

Oatlands School



Attendance Policy (Pupils)

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1. Introduction and Policy Aims

'Attendance is everyone's responsibility'; high attendance has a direct correlation with attainment, wellbeing and wider life chances for our pupils. Oatlands School recognises that children missing education can act as a vital warning sign to a range of safeguarding issues and that attendance is an important protective factor for the most vulnerable pupils.

This policy aims to show our commitment to meeting our obligations with regards to school attendance, including those laid out in the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on [working together to improve school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\)](#), through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- Setting high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all pupils
- Understanding the barriers to attendance and working with families and support services to eliminate these in order to reduce absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- Making effective use of attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance and acting early to address those patterns
- Building strong relationships and working jointly with families to make sure pupils have the support in place to attend school

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy is based on the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on [working together to improve school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\)](#) and [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). The guidance is based on the following pieces of legislation, which set out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of the [Education Act 1996](#)
- Part 3 of the [Education Act 2002](#)
- Part 7 of the [Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006 \(and 2010, 2011, 2013, and 2016 amendments\)](#)

- [The School Attendance \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2024](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013 and the 2024 amendment](#)

It also refers to:

- [School census guidance](#)
- [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)
- [Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools](#)

The school is mindful of its obligations under the Equality Act 2010 in the development and implementation of this policy.

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 The governing board

The governing board is responsible for:

- Setting high expectations of all school leaders, staff, pupils and parents
- Ensuring school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties, including:
 - Making sure the school records attendance accurately in the register, and shares the required information with the DfE and local authority
 - Making sure the school works effectively with local partners to help remove barriers to attendance, and keeps them informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate
- Recognising and promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos
- Recognising that improving attendance is a part of improving a pupil's overall welfare and prioritising attendance in strategies including raising attainment, behaviour and combatting bullying, special educational needs and disabilities, wellbeing and safeguarding
- Ensuring the school's attendance management processes are delivered effectively, and that consistent support is provided for pupils who need it most by prioritising staff and resources, (including where applicable through effective use of pupil premium funding); this includes ensuring Oatlands engages and works effectively with the local authority School Attendance Support Team and wider local partners and services)
- Making sure the school has high aspirations for all pupils, but adapts processes and support to pupils' individual needs, (including those with long term illnesses, special educational needs and disabilities, pupils with a social worker and pupils from cohorts with historically lower attendance such as those eligible for free school meals)
- Regularly reviewing, discussing and challenging attendance data and trends and helping school leaders focus improvement efforts on individual pupils or cohorts who need it most
- Working with school leaders to set goals or areas of focus for attendance and providing support and challenge
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school and repeatedly evaluating the effectiveness of the school's processes and improvement efforts to make sure they are meeting pupils needs
- Where the school is struggling with attendance, working with school leaders to develop a comprehensive action plan to improve attendance
- Making sure all staff receive adequate training on attendance as part of the regular continued professional development offer, so that staff understand:
 - The importance of good attendance
 - That absence is almost always a symptom of wider issues

- The school's legal requirements for keeping registers
- The school's strategies and procedures for tracking, following up on and improving attendance, including working with partners and keeping them informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate
- Making sure dedicated training is provided to staff with a specific attendance function in their role, including in interpreting and analysing attendance data
- Holding the Head Teacher to account for the implementation of this policy

3.2 The Head Teacher

The Head Teacher is responsible for:

- The implementation of this policy at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Requesting the local authority to issue a fixed-penalty notice, where necessary, and/or authorising the Attendance Officer to do so
- Working with the parents of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) to develop specific support approaches for attendance for pupils with SEND, including where school transport is regularly being missed, and/or where pupils with SEND face in-school barriers
- Communicating with the local authority when a pupil with an education, health & care plan (EHCP) has falling attendance, or where there are barriers to attendance that relate to the pupil's needs
- Communicating the school's high expectations for attendance and punctuality regularly to pupils and parents through all available channels (providing clarity on expectations, why good attendance is important and the consequences of poor attendance)

3.3 The designated senior leader responsible for attendance

The designated senior leader (also known as the 'senior attendance champion') is responsible for:

- Leading, championing and improving attendance across the school
- Setting a clear vision for improving and maintaining good attendance
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having a strong grasp of absence data and oversight of absence data analysis
- Regularly monitoring and evaluating progress in attendance, including the efficacy of the school's strategies and processes
- Establishing and maintaining effective systems for tackling absence, and making sure they are followed by all staff
- Liaising with pupils, parents/carers and external agencies, where needed
- Building close and productive relationships with parents to discuss and tackle attendance issues
- Creating intervention or reintegration plans in partnership with pupils and their parents/carers
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families

The designated senior leader/senior attendance champion responsible for attendance is the **Head Teacher** and can be contacted via 01932 843990 or email info@oatlands.surrey.sch.uk.

