



## **Attendance Policy 2022-2023**

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## **Orchard Academy Attendance Policy 2022-23**

At Orchard we recognise the importance of regular school attendance and believe that children can only learn effectively if they attend school every day. It is also vitally important that children arrive at school on time every day.

Education provides a means of enhancement for all young people. Children need to attend school every day if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. Irregular attendance seriously disrupts continuity of learning, undermines the educational process and leads to underachievement and low attainment.

A high level of attendance is the responsibility of everyone in the school community - pupils, parents and carers, governors and all staff.

### **The School Day**

At Orchard Academy the day begins at 8.30 am and ends at 3.05 pm.

Breakfast Club is available at Orchard from 7.30am at a small cost of £2.20 per day. This needs to be booked in advance. Bookings can be made through out reception staff.

## **The Law**

By law, all children of compulsory school age must receive suitable education. Parents are responsible for making sure this happens, either by registering the child at a school or by arranging an effective alternative to school.

A child reaches compulsory school age on or after their 5th birthday. A child continues to be of compulsory school age until their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.

Local Education Authorities have various powers to ensure that parents meet their duties.

## **Responsibilities of Parents**

There are legal obligations on parents/carers to secure education for their children of compulsory school age, whether at school or otherwise and to send them to school at every possible opportunity once they are on the school roll.

If the school is to achieve its attendance targets, parents/carers must see themselves as partners with the school in their children's education and support the school in the following ways:

- ensure the fullest possible attendance of their child.
- when absence is unavoidable, provide a verbal or written explanation, on the first day of absence.
- when absence continues for more than a day, contact the school by phone, letter or email each day to update the school.
- ensure that their child arrives at school and is collected from school on time.

## **Responsibilities of the School**

It is the responsibility of the school to support attendance and to deal with problems which may lead to non-attendance. The school employs a range of strategies to improve and encourage good attendance and punctuality. These include individual attendance awards given at special termly assemblies and a trophy awarded each week to the class with the highest attendance. We also award a termly certificate for the child with the most improved attendance.

The school will investigate promptly all absenteeism, liaising closely with parents & carers. Staff will respond to all absenteeism firmly and consistently.

## **The Importance of Registration**

Registers are important legal documents and are kept securely. The law requires schools to take the register twice a day:

- at the start of the morning session at 8.40am
- at the start of the afternoon session at 1pm

Taking the register is a key part of the school day and should be seen as such by staff, children and parents/carers.

At Orchard the registers are computerised. Children are marked either present or absent. Particular attention is given to accurate registration; staff use consistent rules and coding for registration.

When a child arrives after the registration period at Orchard the child's name and time of arrival is recorded in the school office; the child will then be registered 'late' for that session. The school monitors closely the number of minutes and frequency that a child is late. Registration at Orchard Academy closes at 9am.

When a child is absent, the register must also show whether the absence was authorised by the school or unauthorised. This information is entered onto the computer daily and monitored by the Safeguarding and Inclusion Lead.

### **Notification of Absence**

All parents/carers are asked to contact the school to advise them of their child's absence and providing a reason for the absence. This can be done by:

- **telephone:** the school administrator/Safeguarding & Inclusion Lead will then pass the message to the class teacher and enter the reason for absence directly into the register
- **letter:** the class teacher will place the letter in the register and enter the reason for absence into the register
- **personally:** an explanation may be given personally to either the class teacher or another member of staff. This will then be entered into the register.
- **email:** by emailing the school email address: [school@orchard.emat.uk](mailto:school@orchard.emat.uk) This will then be entered into the register.

At Orchard Academy we have a system in place for contacting parents/carers on the first day of unexplained absence. Each morning, the Safeguarding & Inclusion Lead checks all registers and check with the office of any late arriving students. The Safeguarding & Inclusion Lead will phone any parent/carer to check any unexplained absences.

If your child is not at school and we have not heard from you by 9.15am then we will start to call each of the contact numbers that you have provided in order to gain an explanation for the absence.

