



orchard
Education

Attendance Policy

Orchard Education Ltd
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School Attendance

At the Orchard we recognise the need for excellent attendance in order for our learners to achieve and meet their full potential. Having recently gone through a pandemic many learners have already missed time from school which will impact on their ability to achieve their potential. A 2012 study found that 73% of learners with over 95% attendance achieve GCSE grades 4 and up with only 3% of learners with less than 50% managing to achieve GCSE grades 4 and up, therefore it is more important than ever that our learners attend school regularly for them to achieve academic success.

Aim of policy:

- To promote good attendance and reduce absence including persistent absence (PA)
- Ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled.
- Act early to address patterns of absence.
- Highlight what actions the school takes in managing attendance at each stage
- To inform parents of their legal duty by ensuring their children of compulsory school age who are registered at school attend regularly.
- To ensure all pupils are punctual to their lessons.

This policy has been reviewed and amended to consider new advice from the DfE.

'School attendance Guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities July 2021' [Schools Attendance guidance \(July 2021\)](#)

Overview:

Our purpose is to provide high quality education to each pupil according to their individual need within a caring and nurturing environment.

The Orchard is a small specialist school that caters for pupils with additional learning needs and we work to provide a bespoke environment based around continual positive reinforcement. In many cases learners arrive at The Orchard with long standing attendance issues from previous schools.

All systems, teaching and management of the school, focus on the promotion, establishment and internalisation of socially acceptable and appropriate behaviours. Through an individualised approach, in a consistent, caring and supportive environment, each pupil will be given opportunities which encourage them to develop their knowledge skills, qualities and self-esteem.

With this positive behaviour management each pupil will be empowered as their confidence, ability and self-control is enhanced. Pupils are encouraged to develop appropriate behaviour patterns within the school. There is a warm caring attitude in adult-child relationships and the systematic use of incentives. Pupils are dealt with as individuals and this facilitates pastoral care.

To this end the school will do as much as it can to ensure that all pupils achieve maximum possible attendance and that any problems, which may impede full attendance, are acted upon as quickly as possible.

Our school recognises that:

- All pupils of school age have an equal right to access an education.
- No pupils should be deprived of their opportunity to receive an education that meets their needs and personal development.
- In the first instance it is the responsibility of pupils and their parents/carers to ensure attendance at school as required.
- Pupils and parents/carers may at some stage need to be supported in meeting their attendance obligation.
- Situations beyond the control of pupils and/or parents/carers may impact on attendance. The school will, with the agreement and support of parents/carers, work with other agencies if necessary, to resolve these.

Expectations:

What Orchard Expects:

The Orchard has high expectations for attendance and any attendance that falls below 95% will be reviewed in order to support regular attendance.

Any learner whose attendance falls between 85-95% will be monitored internally where welfare and attendance support will be provided to build on our learner's attendance. Persistent absence (under 85%) without justifiable cause (such as illness) will result in a referral to the EWO/LAP for support.

Parents should

- Contact with school on the first day of absence or as soon as possible.
- Support their child and school in achieving maximum attendance.
- To ensure that their children attend school regularly and punctually.
- To ensure that they contact school as soon as is reasonably practical whenever their child is unable to attend.
- To ensure that their children arrive at school well prepared for the school day and to check that any homework given has been completed.
- To contact the school in confidence whenever a problem occurs that may affect their child's performance in school.

Students should:

- Attend school regularly.
- Arrive on time and appropriately prepared for the day.
- Tell a member of staff about any problem or reason that may prevent them from attending school.