3.4 The Attendance Officer

The school Attendance Officer is responsible for:

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data (see section 7)
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement

- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance
- Working with the Surrey County Council Inclusion Officer/Education Welfare Officer to tackle persistent absence
- Working with the Head Teacher to decide when to request the issue of a fixed-penalty notices

The Attendance Officer is the Office & Finance Administrator and can be contacted via 01932 843990 and/or info@oatlands.surrey.sch.uk.

3.5 Class Teachers

Class Teachers are responsible for recording the children as present or absent for both morning and afternoon sessions daily. They will also alert the Attendance Officer or Head Teacher if children are persistently arriving after 9.00am but before register closes.

3.6 School Office Staff

School office staff will:

- Take calls/check emails from parents/carers about absence daily and record absences with the correct codes on Arbor
- Liaise with parents to ensure absences are reported in a timely and detailed manner and to obtain the correct reason for absence
- Transfer calls from parents/carers to the Attendance Officer or Head Teacher where appropriate, in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance

3.7 Parents

Where this policy refers to a parent, it refers to the adults the school and/or local authority decides is most appropriate to work with, including:

- All natural parents, whether they are married or not
- All those who have parental responsibility for a child or young person
- Those who have day-to-day responsibility for the child (i.e. lives with and looks after them)

Parents are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day on time at **8.50 am**
- Call or email the school to report their child's absence before 9.30 am on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence, and advise when they are expected to return on 01932 843990 or email info@oatlands.surrey.sch.uk
- Update the school as to any changes to their child's information as recorded on the admission register (including full name, name used at school, address, full name(s) and address(es) of parent(s), emergency telephone number(s) for the pupil's parent(s)
- Provide the school with **more than one** emergency contact number for their child
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day
- Keep to any attendance contracts that they make with the school and/or local authority
- Seek support, where necessary, for maintaining good attendance, by contacting either the Attendance Officer, Head Teacher, nurture lead, home school link worker or SENCO, who can be contacted via 01932 843990 or info@oatlands.surrey.sch.uk

3.8 Pupils

Pupils are expected to attend school every day, on time, from 8.50am to 3.00pm

4. Recording attendance

4.1 Attendance register

We will keep an electronic attendance register, and place all pupils onto this register.

We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session, after lunch. We will mark, using the appropriate national attendance and absence codes from the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024, whether each 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 (detailed in notes on Arbor):

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

See Appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

We will also record:

- Whether the absence is authorised or not
- The nature of the activity, where a pupil is attending an approved educational activity
- The nature of circumstances, where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 6 years after the date on which the entry was made.

The school day starts at 8.50 am and ends at 3.00 pm.

Pupils must arrive in school by **8.50 am** on each school day.

Registers are marked at 8:50am and your child will receive a late mark if they are not registered by 9:00am.

The registers will be kept open until 9:10am; after this time your child will be marked as an unauthorised absence for the morning session.

In the afternoon registers are marked between 1.00 & 1.15 pm (depending on the year group) and your child will receive a late mark if they are not registered by 1.30pm.

The Attendance Officer will contact you if your child is late persistently and the matter may be referred to the Surrey County Council Inclusion Officer/Education Welfare Officer.

4.2 Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school office of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 9.30 am, or as soon as practically possible by phone call, voice message or email. The school office can be contacted via 01932 843990 or info@oatlands.surrey.sch.uk.

We will mark absence due to physical or mental illness as 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 the pupil's parent/carer 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.

Where the absence is longer than 5 days, or there are doubts about the authenticity of the illness, the school will ask for 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 by letter (see Appendix 2).

The UK Health Security Agency has provided some helpful guidance as to the illnesses which do and don't require you to keep your child off school and this is linked here:

[Should I keep my child off School?](#)

4.3 Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent notifies the school in advance of the appointment and provides evidence of the appointment beforehand, by emailing info@oatlands.surrey.sch.uk.

However, we encourage parents to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. When appointments during school hours are unavoidable, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

Pupils must be signed out upon leaving the school and signed back in on their return. Absences for appointments will be authorised if these procedures are followed.

