ATTENDANCE POLICY

The OHC&AT Board of Directors has agreed this Policy and as such, it applies across all OHCAT Academies – 16th March 2018.
Jay Mercer
Chair of OHCAT Board

Attendance Policy

INTRODUCTION

Orchard Hill College Academy Trust (OHCAT) is committed to providing outstanding educational opportunities for all our pupils and students. We recognise the importance of regular attendance in maximising the benefit of any educational opportunity. Encouraging and supporting excellent attendance is a crucial part of supporting our pupils and students to learn effectively.

This policy is written with reference to 'School attendance: Guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities' (DfE, 2016) as well as 'Children Missing Education' (DfE, 2016).

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all OHCAT stakeholders including pupils/students and parents/carers understand the importance of regular attendance at school and their roles and responsibilities regarding attendance. Research has shown that there is a direct correlation between school absence and overall achievement. Poor attendance also affects young people's ability to make and sustain friendships and can interrupt the routine of school life, making it hard to settle when they do attend.

PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

Parents/carers have the primary responsibility for ensuring that children of compulsory school age (5 to 18 year olds) with a Statement of Special Educational Needs or an Education, Health and Care Plan attend an establishment authorised by their Local Authority. This includes a legal obligation to ensure children attend regularly and on time. Ensuring regular attendance is essential; permitting absence from school without good reason is an offence by law and may result in prosecution.

OHCAT will always seek to work collaboratively with families in order to support regular attendance.

AUTHORISED AND UNAUTHORISED ABSENCES

An absence is classed as authorised when a child is away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification or a request from a parent/carer, e.g. if a child has been unwell. Evidence may be required in order to authorise an absence, e.g. hospital appointment letter. There may be other occasions where the school will authorise an absence e.g. family wedding/funeral; any requests of this type must be made in writing to the Principal.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider essential and for which no authorisation has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Local Authority becoming involved. Support will be offered initially but if unauthorised absences continue, the LA has the right to apply a fine or legal proceedings.

Examples of unauthorised absence include:
- Parents/carers keeping children off school to go shopping, to care for a sibling, for a family birthday.
- Refusal by the student to attend an allocated session.
- Absences that have never been explained.
- Children who arrive too late to get a mark.
- Illness without medical evidence.
- Holidays in term-time.

If a child is reluctant to attend school, parents/carers must communicate this as soon as possible to their school's Senior Leadership Team in order that support strategies can be put in place.

Parents/carers can support their child's attendance by:
- Ensuring regular and early bed times, appropriate to the age of the child.
- Having uniform and equipment prepared the night before.
- Reporting any academic or social concerns promptly.
- Retaining open and honest communication with the school.
- Having a positive attitude towards school attendance.

ILLNESS AND MEDICAL APPOINTMENTS

When a pupil/student is unwell, parents/carers should contact the school before morning registration on the first day of absence. A call must be made for each day of absence. When a pupil/student is absent due to illness or a medical appointment, evidence may be requested e.g. appointment card, letter, prescription, prescribed medication packs or boxes with the pupil's/student's name printed on them.

Should school staff become concerned about the amount of school missed due to illness, information may be shared with external agencies such as social services (see 'Safeguarding', below).

Parents/carers should ensure that every effort is made to make or arrange medical appointments outside school hours.

HOLIDAYS

Absence during term time can seriously disrupt pupils'/students' continuity of learning. Parents/carers should avoid booking family holidays in term time. Parents/carers do not have an automatic right to withdraw pupils/students from school for a holiday and

must apply for permission in advance. Holidays in term time will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances.

PUNCTUALITY

OHCAT expects all pupils and students to arrive on time for their scheduled provision. Late arrival is disruptive and can lead to pupils/students missing out on important work and information.

Each Academy's Attendance Procedure gives details of school day start and finish times. This will pay due regard to individual and local circumstances as necessary but maintain the key emphasis on attendance and punctuality.

Persistent lateness may lead to a fixed penalty notice being issued by the Local Authority.

