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## OA– Tunbridge Wells

### Attendance Policy

Document control table	
Title	Attendance Policy
Approved by	OA central
Updated and approved	September 2025
Date of next review	July 2026
Updates/revisions included:	Update definitions of persistent absence and missing education Updated information on penalty fines in accordance with national standards.
Academies to note: This is an OA template, but it must be checked for local context/times/procedures etc. The updated academy version should be returned to OA central for uploading onto each website.	

<b>OA Tunbridge Wells</b>	
How should parents and carers report absence?	Call the main office by 8:30am on the first morning of a child's absence giving the reason why the child will be absent and their expected return date
Who is responsible for overseeing attendance in the academy?	Jordan Darran – Assistant Headteacher Gemma Siddaway - Attendance Officer 01892 519841
<b>Registration times</b>	
Morning	Pupils must arrive by 8:45am
	If a pupil arrives after 8:45am they will be classed as LATE
	If a pupil arrives after 9:15am they will be classed as ABSENT for the morning session
Afternoon	Pupils must register for afternoon sessions at 12:20pm
	If a pupil arrives after 12:20pm they will be classed as LATE
	If a pupil arrives after 12:50pm they will be classed as ABSENT for the afternoon session

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## Introduction

Our aim is to foster a sense of responsibility, a joy of learning and to create a community where the importance of coming to school to learn is recognised by everyone. In our academy, we work together with parents, carers and pupils – we develop relationships where we listen and build our understanding of barriers to attendance so we can work out the best ways to support attendance.

## Legislation

This policy has due regard to the Department for Education’s (DfE’s) statutory guidance on [working together to improve school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\)](#). The guidance is based on the following pieces of legislation and guidance, which set out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

Relevant legislation:

The Education Acts 1996 and 2002

The Children Act 1989

The Crime and Disorder Act 1998

The Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003

The Education and Inspections Act 2006

The Sentencing Act 2020

The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024

The Education (Parenting Contracts and Parenting Orders) (England) Regulations 2007

The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007, as amended

The Education (Information about Individual Pupils) (England) Regulations 2013

The Children and Young Persons Acts 1933 and 1963

The Equality Act 2010

Relevant government guidance:

[Children missing education](#)

[Keeping children safe in education](#) and [working together to safeguard children](#)

[Special educational needs and disability code of practice: 0 to 25 years](#)

[Elective home education](#)

[Alternative provision: statutory guidance for local authorities](#)

[Exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England](#)

[Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions](#)

[Arranging education for children who cannot attend school because of health needs](#)

[Promoting and supporting mental health and wellbeing in schools and colleges](#)

[Preventing and tackling bullying](#)

[Providing remote education](#)

This policy also complies with our trust's funding agreement and articles of association.

### **Olive Academies values and our aims**

The values of Olive Academies (OA) are:

- **CONVICTION** - Everyone has the capacity to reach their potential.
- **DETERMINATION** - Not giving up on those who have not experienced success.
- **AMBITION** - All challenges can be overcome, and education is an important lifelong journey.
- **REFLECTION** - Learning from experiences and developing a capacity to improve further.

These values shape our approach to supporting children to attend school as much as is possible as we know that this is crucial for learning and wellbeing.

We recognise that improving attendance is **everyone's business**. Barriers to accessing education, especially in an alternative provision and specialist schools such as ours, are wide and complex, both within and beyond the school gates. They are often specific to individual pupils and families. The foundation of securing good attendance is that a school is a calm, orderly, safe, and supportive environment where all pupils want to be and are keen and ready to learn. Providing this for our pupils is our core objective in OA schools.

We recognise that to support our pupils to attend school, we need to build **strong and trusting relationships with parents and carers** and other partners so that we can work together to remove barriers to attendance and put the right support in place. Securing good attendance cannot be seen in isolation, and effective practices for improvement will involve close interaction with schools' efforts on curriculum, behaviour, bullying, special educational needs support, pastoral and mental health and wellbeing, and effective use of resources, including pupil premium. It cannot solely be the responsibility of a single member of staff, or organisation, it must be a collective effort across all teaching and nonteaching staff in school, the trust, the local authority, and other local partners.

## The law on school attendance

The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to a full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. It is the **legal responsibility** of every parent and carer to make sure, if their child is registered at a school, that they ensure their child attends that school regularly. This means attendance every day, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school.

### Categorisation of absence

When a pupil is absent from school, the law categorises that as either 'authorised' or 'unauthorised'.

The law states that it is for school leader to determine into which category any absence fits, it is for the academy to decide whether any absence is 'authorised' or 'unauthorised'.

### Authorised absence

Examples of the type of absence which may be authorised:

- Sickness
- Unavoidable medical/dental appointments (although these should be made wherever possible out of school hours.)
- Exceptional family circumstances (at the discretion of the school)

### Unauthorised absence

Examples of the type of absence which will not be authorised are:

- Birthdays
- Shopping
- Haircuts
- Special treats
- Looking after family members
- Holidays in term time

### The need for parental explanation

All absences must be explained either by telephone call, text message, email or letter by a parent or carer. However, this does not automatically authorise the absence.