The pupil's parent must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Go to section 5 to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

4.4 Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed (between 8.50 – 9.10 am) will be marked as late, using the appropriate code
- After the register has closed (at 9.10am) will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code

In all cases of lateness parents will need to bring their children into school via the main office, providing a reason for lateness ahead of signing them in.

Where a child receives 5 or more late marks within a period of 6 weeks our Attendance Officer will issue a late letter (see appendix 2). If there is not a sustained improvement over the following 6-week period, then parents/carers will be invited in to meet with the Head Teacher to explore how punctuality might be improved.

4.5 Following up unexplained absence

Where any pupil we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the school will:

- Contact the pupil's parent on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. This will be done through text message, email or phone call. If the school cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts, then a member of staff may visit the home to try to ascertain if the child and their family are safe. If we are still unable to establish where the child is, the school may contact Children's Services and/or the Police.
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session(s) for which the pupil was absent
- Contact the parent on each day that the absence continues without explanation, to make sure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the school will consider involving the Surrey County Council Inclusion Officer/Education Welfare Officer
- Where appropriate, offer support to the pupil and/or their parents to improve attendance
- Identify whether the pupil needs support from wider partners, as quickly as possible, and make the necessary referrals

- Where relevant, report the unexplained absence to Children's Services or social worker allocated to the family
- Where support is not appropriate, not successful, or not engaged with, we may issue a notice to improve, penalty notice or other legal intervention (see section 5.2 below), as appropriate.

4.6 Reporting to parents

Parents can access their children's attendance records at any time through Arbor.

The school will regularly inform parents (see definition of 'parent', as used in this policy, in section 3.7 above) about their child's attendance and absence levels where the school has any concerns.

At the start of the school year we will request medical evidence from parents, for any child who had less than 90% attendance during the previous school year (see appendix 2).

5. Authorised and unauthorised absence

5.1 Approval for term-time absence

The Head Teacher will allow pupils to be absent from the school site for certain educational activities, or to attend other schools or settings.

The Head Teacher will only grant a **leave of absence to a pupil** during term time if the request meets the specific circumstances set out in the [2024 school attendance regulations](#). These circumstances are:

- The **child** is taking part in a regulated performance, or regulated employment abroad, with a specified start & end date. School **may** authorise up to five days (10 sessions) PER YEAR for stage auditions/advertisement filming and participation in national or international sporting competitions by the child, provided that this will not take the child's total absence to more than 5 days (10 sessions) in one academic year.

Any parent requesting a longer period of authorised absence for a theatre or filming opportunity will need to meet the Head Teacher to discuss the opportunity. For any absence over 5 days, a catch-up plan and tutor must be provided by the production or film company. Permission for these must be requested via the Attendance Officer by emailing info@oatlands.surrey.sch.uk along with evidence from the organising body.

- The **child** is attending an interview at a new school
- A temporary, time-limited part-time timetable (organised between home and school)
- Exceptional circumstances

A leave of absence is granted at the Head Teacher's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for and the child's current attendance percentage.

We define 'exceptional circumstances' as:

- A major family event such as the wedding of a close relative. We will only authorise the day of the event and depending on the circumstances/distance one day for travel. Any additional days will be unauthorised
- Serious or terminal illness of a close relative
- Significant family trauma has occurred and a break is in the best interest of the child
- Observance of religious or spiritual ceremonies – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parent(s) belong(s). If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parent's religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart. We will only authorise the day of the event and depending on the circumstances/distance one day for travel. Any additional days will be unauthorised.

Leave of absence will not be granted for a pupil to take part in protest activity during school hours.

As a leave of absence will only be granted in exceptional circumstances, a leave of absence will **not** be granted for the purposes of a family holiday or special occasion e.g. significant milestone birthdays or anniversaries.

Where a holiday is taken, and the number of days meets the threshold of 10 sessions (5 days) within a 10-week rolling period then a penalty notice will be requested by the school.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, considering the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least 4 weeks before the absence. The request must be submitted on the leave of absence request form, which can be downloaded from the school website or a hard copy obtained from the school office.

The Head Teacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence. This may include notes from clinician's, travel documentation or other relevant evidence.

