

Attendance Policy

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Statement of Intent

Odessa Infant School is committed to the continuous raising of achievement of all our pupils. Regular attendance is critical if our pupils are to be successful and benefit from the opportunities presented to them. It is our aim to instil high aspirations in all of our pupils and to encourage them to become resilient, lifelong learners, who embrace challenges and continue to grow. The DfE outline the impact of attendance on children's attainment in the guidance, 'Working together to improve school attendance' 2022: ***'The pupils with the highest attainment at the end of key stage 2 and key stage 4 have higher rates of attendance over the key stage compared to those with the lowest attainment'***.

At Odessa Infant school it is our intent to ensure that pupils and families form good habits and attitudes to attendance from an early age to reduce the risk of low attainment. Good attendance is fundamental to a successful and fulfilling school experience. We actively promote 100% attendance for all our pupils, through sharing attendance data with parents in newsletters and celebrate attendance through having a weekly assembly where certificates are awarded to the class with the highest attendance.

The DfE guidance, 'Working together to improve school attendance' 2022 also reinforces:

The importance of school attendance: ***'Improving attendance is everyone's business. The barriers to accessing education are wide and complex, both within and beyond the school gates, and are often specific to individual pupils and families. The foundation of securing good attendance is that school is a calm, orderly, safe, and supportive environment where all pupils want to be and are keen and ready to learn'***.

We are committed to building strong relationships with our families to ensure that pupils have the support in place in order for them to attend school.

Key Points

A verbal or written explanation will be required for every occasion on which a pupil is absent from school.

- This policy applies to all pupils, including children of non-statutory age.
- If, following enquiries, no satisfactory reason has been provided, the absence will be regarded as unauthorised and the register will be updated accordingly.
- The school reserves the right to query the validity of an explanation and refuse to authorise an absence.
- Parents/Carers do not have the automatic right to remove a child from school for family holidays during term time. The school have agreed that any holidays or visits should be confined to school holidays and will not be authorised if taken during term time.
- The school works closely with Newham Attendance Services to promote regular attendance and punctuality.

Avoiding unauthorised absences

If a child is absent, parents should call the school office by 9.30am on the first day of absence stating a reason for the absence. A member of the office staff: James Labadie (office manager) or Ishin Guryay (Admin assistant) will attempt to contact all parents/carers who have not telephoned the school, to try to ascertain a reason for any absences.

- **To contact the office team about absences please call 02085347967**
- All messages received regarding absences will be recorded. Verbal and telephone messages are acceptable and will be noted by the person receiving them, a written explanation is acceptable too.
- A member of the office staff will update the pupils records with the explanations, copies of all letter/doctor's notes or appointment cards received will also be uploaded on to the system.
- If a child is away from school for a period of 2 days, and after attempts have been made to contact the family by telephone, a member of the school office will be asked to visit the home address.
- If the school deems it appropriate home visits will be conducted for safeguarding purposes, at any point.

- Office staff will notify a designated safeguarding lead if no reason for absence has been provided and contact with the parent/carer has not been made.

Medical Appointments and Sickness

- If your child is unwell, please contact the school on the first day of absence. If the illness is prolonged for more than 3 days, we will request that you provide medical evidence. This can be in the form of a doctor's note or certificate. We encourage parents to make medical appointments outside of school time so it will not disrupt your child's learning.
- When appointments cannot be made outside of school hours we do require proof of appointment, such as a medical card/ appointment letter, this will allow us to authorise the absence.
- Where possible, we expect you to inform the school in advance that you child will be absent. Absences will not be authorised without medical evidence.

Holidays

- Parents do not have the legal right to take their children out of school on holiday.
- A pupil's absence during term time can seriously disrupt their continuity of learning. Not only do they miss the teaching provided on the days they are absent, but they are also less prepared for the lessons building on that after their return.
- Under guidance given by the Department of Education, schools are not able to authorise family holidays during term time. School term dates are published a year in advance; therefore, the school does not see any reason for parents to take their child/children out of the school during term time.
- Request a copy of Odessa's Attendance Policy and Request for Leave of Absence Form from the School Office.
- Complete a Request for Leave of Absence Form.
- Applications must be made in advance and the Headteacher must be satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances based on the individual facts and circumstances of the case.
- In considering whether to authorise leave of absence, the school will consider each case individually. Parents will be notified in writing of the school's decision on exceptional leave.
- Parents who take their child/children on a leave of absence without the school's permission could be issued with a Penalty Notice (a fine of up to £60). In cases where there is more than one pupil in the family, a Penalty Notice will be issued for each parent of each child.
- Where leave of absence has been granted, the Headteacher will determine the number of days a pupil can be away from school. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the Headteacher's discretion.

The regulations do not allow schools to give retrospective approval. If the leave of absence is not applied for in advance, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

Religious Observance

- The School will treat absence as authorised when it is due to religious observance. Following DfE guidance, the day must be exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parents belong. Where necessary, school staff will seek advice from the parents' religious body about whether it has set the day apart for religious observance. The school will expect to be notified by parents in advance if their child/children will be absent for religious observance.

Interviews at other educational institutions

- Following DfE guidance, schools should be satisfied that the interview and/or test is linked to transfer to another educational institution. Absence should be limited to the time taken to complete the test and travel to and from the educational institution. Parents/carers will be asked to provide evidence of appointments in advance.