It is for the head of academy to decide whether to accept the explanation offered. You may be asked to provide evidence of a doctor's visit (e.g. appointment card or prescription).

Long term absences must be discussed with academy staff to enable them to offer the pupil access to education to which they are entitled. Where a parent/carers anticipates in advance that their child will be absent then as much advance notice as possible should be given.

### Holidays during term time

Parents/carers are reminded that they do not have any right or entitlement to take their child out of school for holidays. The DfE guidance states, '*As headteachers should only grant leaves of*

*absence in exceptional circumstances it is unlikely a leave of absence will be granted for the purposes of a family holiday.'* Examples of circumstances which by themselves are very unlikely to be considered as special and thus leading to a grant of permission include:

- To fit in with parental working patterns
- Economic reasons, such as cheap flights and/or accommodation
- To overlap with beginning or end of term.

Attendance will be enforced through statutory intervention (fixed penalty notice) or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education – should persistent unauthorised absence occur the headteacher may refer to the Local Authority to issue Penalty Notices or prosecute (see section 6).

Parents must put requests for term time leave in writing to the Head of Academy or request a term time leave form through the Office Manager. Each request will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

### **Children Missing Education**

If a pupil fails to attend school for 10 consecutive days, without explanation, the school will refer the pupil to the Local Authority as a Child Missing in Education. After a further 10 days of absence with no explanation, your child is at risk of losing their school place with us.

- The academy will seek advice from the CME team if unsure about any individual cases

**Contact details are:**

- email: [cme@kent.gov.uk](mailto:cme@kent.gov.uk)
- call: [03000 42 33 63](tel:03000423363) (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm)

Further information can be found on the [Kent County Council CME Website](#)

### **Elective Home Education**

It is a parent's right to be able to withdraw their child from school to educate them at home if they wish to. There are legal responsibilities parents/carers must fulfil if they wish to educate their child at home, which are monitored by the Local Authority. Please speak to the Head of Academy in the first instance if you are considering this option.

### **Our approach to improving attendance**

The purpose of ensuring regular attendance at school is so that pupils can get the most out of their school experience, including their attainment, wellbeing and wider life chances. **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.**

Our experience at Olive Academies that some of our pupils face significant challenges outside of school and regular attendance gives us the best opportunity to understand each pupil's needs and to identify what support is needed to help them to achieve and grow as individuals.

This policy will be applied fairly and consistently but we will always consider the individual needs of our pupils and their families, some of whom may have specific barriers to attendance that we need to work with them to remove. As with all our work, we know that this can only be done by building

strong relationships with families, by listening to them and understanding their individual situations.

We will work with families and others to treat the root causes of absence and remove barriers to attendance.

### **How do we encourage good attendance?**

At Olive Academies we promote good attendance in several ways: working with each individual pupil and their parents and carers; working across each academy; and working across the trust.

### **Supporting individual pupils to attend regularly**

We work with families, parents and carers to make sure they understand the importance of good attendance. The reasons for this are outlined in this policy.

We use our staged approach to supporting attendance – this is available in appendix 1 and includes details about incentives and rewards given to pupils who attend regularly and steps that will be taken when they do not. These include working alongside parents and carers to support them as well as monitoring and putting in place plans as necessary – examples of general and specific actions include:

- information sharing and meetings with parents and carers to make sure they understand the procedures both at induction and as needed, e.g. provision of an annual attendance information leaflet
- clear information on the website and ensuring parents and carers have seen this attendance policy
- regular communication with parents and carers when attendance becomes an issue – done using the method best suited to individual carers, be it text, email, phone, face to face meeting
- home visits
- weekly conversations with tutors/coaches
- attendance boards to celebrate improvements
- weekly attendance rewards and certificates
- sign posting to other services, e.g. via a common assessment form (CAF)

Where there is **persistent or severe absence**, OA staff will put in place an individual action plan which will include input from other support services and the local authority who will work together to identify ways of removing barriers to attendance.

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, attendance will be enforced through statutory intervention (Fixed penalty notice) or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.

### **Fixed Penalty Notices and the Local Authority Attendance Service**

The head of academy may refer to the Local Authority to issue Penalty Notices where unauthorised absence occurs. This can include persistently being late for school. These are aimed at reducing the levels of unauthorised absences during a school term and can be issued by the Local Authority,

schools or the Police. The national threshold has been met when a pupil has been recorded as having **unauthorised absences for 10 sessions (equivalent to 5 school days)** within 10 school weeks. **All penalty notices are issued per parent per child.**

First offence - First Penalty Notice **per parent, per child**, must pay:

- £80 if you pay within 21 days
- £160 if you pay after 21 days but within 28 days

Second Penalty Notice within 3 years **per parent, per child**, must pay:

- £160 within 28 days

Any other offence within 3 years - Legal proceedings will be taken if:

- their child has any further unauthorised absences within 3 years

These may be issued for:

- Unauthorised holidays in term time.
- Parentally condoned absence where the parent is deemed capable but unwilling to address attendance problems (e.g. a failure to engage with support measures).
- Where a pupil is stopped by parents/carers during a truancy sweep and the absence is not authorised by the school.
- A parent continually fails to explain a pupil's absence in accordance with the school's procedures.