Other valid reasons for **authorised absence** include (but are not limited to):

- Illness (including mental-health illness) and medical/dental appointments (see sections 4.2 and 4.3 for more detail)
- Parent(s) travelling for occupational purposes – The pupil is a **mobile** child and their parent(s) is travelling in the course of their trade or business and the pupil is travelling with them. A mobile child is a child of compulsory school age who has no fixed abode and whose parent(s) is engaged in a trade or business of such a nature as to require them to travel from place to place.
- If the pupil is currently suspended or excluded from school (and no alternative provision has been made)

Other reasons the school may allow a pupil to be absent from the school site, which are not classified as absences, include (but are not limited to):

- Attending an offsite approved educational activity, sporting activity or visit arranged by the school
- Attending another school at which the pupil is also registered (dual registration)
- Attending provision arranged by the local authority
- Flexi-schooling requests – Where a child will benefit from taking part in an extra-curricular activity or intervention that cannot be undertaken during the school day (this does not include home schooling)
- If there is any other unavoidable cause for the pupil not to attend school, including disruption to travel caused by an emergency, a lack of access arrangements, or because the school premises are closed fully or in part

5.2 Sanctions

Our school will make use of the full range of potential sanctions – including, but not limited to, those listed below – to tackle poor attendance. Decisions will be made on an individual, case-by-case basis.

Penalty notices

The local authority or the police can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age, by issuing a penalty notice.

If the child's attendance triggers the absence threshold, the school will request that the local authority issues a penalty notice.

Before requesting a penalty notice, the school will consider the individual case, including:

- Whether the national threshold for considering a penalty notice has been met (10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks)
- Whether a penalty notice is the best available tool to improve attendance for that pupil, unless the absence is due to an unauthorised holiday in which case fines will automatically be issued
- Whether further support, a notice to improve or another legal intervention would be a more appropriate solution

- Whether any obligations that the school has under the Equality Act 2010 make issuing a penalty notice inappropriate

Each parent who is liable for the pupil's offence(s) can be issued with a penalty notice, but this will usually only be the parent/parents who allowed the absence.

The payment must be made directly to the local authority, regardless of who issues the notice. If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

If issued with a **first** penalty notice, the parent must pay £80 within 21 days, or £160 within 28 days.

If a **second** penalty notice is issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil, the parent must pay £160 if paid within 28 days.

A **third** penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within 3 years of the date of the issue of the first penalty notice. In a case where the national threshold is met for a third time within those 3 years, alternative action will be taken.

A penalty notice may also be issued where parents allow their child to be present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification, during the first 5 days of a suspension or exclusion (where the school has notified the parents that the pupil must not be present in a public place on that day). These penalty notices are not included in the National Framework, not subject to the same considerations about support being provided, and do not count towards the limit as part of the escalation process. In these cases, the parent must pay £60 within 21 days, or £120.

Notices to improve

If the national threshold has been met and support is appropriate, but parents do not engage with offers of support, the school may offer a notice to improve to give parents a final chance to engage with support.

Notices to improve will be issued in line with processes set out in the local code of conduct for the local authority area in which the pupil attends school.

They will include:

- Details of the pupil's attendance record and of the offences
- The benefits of regular attendance and the duty of parents under [section 7 of the Education Act 1996](#)
- Details of the support provided so far
- Opportunities for further support, or to access previously provided support that was not engaged with
- A clear warning that a penalty notice may be issued if attendance doesn't improve within the improvement period, along with details of what sufficient improvement looks like, which will be decided on a case-by-case basis
- A clear timeframe of between 3 and 6 weeks for the improvement period
- The grounds on which a penalty notice may be issued before the end of the improvement period

6. Strategies for promoting attendance

All members of the Oatlands School community need to work together in order to ensure a high level of attendance.

The school undertakes to:

- Remind all regularly about attendance in the school newsletter
- Inform parents of any concerns promptly
- Provide a safe learning environment

- Monitor individual student's attendance and punctuality
- Encourage good attendance and punctuality through sensitive and non-discriminatory recognition of good and improved attendance/punctuality (see appendix 2)
- Agree **attendance contracts** (see appendix 3) with parents where attendance continues to be a challenge following other offers of support

7. Supporting pupils who are absent or returning to school

7.1 Pupils absent due to complex barriers to attendance

The school recognises that some pupils face more complex barriers to attendance; the school's attendance ambition for these pupils is the same as for any other pupil but additional support may be needed. Oatlands will work closely with families to identify potential barriers to attendance, including but not limited to, learning needs; socio-economic issues; behavioural concerns and pastoral matters.

In identifying potential barriers Oatlands will seek to work with children and parents to mitigate as far as possible in order to reduce or remove said barrier to a child's attendance.

Oatlands will work with both families and other external professionals such as social services, the Police and the local authority where possible or required to reduce or remove barriers to attendance.

