Students First
OUTWOOD
FAMILY OF SCHOOLS

Attendance and Punctuality Policy

Document control table	
Document title:	Attendance & Punctuality Policy
Owners (name & job title):	Laura Knitter - Trust Strategic Lead for Attendance
Version number:	V4
Date of next review:	Reviewed at least annually on or before 30 June, or sooner as the trustees consider necessary in response to the ongoing review of attendance data.
Approved by:	Executive Board

Document History

Version	**Date**	**Author**	**Note of revisions**
3	June 26	L Knitter	Policy rewrite.
4	July 26	L Knitter	Statutory Updates: Updated reference to DfE statutory guidance Working Together to Improve School Attendance (2026). Strategic Principles: Enhanced Principle 2 to include targeted support for young carers and those with mental health needs. Updated Principle 4 to include Local Authority notification for pupils missing 15+ days due to health Updated Principle 5 to include statutory LA reporting for register deletions and admissions Operational Changes: Standardised registration routines to ensure registers are taken at the same time for all pupils and remain open for identical durations (max 30 mins)

			Leave of Absence: Clarified that the Trust does not operate blanket policies for leave CME Processes: Added a new section for Extended Leave and Removal from Roll, including support for EAL families and a formal 20-day threshold for Children Missing Education (CME) referrals

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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 pupils 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 (2026)* (the "DfE Attendance Guidance"), the **Equality Act 2010**, and the **UN Convention on the Rights of the Child**.

While we aspire for all pupils 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. This includes providing targeted, empathetic support for our young carers, pupils with SEND, and those with medical or mental health needs.

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 pupils, 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 pupils. Where a student's health needs mean they are expected to miss 15 or more school days (consecutively or cumulatively), we will work in partnership with the family and notify the Local Authority so that additional educational support can be considered.

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. Each academy also complies with statutory Local Authority reporting requirements, including making necessary notifications regarding register deletions, new admissions, and prolonged sickness absences.

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 Child Protection Policy:
https://academy-sites-files.outwood.com/customisedpolicy/553/file/5aceec73f90ad3985eb90630b30969ba.pdf

Senior Attendance Champion (SAC)

The Senior Attendance Champion at the Academy is Katie Hockborn, Assistant Principal. 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 Learning Manager or Class Teacher. Where more detailed, targeted support around attendance barriers is required, families should contact Sharon Robinson, Educational Welfare Officer.

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 reintegration support to welcome pupils back into education following a long-term absence.

What the Trust Expects From Pupils:

- 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: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/66bf301e253aee7aafdbdfea/Summary_table_of_responsibilities_for_school_attendance_-_August_2024.pdf

5. Operational Routines & Registration

The Morning Welcome and Registration

The Academy maintains an electronic attendance register to record each student's attendance. This register will be taken at the same time for all registered pupils at the start of each morning and afternoon session. The register will stay open for exactly the same length of time during every session across the academy, which will never be more than 30 minutes. Registers are marked using the national statutory attendance and absence codes found in the DfE Attendance Guidance.

Registration Session	Start Time	End Time
Morning Session	8:25am	8:55am
Afternoon Session	12:20pm	12:50pm

- **Late Arrival:** Pupils 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.** To support families, the academy will not unreasonably request medical evidence or demand specialist doctor notes for every short-term illness spike linked to a known long-term health condition. Staff will accept parental explanations in good faith unless there is a clear and documented safeguarding reason to doubt the information. Where a child has a signed Individual Healthcare Plan, this document will serve as the primary evidence for managing health-related absences.
- **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 visit to complete reasonable enquiries to establish a reason for absence.

For pupils 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 pupil should attend school for as much of the day as possible. Parents must give advance notice to Sharon Robinson, Educational Welfare Officer and the student must provide physical or digital appointment confirmation to sign out safely.

Leaves of Absence (Including Term-Time Holidays)

OGAT does not operate blanket policies for approving leave. Every application for a leave of absence will be considered individually on its own merits by the Principal.

For the avoidance of doubt, family holidays for leisure or recreation, as well as participation in protest activities, do not constitute exceptional circumstances and cannot be authorised. Parents and carers must avoid taking pupils out of education for holidays or leisure trips during term time.

In line with Paragraph 37 of the DfE Attendance Guidance, a leave of absence will only be granted under exceptional circumstances approved by the Principal, such as:

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. 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.

Extended Leave of Absence and Removal from Roll

We understand that some families, particularly those with English as an Additional Language (EAL), may wish to travel abroad to visit family. However, taking extended leave without written permission from the Principal is unauthorised.