This is not an exhaustive list, and each case will be considered individually.

### **Notices to improve**

If the national threshold has been met and support is appropriate, but parents do not engage with offers of support, the school may offer a notice to improve to give parents a final chance to engage with support.

Notices to improve will be issued in line with processes set out in the local code of conduct for the local authority area in which the pupil attends school.

They will include:

- Details of the pupil's attendance record and of the offences
- The benefits of regular attendance and the duty of parents under [section 7 of the Education Act 1996](#)
- Details of the support provided so far
- Opportunities for further support, or to access previously provided support that was not engaged with
- A clear warning that a penalty notice may be issued if attendance doesn't improve within the improvement period, along with details of what sufficient improvement looks like, which will be decided on a case-by-case basis
- A clear timeframe of between 3 and 6 weeks for the improvement period
- The grounds on which a penalty notice may be issued before the end of the improvement period

## Supporting Pupils to Attend Regularly – Roles and Responsibilities

### Pupils

Pupils are expected to be responsible and independent. Except where there are exceptional circumstances, they are personally responsible for maintaining good attendance and being punctual.

- Pupils must attend all sessions that are agreed and outlined in their timetable
- Pupils will not leave the academy site without permission from staff.
- Pupils should arrive on time to the academy
- Pupils who arrive before the register closes will be marked as late
- Pupils who arrive over 30 mins after school starts will be marked as absent for the session.

### Parents/carers

- Parents/carers must telephone the academy absence line by 8:30am on the first day of any absence to explain the reason for absence and give an expected return date.
- Parents/carers are legally responsible for ensuring their child's regular attendance.
- It is parents and carers' responsibility to make sure their child comes to school on time via the agreed transport method.
- Parents/carers must provide an up-to-date contact number and an emergency number that may be used in exceptional circumstances. It is important that should the need arise, we can contact parents /carers without delay and that our messages are responded to as soon as possible.
- Parents/carers who do not give an acceptable reason for the absence of their child must understand that the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.
- If children have medical appointments parents/carers must supply appointment cards.

### Olive Academies' responsibilities

- We follow the staged process to supporting and ensuring good attendance (as outlined in appendix 1)
- We will keep accurate records of attendance and any follow-up communication with parents and carers.
- A system of first day calling operates – where no reason for absence has been given, parents and carers will be called or a text message sent to notify them that their child is absent.
- Where a pupil has not attended school for two or more days and the academy has not been able to contact the parents/carers a home visit will be arranged.
- We always notify parents/carers if pupils abscond from academy premises and if necessary, notify the police.
- The head of academy reserves the right to ask for medical evidence before making a decision as to whether to authorise the absence. This must be presented within one week of the last day of absence.
- If a pupil becomes unwell whilst at the academy, parents/carers are informed. Depending on the pupil's age and the severity of the illness, a decision will be made on whether the pupil should be collected by a parent or carer or sent home on their own.

## The School Senior Attendance Champion

### The designated senior leader responsible for attendance (this may be the Head of Academy)

The designated senior leader:

- o Leading, championing and improving attendance across the school
- o Setting a clear vision for improving and maintaining good attendance
- o Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- o Having a strong grasp of absence data and oversight of absence data analysis
- o Regularly monitoring and evaluating progress in attendance
- o Establishing and maintaining effective systems for tackling absence, and making sure they are followed by all staff
- o Liaising with pupils, parents/carers and external agencies, where needed
- o Building close and productive relationships with parents to discuss and tackle attendance issues swiftly
- o Creating intervention or reintegration plans and attendance contracts in partnership with pupils and their parents/carers
- o Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families where appropriate

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance is Jordan Darran and can be contacted via 01892 519841.

## Monitoring Attendance

Within each academy and across the trust, we have in place rigorous monitoring systems to be able to track and analyse attendance data so that we can identify individual challenges **as well as trends each academy and across the trust**. Each academy has an attendance lead who works with the Trust Welfare and Attendance lead to develop action plans and target efforts at individuals and across the academy.

Attendance figures are reported at every local Academy Advisory Board (AAB) meeting and the school leader is asked questions about what actions are being taken and progress being made. Each AAB has a link member for Behaviour & Attitudes who has a specific focus on overseeing attendance.

The Academies send daily returns on attendance to Wonde the DfE data collection service. More information can be found [here](#).

## Review of this policy

This policy and the procedures will be reviewed at least annually. It will be approved by the Interim Director of Standards within the trust and submitted to the AAB and the Board of Trustees.

## Appendix 1

### Our Attendance Procedure

Good attendance is crucial – attendance is monitored closely and when there is absence, appointed staff will follow procedures as outlined below.