Oatlands will review and update the support approach as necessary to ensure it continues to meet individual needs

7.2 Pupils absent due to mental or physical ill health or SEND

Where a pupil has an education health and care plan (EHCP) and their attendance falls, or the school becomes aware of barriers to attendance that relates to the pupil's needs, the school will inform the child's SEN Case Worker.

Working with families:

- **Open Communication:** Oatlands will attempt to establish regular communication with families to discuss the child's condition, progress, and any changes needed in their educational plan. This may include setting up meetings with parents, guardians, or caregivers to review the student's needs.
- **Personalized Learning Plans:** Oatlands may develop or adjust Learning Plans or Education, Health, and Care Plans (EHCPs) in consultation with families and relevant professionals to reflect the child's current circumstances, setting realistic goals for academic progress.

Adjustments the School May Make:

- **Flexible Attendance Plans:** Where appropriate Oatlands may create a flexible attendance schedule, allowing for a phased return to school or a combination of in-person and remote learning.
- **Home-based Learning Resources:** For a limited period, Oatlands may provide home-based learning resources, such as online lessons, printed materials, or recorded classes, to help the student keep up with the curriculum.
- **Modified Curriculum:** Oatlands may adjust the curriculum to suit the child's current capabilities, which could involve reducing the workload, focusing on core subjects, or modifying lesson content.
- **Quiet or Rest Areas:** If a child is able to attend school but needs breaks due to their health condition, Oatlands may provide an alternative space in which to learn.

Additional support

Please contact the school if you need any additional support. Our SENCO, Nurture Lead and Home School Link Worker will be able to signpost you to further available support both in and out of school.

7.3 Pupils returning to school after a lengthy or unavoidable period of absence

Where appropriate Oatlands may use any of the strategies set out in 7.2 to support pupils back into school and provide support to build confidence and bridge gaps after a lengthy or unavoidable period of absence.

8. Attendance monitoring

8.1 Monitoring attendance

The school will monitor attendance and absence data (including punctuality) daily, weekly, half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil, year group and cohort level.

Specific pupil information will be shared with the DfE on request.

The school has granted the DfE access to its management information system so the data can be accessed regularly and securely.

Data will be 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.

The school will benchmark its attendance data at whole school, year group and cohort level against local, regional, and national levels to identify areas of focus for improvement, and share this with the governing board.

The cohorts monitored may include boys and girls, year groups, pupils with special educational needs or disabilities, pupils with a social worker or who are looked-after by the local authority, pupils eligible for free school meals and any pupils from backgrounds (including ethnicities, religions or beliefs etc) in the school community that have, or have historically had, lower attendance than their peers.

8.2 Analysing attendance

The school will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils, groups or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance
- Identify pupils whose absences may be a cause for concern, especially those who demonstrate patterns of persistent or severe absence
- Conduct thorough analysis of half-termly, termly, and full-year data to identify patterns and trends (e.g. days of poor attendance)
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns

8.3 Using data to improve attendance

The school will:

- Develop targeted actions / specific strategies to address patterns of absence (of all severities) of individual pupils, groups or cohorts that it has identified via data analysis
- Provide targeted support to the pupils it has identified whose absences may be a cause for concern, especially those who demonstrate patterns of persistent or severe absence, and their families (see section 8.4 below)
- Provide regular attendance reports to class teachers to facilitate discussions with pupils and families, and to the governing board and school leaders (including special educational needs co-ordinators, designated safeguarding leads and pupil premium leads)
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies

- Share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities and other partners where a pupil's absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe, including keeping them informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate

8.4 Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence (PA) is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence (SA) is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school. Reducing persistent and severe absence is central to the school's strategy for improving attendance.

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Consider potential safeguarding issues and, where suspected or present, address them in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable or at risk of persistent or severe absence, or who are persistently or severely absent, to:
 - Discuss attendance and engagement at school
 - Listen, and understand barriers to attendance
 - Explain the help that is available
 - Explain the potential consequences of, and sanctions for, persistent and severe absence
 - Review any existing actions or interventions
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance, in conjunction with the local authority, where relevant
- Consider alternative support that could be put in place to remove any barriers to attendance and re-engage these pupils. In doing so, the school will sensitively consider some of the reasons for absence
- Implement sanctions, where necessary (see section 5.2, above)

Absence Procedures:

If your child is absent you should:

Contact us as soon as possible and no later than 9.30am on every day of absence stating the detailed reason (feeling unwell or under the weather is not sufficient) by email info@oatlands.surrey.sch.uk, telephone 01932 843990 (option 1), by written message, or in person

If your child is absent we will:

Telephone you on every day of absence if we have not heard from you by 9.30am

If there should be a problem with attendance, we would expect parents/carers to contact the school at an early stage and work with us to arrive at a solution.

