

Statutory Policy:

Policy provided centrally for adoption by schools with minimal amendment to the core text. Changes are allowed to the text where indicated

School Attendance Policy

St Peter's Church of England Middle School

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This guidance meets the requirements of [working together to improve school attendance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE’s statutory guidance on [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#).

Introduction

We believe that for children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and that children should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. Any absence affects the pattern of a child’s schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any student’s absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class. Children are best safeguarded from exploitation and other risks in the wider community by attending school regularly where they are supervised by qualified and caring professionals. Ensuring a child’s regular attendance at school is the legal responsibility of parents and registered carers and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution. It is very important therefore that parents and registered carers make sure that the children they are responsible for attend school regularly and this guidance sets out how together, we will achieve this.

We are committed to meeting our obligation with regards to school attendance through a culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- Promoting good attendance
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensuring every student has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence
- Building strong relationships with families to ensure students have the support in place to attend school
- We will also promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

Legislation and Guidance

This policy guidance meets the requirements of the [working together to improve school attendance](#) 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:

Part 6 of [The Education Act 1996](#)

Part 3 of [The Education Act 2002](#)

Part 7 of [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)

[The Education \(Student Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006 \(and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments\)](#)

[The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.

Definitions

Where the term "relevant body" has been used within this policy guidance, this means the Board of Trustees of ODST. The relevant body has chosen to delegate some of its functions to Local Governing Bodies (LGBs) as set out in this procedure.

Unless indicated otherwise, all references to "school" include both schools and academies

Unless indicated otherwise, all references to "teacher" include the Head of School, Executive Head of School, Principal or Head of School

Unless indicated otherwise. All references to "Head of School" include Executive Head of School, Principal or Head of School

Unless indicated otherwise, all references to 'staff' include both teaching and support staff

Consistency of Treatment and Fairness

The relevant body is committed to ensuring consistency of treatment and fairness and will abide by all relevant employment and equality legislation.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Any feedback or concerns from ODST schools regarding this policy guidance will be reported back in the first instance to the ODST Education, Quality, Standards and Impact (EQSI) Committee.

Date of Review

The procedure will be reviewed as required by the Education, Quality, Standards and Impact (EQSI) Committee of the Board of Trustees of ODST to take account of any revised guidance, legislative changes and / or national policy development.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Board of Trustees of Oxford Diocesan Schools Trust

The Board of Trustees is responsible for:

Promoting a culture that sets high expectations for attendance across all ODST schools

Supporting schools to prioritise attendance

Ensuring that school leaders are able to fulfill high expectations and statutory duties

Regularly reviewing attendance data from across the Trust and directing school improvement resource to help school leaders focus support on the students who need it

The Local Governing Body

The Local Governing Body is responsible for:

Promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos

Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties

Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data

Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school

Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance

Holding the Head of School to account for the implementation of a policy based on this guidance

The Head of School

The Head of School is responsible for:

Implementation of a policy based on this guidance at the school

Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to the Local Governing Body and to the ODST School Improvement Team.

Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual students

Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies

Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary

Form Tutors

Form Tutors are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office on the same day.

School office staff

School office staff will:

Take calls from parents and registered carers about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system

Parents/carers

Parents/carers are expected to:

Make sure their child attends school every day on time

Call the school to report their child's absence as soon as possible on the day of the absence and on each subsequent day of absence, and advise when they are expected to return

Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child

Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day

Students

Students are expected to:

Attend school every day on time

Recording Attendance

Attendance register

We will keep an attendance register and enter all students onto this register.

We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session (am) of each school day and once during the second session (pm). It will mark whether every student 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.

We will also record:

For students of compulsory school age, whether the absence is authorised or not

The nature of the activity if a student is attending an approved educational activity

The nature of circumstances where a student is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Students must arrive in school by 8:25am on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at 8.30am and will be kept open until 8:40am– not longer than 30 minutes after the session begins, or the length of the form time or first lesson in which registration takes place]. The register for the second session will be taken at 1:45pm and will be kept open until 1:50pm.

