ATTENDANCE MATTERS

OAKS PARK HIGH SCHOOL

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE GUIDE FOR PARENTS

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School Attendance Team Contact:
Email: attendance@oakspark.redbridge.sch.uk
Telephone: 0208 590 2245

1. Introduction and Rationale

Attendance is one of the most important elements in what makes a successful student. Various studies have been completed that show there is a significant link between attending school and being successful. If a student's attendance is consistently 80% from Year 7 to Year 11, he/she will have effectively missed one entire year of school. However, attendance goes beyond school, it is also a life skill and is fundamental to a student's future as a citizen. The aim of this document is to ensure clarity between what is expected of the students, parents, the school, and the legal processes that are undertaken.

2. Absence Procedures for Parents/Carers

- If your child is going to be absent, you must inform the school by **7.30am** on the day of absence with the reason why your child is absent.
- The methods of informing the school attendance team are via one of the following:
    - **Email**: attendance@oakspark.redbridge.sch.uk
    - **Telephone: 0208 590 2245.** Press **Option 1** to report your child absent. Then choose one of the following options:
      Press 1 for Lower School (Year 7 & Year 8)
      Press 2 for Middle School (Year 9 & Year 10)
      Press 3 for Upper School (Year 11 & Sixth Form)

  Please include your child's **Full name** and **Tutor group** in all communication.
- You will be contacted by a member of the School Attendance Team to submit evidence of any medical appointments if not provided.
- You must contact the school every subsequent day of absence until your child returns to school.
- Upon return from absence, a note should be provided to Student Services or the Sixth Form office so the appropriate code can be entered into the register.
- Medical appointments should be kept to a minimum and preferably made outside of school hours. The school will only authorise **either** a morning **or** afternoon session for any medical appointments, providing a copy of the appointment is submitted to the School Attendance Team.

3. Arrival Time and Lateness

- Students must be on site by **8.20am** and in their year group zone **by 8.25am** (for am registration) and in their Period 5 lesson by 2.00pm (for pm registration)
- Staff will monitor students' arrival daily on both entrances to the school.
- The "Back gate" entrance on Perrymans Farm Road closes at 8:25am. After that, students must use the "Front gate" entrance on Oaks Lane.
- Students who arrive after 8.25am will be required to use their ID card to tap in on the Inventry card reader. This will provide an accurate time of arrival. Students without their ID card will have their name recorded by the member of staff on duty. They will then update the register on Bromcom and be issued a behaviour sanction for uniform infringement.
- The Front gate entrance will be supervised until 8.50am. Any student arriving after this time must sign in at the main reception.

4. Penalty Notices

We are required by law to inform you of the legal notice regarding potential issuing of Penalty Notices or Prosecution, which is outlined in our letters and on various documents. Poor attendance is prosecuted by the London Borough of Redbridge and in most cases they will defer prosecution for a penalty notice. However, if attendance does not improve, or penalty notices are unpaid, court proceedings will take place.

Who Can Be Fined?

Parents can be fined if their child is of compulsory school age and has unauthorised absences.

When Are Fines Issued?

- To avoid court action and only if it can help improve attendance.
- If support to improve attendance has been given but not used.
- If support is not suitable for the situation (e.g. holidays during term time).

How Many Absences Lead to a Fine?

- 10 sessions of unauthorised absence within 10 school weeks.
- Each school day has 2 sessions: morning and afternoon.
- The absences can be consecutive or spread out over the 10 weeks.

Repeat Offences:

- Only 2 penalty notices can be given for the same child within 3 years.
- First fine: £160, reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days.
- Second fine: Flat rate of £160.
- No third fine for the same child within 3 years. Further action may be taken, like prosecution.

5. Attendance Glossary of Terms

Authorised Absence

An authorised absence is when the school has given approval for a pupil to be away from school, or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as a satisfactory justification for the absence. Only schools can authorise an absence, not parents.

This could be for the following reasons:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments
- Religious observance– where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. A maximum of 3 (non -successive school) days will be considered for religious observance in any 1 academic year.
- Traveller students travelling for occupational purposes

Unauthorised Absence

Unauthorised absence is defined as any absence that is not covered by the categories of authorised absence and where:

- The school has not given approval in advance for the pupil to be absent.
- The reason for the absence cannot be established or is not deemed valid by the school.
- The absence falls outside the specific circumstances that schools can approve as authorised.

Specific examples of unauthorised absences include (but not limited to):

- Keeping your child off school unnecessarily or without reason.
- Truancy before or during the school day.
- Absences which have never been properly explained.
- Arrival at school after the register has closed (usually marked with Code U).
- Shopping trips, looking after other children or birthdays.
- Day trips and holidays in term-time which have not been agreed by the school.
- Leaving school for no reason during the day.

It's important to note that the school has the final say in whether an absence is authorised or unauthorised. The school is not obliged to accept a parent's explanation for their child's absence, even if the parent provides a letter or telephone call, if they doubt the explanation.

Persistently Absent: Where a student's attendance drops below 90%
School Attendance Meeting (SAM): A meeting held at school with parents/carers whose attendance is close to (or below) 90%.
Attendance Contract: An attendance contract is a formal written agreement between a parent and the school or local authority to address irregular attendance at school
Education Supervision Order (ESO): A formal attendance order put forward by the Education Welfare Service through a Family or High Court

6. **Parental Responsibility**

It is your responsibility to ensure that your child attends school every day the school is open and on time.
If your child is marked absent and a reason for an absence has not been not provided, the School Attendance Team will send a communication to the primary contact requesting a reason for the absence during the morning of the absence. However, It is the responsibility of the parent/carer to provide a reason for the absence via our absence procedures (see Point 2).
Prolonged periods of absence with no contact could result in the school having to call the police and report your son/daughter as missing. On occasions where we deem it necessary, we will make a visit to your home address.

