

Ormesby Village Infant and Junior School

Attendance Policy

1 Introduction

- 1.1** We expect all children on roll to attend every day, when the schools are in session, as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so. We do all we can to encourage the children to attend, and to put in place appropriate procedures. We believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is development of positive attitudes towards school. To this end we strive to make our schools happy and rewarding experiences for all children.
- 1.2** Under the *Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 1995* the governing body is responsible for making sure the schools keep an attendance register that records which pupils are present at the start of both the morning and the afternoon sessions of the school day. This register will also indicate whether an absence was authorised or unauthorised and for what reasons.

2 Definitions

2.1 Authorised absence

An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or guardian, for example, if a child has been unwell and the parent writes a note or telephones the school to explain the absence.

Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents do not have this authority. Consequently not all absences supported by parents will be classified as authorised. For example, if a parent takes a child out of school to go shopping during school hours, this will not mean it is an authorised absence.

2.2 Unauthorised absence/lateness

An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of both the school and a parent.

Therefore the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent.

The school day begins at 8:45am when the outside doors are locked and teachers takes each class's register. Any child who arrives at school after 8:55am is late and this will be recorded in the register as 'L' – 'late before registers close'. These pupils miss early morning activities and disturb other pupils when they settle themselves into their classrooms, so please ensure your child arrives at school by 8:55am at the latest. Children who arrive at school after 9.15 are late, 'after registers have closed' and will be marked 'U' on the register which is classed as unauthorised absence and

could lead to action being taken if attendance falls below 90% over a six week period.

3 If a child is absent

- 3.1** When a child is absent unexpectedly, the class teacher will record the absence in the register, and will inform the school office. Registration takes place at 8:50/8:55am. If a child has not arrived at school by 9.15 the absence mark remains and if it is a first day absence a phone call will be made as soon as possible to the parents to find out why the child is absent. We ask parents to phone in on the first morning of absence to tell us why a child is to be absent and these calls are recorded in the office. If the school makes a call and cannot obtain a parent/carer, the time the call was made is recorded in the register.
- 3.2** When the child returns to school and the absence has not been explained, the parents need to tell the school in person or send in a note. These notes should be kept until the end of the term in which the absence occurred. After this time they may be destroyed. If there are attendance concerns about a pupil that may require further investigation or detailed evidence collected then the notes should be kept for as long as necessary.
- 3.3** A note may be sent to the school prior to the day of absence, for example, if a child has a medical appointment.
- 3.4** If there is any doubt about the whereabouts of a child, the class teacher should take immediate action by notifying the school office. The school will then be in contact straight away with the parent or guardian, in order to check on the safety of the child.

4 Requests for leave of absence

- 4.1** We believe that children need to be in school for all sessions, so that they can make the most progress possible. However, we do understand that there are circumstances where a parent may legitimately request leave of absence for a child to attend, for example, a medical appointment or a funeral. We expect parents to contact the school at least a week in advance if possible, but normally this request will be granted.
- 4.2** The Governing Body has decided not to authorise any absence from school due to holidays except in exceptional circumstances. If parents still decide to take a holiday during term time they need to obtain a holiday form from the school offices and fill this in prior to taking the child out of school. This decision was made in response to the high number of children missing school because of holidays, and in the light of the most recent DfE guidance and current absence figures. Governors have also decided to follow the most recent LA guidelines which state clearly the circumstances in which attendance officers will be alerted and fixed penalty notices requested. These guidelines are issued by letter at the start of each academic year and published on the schools' websites. Attendance data is closely monitored and parents are informed termly of absence and attendance rates.

- 4.3** If pupils have a planned holiday, but are absent through illness immediately prior or following the planned holiday dates, the school may request medical evidence for this absence from a medical professional. Failure to provide this will mean that the absence is marked as unauthorised.

5 Long-term absence – Repeated absence through illness

- 5.1** When children have an illness that means they will be away from school for over three days, the school will do all it can to send material home where practicable, so that they can keep up with their school work.