If attendance drops below 90%:

Letter 1 – we will send a letter informing the parent/carer of their child's attendance and reminding them of the importance of full school attendance. We will continue to monitor attendance following the issue of the letter for 6 weeks.

Letter 2 – if attendance has not improved over the 6-week period following the issue of letter 1 a second letter will be issued requiring further absences to have evidence provided. We will continue to monitor attendance following the issue of this letter for a further 4 weeks.

Letter 3 - should there not be an improvement over the 6 weeks following the issue of letter 2, we will invite parents/carers in to discuss the situation with our Head Teacher and agree what support the school may be able to offer, including parents/carers completing an Attendance Contract (appendix 2).

If unauthorised absences continue to be recorded and attendance continues to be below 90% parents/carers will be invited to meet with the Head Teacher and the Surrey County Council Inclusion Officer/Education Welfare Officer to discuss potential barriers to attendance.

9. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority and/or DfE is updated, and as a minimum every two years by the Head Teacher. At every review, the policy will be approved by the full governing board.

10. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE)
- Behaviour policy
- Pupil Premium policy

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
Attending a place other than the school		
K	Attending education provision arranged by the local authority	Pupil is attending a place other than a school at which they are registered, for educational provision arranged by the local authority
V	Attending an educational visit or trip	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip arranged by or on behalf of the school and supervised by a member of school staff
P	Participating in a sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
W	Attending work experience	Pupil is on an approved work experience placement
B	Attending any other approved educational activity	Pupil is attending a place for an approved educational activity that is not a sporting activity or work experience
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
Absent – leave of absence		
C1	Participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad	Pupil is undertaking employment (paid or unpaid) during school hours, approved by the school
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
J1	Interview	Pupil is attending an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
S	Study leave	Pupil has been granted leave of absence to study for a public examination
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
C2	Part-time timetable	Pupil is not in school due to having a part-time timetable
C	Exceptional circumstances	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances

Absent – other authorised reasons		
T	Parent travelling for occupational purposes	Pupil is a 'mobile child' who is travelling with their parent(s) who are travelling in the course of their trade or business
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day that is exclusively set apart for religious observance
I	Illness (not medical or dental appointment)	Pupil is unable to attend due to illness (either related to physical or mental health)
E	Suspended or permanently excluded	Pupil has been suspended or permanently excluded from school on disciplinary grounds and no alternative provision has been made
Absent – unable to attend school because of unavoidable cause		
Q	Lack of access arrangements	Pupil is unable to attend school because the local authority has failed to make access arrangements to enable attendance at school
Y1	Transport not available	Pupil is unable to attend because school is not within walking distance of their home and the transport normally provided is not available
Y2	Widespread disruption to travel	Pupil is unable to attend because of widespread disruption to travel caused by a local, national or international emergency
Y3	Part of school premises closed	Pupil is unable to attend because they cannot practicably be accommodated in the part of the premises that remains open
Y4	Whole school site unexpectedly closed	Every pupil absent as the school is closed unexpectedly (e.g. due to adverse weather)
Y5	Criminal justice detention	Pupil is unable to attend as they are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In police detention • Remanded to youth detention, awaiting trial or sentencing, or • Detained under a sentence of detention
Y6	Public health guidance or law	Pupil's travel to or attendance at the school would be prohibited under public health guidance or law
Y7	Any other unavoidable cause	To be used where an unavoidable cause is not covered by the other codes
Absent – unauthorised absence		
G	Holiday not granted by the school	Pupil is absent for the purpose of a holiday, not approved by the school
N	Reason for absence not yet established	Reason for absence has not been established before the register closes

O	Absent in other or unknown circumstances	No reason for absence has been established, or the school isn't satisfied that the reason given would be recorded using one of the codes for authorised absence
U	Arrived in school after registration closed	Pupil has arrived late, after the register has closed but before the end of session
Administrative codes		
Z	Prospective pupil not on admission register	Pupil has not joined school yet but has been registered
#	Planned whole-school closure	Whole-school closures that are known and planned in advance, including school holidays, bank holidays, non-educational days and use of the school as a polling station

Appendix 2: attendance letters

Letter 1 – notification to parents that attendance is low

Dear [REDACTED]

As you are aware at Oatlands School we monitor all children's attendance on a weekly basis and take appropriate action when a child's attendance drops below expected levels. The Government expects us to maintain levels of at least **95%** as a whole school and for each individual child.

