



# **Odysseus House School**

## **Attendance Policy**

<b>Author / reviewer:</b>	<b>Charu Kashyap</b>	<b>Designation:</b>	<b>CEO &amp; Co-Founder</b>
<b>Date:</b>	<b>December 2021</b>		
<b>Approved by:</b>	<b>SLT</b>	<b>Designation:</b>	<b>SLT</b>
<b>Review date:</b>	<b>December 2022</b>		

## Introduction

For a child to reach their full educational achievement a high level of school attendance is essential. We are committed to supporting students to attend Odyssey House School regularly so that they achieve their full potential.

At Odyssey House School, we will consistently work towards a goal of 100% attendance for all students. Every opportunity will be used to convey to students and their parents/carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance at school.

Regular attendance is an important component of the process of learning and of the evaluation of student engagement and achievement. When learning is disrupted by irregular attendance, both the individual student and their classmates suffer a loss of experience that cannot be entirely regained. Students who habitually miss lessons will suffer in the evaluation process because their participation and achievement cannot be fully assessed.

School attendance is subject to government regulations. This attendance policy is written to reflect this guidance and the school's approach to adhere to the guidance whilst supporting students with their individual needs.

Each year the school will examine its attendance figures and set attendance targets. These will reflect both national and Odyssey House School attendance targets. Government legislation currently states that the expected attendance is at least 95% per year. The school understands that students with autism experience extremely high levels of anxiety and many of our students will have additional mental health diagnoses. In addition, when our students are sick, they can need higher levels of care than children in mainstream education. For that reason, we believe that 90% attendance is good and that attendance over 95% is outstanding.

We recognise that some students experience difficulties attending school however we are committed to finding the best ways of supporting, inspiring and motivating students to attend school.

We recognize that some of our students may face challenges which make attending school difficult. These challenges may be different for students attending the school; for example, those on transition or outreach plans. Our staff will work with students, families and a range of agencies to support our students to improve their attendance.

Odyssey House School recognises that achieving over 90% attendance, although the ideal, may seem like an unrealistic target for some students. Where this is the case, the school will support these students and their families with bespoke support plans and working with other professionals (e.g. CAMHS, Early Help) to increase attendance, whatever the student's starting point.

All students are encouraged to respect the importance of school attendance and good time keeping, as this sets good habits for future employment or training.

## Principles

- Receiving a full-time, suitable education is a child's legal entitlement.
- It is parents'/carers' legal responsibility to ensure this happens.
- Attending school regularly aids intellectual, social and emotional development.
- Good attendance practice safeguards the welfare of children whilst they are not in the care of their parents or carers.
- All children whose attendance is poor will be considered vulnerable.

## **Aims**

- To ensure that all children attend as near full-time as possible, in order to maximise their educational achievement and social development.
- To safeguard the welfare of students.
- To ensure that all those responsible for children's education, including parents, carers, staff and leaders understand and accept their responsibilities in relation to attendance.
- To minimise absence from school, thereby reducing levels of persistent absence.
- To improve the life chances of our children and young people and prepare them to be fully contributing citizens when they reach adulthood.

## **Legislation and guidance**

This policy meets the requirements of the [school attendance guidance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- The Education Act 1996
- The Education Act 2002
- The Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2010
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2011
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2016
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

### **The school expects students to:**

- Attend school every day unless too unwell to do so
- Arrive on time, appropriately dressed and prepared for the day.

### **The school expects parents / carers to:**

- Encourage their children to attend school
- Ensure their child's attendance does not fall below 95% (unless they are unwell, in which case medical evidence must be provided)
- Contact the office as soon as possible if their child cannot attend school
- Contact the school immediately if they become aware that their child is reluctant to attend school.

### **Students and parents/carers can expect the school to:**

- Ensure that there is regular, efficient and accurate recording of attendance and time keeping
- Phone home on first day of non-attendance
- Make home visits after 3 consecutive days of absence, at the School Director's discretion this may be prior to 3 days
- Establish early contact with the home when a pattern of lateness emerges
- Act immediately on any problem notified to us
- Maintain confidentiality
- Provide positive measures to encourage good attendance

- Support learners - to ensure a broad and balanced curriculum
- Provide a welcoming, safe and caring environment in which each learner is valued and supported
- Build and maintain effective partnerships between the school and its parent body, external support agencies and the wider community

### **Attendance register**

By law, all schools are required to keep an attendance register, and all pupils must be placed on this register.

The attendance register will be taken at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

Every entry in the attendance register will be preserved for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

### **School Procedures**

Any student who is absent from school at the morning or afternoon registration period must have their absence recorded as being authorised, unauthorised or as an approved educational activity.

