



**Overdale Infant
School
Attendance Policy**

Introduction

Overdale Infant School is a successful school with a good attendance record; this relies on every child playing their part. For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly. Your child should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. Overdale Infant School attendance policy is written in adherence with the law and also guidelines produced by the Department of Education. As such we will work closely with the Education Welfare Service to support regular school attendance. It is therefore very important that you make every effort to ensure that your child attends school regularly.

This Attendance Policy sets out how together we will achieve this.

Why regular attendance is so important

Any absence (including lateness) affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously impact their learning. This impact is not only limited to learning but can also extend to a child's social and friendship groups and where not corrected can lead to needless stress and anxiety for the child. Any pupil absence also disrupts teaching routines and so will affect the learning of others in the same class. Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason is an offence by law and may result in a Fixed Penalty Notice (for each parent/carer) and/or prosecution.

Promoting regular attendance

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility - parents/carers, pupils and all members of school staff.

To help achieve this we will:

- Provide you with notification should your child's attendance drop below an acceptable level and set out clear expectations and methods of expected improvement.
- Reward good or improving attendance.
- Run promotional events when parents/carers, pupils and staff can work together on raising attendance levels across the school.

Understanding types of absence

The school day is split into two sessions, a morning and an afternoon session. By law, every half-day session absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents/carers), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the reason for any absence is always required, preferably in writing.

AUTHORISED absences are morning or afternoon sessions away from school for a genuine reason. These can include but are not limited to:

- illness
- medical/dental appointments/treatments which unavoidably fall in school time
- emergencies or other unavoidable unforeseen circumstances.

UNAUTHORISED absences are morning or afternoon sessions away from school which the school does not consider reasonable and for which the school has not given consent. These can include but are not limited to:

- parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily (i.e. condoned absence)
- truancy during the school day
- absences which have never been properly explained
- children who arrive at school too late to receive a register mark
- shopping, looking after other children, birthdays
- day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed.

This type of absence can lead to the Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings.

Whilst any child may be off school because they are unwell, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. All problems with irregular attendance should be addressed by the school with the parents/carers and the child. If your child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually make things worse. Where there is a known problem with attendance parents should seek to notify the school as soon as possible so that together a solution can be found.

Persistent absenteeism (PA)

A pupil is classified as a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the academic school year. It is also worth noting that this does include all extended periods of authorised absence regardless of circumstance. Absence at this level causes considerable damage to educational development and requires parents/carers fullest support and co-operation to tackle it. We monitor all pupil absence thoroughly throughout the year and any cases which reach the PA mark or are seen to be at risk of reaching the PA mark are given priority and parents/carers will be informed directly.

PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system and we also combine this with academic mentoring where necessary. All our PA pupils and their parents/carers are subject to intervention and where needed an Attendance Improvement Action Plan depending upon the nature of the absence circumstances.

All PA cases are also automatically made known to and where needed referred to the Education Welfare Officer.

Absence Procedures

If your child is absent you must:

- Contact the school as soon as possible on the first day of absence with a full explanation for the absence. If no one is available to answer the phone in the office a voice mail should be left on the school answer phone. Alternatively parents are encouraged to contact the school using the office email address: admin@overdale-inf.leicester.sch.uk
- Contact the school on each further and subsequent day of absence.

NB: Notes/letters provided by parents/carers in explanation of absence will be stored on your child's file.

Failure to provide a valid reason for your child's absence on the first day they are away from school is unacceptable and will result in an unauthorised attendance mark until such time as the school deems a valid explanation has been given.

If your child is absent and we have not been notified as to why (see above for notification procedure), we will:

- E-mail or telephone you on the second day of absence (and on subsequent days) until an explanation is provided.
- Write to you to if we are concerned about your child's attendance or an emerging pattern of high level absence.
- Invite you into school to discuss the situation with our Head Teacher and/or Deputy Head Teacher/Educational Welfare Officer if absences persist.
- Refer the matter to the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) if attendance is a concern.
- In some circumstances, if your child is absent from school and has not been seen, we will arrange for a visit to your home to be undertaken to establish that your child is safe. This could be by a Police Officer.

NB: Letters and notes of our contact with you will be stored on your child's file.

Telephone Numbers

There are times when we need to contact parents about a variety of matters, including absence. We therefore need to have parent's up to date contact numbers at all times. Please help the school to help you and your child by making sure we always have an up to date number.

The Education Welfare Officer

Where a child's attendance has become an issue parents/carers are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. Where this is not possible, the school may refer the child to the Education Welfare Officer from the Local Authority. He/she will then also try to resolve the situation by agreement. If this is unsuccessful and the child's attendance still fails to improve, Officers will use sanctions such as Fixed Penalty Notices and/or prosecution in the Magistrates' Court. Full details of the options open to enforce attendance at school are available from the school or the Local Authority. (Please note that Penalty Notices can be issued by the Local Authority immediately following a period of holiday related leave that has not been authorised by the school.) Parents/carers may wish to contact the EWO themselves to ask for help or information. Educational Welfare are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is available from the school office or by contacting the Local Education

Authority on 0116454 5510. They can also be reached by e-mailing education.welfare@leicester.gov.uk.

Lateness

Persistent poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your child misses registration it disrupts their routine for the rest of the day and vital information from the teacher can be missed. Pupils arriving into school late also disrupt lessons and the learning of others. It can be embarrassing for the child and therefore also encourage further absence.

How we manage lateness

The school day starts at 9.05am and your child is expected to be in class at that time.

Registers are marked by 9.10am and your child will receive a late mark if they are not in by that time.

At 9.30am the registers will be closed. In accordance with the regulations, if your child arrives **after** that time they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will **not** count as a present mark but instead an **unauthorised absence** mark. Where unauthorised absence marks exceed 20 within a 12 week period parents could face a Penalty Notice from the Local Authority.

If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with the Head Teacher/Educational Welfare Officer to resolve the problem.

Parents are encouraged to approach the school at any time should you feel that there is a problem getting your child to school on time. Where appropriate contact has been made the school will look to how we are best able to support you with this issue.

Poor attendance escalation process:

Below 95%	School will contact the child's parents in writing highlighting the drop in attendance and reminding the importance of regular attendance. Child's attendance will be monitored
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	closely for improvement.
Below 90%	School will contact the child's parents in writing highlighting the further drop in attendance and requesting that any future and further absence be documented with supporting medical evidence.
Below 85%	Where absence can't be accounted for the school will contact the child's parents in writing informing them that their child has been referred to the Education Welfare Officer. The EWO will then contact parents to arrange an attendance panel meeting between themselves, parents and the school.
Below 80%	Where an attendance panel meeting has already taken place but there has been no improvement the school will seek advice from the Educational Welfare service, this may result in the issue of a fixed penalty notice to the parents for non-attendance.

Holidays in term time

Taking holidays in term time will seriously affect your child's schooling and we expect parents/carers to help their child by not taking them away in school time. Leicester schools do not authorise absence for holidays during term time except in the most exceptional of circumstances. These will be looked at on a case by case basis and authorised at the Head Teachers discretion. Therefore any holiday taken during the school term will not be authorised and where the period of absence exceeds 4 days the **Local Authority** will issue parents/carers with a **Fixed Penalty Notice**:

Fixed Penalty Notice: £120 per parent, per child (discounted to £60 if paid within 21 days) per absence period. Where Penalty notices are not promptly paid cases will be referred by the Local Authority directly to the Magistrates' Court.

These guidelines are set by the government and are in the best interests of the child and their education. Research shows that children who are persistently absent from school underachieve and that good school attendance is extremely important in terms of future choice, opportunities and income.

Leave of absence

As with requests for holidays during term time requesting a leave of absence for your child will only be authorised in the most exceptional of circumstance and at the head teacher's discretion.

Application process to request a Leave of absence during term time:

- An application in writing should be submitted to the school in advance by the parent with whom the pupil normally resides. Forms are available from the school office.
- The Head Teacher will then consider whether the reasons outlined in the application constitute "exceptional circumstances".
- Parents will be notified whether or not the period of absence can be authorised. If it is not authorised, parents will be notified and a fixed penalty notice will be issued from the local authority.

If you decide not to take this holiday/leave of absence, you must notify the School and the Fixed Penalty Notice will not be issued and withdrawn.

Exceptional Circumstances

As stated holidays and leave of absences will only be approved by the Head Teacher under the most exceptional of circumstances. Where it has not been possible to submit an application, the child's absence will be treated as unauthorised until such a time that supporting evidence can be provided by the parents. The Head Teacher will then consider as to whether to authorise the absence period retrospectively.

School targets, projects and special initiatives

The school has targets to improve attendance and your child has an important part to play in meeting these targets.

The Attendance target for the school is 95%.

Our target is to achieve better than this however because we know that good attendance is the key to successful schooling and we believe our pupils can be amongst the best in the city.

Through the school year we monitor absences and punctuality to show us where improvements need to be made. Information on any projects or initiatives that will focus on these areas will be provided in our Newsletter and we ask for your full support.

The registration system

The school will use a computerised system for keeping school attendance records. The following national codes will be used to record attendance information.

CODE	DESCRIPTION	MEANING
/	Present (AM)	Present
\	Present (PM)	Present
B	Educated off site (NOT Dual registration)	Approved Education Activity
C	Other Authorised Circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code/description)	Authorised absence
D	Dual registration (i.e. pupil attending other establishment)	Approved Education Activity
E	Excluded (no alternative provision made)	Authorised absence
F	Extended family holiday (agreed)	Extended family holiday (agreed)
G	Family holiday (NOT agreed <u>or</u> days in excess of agreement)	Unauthorised absence
H	Family holiday (agreed)	Authorised absence
I	Illness (NOT medical or dental etc. appointments)	Authorised absence
J	Interview	Approved Education Activity
L	Late (before registers closed)	Present
M	Medical/Dental appointments	Authorised absence
N	No reason yet provided for absence	Unauthorised absence
O	Unauthorised absence (not covered by any other code/description)	Unauthorised absence
P	Approved sporting activity	Approved Education Activity
R	Religious observance	Authorised absence
S	Study leave	Authorised absence
T	Traveller absence	Authorised absence
U	Late (after registers closed)	Unauthorised absence
V	Educational visit or trip	Approved Education Activity
W	Work experience	Approved Education Activity
X	Untimetabled sessions for non-compulsory school age	Not counted in possible attendances
Y	Enforced closure	Not counted in possible attendances
Z	Pupil not yet on roll	Not counted in possible attendances
#	School closed to pupils	Not counted in possible attendances

Security of registers

Registers by law must be kept for at least 3 years and are stored electronically and backed up.

Those people responsible for attendance matters in this school are

Mrs K Stuart, Head Teacher

Mrs H Holmes, Deputy Head Teacher

Summary

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend school. All school staff are committed to working with parents and pupils as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.