What our parents and students can expect from Orchard in support of attendance:

As a school where pupils often must travel some distance to attend, communication between home and school is vitally important. School will wherever possible assist learners in the transport to school by way of a pickup and drop off service, however this service will be withdrawn if poor behaviour is apparent. Where transport is provided, school drivers will wait a short period of time for students to get ready, however students should be immediately ready to attend at their allotted collection time

- School will ensure that there is an emergency contact for all pupils and so that regular contact is maintained.
- Regular, efficient and accurate recording of attendance.
- Early contact with parents/carers when a pupil fails to attend school without providing a good reason (such as illness or significant life event).
- Recognition and reward for good attendance.
- Access to a broad and balanced curriculum designed to cater for individual needs to promote academic achievement, skills, creativity, imagination, initiative and individuality in all pupils.
- Accurate records of classroom absence will be kept and monitored. This will support decisions for pupil interventions.
- Where problems are identified support will be provided by our Welfare lead
- You will receive excellent communication with school to resolve any issues you may have

We expect the following from our pupils:

- That they attend school regularly.
- That they arrive on time and appropriately prepared for the day.
- That they will tell a member of staff about any problem or reason that may prevent them from attending school.
- That they work with our staff and school to build a positive environment for all our learners

Encouraging attendance:

- Celebrate good attendance.
- Monitor attendance and raise concerns early.
- Support families with raising attendance early

Responding to non-attendance:

When a pupil does not attend, the school needs to respond effectively.

- We will telephone parent/carer/emergency contact on the first day of absence if we do not receive a reason for absence.
- All telephone/text messages received will be recorded via the school's management information system (SIMS)
- Where non-attendance continues, the case will be discussed, and the appropriate action taken. Parents/carers will be invited to attend a meeting to discuss strategies for re-engagement. This will be reviewed within a nominated time to check on progress in order to ensure success.

- If there is no further improvement, we will seek support and work in partnership with the other relevant agencies. This may result in the referring school/agency seeking Education Welfare involvement for legal proceedings to be considered.

Organisation:

For this policy to be successful every member of staff must make attendance a high priority and should convey to pupils the importance and value of education:

Guidelines for staff dealing with attendance and absence:

Teachers/Learning Support:

- Liaise with administration staff to accurately record attendance

Administrator:

- Phone parent/carer/emergency contacts on first day of absence.
- Report any concerns about absences to the Principal.
- Record all reasons given for absence in the daily communications log. Collect and check absence letters and appointment cards received.
- Accurately record attendance on the attendance sheets for the referring agency/school.
- Complete registers.
- Monitor long term attendees, inform Principal; who will consider the level of action to be taken.
- Send out letters to parents advising them of their attendance at The Orchard each half term so parents know what to expect.
- Work with Educational Welfare Officer (EWO) to support reengagement / legal proceedings.

Guidance on categorising absence as authorised or unauthorised:

The main areas where The Orchard will authorise absence are given below.

Illness:

Where schools accept that a pupil is ill, they must authorise the absence. Parents should telephone The Orchard on 01472 898498 before 9.30am on the first day of illness. Regular illness will require proof from either Prescription, appointment cards or medical notes.

Appointments:

Dental and doctor's appointments are authorised absences. Parents must confirm these appointments in writing. Parents may be asked to provide evidence (i.e. appointment cards or letters etc) if absences become too frequent or if requested by the referring school or agency or Education Welfare. We request that these appointments be taken out of school time where possible or only impact on a short proportion of the school day.

Holidays: Time off for holidays is not a right. The regulations state that:

The principal should only authorise leave of absence in exceptional circumstances. If a leave of absence is granted, it will be for the principal to determine the length of time the child can be away from school. Leave is unlikely, however, to be granted for the purpose of a family holiday as a norm. (*DfE School Attendance – Department advice for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities – November 2016*).

Any absence requests should be submitted to the principal for consideration (Appendix A). Requests will only be considered in exceptional circumstances such as weddings, requests to see family in the forces or other extenuating circumstances. Each case will be considered individually and will be subject to prior excellent attendance and the learners ability to progress despite the requested absence.

The Orchard will not give permission for pupils to have holidays during examinations courses.

Exceptional Circumstances / Unavoidable Causes:

These could be catastrophic events at home or students held in custody rather than shopping trips or birthday treats. There may be extenuating or compassionate reasons for authorising absences.

Pupils arriving late:

Pupils who arrive at school after 9.15am are deemed to be late. The appropriate marks should be entered to record these situations. Between 9.15am and 9.45am the mark will be recorded as 'L' and after 9.45am the mark will be recorded as 'U'. Parents/carers will provide an explanation for late attendance. Parents/carers will be informed of late attendances. If pupils arrive late, they should report to the reception where their attendance will be recorded, and they will be escorted to class.

