and attainment. All information shared will be done in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and is GDPR compliant.

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### Support Systems:

Oakgrove School recognises 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 school aware of any difficulties or changes in circumstances that may affect their child's attendance and or behaviour in school, for example, bereavement, divorce and separation. This will help the school identify any additional support that may be required.

Oakgrove School recognises that some pupils are more likely to require additional support to attain good attendance, for example, those pupils with special educational needs, those with a social worker, those with family members in prison, those with physical or mental health needs, migrant and refugee pupils and children in care.

The school will implement a range of strategies to support improved attendance. This support will be child centred and planned in discussion and agreement with both parents/carers and the pupil. Strategies used could include:

- Discussion with parents/carers and pupils.
- Referrals to support agencies, including Arthur Ellis, CAMHs, Mental Health Support Team, Service Six, Health Practitioner Early Help Assessment, and referral to Targeted Support.
- EBSA process (Emotionally Based School Avoidance).
- Pastoral support – corridor cards, mentoring.
- Intervention with friendship groups – including restorative meetings.
- Time limited part-time timetables.
- Additional learning support.
- Behaviour support.
- Reintegration support packages.
- Rewards and incentives from both home and school.
- Parent/carer/pupil attendance contracts.
- A Notice to Improve -a final opportunity for a parent/carer to engage in support and improve their child's attendance before a penalty notice is issued.

**Fixed Penalty Notices: (FPN)** (Anti-Social behaviour act 2003). Penalty notices are intended to prevent prosecution and court action. Only two penalty notices can be issued to the same parent/carer in respect of the same child within a three year rolling programme and any second notice within that period is charged at the higher rate. Penalty notices will be considered when:

- Intervention has failed to bring about improvement and further unauthorised absence has occurred following written warning to improve.
- A pupil absent from school for the purpose of a holiday in term time and the absence has not been authorised by the school.
- Parents/Carers allow their child to be present in a public place during school hours without justification during the first 5 days of a fixed period or permanent exclusion.

As of September, 2025, the Penalty Notice is a £160 fine, per parent/carer, per child and must be paid within 21 days of issue. The fine reduces to £80 per parent/carer, per child if paid within 21 days. A second penalty notice issued to the same parent/carer in respect to the same child is charged at a flat rate of £160. Failure to pay the Penalty Notice may result in a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

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Once three years has elapsed since the first penalty notice was issued a further penalty notice can be issued, but in most cases, this may not be the most effective tool for changing what now may have become an entrenched pattern of behaviour. Therefore, alternative options will be looked at.

Where a pupil has moved schools, an additional check should be made by the Local Authority/School to try and ascertain whether previous penalty notices have been issued in respect of the pupil.