Attendance Procedures 2023-24

Introduction

UTC Oxfordshire (UTCO) is a successful school and our students play their part in making it so. At UTCO we aim for an environment which enables and encourages all members of the community to strive for excellence. For our students to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend school regularly and they should be at school on time, every day that the school is open unless the reason for their absence is unavoidable. It is therefore very important that school and home work closely together to support all students in achieving this.

Aims

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

- Promoting good attendance

- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence

- Ensuring every pupil 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 pupils have the support in place to attend school

We will also promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

Legislation and Guidance

This procedures document 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 (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments)

- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

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

Roles and Responsibilities

The governing board

The governing board 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 headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy

The Executive Principal:

The Executive Principal is responsible for:

- Implementation of this procedure at the school

- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors

- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual students

- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies

- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance

The designated senior leader is responsible for:

- Leading attendance across the school

- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement

- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes

- Having an oversight of data analysis

- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data

- Arranging calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues

- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance is Zoe Barnes and can be contacted via zbarnes@utcoxfordshire.org.uk

The Attendance Officer

The school attendance officer is responsible for:

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data (see section 7)

- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement

- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance and the headteacher

- Working with the County Attendance officer to tackle persistent absence

- Advising the Executive Principal when to issue fixed-penalty notices

The attendance officer is Paula Ramsbottom and can be contacted via attendance@utcoxfordshire.org.uk

Form Tutors

Form Tutors are responsible for recording attendance daily, using the correct codes, and submitting this information via EdGenl. This must be done during form time (between 8:40-9am).

School reception staff

School reception staff will:

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

- Transfer calls from parents to the relevant head of year or attendance officer to provide them with more detailed support on attendance

Parents/carers

Parents/carers are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every on time

- Call the school to report their child's absence before 8:30am on the day of the absence and 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

- Attend every timetabled session on time

Recording Attendance

Attendance register

We will keep an attendance register and place all students onto this register. We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark whether every student is:

- Present

- Attending an approved off-site educational activity

- Absent

- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

We will also record:

- 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 pupil 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 8:40am on each school day. The register for the first session will be taken at 8:40am and will be kept open until 9:10am. The register for the second session will be taken at 12:20pm and will be kept open until 12:50pm.

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 8:30am or as soon as practically possible by calling the school reception and using option 1 to leave a voicemail on the absence line.

To record a student absent, you can either notify us via email: attendance@utcoxfrodshire.org.uk or by phoning: 01235 391587.

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 pupil'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. 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.

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 will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code

The Attendance Officer monitors lateness to school and logs this on CPOMS.. Parents will be contacted if students are frequently late for school and invited in for a meeting with the relevant Head of Year and/or Attendance Officer.

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, necessary safeguarding actions will take place
- 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 the County Attendance Officer.

Reporting to parents/carers

Parents and carers will have access to EdGen so they can see attendance figures for roll-call and lesson attendance. Attendance will also be reported to parents at least twice a year via written reports. (parent portal is in the process of being set up).

Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

Approval for term-time absence

The Executive Principal 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 Executive Principal's discretion, including the length of time the student is authorised to be absent for.

We define 'exceptional circumstances' as Illness or death of an immediate family member (please specify relationship to student), the child, parent/carer requires medical treatment, or the child has been offered coaching, training or a scholarship for a talent

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 4 weeks before the absence, and in accordance with a written request to the Executive Principal. The Executive Principal may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:
- Illness and medical/dental appointments (see sections 4.2 and 4.3 for more detail)

- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart

- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travelers, showmen (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 pupil is attending educational provision

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 the Executive Principal local authority officer or the police.
The decision on whether to issue a penalty notice may consider:
- 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

At UTCO we believe that attendance and attainment are strongly linked, and we expect students to attend school regularly and on time so they can become resilient and confident learners who are able to achieve their potential and make a positive contribution to society.

6 out of 10 students with an attendance rate of 97% or more gain at least 5 GCSEs at grades 5-9. An attendance rate of 90% is equivalent to missing half a day of school per week!

On a school day, the only place students should be is in school. Students are legally required to attend school every day and should only be absent in real emergencies.

Section 444 of the Education Action 1996 states "if a child of compulsory school age, who is a registered pupil at school, fails to attend regularly at the school, the parents are guilty of an offence". This is applicable to all students of compulsory school age up to 16.

We expect all our students to attend school regularly and on time. At UTCO we will do our utmost to encourage good attendance from our students and want all students to achieve at least 97% attendance. If a student's attendance falls below 95%, we will contact parents and carers to consider how we can work together to support students attending school regularly moving forward. If attendance continues to fall, we will use other strategies including phone calls from Heads of Year, letters home from key staff, Attendance Panel meetings in school and/or referrals to the County Attendance Officer. We aim to avoid the latter wherever possible, as we prefer to work directly with families to consider what measures can be put into place to support the student improving their attendance.

We will also endeavour to do the following:

- Give you details on attendance in our regular newsletter;
- Report to you 3 reports a year on how your student is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainment;
- Celebrate good attendance by displaying individual and year achievements;
- Reward good or improving attendance through tutor group competitions, and certificates
- Run promotional events when parents, students and staff can work together on raising attendance levels across the school.

Attendance Monitoring

The Attendance Officer in conjunction with Heads of Year and Pastoral Leaders at our school monitor pupil absence on a weekly basis.

Monitoring attendance

UTCO will:

- Monitor attendance and absence data half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual student level

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- Identify whether there are groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern

Student-level absence data will be collected each term 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 national average and share this with the governing board.

Analysing attendance

UTCO 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

UTCO will:

- Provide regular attendance reports to form tutors 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 pupils 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

We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA threshold or is at risk of moving towards that threshold is given priority and you will be informed of this immediately. PA students are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system, and we also combine this with academic mentoring where absence affects attainment. All our PA students and their parents/carers are subject to an Action Plan. The plan may include:

- Allocation of additional support through one of our pastoral support workers
- Use of tutor time
- Individual incentive programmes
- Participation in group activities around raising attendance including reengagement programmes in OCC alternative provision.
- Parent contracts

All PA cases are also automatically made known to the County Attendance Team. If a student becomes a PA STUDENT, we will seek consent to complete an Early Help Assessment with you and consider convening a Team Around the Family.

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Monitoring Arrangements

This procedures document will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum one a year by Zoe Banes (Assistant Principal). At every review, the procedures document will be approved by the leadership team and governing body.

Links with other Policies

This policy links to the following policies:
- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Behaviour policy

Date created: November 2023.   Date of review: September 2024.

Appendix 1: attendance codes
The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
****	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Pupil is on a work experience placement

Code	Definition	Scenario
Authorised absence		
A	Reflection room	Student is spending time in the reflection room
F	iHUB	Student will be spending their lesson in the iHUB rather than their timetabled lesson
C	Authorised leave of absence	Student has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Student has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Student has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	School has been notified that a student will be absent due to illness
M	Medical/dental appointment	Student is at a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance	Student is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Year 11 student is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma and traveller absence	Student from a traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
Unauthorised absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Student is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
N	Reason not provided	Student is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence

		has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for student's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Student arrived at school after the register closed