SAFEGUARDING

OHCAT has a duty to effectively safeguard all pupils and students attending its academies. Supporting regular attendance is part of this safeguarding duty. Poor attendance and unexplained absence can indicate a possible safeguarding concern including (but not limited to) physical, emotional or sexual abuse, neglect, female genital mutilation, child sexual exploitation, radicalisation, substance misuse or peer on peer abuse.

OHCAT staff will always seek to work with families to minimise absence and ensure clear communication regarding any absence that might occur. Where safeguarding concerns are raised, these will be managed in accordance with OHCAT's Safeguarding Policy and Procedures.

CHILDREN MISSING EDUCATION

Safeguards in place to prevent children missing education at OHCAT Academies include:
- OHCAT Academies must hold a minimum of three emergency contact numbers for each pupil, unless there is a genuine reason why this is not possible e.g. parent fleeing domestic violence.
- Any child going missing from education will always get immediate attention from the DSL. Staff are trained to be alert to signs to look out for and the individual triggers to be aware of when considering the risks of potential safeguarding concerns such as travelling to conflict zones, FGM and forced marriage.
- When a student is absent without notification, the attendance administrator will record the absence in the register and the school will endeavour to contact the parents/carers and other emergency contacts in order to determine the reason for the absence. This will happen for every day of non-attendance where no call has been received informing the school of absence and reasons why.

- Any unexplained absence of a student with a Child Protection Plan will be reported to the student's social worker within one day.
- Where a student does not present for school as expected, the school will endeavour to ascertain that student's whereabouts and wellbeing without delay, using all available parent/carer and secondary/emergency contact details. Where no contact can be made with either the student or any named emergency contacts, a member of school staff should generally attend the student's home. If the student or a named contact still cannot be contacted, the school must report this to relevant personnel in the Local Authority and, where deemed necessary, the police. However, it is acknowledged that in some exceptional, local circumstances, such action may be counter-productive and it is for the school to risk assess such a scenario on the first day. Regardless of this, if a student is absent for a second consecutive day without notification from a named contact, the school **must** report this to relevant personnel in the Local Authority and, where necessary, the police.
- Staff will always report to the Local Authority the name of any child who has been newly registered to attend the school but does not arrive on the expected day.
- Staff will always report to the Education Welfare Service the continued absence of a child known or thought to have been taken overseas if the child does not return to school on the expected return date.
- OHCAT Academies maintain accurate attendance and admissions registers (all pupils/students are on both), in line with statutory requirements. This includes paying careful attention to off-rolling pupils in association with the Local Authority and knowing, and recording, pupil/student destinations consistently on the admissions register. Where a pupil/student destination is unknown, and unable to be sought after significant follow-up, the Local Authority, Education Welfare Service and/or Social Care Services will be informed.
- Pupils/students will not be deleted from the admissions register. Staff will alert the child's Local Authority immediately if:
  - the pupil/student has been taken out of school by their parents/carers and is being educated outside the school system e.g. home education
  - the pupil/student has ceased to attend school
  - the pupil/student has been certified as medically unfit to attend school or is in custody.

Keeping Local Authorities up to date is crucial so that they can check if children of compulsory school age are missing education, and might therefore be in danger of not receiving an education and be at risk of abuse or neglect.

On the rare occasions that OHCAT pupils/students are excluded for a fixed term, the school will confirm this in writing to both the family (and the placing Local Authority where this exclusion exceeds five days). While the school will provide the pupil/student with work to complete during their external exclusion (and mark it), OHCAT is not responsible for the pupil's/student's safety and welfare during their time at home.

POLICY REVIEW DETAILS

Version: 1.0
Reviewer: John Prior
Approval body: Family Board
Date this version approved: 16.03.18
Due for review: Spring 2021

RELATED POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Child Protection Adult Protection & Safeguarding Policy and Procedures
Exclusions Policy
Anti-Radicalisation Policy
Positive Behaviour Policy
Supporting Pupils in School with Medical Conditions Policy