Monitoring of Attendance and Punctuality

- The school will check pupil attendance records weekly. If it is found that a child's attendance has fallen below 95%, a standard letter will be sent to the parent/carer. Where absence has been agreed for exceptional circumstances, or where there is a known serious illness, this will be taken into account.
- Further monitoring will be carried out to see if attendance shows improvement. Additional absence will result in another letter being sent from Newham Attendance Services. Any further absence will result in the parent/carer being invited to school for meeting with the Attendance Manager and Newham Attendance Services.
- If all of the above has been done and we still don't see any signs of improvement parents/carers will be summoned to court and fined.

Roles and responsibilities of the Headteacher and teachers

The Headteacher will ensure that:

- Pupils are registered accurately and efficiently
- Monitoring absences and reporting to governors
- Attendance targets are set for individual pupils, classes and year groups
- Parents/carers are contacted when reasons for absence are unknown or unauthorised
- Pupil attendance and lateness are monitored regularly
- Pupils absent for long periods because of ill-health receive appropriate learning support
- That school staff receive attendance training

- Will ensure that there is a designated senior leader for attendance. Sue Tindling, deputy head teacher is the designated person at Odessa.

Registration of Pupils

All teachers are expected to:

Register pupils accurately and efficiently

- Registration time for the morning session is between 8:45am-9am and once during the afternoon session at 1:00pm. Registers should be completed between these times and returned to the office promptly.
- Any pupils arriving after 9am will be marked as late.
- Class teachers must speak to the school staff member responsible for monitoring absence if they are concerned about pupils attendance or lateness (punctuality)
- Actively encourage pupils to attend school regularly and inform colleagues if there is a problem that may lead to absences

Pupils will be encouraged to:

- Attend school regularly

Parents and carers will be asked to:

- Ensure their child attends school regularly
- **Inform the school on the first day of non-attendance. It is the parents'/carers' responsibility to contact the school by 9.30am on the first day of non-attendance so that all parties know that your child is safe and their whereabouts known. Parents/carers must update the school each day that their child is absent.**
- Discuss planned absences with the school in advance (e.g. family holidays, special occasions)
- Parents/carers are required to provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child

Punctuality

- Persistent lateness does not constitute as full school attendance (Section 444 of the Education Act 1996).
- Pupils arriving after the opening of the register up to and including the 30th minute will receive an 'L' (Late) coding and those who arriving after the 31st minute will receive an unauthorised 'U' coding.

- A member of the office staff will check the computer records and lateness will follow the same procedure as absences.

Fixed Penalty Notices

- The penalty notices imposes a £60 fine per child and per parent/carer. If the fine is not paid within 42 days from the first date when the notice is issued, the parent/carer will be prosecuted in a Magistrates Court for the offence under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

Children Missing Education

A pupil will not be removed from roll until the following information has been received and investigated:

- The date the pupil will be leaving this school and starting the next; -
The address of the new school; □
The new home address, if it is known.
- The school will need written confirmation from the parent/carer.

The pupil's school will follow the LEA process for informing the new school as soon as possible. In the event that the school has not been informed of the above information, the family will be referred to the Inclusion Service.

No child should be removed from the school roll without consultation between the Headteacher and the Inclusion Service when appropriate. Please see the circumstances below: -

Where a child is missing from education, Local Authority guidance will be followed, by completing a Child Missing Education referral for the following circumstances: -

- If the whereabouts of the child is unknown and the school has failed to locate him/her.
- The family has notified the school that they are leaving the area but no Common Transfer Form (pupil file) has been requested by another school.

Parental Responsibilities

- It is the parents/carers legal responsibility to ensure their children receive full time education. This extends beyond ensuring regular and punctual attendance and requires that the child comes to school in a fit state to learn. Parents cannot determine what constitutes authorised absence; this is for the Headteacher and Local Governing Board to decide. The fact that a parent/carer has offered a reason for absence does not oblige the school to authorise the absence, if the reason given is not

regarded as a valid justification for non-attendance. If we have reason to believe parents/carers are condoning unjustified absences, the Newham Attendance Service will be involved at the earliest opportunity. Furthermore, excessive amounts of authorised absence will seriously disrupt the continuity of learning for the pupil. Any patterns for individual pupils or families that emerge during monitoring will be investigated.

- It is the parent/carers responsibility to inform the school of the reason for a child's absence on the first day and if required, to provide any further information. The school accept notification by personal contact, telephone message, and email or by note. If absence is due to illness, the school should be notified of the nature of illness and if possible the date a child is expected to return to school. As a parent you are committing an offence if you fail to make sure that your child attends school regularly.
- Odessa Infant School working alongside the Newham Attendance Service will be monitoring and targeting pupils who:
 - Have below 95% attendance
 - Have unauthorised absences
 - Are persistently late to school
 - Have a number of absences due to sickness/medical reasons
 - Have requested/taken leave for holiday purposes

The Role of Governing Body:

- Regularly review attendance and challenge attendance data provided by the school in reports
- Support the school in prioritising attendance
- Ensure that school leaders are fulfilling their statutory duties
- To hold the Headteacher to account got the implementation of this policy

In the table below the Dfe clearly set out how all partners should work together in the guidance 'Working together to improve attendance' 2022:

