



Attendance and Punctuality Policy

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1. Aims and Core Principals

Outwood Grange Academies Trust (OGAT) is committed to maximising educational opportunities and achievement by ensuring every child feels a profound sense of belonging within our schools. We believe that daily presence and active participation are the foundations of a successful education, a child and young person's wider wellbeing, and a smooth transition into adult working life.

To support excellent levels of attendance for all students to enable fulfilment of their potential, this policy has been prepared with regard to the statutory duties relating to attendance, including those set out in the Department for Education's statutory guidance *Working Together to Improve School Attendance (2024)* (the "DfE Attendance Guidance"), the **Equality Act 2010**, and the **UN Convention on the Rights of the Child**.

While we aspire for all students to experience 100% presence, our approach is rooted in **support first**. We value our relationships with families and communities, recognising that working in partnership is the most effective way to understand and overcome the complex, unique barriers that can pull a child away from school. High levels of attendance and punctuality are actively promoted and rewarded across the Trust. Where attendance or punctuality fall short of expected standards, supportive steps will be taken, but disciplinary sanctions may also be applied in accordance with the Academy's behaviour policy.

Our strategic framework is driven by 5 Interconnected Principles designed to foster presence:



2. The 5 Strategic Principles for Presence

Principle 1: Integrated Policies and Procedures

As a family of schools, OGAT maintains robust, evidence-informed practices to ensure every child experiences a consistent, welcoming environment. We work adaptively and collaboratively with local authorities, sharing information and combining resources to build an everyday culture where every child can show up and thrive.

Principle 2: Personalised Pathways to Belonging

Rather than applying blanket rules, each student is supported on a personalised basis tailored to their specific circumstances. We work hand-in-hand with parents, children, and local partners to build bespoke

presence plans that protect the student's wider wellbeing, take individual needs into account, and make school feel like a safe place to be.

Principle 3: Relationship Practice in Action

To turn our principles into reality, all academies commit to the following active operational steps:

- **Expect:** We build a welcoming, whole-academy culture that treats daily presence as a collective joy and responsibility.
- **Monitor:** We rigorously use data to spot early disruptions to a student's connection with school, sharing this early with parents so we can wrap support around the child and family before patterns become entrenched.
- **Listen and Understand:** We treat all families with dignity, building strong, respectful home-school relationships to understand the root causes of why a child is finding it difficult to attend.
- **Facilitate Support:** We actively help families access internal and external resources, utilising early help modules or whole-family plans to remove out-of-school barriers to presence.
- **Formalise Support:** If voluntary engagement is unsuccessful despite concerted efforts, we work transparently with parents to explain legal consequences and put formal structures in place (such as attendance action plans or attendance contracts) to support urgent improvement.
- **Enforce:** Where all supportive avenues are fully exhausted, unengaged with, or inappropriate, statutory intervention, penalty notices, or prosecution will be enacted to protect the child's fundamental right to an education.

Principle 4: Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

For some students, particularly those with SEND or long-term health conditions, attending school can present complex barriers. Attendance challenges are often a communication directly related to their specific needs. We proactively work alongside families to establish reasonable adjustments (e.g. uniform adaptations, support with transport where appropriate, sensory routines or tailored lunchtime arrangements) to ensure school remains an accessible space in line with the needs of students.

If a student has, or is undergoing a statutory assessment for an Educational, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), we understand this often highlights a period of vulnerability. During this time, our staff will collaborate closely with parents, carers and the Local Authority to ensure suitable, tailored provision is maintained to ensure a student's access to education and sense of belonging and connection to learning is not compromised.

Principle 5: Connected Technology and Data

OGAT utilises an electronic management information system to accurately communicate, record, track, and monitor pupil attendance data. Data systems are used to analyse weekly, half-termly, termly, and full-year patterns to benchmark academy data against local, regional, and national levels. These systems also supply required statutory returns to external agencies, including termly absence data requested by the Secretary of State and the Department for Education.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

The Trust Board & Trustees

The board of trustees will take an active role in attendance improvement, ensuring Academy leaders fulfil statutory duties and maintain effective recording systems. The Trust Board will:

- Appoint a dedicated Trust Attendance Lead who drives improvement across the trust and acts as a central point for academies with attendance queries.
- Hold termly attendance review meetings with the Academy and require regular attendance reporting to discuss and challenge data trends.
- Ensure staff receive adequate training on attendance management and share effective practices across its academies.

The Academy and Leadership

The Academy will regularly inform parents about their child's attendance, investigate unexplained absences, and assign overall responsibility for improving attendance to a designated senior leader. The Academy will maintain appropriate safeguarding responses for children at risk of missing education, having full regard to the statutory guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE)

(Please refer to our Safeguarding Policy)

Senior Attendance Champion (SAC)

The Senior Attendance Champion at the Academy is listed within their policy. The SAC is responsible for:

- Setting a clear vision for maintaining good attendance and establishing systems followed by all staff.
- Evaluating expectations, monitoring weekly data patterns, and providing reports to class teachers, leaders, and the board of trustees.
- Leading targeted interventions and benchmarking data to focus collective academy efforts.

Staff

Day-to-day attendance issues and initial support paths should be discussed directly with the student's Mentor / Class Teacher. Where more detailed, targeted support around attendance barriers is required, families should contact the school.

4. Shared Expectations for Connection

What Families Can Expect From the Trust:

- A safe, caring, and engaging learning environment where every child feels seen and valued.
- Proactive, compassionate communication and swift follow-ups to check on a pupil's welfare when they are absent.
- Dedicated, warm re-integration support to welcome students back into education following a long-term absence.

What the Trust Expects From Students:

- To attend the Academy regularly, punctually every day, in the correct uniform, fully equipped and ready to learn.
- To follow the correct procedures if arriving late and to engage fully with registration processes for all timetabled lessons and enrichment activities.

What the Trust Expects From Parents/Carers:

- To promote and champion the importance of regular attendance and punctuality at home.
- To follow the correct procedure for reporting absences daily and avoid unnecessary absences.
- To keep the Academy informed of any circumstances which may affect their child's attendance.
- To inform the Academy in advance of any proposed change of address for their child(ren), along with the name of the parent with whom the child shall live.
- To observe and fulfil all responsibilities set out in the DfE Summary Table of Responsibilities.

5. Operational Routines & Registration

The Morning Welcome and Registration

The Academy maintains an electronic attendance register to record each student's attendance at the start of the school day and again during the afternoon session. Registers are marked using the national statutory attendance and absence codes found in the DfE Attendance Guidance.

Late Arrival: Students who arrive after the session start time but before the register closes will be marked as Late.

- **Unauthorised Absence via Lateness:** Registers close exactly 30 minutes after the session start time. If a student arrives after the register has officially closed, they must report immediately to the Academy office to sign in and provide a reason for their lateness. In the absence of a satisfactory explanation, this will be legally recorded as an unauthorised absence for that session.
- **Persistent Lateness:** Unexcused, persistent lateness disrupts the community, hinders educational prospects, and will be treated as a disciplinary matter in line with the Academy's behaviour policy.
- **In-Day Truancy:** Where a student attends a registration session but fails to attend subsequent lessons, this will be treated as a truancy and non-attendance matter under the behaviour policy, and parents will be engaged immediately.

6. Reasons for Absence: Authorisation, Reporting & Leave

Legal Definitions of Absence

Please note that while parents provide the reason for an absence, **only the Academy can legally authorise an absence.**

- **Authorised Absence:** Absence will only be authorised where the Academy has given approval in advance or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as satisfactory justification.

- **Unauthorised Absence:** Absence will be marked as unauthorised where the Academy is not satisfied with the reasons given, or where no explanation is provided.

Reporting Absence Procedures

- **Daily Contact:** Parents/carers must contact the Academy by telephone **by 8:00 am** on the morning of the first day of absence, providing a clear reason and an expected return date. If the return date is not confirmed on day one, parents must contact the Academy on **each subsequent day of absence**.
- **Written Confirmation on Return:** On the day the student returns to the Academy, parents/carers must provide **written confirmation** detailing the exact reason(s) for the full period of absence.
- **Medical Evidence:** In cases where clarification is needed, or if an illness absence becomes prolonged, the Academy may request medical evidence (such as a doctor's note, appointment card, or digital confirmation). If satisfactory evidence is not provided, the absence may be marked as unauthorised.

First-Day Care & Welfare Response

If a child is absent without prior notice, the Academy will promptly initiate contact via text, email, or telephone to ensure the child's safety. Where contact cannot be established and welfare or safety concerns persist, staff may carry out a **home welfare check**. For students accessing Alternative Provision or Dual Registration, attendance is cross-referenced daily with the partner provider to ensure seamless safeguarding and presence monitoring.

Medical and Dental Appointments

Medical, dental, and other essential appointments must take place outside of school hours wherever reasonably possible. When an appointment during school time is unavoidable, the student should attend school for as much of the day as possible. Parents must give advance notice to the school and must provide physical or digital appointment confirmation to sign out safely.

Leaves of Absence (Including Term-Time Holidays)

Parents/carers must avoid taking students out of education for holidays or leisure trips during term time, as these cannot be authorised. In strict accordance with Paragraph 37 of the DfE Attendance Guidance, a leave of absence will only be granted under **strictly exceptional circumstances** approved by the Principal:

1. Taking part in a regulated performance or employment abroad.
2. Attendance at an interview for entry into another educational setting or future employment.
3. Study leave for public examinations.
4. Temporary, time-limited part-time timetables (agreed with parents and medical/pastoral professional insight, with a clear plan to return to full-time status safely and rapidly).
5. Other unique, exceptional circumstances.

Application Process

- To request a leave of absence, parents must make the request **in writing to the Principal at least 4 school weeks ahead** of the planned absence.
- **Discretion:** The decision will be confirmed in writing, is solely at the Principal's discretion, and is **final**.
- **Unauthorised Leave and Penalty Risks:** If permission is denied and the leave is taken, the days will be marked as unauthorised, and parents may be issued a penalty notice or face local authority prosecution.
- **Safeguarding School Places during Extended Absence:** If a student is taken out of school for an unauthorised extended period of **4 weeks or more**, the Academy may take formal steps to remove the child from the admission register. In such instances, their place is no longer guaranteed, and the family must re-apply through the Local Authority's standard admissions process upon return.

Religious Observance

We recognise and respect that students of certain faiths may need to participate in days of religious observance. Absence will be authorised where a day of religious observance falls during school time and has been exclusively set apart by the religious body to which the student belongs. Parents must notify the Academy in writing to the academy in advance.

Historical Coronavirus (COVID-19) Provision

The Academy continues to adhere to statutory DfE guidance regarding public health infections. If a student tests positive for coronavirus, their absence will be recorded under standard illness guidelines.

7. Addressing Poor Attendance: Intervention & Enforcement

The Academy uses data to target attendance improvement efforts towards the students or cohorts who need it most, monitoring patterns to identify vulnerable groups and deliver targeted support alongside local authority partners. Our localised procedures for managing unexplained absences can be found in each academy's policy.

Protecting Students at Risk of Disconnection

Persistent Absence (PA): Absence below 90% When a student's attendance falls below 90% across the academic year (for any reason), they are classified as persistently absent. This signals a significant risk to educational prospects and social belonging. This status triggers full parental cooperation and immediate prioritisation for an individual **attendance action plan**, multi-agency support, or formal **attendance contracts** to urgently remove out-of-school barriers.

Severe Absence (SA): Absence of 50% or more Students missing half or more of their schooling face intense educational and developmental risks. They are our highest priority for inter-agency intervention, involving intensive whole-family plans, Local Authority Attendance Team interventions, or statutory children's social care assessments where safeguarding concerns persist.

Statutory Legal Framework Appendix (Penalty Notices)

Where parents/carers fail to ensure a child attends regularly, and supportive interventions are exhausted or unengaged with, the Academy fulfils all legal duties within the **DfE National Framework for Penalty Notices** (effective from August 2024).

- **The National Threshold:** Any 10 sessions of unauthorised absence (equivalent to 5 school days) within a rolling 10-week period triggers a formal legal review. The Academy must report this threshold to the Local Authority, which may issue a Penalty Notice in accordance with local codes of conduct.
- **The Two-Fine Cap:** The National Framework imposes a maximum limit of **two penalty notices** per parent, per child, within a rolling **three-year period**.
 - First Offence: A fine of £160 per parent, per child (reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days).
 - Second Offence: A flat fine of £160 per parent, per child, with no option for a reduced rate.
 - Third Escalation: A third instance of hitting the national threshold within the rolling three-year period cannot legally be issued a fine and will progress straight to prosecution via the Magistrates' Court.
- **Non-Payment:** If a penalty notice is not paid within 28 days, or if wider prosecution is sought, the local authority retains separate statutory powers to prosecute parents under criminal frameworks.