- 5.2** If the absence is likely to continue for an extended period, or be a repetitive absence, the school will contact the support services, so that arrangements can be made, if possible, for the child to be given some tuition outside school.

- 5.3** If a child is repeatedly absent through illness(es), the school will request permission from parents via the Healthy Child Programme for direct liaison with the medical professionals supporting the child, so as the school can better understand the medical position of the child and identify how best to support them with their schooling. This may be a note from the GP or letter from a specialist department the child may be under for certain ongoing care. Failure to receive this permission and access to medical evidence for the continued absence via the Healthy Child Programme may mean the continued absences are recorded as unauthorised.

6 Repeated unauthorised absences

- 6.1** The school will contact the parent or guardian of any child who has an unauthorised absence. If a child has a repeated number of unauthorised absences, the parents or guardians may be asked to visit the school and discuss the problem. If the situation does not improve, the school will then contact Children's Services Attendance Team. The school will make referrals to the attendance team following the most recent LA guidance.
- 6.2** Any pupil who is absent from school without explanation gives us cause for concern. The school will send a letter to parents explaining the consequences of a non-reported period of absence of five days.
- 6.3** Any pupil who is absent without any explanation for ten consecutive days will automatically be referred to the appointed Education Social Worker at the Norfolk Pupil Attendance Service in Gt. Yarmouth. This is a legal requirement and needs to be supported with details of any action that the school has taken to ensure the attendance of the child in question.
- 6.4** The governors, supported by Children's Services, reserve the right to consider taking legal action against any parents or guardians who repeatedly fail to accept their responsibility for sending their children to school on a regular basis.

7 Rewards for good attendance

7.1 The school has an Attendance Challenge each week. The winning class in the Infant School and Junior School with the highest attendance wins the Attendance Challenge and are promoted weekly on our school websites. COVID-19 permitting, an attendance reward trip may also be undertaken near the end of the year for all pupils with exemplary attendance. Our reward systems are regularly reviewed to keep them meaningful.

7.2 There is an annual Attendance Reward trip for those children who have displayed strong attendance and met the agreed school eligibility criteria, which are:

- **If they have had more than one bout of a contagious illness requiring quarantine in accordance with the PHE Exclusion Table OR more than three days of absence through other illness(es) since September of that academic year (this does not include agreed medical absences for appointments and or evidenced surgical procedures);**
- **If they have had or are going to have any unauthorised holidays for any length of time during term time;**
- **If they have had any unauthorised absences for any duration;**
- **If they are persistently late, regularly arriving after 8:45AM.**

7.3 School children with the strongest attendance 98% and above may be entered into a draw to win vouchers for a brand new bicycle.

8 Attendance targets

8.1 The schools set attendance targets each year. These are agreed by the senior staff and governors at the annual target-setting meeting. The targets are challenging yet realistic, and based on attendance figures achieved in previous years. The school considers carefully the attendance figures for other similar schools when setting its own targets.

The national attendance target for schools is 96%. Our schools' ambition is to have a percentage that is higher. However, there is acknowledgement that the COVID-19 pandemic may affect both the national and school targets. Nevertheless, all our pupils should strive for an attendance target no lower than 96%.

9 Monitoring and review

9.1 It is the responsibility of the governors to monitor overall attendance, and they will request reports from the Headteacher. The governing body also has the responsibility for this policy, and for seeing that it is carried out. The governors will therefore examine closely the information provided and seek to ensure that our attendance figures are as high as they should be.

9.2 The school will keep accurate attendance records on file for a minimum period of three years.

- 9.3** The rates of attendance will be reported in the schools' prospectuses and on the website and reported termly to parents.
- 9.4** Class teachers will be responsible for monitoring attendance in their class and for following up absences in the appropriate way. If there is concern about a child's absence, they will contact the school office immediately. If there is a longer-term general worry about the attendance of a particular child, this will be reported to the Headteacher, who will contact the parents or guardian.
- 9.5** This policy will be reviewed every year.

Action	Date
Policy agreed	September 2023
Signed by Chair of Governors	Clive Sillitoe
Review date	September 2024