Unplanned absence

The student's parent/carer must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 8:25am or as soon as practically possible by calling the school.

The school should be notified by telephone to the absence line on the school number 01753 866253.

We will mark absence due to illness as 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 the student's parent/carer 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/carers will be notified of this in advance.

Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised if the student's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment.

Parents / carers requesting leave must do so in advance and in writing using the Leave of Absence Form available from the school office or the school's website.

However, we encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible.

Where this is not possible, the student should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

The student's parent/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Go to section 9.1 to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

Lateness and punctuality

A student who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code.
- After the register has closed they will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code.

- Parents / carers are contacted on the first day of absence, if they have been unable to contact the school.
- Attendance reports are run on a regular basis and analysed to establish trends

Following up unexplained absence

Where any student we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the school will:

- Call the student's parent/carer on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the school cannot reach any of the student's emergency contacts, the school may contact the police or the MASH team where appropriate
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session
- Call the parent/carer on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the school will consider involving an education welfare officer

Reporting to parents/carers

- Letters are sent to parents informing them if their child's attendance has fallen below 95% or 90%; follow up letters can be sent if there is no significant improvement.
- If attendance remains below 90% a meeting will be called to discuss and plan for improvement (Attendance support plan) with parents / carers and the student.
- St Peter's works closely with the Local Authority and attendance is regularly discussed with the Education Welfare Officer. Students with specific concerns may be referred to the Education Welfare Team.
- The education welfare team may consider legal proceedings, fixed penalty notices or other interventions.

Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

Approval for term-time absence

The Head of School will only grant a leave of absence to a student during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the Head of School's discretion, including the length of time the student is authorised to be absent for.

We define 'exceptional circumstances' as one-off events which are unavoidable, examples may include the death of a close relative, attendance at a funeral, respite care of a looked after child or a housing crisis which prevents attendance.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, considering the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least four weeks before the absence, and in accordance with any leave of absence request form, accessible via the school website and from the school office. The Head of School may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments which cannot be taken outside of term time (see section 8.3)
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the student's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Traveller students travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travellers, fairground people and circus people, bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and new

travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether the student is attending educational provision

- Death of a close family relative
- Funeral of a close family relative
- Other possible 'exceptional circumstances' where the Head of School may grant term-time holiday

Legal sanctions

The school or local authority can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

If issued with a fine, or penalty notice, each parent must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

Penalty notices can be issued by a Head of School, following the procedures set out in the local authority policy, by a local authority officer or by the police.

The decision on whether to issue a penalty notice may take into account:

- The number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- Where an excluded student is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason
- If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

Strategies for Promoting Attendance

The promotion of a pattern of regular attendance is the responsibility of parents, students, all members of school staff and the Local Governing Body.

We encourage our students to attend regularly and issue certificates every term in celebration assembly to those that have over 97% attendance for that particular term.

Attendance Monitoring

The school will:

- Monitor attendance and absence data half-termly, termly, and yearly across the school and at an individual student level
- Identify whether there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern
- Student-level absence data will be collected each term, reported to relevant body, and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. The school will compare attendance data to the ODST and national average and share this with the Local Governing Body.

Analysing attendance

The school will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify students or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these students and their families
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns

Using data to improve attendance

The school will:

- Provide regular attendance reports to class teachers and other school leaders, to facilitate discussions with students and families
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place to modify them and inform future strategies

Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence is where a student misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a student misses 50% or more of school.

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of students who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance
- Liaise closely with the Education Welfare team at RBWM and meet with parents as required to develop strategies to encourage good attendance

Attendance Policy Monitoring Arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from ODST, the local authority or the DfE is updated, and as a minimum every three years by the Head of School. At every review, the policy will be approved by the Local Governing Body.

Links with other Policies

This policy links to the following policies:

ODST Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy

School Behaviour Policy