If a pupil is absent without authorisation for **20 consecutive school days**, we are required to follow the Local Authority's "Children Missing Education" process. This process can ultimately result in the pupil being removed from the school roll, meaning they will lose their place at the academy.

Each academy will follow their local council's specific procedures and timelines for these cases. OGAT Checklist for CME to be completed by EWO and referral via the portal to Stockton Borough Council.

Religious Observance

We recognise and respect that pupils 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 Jason Rhodes, Principal, 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 pupils or cohorts who need it most, monitoring patterns to identify vulnerable groups and deliver targeted support alongside local authority partners.

Protecting Pupils at Risk of Disconnection

Persistent Absence (PA): Absence below 90% When a pupil'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 pupils missing half or more of their schooling face intense educational and developmental risks. They are our highest priority for multi-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.

Appendix 1: Adaptable Academy Customisation Template

Outwood Academy Bishopsgarth Attendance and Punctuality Local Rules

1. Academy Key Contacts
- Senior Attendance Champion: Katie Hockborn, AP, k.hockborn@bishopsgarth.outwood.com
- Day-to-Day Absence Reporting Line: Attendance Team 01642 586262 / attendance@bishopsgrth.outwood.com
- Pastoral / Year-Group Support Contacts:
    - Year 7 - Sophie Smith - s.smith@bishopsgarth.outwood.com
    - Year 8 - Daniel Sinclair - d.sinclair@bishopsgarth.outwood.com
    - Year 9 - Lindsay Kidger-Preston - l.kidger-preston@bishopsgarth.outwood.com
    - Year 10 - Paige Hunter- p.hunter@bishopsgarth.outwood.com
    - Year 11 - Claire Fisher - c.fisher@bishopsgarth.outwood.com
    - Lead Learning Manager - Sean Angell - s.angell@bishopsgarth.outwood.com

2. Daily Timeline & Routines
- Arrival & Welcome: Pupils must arrive by 8:20 am to settle in comfortably before learning begins.
- Morning Registration: Registers open at 8:25am and close promptly at 8:55am.
- Afternoon Registration: Registers open at 12:20pm and close at 12:50pm.
- Late Entry Point: Pupils arriving after the morning welcome must enter via student services where they will be greeted by a member of the attendance team to sign in and provide reasons for delay. After 9am students will enter via reception and be logged on the sign in/ out tracker.
- Punctuality Interventions: In line with our Behaviour Policy, unexcused lateness will result in a C4b (40 minute detention) and 3 lates in 1 week C5b will be issued including U codes (absent for P1 after close of register)

3. Celebrating and Promoting Presence

At Outwood Academy Bishopsgarth, our efforts to praise presence focus on growth, effort, and inclusivity. Pupils with certified long-term medical conditions or unavoidable absences are never excluded from our recognition systems. Our local initiatives include:

- Welcoming each student every day VIA SLT on the entrance gate
- Student services to support with any day to day issues
- Dedicated PDG tutor with SLT link for each year group
- Praise at the heart of our culture:
- Praise Points each lesson and 3 classroom champions each lesson, positive postcards from departments, Learning Legends, Learning managers/ Teaching staff including HOD's and SLT - Daily lesson by lesson, Proud Friday - sharing and showcasing classwork on a fortnightly basis with fortnightly nominations, submission and display, positive phone calls/ correspondence
- Attendance - PDG top attendance and most improved attendance praise - League shared with PDG mentors, trophies, weekly attendance overview of attendance and band movement for each student, Weekly assembly overview and PDG input and screen signage. Social media shout out, SLT 5 a side intervention, attendance champions.

4. Contextual Community Partnerships

We work directly with our unique local community partners to support our families in getting to school. In this academy, we collaborate closely with:

- Stockton Borough Council, Admissions https://www.stockton.gov.uk/article/2299/Contact-us
- SEND https://www.stockton.gov.uk/article/5835/The-Special-Educational-Needs-and-Disabilities-SEND-and-Inclusion-Service
- Attendance Support: attendance.team@stockton.gov.uk
- Virtual Schools : dlvirtualschool@stockton.gov.uk
- Free Breakfast Club at Outwood Academy Bishopsgarth 8am until 8:20am - All welcome
- Careers - Tees Valley Combined Authority - Careers Co-ordinator, Suzanne.Strathern@teesvalley-ca.gov.uk , Stockton Borough Council Local Authority Collaboration and Progress Careers progresscareers@bishopsgarth.outwood.com