If we still have not been able to ascertain where your child is then we will make a home visit. However, if we still haven't been able to get a response and we have a concern for your child's welfare then we may have to report it to the police as your child will then be classed a 'missing child'.

## **School Responses to Absence**

### **Authorised and Unauthorised Absence**

Where a child is absent at the time of registration the law requires schools to indicate on their attendance register whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.

Authorised absence means that the school has either given approval in advance for the child to be absent or that we have received information on the first day of absence and are satisfied the absence is for a valid reason to be taken within term time. The law requires that absences not agreed in advance to be recorded as unauthorised unless and until a satisfactory explanation is given.

Parents/carers are asked to complete a Leave of Absence Form requesting any absence from school. The school will then arrange a meeting with the parent/carer to discuss the outcomes of the absence requested and whether the absence will be recorded as authorised or unauthorised. The outcome of the meeting will be confirmed in a follow up letter. With regards to absences of more than 10 days, it is at the discretion of the school as to whether the child remains on the school roll.

The school will:

- investigate all unexplained absences
- continue to contact parents/carers for an explanation if no response is received and especially where there is a problem with attendance
- contact parents/carers if it has any concerns over attendance
- make a home visit in the event that the reason for absence is unknown or unexplained and it has not been possible to contact the parents.

- provide print outs of their child's attendance to parents/carers at parents evenings and discuss any issues. This will be reported back to the Safeguarding & Inclusion Lead.
- request from the LA a fixed Penalty Notice fine of £60/£120, per parent, if parents/carers fail to ensure that their child attends the school every day possible or takes them out of school during term time.
- involve the LEA or Courts, if parents/carers fail to support the school in ensuring the fullest possible attendance of their children.

By law, only the school can approve absence, not parents/carers. The school need not accept a parental explanation for a child's absence if they doubt the explanation. If the school is satisfied that the circumstances are both genuine and exceptional then absence may be authorised. Where parentally condoned, or a child is persistently absent, and/or an unjustified absence appears to be a problem the school will involve the Senior Leadership Team, LEA or Courts at the earliest opportunity.

Excessive amounts of authorised/unauthorised absences can disrupt continuity of learning. The school will therefore watch for emerging patterns of authorised/unauthorised absences by individual children. If a child has 10 unauthorised sessions (a session is one am or pm session) over 12 school weeks then a warning letter will be sent to parents. If attendance does not improve then the school may refer the parents to the Local Authority for a Fixed Penalty Notice of £60/£120, per parent.

### **Examples of Authorised Absence**

An absence may be authorised if it is for the following reasons:

- genuine illness
- unavoidable medical/dental appointments
- days of religious observance
- exceptional family circumstances, such as bereavement
- planned absences, authorised in advance by the Head Teacher of Safeguarding & Inclusion Lead.

### **Examples of Unauthorised Absence**

The school cannot accept any of the following:

- shopping during school hours

- special occasions e.g. birthdays/weddings
- family holidays
- no uniform/shoes
- overslept
- haircut
- sham illnesses
- at home due to family illness
- caring for brothers/sisters/relatives.

## **Lateness**

It is our policy at Orchard Academy to actively discourage the late arrival of children at school. A child who arrives late may seriously disrupt not only his or her continuity of learning but also that of others. A firm line is taken on late arrivals. Where children miss registration altogether, they are marked in the late book with their time of arrival along with the reason for lateness.

Registration opens at 8.30am and the expectation is that all children will be in their classes by 8.40am. Registers close at 9am.

If a child is late for registration 10 times in any 12 school-week period then a warning letter will be sent to parents. This can include before and after school holidays. If a child is late again within the 3 weeks following a warning then an informal attendance meeting will be requested. Following the attendance meeting, persistent lateness may also result in the request for a LA Fixed Penalty Notice of £60/£120, per parent, if improvements are not made following discussions with the Safeguarding & Inclusion Lead.