The Orchard is open for 192 full days per academic year and is required by law Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2016 to keep accurate registers of pupil's attendance. Activities outside the normal school day are not recorded in the statutory attendance register.

There is a strong statistical link between attendance and attainment.

Pupils join the school roll on the agreed admission date and are listed in both the admissions and attendance registers from that day.

At registration it is recorded whether every pupil was:

- Present.
- Absent.
- Present at an approved educational activity.
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

The attendance register is a legal document which must be accurately maintained and will always be kept securely.

Persistent Absence (PA)

From the beginning of the academic year 2015/16 the government reduced the persistent absence threshold from 15% to 10%. This now means that a pupil will be classified as a persistent absentee if they miss 10 % or more of their own possible sessions, rather than if they reach a standard threshold of absence sessions (*A Guide to Absence Statistics DfE May 2021*) In response to this and to try and prevent pupils from falling into this category, the school's Attendance and Welfare Manager tracks and monitors any pupils who have an attendance figure of 90% and under. These checks are done on a regular basis. Pupils are closely monitored, and appropriate interventions are made. This includes, letters, phone calls, home visits and meetings with the Attendance and Welfare Manager and / or members of the Senior Leadership Team in school. After all appropriate interventions have been sort alongside parents/carers and attendance still remains a concern, we may refer to the EWO.

Improving, Supporting and Challenging Absences

School will always look to support our learners with managing attendance. We offer a very supportive network with additional pastoral support available. However, on occasions we may need to challenge poor attendance and school will follow appropriate methods in order to try and improve poor attendance.

The minimum standards School will follow for all learners in improving, supporting, and challenging attendance will be as follows:

Transport

Transport is generally viewed as being a positive way in helping improve learner's attendance at School. However, there are a small number of learners who have this privilege withdrawn due to behaviour in vehicles. We know this presents a real challenge for some of the learners in that they will not routinely use other methods of transport available (bus pass provided). If transport is withdrawn school will look to seek ways in which transport can be reinstated by restorative actions.

Half termly Review

Administration staff will be informed by the school's Welfare Manager to write to the home address of any learner who have been identified on the school attendance at risk register, to give formal notification of the half termly attendance to parents/carers. Any learners below an agreed level without authorised reason (agreed with EWO) will receive notification and a follow up call from senior school staff. The letter will inform the parent/guardian of any actions or resultant prosecution that will follow for low/non-attendance.

Education Welfare Officer

We will utilise the NELC education welfare officer (Vicky Carmichael) to assist in any formal proceedings that may take place. EWO will also send out penalty notice warning letters.

Rewarding good attendance

We will continue to focus on positive rewards for pupils who attend school regularly and will organise trips or other learner-initiated rewards to motivate good attendance.

Prosecution

School will be proactive in the SAP/LAP/PN process. We will look to target all pupils and families of ALL learners whose attendance falls below School expectations.

Data

We will remain focused on being data driven, providing all the information for learners, staff, managers, and leadership team. By remaining focused throughout the school, we will make sure that we have every chance of improving on poor attendance. We will also make sure staff are focused and understand the processes that follow for poor attendance so that they can also explain and help students understand.

Flexible/Personalised Learning Patterns

School will understand that issues may present themselves whereby full-time attendance might pose a barrier for the students attending School. When used sensitively, over the short term with appropriate targets this may be used to reintegrate pupils.

Student Voice/Student Council

Throughout all the interventions it is vitally important that we give the students a voice. Trying to understand the issues surrounding each learner will no doubt help in trying to promote and increase attendance. Making the student council part of the school attendance process has helped focus learners on attendance.

Pupils Moving to a New Address and/or School

Where the parent of a pupil notifies the school that the pupil will live at another address, schools must record in the admission register: (a) the full name of the parent with whom the pupil will live, (b) the new address, and (c) the date from when it is expected the pupil will live at this address.

Where a parent notifies the school that the pupil is registered at another school or will be attending a different school, schools must record this in the admission register: (a) the name of the other school, and (b) the date of when the pupil first attended, or is due to start attending, that school.