Only the Head Teacher or a member of SLT acting on their behalf can authorise absence. If there is no known reason for the absence at registration, then the absence must be recorded in the first instance as unauthorised.

### **Lateness**

Morning registration takes place at the start of school at 8:45am.

The registers will remain open until 9.30am. Students arriving after the start of school but before the end of the registration period will be treated for statistical purposes, as present, but will be recorded as late before registers close.

We expect a reasonable explanation (e.g. local authority transport to school was delayed) when a student is late. In cases, for example, where the absence at registration was for attending an early morning medical appointment, the appropriate authorised absence code will be entered. The afternoon registration will be after lunch at 12:45pm. The registers will close at 1.00pm.

### **Attendance Procedures**

If a student is going to be absent from school, it is the parent/carer's legal responsibility to report the absence and the reason for absence to the school. The parent/carer is required to:

1. Contact the school on 020 8348 8009 before 8.45am if a student is going to be absent for part or all of the day.
2. If the absence is going to be more than one or two days, we encourage the parent/carer to keep in touch with the school to explain the absence and give the expected number of days absence. Parents may contact the school at any time if concerned about their son's/daughter's attendance.
3. If parents/carers do not report their child's absence, we will call all contact numbers for parents/carers and emergency contact numbers until we get a response. We may also send text messages or emails in order to make contact. Parents should expect a variety of contact from the school until the reason for absence is ascertained. If there is still no reply from any of the contact numbers, we will consider whether the child has additional agency support, such as a social worker, and may contact them. We may also ask around the school to find out if anyone knows the family and the reason for absence. We may also consider a home visit. We may also refer to children's services / MASH / Police and request a welfare call.
4. Any absence without a legitimate reason or where a reason has not been obtained will be recorded as unauthorised.
5. Where students are habitually absent and/or late a referral to social services may be needed and the Local Authority paying for the placement will be notified. Parents should note that the LA may consider termination of placement for persistent absenteeism.

### **Student Attendance – Signing out**

Older students (Year 9,10 & 11) are permitted to sign/clock out of school during lunch hour, with the approval of parents and Headteacher once they have obtained their Odyssey Independence Award. Students who fail to return to lessons on time after lunch may have this privilege withdrawn.

In certain circumstances this can be extended to other students when school, parents and the student agree and the student is judged to have an adequate level of independence.

If a student leaves the school for lunch, becomes ill and does not return to school, it is the student's responsibility to get a parent to contact the school immediately, otherwise the student's absence will be treated as unauthorised.

### **Students on transition and outreach plans**

If a student is on a transition or outreach plan, they will be marked presence in accordance with their plan and their participation at the allocated time. On the days and times, the student is not present due to the expectation of their plan they will be marked with an 'A' code (Adjusted timetable). Although this will still officially count as an absence it will also show they were not expected to attend at that point. All plans are reviewed on a two-week cycle.

## **Appointments**

Every effort should be made for parents to schedule medical or other appointments for their children outside of school hours or in the school holidays. Where this is not possible, the school must be notified in advance of the appointment and the time that the student will arrive at school after their appointment or will need to leave for their appointment. Students who must leave during the school day are required to sign-out of school through the School Office.

Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence; advance written notice is required for authorising these absences. Please use the form (in Appendix 2) for obtaining leave authorisation by the school.

However, we encourage parents to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

Parents should email the school office ([reception@odysseeducation.org.uk](mailto:reception@odysseeducation.org.uk)) with details of any appointments in advance and submitting the leave of absence request at least a week in advance of the appointment. For emergency appointments, parents should discuss this as soon as possible with the Headteacher.

Applications for other types of absence in term time must also be made in advance. Information relating to whether the school can authorise such absences can be found in this policy.

## **Students Who Become Ill During the Day**

A student who becomes ill during the day will be required to see a staff first aider. In cases where it is felt that the student needs to be sent home, the parent/carer or emergency contact will be contacted through the office. Only after consent is given by a parent/carer and travel arrangements are agreed will a student be given permission to leave school before the end of the school day.

## **Subject Attendance – Late Procedures**

Students are required to be on time for all lessons; the learning environment of others is affected when students are late even for just a few minutes. If students are regularly late for lessons teachers should inform the Head.

## **Unplanned absence**

Parents must notify the school via phone or email on the first day of an unplanned absence – for example, if their child is unable to attend due to ill health – by 9.00 am or as soon as practically possible.

Absence due to illness will be authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask parents to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents will be notified of this.

## **Student Attendance – Mock Exams, Final Exams and Vacations**

Attendance for Mock Exams, GCSEs and all End of Year Examinations is mandatory. Students are expected to be in attendance for all exams and tests in school. Failure to attend on a regular basis will result in the teacher contacting the parents and notifying the Head Teacher.