## **Leaving School during School Hours**

Should your child need to leave school to attend an unavoidable appointment, please notify the school in advance where possible. No child will be allowed to leave the school premises during school hours unless a parent or carer collects them from Reception. Proof of appointments will be requested.

## **Annual Holidays**

At the pre-school induction meeting parents/carers are asked to arrange their family holidays within the school holidays, rather than in term-time so that their child's education is not disrupted. The Safeguarding & Inclusion Lead will talk to those parents who persistently take their holidays in term time, reminding parents of the disruption to their child's education. Orchard Academy

**will not** authorise any holiday taken during term-time, unless under exceptional circumstances.

Parents/carers are asked to complete a Leave of Absence Form requesting absence from school. The school will then arrange a meeting with the parents/carers to discuss the outcomes of the absence requested and whether the absence will be recorded as authorised or unauthorised. All leave, unless in exceptional circumstances, will be recorded as unauthorised. The school will request a LA Fixed Penalty Notice of £60/£120 for any child who has 5 or more consecutive day's leave, regardless of current or prior attendance. The school may ask for copies of the flight itinerary if travelling abroad.

## **Exclusions**

Where a child has been excluded [fixed term] he or she will remain on the school roll. The absence will be regarded as authorised. Once a permanent exclusion is confirmed the child will be removed from the school roll.

## **Communication with Parents/Carers**

As attendance is crucial to effective learning and the continuity of learning experiences, the school places great emphasis on this in its communication with parents/carers.

**Pre-School Induction Meetings:** At the pre-school induction meetings held in the Summer term for children who will join our school the following September, the importance of regular attendance is discussed and explained. This talk also includes parents/carers and children arriving at school on time so that each child can be given the best possible start to each school day. Being picked up on time is also stressed, especially for young children who can be very upset if they are the only child left in the building. If children are regularly collected late from school then the school may report this to Children's Services who may want to intervene.

Children are also admitted to school at various times of the year, and into various year groups. All parents requesting a place are invited to view the school, and during this visit the importance of regular attendance will be highlighted along with other school routines.

## **Parental Concerns**

Orchard Academy is a happy school. Children learn best when they are happy and relaxed. All the staff at Orchard Academy are concerned about children's regular attendance, and the importance of continuity in each child's learning. They are also concerned about each child's safety, welfare and happiness.

Parents/carers are asked to share any worries their child might have in school. Sometimes little things upset a child, which means they become unhappy, and may not want to attend school. Parents/carers are encouraged to bring their child to school, so that reasons for the child not wanting to attend can be discussed and hopefully resolved.

The class teacher or the Safeguarding & Inclusion Lead will talk to the child concerned to find out if there are any worries or problems in school that might make that child not want to attend. If there are, then these will be discussed with the parent/carer and appropriate action taken. School will do our best to support the child and their family in these instances.

### **The Role of the LA**

The LA is charged in law with enforcing school attendance and must ensure that schools and parents are fulfilling their statutory obligations, including where necessary, the taking of action through the courts. All persistent absences that require referrals for further action will be sent to the Milton Keynes Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).

### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

The attendance of children will be monitored on a weekly basis by the Safeguarding & Inclusion Lead and Class Teachers. All meetings with parents would generally be conducted in school, should a home visit be required, our Home Visit procedure should be followed. This states that 2 members of staff attend the home.

The Safeguarding & Inclusion Lead will keep the Head Teacher informed on attendance issues, and be advised of procedures followed to date.

This policy and the procedures included within it will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure continued high standards in all aspects of attendance.



\*\* Updated 6.01.22 by Mrs S James

## Appendix (Letters for parents/carers)

1.
  - i. 1<sup>st</sup> Letter Absences
  - ii. 2<sup>nd</sup> Letter Persistent absence meeting
  - iii. 3<sup>rd</sup> Letter LA Fixed Penalty Notice Warning (sent when attendance does not improve following an attendance meeting)
  
2.
  - i. Leave of Absence Form
  - ii. Leave of Absence meeting (receipt of leave request)
  
3.
  - i. Supporting GPs Surgery Stamp (persistent illnesses)  
(Following 2<sup>nd</sup> letter)

### 1<sup>st</sup> Letter Absences

**Date:** xxxxxxxxxxxx

To the Parent / Guardian of:-

Dear

I am writing to you to express my concern about .....attendance at school.