We are bringing this to your attention as [REDACTED]'s attendance is [REDACTED]%, which is below expected levels.

Our pupils' welfare is of paramount importance to us, and we believe that regular attendance throughout the year is essential for their success and fulfilment.

We appreciate that low attendance can often be caused due to bouts of sickness and of course your child should stay home when unwell. However, we are sure you can appreciate that when a child is absent from school their learning can be hindered. It has been proved that repeated absence can affect progress which we are sure you would not want.

We will be monitoring [REDACTED] attendance closely for the next 4 weeks and hope to see an improvement. If you are struggling with ensuring your child attends school, please get in contact with us so that we can find ways to support you.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation and support regarding your child's attendance and if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact myself or the Head Teacher.

Yours sincerely
Attendance Officer

Letter 2 – notification to parents that medication evidence is required

Dear [REDACTED]

Further to our previous letter dated [REDACTED], highlighting [REDACTED]'s attendance, we are disappointed to see that **he/she** has continued to incur absences.

As you know, our aim is to work with parents/carers to ensure all our pupils receive the most from their education and reach their full potential and this level of attendance is extremely concerning. The children's welfare is of paramount importance to us and we believe that regular attendance throughout the year is essential for their success and fulfilment.

We have been monitoring [REDACTED]'s attendance and as there has been no improvement despite the support offered by the school, we will now require medical evidence to be provided if [REDACTED] is absent from school.

This does not need to be a medical certificate, it can be a copy of an appointment card, email or text, a screen shot of a virtual consult or a copy of the child's prescription medicine. Should medical evidence not be provided the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

[REDACTED]'s attendance will be monitored for a further 6 weeks and if there is no improvement, you will be invited to attend a meeting with the Head Teacher to discuss the situation and agree what additional support the school may be able to offer, including completing an Attendance Contract.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,
Attendance Officer

Letter 3 – notification to parent that a meeting is required

Dear [REDACTED]

Further to my previous letters dated [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] regarding the concerns with [REDACTED]'s level of attendance, I am writing to you again as following the monitoring period, no improvement was noted.

Having reviewed [REDACTED]'s attendance, we are disappointed that appropriate medical evidence has not been provided and therefore «forename»'s absences have remained unauthorised.

Therefore, we would like you to attend a meeting with the Head Teacher to discuss [REDACTED]'s attendance and any interventions that are required to support an improvement in attendance and as attendance remains a concern, we will ask you to complete a formal attendance contract.

If you fail to attend this meeting, then we may consider issuing a Penalty notice or a referral to the Surrey County Council Inclusion Officer/Education Welfare Officer.

Please contact the school office to arrange a convenient time to meet within the next week.

Yours sincerely
Attendance Officer

Late letter

Dear [REDACTED]

We are writing to you to emphasise the importance of being in school on time as there have been numerous incidents ([REDACTED] mornings) of [REDACTED] arriving late at school since [REDACTED].

Children need to be in their classes by **8:50** for the register and to start their lessons promptly. Children who arrive late are greatly disadvantaged because they miss starting the day with their peers and the beginning of lessons. This means that they are often unsettled and confused about tasks. Their teacher will not always be able to re-explain work.

It is essential that you ensure that [REDACTED] arrives at school on time to prevent disruption to their own learning and that of others.

We are required to monitor children's punctuality and attendance. We understand that there may be rare occasions when you are unavoidably late due to unforeseen circumstances. On these occasions, please make sure that you contact the school office to inform us when you will arrive.

If you are experiencing difficulties with punctuality and would like to talk to us about it, please do not hesitate to contact me.

[REDACTED]'s punctuality will be monitored for a further 4 weeks and if there is no improvement, you will be invited to attend a meeting with the Head Teacher to discuss the situation and agree what additional support the school may be able to offer.

Thank you for your understanding.

Yours sincerely
Attendance Officer

Letter for Children Below 90% at the start of the academic year

Dear [REDACTED]

All schools have a duty to monitor the attendance of children in our school and we are writing to you with regards to [REDACTED]'s attendance. Last academic year [REDACTED]'s attendance for the whole year was [REDACTED] %.