If a student becomes ill during the Final Examination session, the school must be notified and a doctor's note should be supplied. Attempts to reschedule the final examination will be made with the examination board.

If a student is absent due illness for a Mock Exam, the exam will be rescheduled when the student returns to school.

### **First Day Absence**

- Parent/Carer expected to ring before 8:45am to inform the School
- If parent/carers has not called, the Office will ring home by 9:30am to confirm the whereabouts of the child
- Office records and categorises absence once contact made and a reason given

### **Continuing Absence**

- Parent / Carer expected to ring each day a child is absent (except in cases where duration of absence is known)
- Where continued 'unexcused' absence occurs, the teacher and/or Office staff notify the Head Teacher and a letter is sent home requesting action to be taken in the form of further communication.

### **After 10 Days of Absence**

- Where a student is absent without an explanation for 10 consecutive days, a report may be sent to the relevant Local Authority's 'Child Missing from Education Officer'.
- A member of staff may visit the student's home to investigate the circumstances surrounding the absence.
- A meeting will be requested with Head Teacher.
- The Local Authority has a further 10 days to investigate this absence. After this time, the student can be taken off role and their place may be offered to someone else.

### **Frequent Absence**

It is the responsibility of the Form Tutor and School Administrator to be aware of and bring attention to, any emerging attendance concerns and report these to the Head Teacher. In cases where a student begins to develop a pattern of absences, the school will try to resolve the problem with the parent/carers. If this is unsuccessful the school will refer to the Head Teacher and may seek advice from the Local Authority.

### **Returning to school**

It is important that on return from an absence that all students are made to feel welcome. This should include ensuring that the student is helped to catch up on missed work and brought up to date on any information that has been passed to the other students.

## **Absence notes**

Letters received from parents explaining absence and appointment letters are kept on the student file.

## **Holidays in term time**

Holidays during term time are discouraged. Parents and Carers will be reminded of the effect that absence can have on a student's potential achievement. The school will consider authorising such absences only in exceptional circumstances.

Parents must apply in writing at least two weeks before the anticipated absence for permission to the Head Teacher and give reasons why the absence is necessary, using the attached Application for Leave of Absence from School form.

The Head Teacher will make a decision and notify the parent/carer. Students who have less than 95% attendance or who are behind in submission of work for GCSEs, BTECS or other exams will not be granted authorisation.

## **Attendance Targets**

The school will set attendance targets each year. A system for analysing performance towards the targets will be established and the Head Teacher (or someone they delegate this to) will be responsible for overseeing this work. Awards are given out termly for 100% attendance. Each term attendance is reported on to parents in the termly progress report.

## **Attendance Monitoring**

Attendance of students is monitored regularly. Where attendance is below standard, and there are no apparent mitigating circumstances, the School Administrator or Head Teacher will write to the parent/carer to express their concern, offer support and request an improvement in attendance. In some cases, this responsibility may be passed to the Form Tutor where there is a close relationship. Where there is no improvement, the Head Teacher will then write to the parent/carer to request an improvement.

## **Our school attendance target is currently: 95% attendance**

## **Reporting to parents**

The school will report to parents on their child's attendance record via a termly written report.

## Appendix 1: attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
A	Adjusted Timetable	Students who are on a transition or outreach plan. (Not part of the DFE Codes)
B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Pupil is on a work experience placement

Code	Definition	Scenario
<b>Authorised absence</b>		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence	Pupil from a Traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school

Unauthorised absence		
<b>G</b>	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
<b>N</b>	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
<b>O</b>	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
<b>U</b>	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed

Code	Definition	Scenario
<b>J</b>	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
<b>Y</b>	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody
<b>Z</b>	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
<b>#</b>	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day

**Appendix 2**



**Application for Leave of Absence from School**

Parents should send this form to the Head Teacher at least TWO WEEKS before the anticipated absence.

I request that my child:

Class:

be granted leave of absence for the purpose of:-

---

---

---

Inclusive Dates: From \_\_\_\_\_ To: \_\_\_\_\_

Have you requested such leave before?      Yes/No  
Would you anticipate needing to do this again?      Yes/No

Please detail below why you consider it essential for your child to have this exceptional leave of absence and why the planned activity cannot take place during normal school holidays.

---

---

---

Signature of Parent: \_\_\_\_\_ Date : \_\_\_\_\_

**A copy of the form showing the Head Teacher's decision will be returned to you.**

Leave of Absence agreed to / Leave of Absence NOT agreed to

Any absence taken and not authorized will be recorded as unauthorized.

Headteacher: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_