According to our records ..... has had a significant amount of time out of school this year. Please find attached a print-out of .....attendance, which shows the percentage attendance figure. Attendance at school is ..... % which falls well below the Government target of 96%.

If .....attendance does not improve it is likely that we will be writing to invite you into school to discuss this further with you.

If school can support you in any way with .....attendance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Samantha James

Safeguarding & Inclusion Lead

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Letter Absences

Date

To the Parent / Guardian of:-

Dear,

I am writing to you to express my concern about \_\_\_\_ attendance at school.

\_\_\_\_ has been repeatedly absent from school (see enclosed certificate of registration) and is now acknowledged as a persistent absentee.

Persistent absence is a term used by the DFE (Department for Education) to identify pupils whose absence is high whatever the reasons for the absences. Pupils with persistent absence are unlikely to achieve their full potential. The definition of a persistent absentee is a pupil who misses 10% or more of school sessions for any reason or combination of reasons, whether we as the school authorised the absence or not.

A child attending for 90% of the time means they are missing lessons at a rate of half a day per week. If this continues throughout the academic year, four whole weeks of lessons would have been missed. If this rate of attendance continues over the eleven years of schooling, just over a whole one year of lessons would have been missed. This will have a serious detrimental effect on the child's ability to achieve educationally.

Attendance is a high priority for us here at Orchard Academy and we would like to discuss your child's attendance with you. I am inviting you to attend a meeting with myself and Mr Brown - Head Teacher - to discuss this as a matter of urgency.

Please return the slip below confirming your attendance at the meeting on \_\_\_\_\_ If however you are unable to attend this date and time, please contact me on 01908 670681 to rearrange.

Yours sincerely,

Samantha James  
Safeguarding & Inclusion Lead

3<sup>rd</sup> attendance letter: LEA fine warning

Dear

## **SCHOOL ATTENDANCE WARNING LETTER**

**NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_ **DOB:** \_\_\_\_\_ **YEAR:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**SCHOOL** \_\_\_\_\_

In accordance with recent guidance from Milton Keynes Council, I write to advise you that you could face a legal sanction if you fail to ensure that your child attends school regularly and punctually.

During the period \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ the school was open for sessions and \_\_\_\_\_ attended on \_\_\_\_\_ occasions and/or was late after the register on \_\_\_\_\_ occasions. Your child's overall attendance is \_\_\_\_\_%.

Section 7 of The Education Act, 1996 states that you have a legal duty to ensure your child's regular attendance at school; therefore, if your child's attendance does not improve the matter will be referred to the Local Authority who will commence legal proceedings. This could mean, under the terms of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act, 2003, a Fixed Penalty Notice will be issued to you and a fine of £60 will become payable in 21 days or £120 will be payable after 21 days but within 28 days. A Notice could be issued three weeks after the date of this letter, if there is no improvement in your child's attendance or punctuality. This warning is in place for 12 (twelve) schools weeks as set out in the Milton Keynes Code of Conduct for their issue.

Alternatively, the Local Authority will write to you to invite you to an Attendance Interview at your child's school. If there is no improvement after the interview, legal sanctions will commence and you will be invited to a formal caution interview as required by the PACE Act\* which will lead to a prosecution in the magistrates' court under Section 444 (1) or Section 444 (1a) Education Act, 1996:

if convicted you will receive a fine of up to £2,500 and/or 3 months imprisonment for an "aggravated" offence or a fine of up to £1000 and a criminal record for a Level 3 offence.

Yours sincerely,

Samantha James  
Safeguarding & Inclusion Lead