
COVID-19 Attendance Policy Addendum

ORCHARDSIDE SCHOOL



Adopted by Governors

Review Date

Chair of Governors

Vision

Orchardside understands that the return to school will be a difficult experience for many young people after COVID-19. Our aim is to ensure that all students return to attending as near full-time as possible, in order to maximise their educational achievement and social development. We will be working closely alongside the Educational Welfare Service with students and parents to ensure everyone understands their responsibilities in relation to attendance and minimise absences from school. We will support both parents and students with any anxieties with returning to school and we will continuously monitor any patterns that may arise.

Strategic Priorities

1. Reintegrate students back into school life
2. Support students/parents with any worries they may have
3. Identify students showing signs of becoming a persistent absentee
4. Prompt and efficient referral procedure to EWS
5. Penalty notices issued where necessary

Operational Management

Registers are taken twice a day, once at the start of the school day and once in the afternoon. Those arriving at school in the morning will be marked present and those arriving after 9.30am will be coded L (Late before registers close) which is a present mark. The number of minutes late will be recorded on the register. As there is some disruption of bus timings due to COVID, the time of closing of the register can be relaxed if need be.

If the reason for absence given is not satisfactory in the school's view, and/or evidence of the reason cannot be provided, the absence will be coded as O (Unauthorised absent). Absence notes received from parents/carers will be kept for the remainder of the academic year. If a student is persistently late, the Attendance Improvement Officer will arrange to meet with the parent/carer as soon as the pattern is identified and they will discuss ways to help support the pupil in getting to school on time.

First Day Absence Responses – COVID-19 Symptoms

Students who have COVID-19 symptoms should self-isolate and get a test. They will be welcomed back to school if 'Negative' test and no longer having symptoms similar to coronavirus. Students with negative tests but remaining unwell will be recorded as "Illness" code I. Students with positive tests should self-isolate for a minimum of 10 days from the start of symptoms and will be recorded code X.

If a member of a student's household has symptoms, the household should self-isolate and the member with symptoms should get a test. If the member tests negative, the student will be welcomed back to school. If a member of a student's household has symptoms, the household should self-isolate and the member with symptoms should get a test. If the member tests negative, the student should return to school.

First Day Absence Contact

Parents are expected to notify the school the first day their child is unable to attend for any unavoidable reason, such as illness. If the school does not receive notification, admin staff will text/telephone on the first day of absence, to try to ascertain the reason. First day contact will be carried out by text as early as possible in the school day. This is in order to notify parents as quickly as possible whose children may have set off for school, but have not arrived. This is important for safeguarding reasons

Given the high levels of vulnerability, we also have an extra level of safeguarding in the form of a dynamic risk assessment that takes place daily, led by the attendance team and DSL. All students who are LAC, CP, CIN will have their linked external keyworker informed of both attendance and non-attendance by text as soon as possible, so as information is shared quickly. Home visit are initiated daily where necessary.

Any response/contact from parents/carers will be recorded accordingly on the school system (SIMS). No response from parents is followed up with a phone call by the Attendance Improvement Officer and the outcome recorded on SIMS. If there is still no contact, the Attendance Improvement Officer will conduct a home visit.

Continuing Absence Procedures

In the event of an absence of three or more days without contact from the family, a home visit will be made. Any child who is absent without explanation for 10 consecutive days or who has a pattern of erratic attendance or persistent lateness after registers close may be referred to the Education Welfare Service, in order that further investigations can be made. Such cases may result in a case being opened by the Education Welfare Officer. Whilst we are taking the reintegration to school at a steady and understanding pace, targets will still be set for improvement. If there is no improvement, the case will be referred to the borough's court assessment meeting where consideration may be made for court action.

Frequent/Persistent Absence Procedures

Regular trawls of the registers will be made by the school to identify students with a pattern of absences that may lead to Persistent Absence (PA), that is to say absence of 10% or more in a half term. Whilst school attendance requires a whole school approach, the school Attendance Improvement Officer will be responsible ensuring that plans are in place for each Student of concern.

Parents and Carers will be informed that any future absences will only be authorised where official supporting documentation is received by the school i.e. medical appointment cards etc. Initially the school will try to resolve the problem with parents/carers, but if the pattern continues the school will use their resources to support the student, i.e. a request to Early Help via the local MASH Team in the Local Authority for the family.

Consequences of Poor Attendance/Punctuality

For Students whose attendance and/or punctuality fails to improve, after a range of interventions and support measures have been tried by the school, the ultimate consequences may be one of the following:

The school may ask the Council to issue a Penalty Notice on its behalf. A Penalty Notice carries a fine of £60, per parent, per child. If the fine is not paid within 20 days it rises to £120 per parent, per child, if paid within 28 days. If not paid at all, court action is likely to be initiated.

The school may ask the Council to initiate court action under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, which could lead to fines of up to £2,500, or even up to 3 months' imprisonment.

In some cases, action may be taken under the Children Act 1989 to protect the welfare and educational development of the child.

Reporting

At Orchardside, the Attendance Improvement Officer meets with the EWO on a rolling 2-week basis.

We go through the registers and pick up on any patterns, check marks have been applied correctly on the register and discuss every pupil's attendance that is below 90%.

If a child has had time off school due to COVID, we will work together with the family to help the pupil's attendance improve.

Monthly reports are run comparing the monthly and overall attendance % to the school year before.

Half termly - The Attendance Improvement Officer compares the whole school's attendance to the half term before. The Attendance Officer will then compare individual student's attendance % to the half term before to see if there has been any improvement. If there has, letters of praise are sent home and the most improved students will receive a treat (trip etc.). If their attendance has gone down, letters are sent home informing the parents of the percentage and that monitoring is now taking place.

Termly - The Attendance Improvement Officer compares the whole school's attendance to the half term before. Attendance officer will then compare every student on roll attendance % to the half term before to see if there has been any improvement. If there has, letters of praise are sent home and the most improved students will receive a treat (trip etc.). If their attendance has gone down, the attendance officer will send letters and phone calls home to discuss with the parents.

A report to governors is produced termly, which includes number of students with 100% attendance, number of EWO referrals open, and:

	Overall %	
	Sept - Dec	Sept - Feb
Students in Alternative provision	x	x
Students in Turnaround	x	x
Orchardside Students	x	x
Personalised Pathway combination of work and learning	x	x
Overall School Attendance	X	x
Authorised	X	X
Unauthorised	x	x

Attendance Pathway

Pupil's arrive to school and first day texts get sent out to parents / external keyworkers by 9:30am
All notes/messages to be logged on SIMS.

Attendance Improvement Officer to call parents of absentees for update.
Log reasons for absence on SIMS.

Attendance improvement officer to send a further email to social workers / external keyworker / police by 11am including any reasons we have been given for pupil's absence or let them know if we are unable to get hold of parents.

Attendance improvement officer to conduct home visit to pupil's we are unable to get hold of, or if there is reason to believe the pupil isn't at home etc.

Concerned

Attendance Officer will log their concerns on EdAware.

A referral will be made to EWO.

The case is regularly reviewed as part of the Safeguarding Team's weekly monitoring cycle

No longer concerned

No further action needed.

The Safeguarding Team will decide whether to discuss the initial concern with other services or single agencies, to ensure the child's needs can be met elsewhere.

The case would need to be considered for regular review as part of the Safeguarding Team's weekly monitoring cycle