This policy will be reviewed annually by SMT/SLT member or area specific school advisory panel member.

	Initial	Review 1	Review 2	Review 3	Review 4	Review 5
Signed		Dave Melia	Pete MacLeod	D. Melia	P. MacLeod	L.Griffin
Position		Director	Director	Director	Director	Welfare & Transitions Manager
Date		03/08/17	11/03/18	31/08/18	12.08.19	01.09.21

Holiday Request form- Orchard Education

Please note that there is no automatic right for pupils to be granted authorised absences for family holidays. Orchard Education considers every request for holiday leave in relation to the criteria below

Pupil Details

Name	
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Date of Birth	
Class Group	
Address	

Holiday Request Details		
Start date of requested holiday		
End date of requested holiday		
Return to school date		
Reason for request: 		
Name of parent / carer (print)		
Signature		
Date		

For school use		
Current attendance % (in current academic year, or if holiday request is in the first term of current academic year consider previous academic year's attendance). Consider the further criteria below if attendance is below 95%		
Previous holidays leave this academic year		
Does the holiday request time coincide with SATS / other examination periods		
Any mitigating / aggravating circumstances which indicate a holiday should be authorised / not authorised? (Including any ongoing medical issues)		
Pupil's current level of achievement?		
Given information above and reason for request is the holiday approved?	YES	NO
Signature of Head Teacher		
Date		
Register Code to be used for this holiday *		

Orchard reserves the right to refuse holidays that are not considered beneficial to the wellbeing of its learners.

Appendix B

Dear Parent/Carer,

Education Penalty Notice Warning for Non-School attendance Under the Education Act 1996, parents and carers have a duty to make sure their children regularly attend school. If parents or carers fail to do this, they can be prosecuted. Working within a Code of Conduct the Local Authority can issue an Education Penalty Notice to parents or carers if a child has missed a number of sessions without permission from the school. If your child falls within one or more of these categories within a 12 week period:

- 10 sessions (5 days) of unauthorised absence with under 90% attendance
- 20 sessions (10 days) of unauthorised absence
- persistently arrives late for school after the close of registration

You could receive an Education Penalty Notice of £60 which will increase to £120 if not paid within 21 days.

The Education Penalty Notice will need to be paid in full before 28 days of the notice being served. Failure to pay an Education Penalty Notice may result in prosecution (a separate Education Penalty Notice may be issued to each parent for each child). In law, an offence is committed if a parent fails to secure a child's regular attendance at school.

You may also receive an Education Penalty Notice for the offence of failing to secure regular school attendance under the following circumstances:

- Your child is stopped on a truancy sweep
- You fail to ensure that your child is not in a public place during the first 5 days of a fixed term or permanent exclusion.

The Local Authority and schools are committed to providing the best possible future for your child. If you have concerns about your child's attendance at school or if you are experiencing any difficulties, please contact school and ask for support which is readily available should it be needed.

Where possible, we would much prefer to work with our learners and families to avoid any penalty notices, but are governed by the law stated above and should this be required the EWO will be informed.

We hope to see all of our learners regularly attending so they can achieve the success they deserve.

Kind regards

Mike Burton
Principal
Orchard Education

Appendix C

School's actions in recording absence and any further action that may be required.

Attendance flow chart
Stage 1 First day of absence (and each subsequent day) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Diver to leave note• Call will be made to parents and carers to absence/reason<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Decision to authorise will be made
Stage 2 After 3 days absence <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Management will contact parent/carer via telephone or where this is not possible home visit will be completed<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Any support needs will be identified if needed
Stage 3 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• After each period of 5 days where reason for absence is not sickness a home visit will be completed followed by subsequent home visits every 5 days until the student returns to school• Any support needs will be identified if where practicable and a plan created
Stage 4 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Where attendance falls below the schools agreed expectations a letter will be sent home highlighting the next steps or potential prosecution if attendance does not immediately improve.
Stage 5 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Where attendance has not improved and no acceptable reason , formal prosecution will begin SAP-LAP-PN

These timescales are recommended minimum standards, school staff may bring each stage forward at any opportunity. School will not look to delay any of the strategies highlighted above.

Appendix D

Attendance expectations and actions