As you will be aware, attendance that is 90% or below, is classed as 'persistent absence' by the Department for Education and all schools have a duty to support parents to improve attendance.

We are highlighting [REDACTED]'s attendance to you again at the start of the year to draw your attention to the importance of attending school every day and we do not want his/her absence to impact on their progress, attainment and general well-being.

We will be monitoring [REDACTED]'s attendance and if there has been no improvement despite the support offered by the school, we will now require medical evidence to be provided if [REDACTED] is absent from school. This does not need to be a medical certificate, it can be a copy of an appointment card, email or text, a screen shot of a virtual consult or a copy of the child's prescription medicine.

We are confident that [REDACTED] will have better attendance this year and look forward to working with you to support you, if it is required.

Yours sincerely
Attendance Officer

Letter to query illness absence

Dear [REDACTED]

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England)(Amendment) Regulations 2013, state that Head Teachers will not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances (see our Attendance policy). Periods of unauthorised absence of 5 days (10 sessions) or more, may result in parents/carers being liable to receive a Penalty Notice.

[REDACTED] was absent from school from [REDACTED] to [REDACTED] and you informed the school that [REDACTED] was ill and this was the reason for the absence.

It has since come to our notice that [REDACTED] was absent because his/she was on holiday, and in the absence of any exceptional circumstances for which the leave may be granted, or medical evidence to show the he/she was too ill to attend school, the absence has been recorded as unauthorised and you are now liable to receive a Penalty Notice. Each **parent/carer** is liable to receive a Penalty Notice for each **child** who is absent.

The first Penalty Notice is for £80 if paid within 21 days, or £160 within 28 days. Failure to pay the Penalty Notice will result in you being served with a summons to appear at the Magistrates Court,

Yours sincerely
Attendance Officer

Letter for recognition of good and/or improved attendance

Dear [REDACTED]

As you are aware at Oatlands School we monitor all children's attendance on a weekly basis and take appropriate action when a child's attendance drops below expected levels. The Government expects us to maintain levels of at least **95%** as a whole school and for each individual child.

We are pleased to be able to recognise the good/or improved attendance/punctuality for [REDACTED].

Keep up the good work.

Yours sincerely
Attendance Officer

Appendix 3: attendance contract

<p>Legislation</p> <p>Section 19 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003</p> <p>Section 7 & 444 Education Act 1996</p> <p>Working together to improve school attendance DFE guidance August 2024</p>

<p>This is a voluntary agreement entered into by:</p> <p>..... (parent name)</p> <p>and</p> <p>Oatlands School</p> <p>The purpose of this contract is to support (child's name) to improve their attendance at school</p>
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Date of meeting:	
Chair:	
Child's Name and DOB:	
Parent(s) Name:	
School Representative Name and role:	
Others Present (name and role):	

<p>Background/context to Attendance Contract:</p> <p>(Brief account of barriers to regular attendance)</p>
Current Attendance %:

Parents: will:

1. Ensure that attends school / alternative provision regularly and on time for registration at 8.50 am
2. Contact school every day that is absent by telephone/email.
3. Attend all meetings with the school.
4. Access or partake in the support offered by the school and/or other professionals
5.
6.
7.
8.

Oatlands School will:

1. Be available for support and advice as requested and respond in a timely manner to any barriers to regular attendance.
2. Ensure that the registers are accurately completed.
3. Monitor’s attendance
4.
5.

Other professionals will:

1.
2.
3.

Agreement

We will do what we have agreed in this parenting contract and will work together to help attend school regularly

Signed
(Parent/s):

Date:

Signed (School Representative):

Date:

Signed (Other professionals): _____	
Date: _____	
Review Date:	_____

<p>Parents' Consent to Information Sharing: – We also understand and agree that information about me/us has been and will continue to be collected so that the parent and child, the school and the LA can assess and provide appropriate assistance and services. The school and LA may also use this information for service planning, monitoring and research purposes and may share the information with external agencies and providers of relevant services that they need to work with to ensure that we are provided with the most appropriate services. We understand that this information will be stored either electronically or in the manual records by the school/LA for case management purposes. The school/LA will keep the information updated and notify anyone who is given the information of any changes to ensure corrections are made.</p> <p><i>The above statements must be explained in full to the parents so that they understand them & the implications clearly</i></p>
<p>Signed (Parent/s): _____</p> <p>Date: _____</p> <p><i>It is a requirement for the council to provide the Department for Education with annual data on all education parenting contacts issued</i></p>