7. **Day to Day illness**

We always want to encourage students to attend school. When feeling slightly poorly, sometimes getting out of bed, showering and getting ready for school is all it takes to make them feel better. Coming in on days like this can make a big difference. We will always send a student home who is not well enough to be in school.

Commentary
Having sporadic days off school can quickly add up. It is often recommended to give students painkillers, plenty of water and send them in. If they are feeling unwell during the day, they will be reviewed by our welfare team to send them home if needed.

8. Prolonged illness

We do not require any evidence for illness that lasts up to four days. Anything longer than four days will require evidence (proof of illness – see below). If this is not provided, then the attendance for this period can be logged as unauthorised. If you are unsure about anything, please do not hesitate to contact the School Attendance Team.

9. Medical Appointments

We understand that medical appointments may be hard to come by; you could wait weeks to see your GP and often hospitals will book appointments during school time. However, we do stress that, where possible, you seek medical appointments outside of school time and during holidays. Any medical appointments during the school day require evidence, without this we cannot authorise the absence. Students should, where possible, not be out all day for medical appointments and either come to school beforehand, or return afterwards to maximise learning time.

Example: *Dentists and Orthodontists: Many dental surgeries offer flexible hours of late evenings and weekends. We are unlikely to authorise a standard dentist check-up during the school day, so please organise them for outside of school time. Orthodontists, however, have limited availability and often only run during the day, we would authorise an orthodontist appointment, with evidence.*

Evidence Types

Evidence is needed to prove illness (more than 4 days) and medical appointments.
We understand that GPs are reluctant to provide medical notes, especially without charge. However, evidence can be:

- Doctors notes
- Prescriptions
- Labels from medicine that have a date within the absence period
- Appointment letters
- Referral letters

10. Prolonged absence

For prolonged absence relating to long term medical conditions, we require more detailed evidence stating:

- Name and nature of the long term medical condition.
- Reason related to the absence.
- In what way the condition affects school attendance.
- For how long attendance will be affected for.

Most evidence has a time limit on it, unless it is a lifelong condition. We may ask you to update the evidence periodically as the condition develops/improves.

11. When attendance declines

Schools are required by law to discuss attendance with families when it starts to decline. We have to follow certain procedures outlined by the London Borough of Redbridge to ensure attendance remains as high as possible. Our aim is for all students to attend school for more than 96% of the time and we take a proactive approach to attendance which declines below certain levels.

Commentary

If we are aware of medical issues and have sufficient evidence to prove potential poor attendance we will not initiate attendance protocols. As attendance declines, you will receive various letters and/or phone calls from the school informing you of declining attendance and discussing how we can support individuals.

12. Attendance Monitoring by the School Attendance Team

Stage 1: Early Intervention (Voluntary Early Help Plan)

- ***When?*** If a student's attendance falls below 95%.
- ***What happens?*** The Form Tutor will contact the parents to discuss the attendance.
- ***Purpose?*** To explore initial support for improving attendance.
- ***Review?*** Every 3 weeks.

Stage 2: Informal Support Meeting (Voluntary Early Help Plan)

- ***When?*** If attendance doesn't improve after Stage 1.
- ***What happens?*** Parents must attend a meeting with a School Attendance Officer or Educational Welfare Officer; Discuss reasons for low attendance and how to fix it. Identify barriers to attendance and set a plan to improve it.
- ***Additional actions?*** A home visit may occur if there are serious concerns.
- ***Review?*** Every 3 weeks.

Stage 3: Formal Support - Attendance Contract

- ***When?*** If attendance problems continue after Stage 2
- ***What happens?*** Parents must attend a meeting with a School Attendance Officer and Educational Welfare Officer. Parents enter an Attendance Contract
- The contract is a formal agreement to address attendance issues and can last 3 to 12 months. Regular reviews are set to monitor progress.
- ***Additional actions?*** A home visit may occur if there are serious concerns.
- ***Review?*** Every 6 weeks

Attendance Monitoring by the Local Authority/Educational Welfare Officer

Stage 4: Education Supervision Order (ESO)

- ***When?*** If the Attendance Contract at Stage 3 does not improve attendance
- ***What happens?*** Referred by the Educational Welfare Officer to a Family or High Court when an attendance contract has failed. A fine of up to £1000 may be issued if parents fail to comply with the ESO. Will run for 1 year, can be extended up to 3 years.
- ***Purpose?*** Provide formal legal help without criminal charges.
- ***Review?*** Every 6 weeks

Stage 5: Attendance Prosecution

- ***When?*** If the ESO fails at Stage 4
- ***What happens?*** The Local Authority makes a referral to prosecute parents in the Magistrates Court.
- ***Additional actions?*** Fines of up to £2500 may also be issued
- ***Purpose?*** To enforce attendance through legal means.

13. Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) and Attendance

We understand that from time to time students may suffer from anxiety and mental health issues. Early intervention is crucial with any issues involving mental health, the earlier we can support, the better. If you are worried that your son/daughter is suffering from potential mental health issues please contact the school.

With regards to SEMH and absence, we still require evidence as to why students cannot attend school, unfortunately we cannot take "anxiety" as a reason for absence without evidence. As always, this only applies for prolonged or regular absence due to mental health. We would require a letter for a doctor, therapist or counsellor explaining the following.

- A diagnosis – This does not need to be "official" but it outlines concerns and comes from a mental health professional.
- A supporting statement that this condition will affect attendance.

Having this evidence will allow us to approve absence. It will, like any evidence, need reviewing periodically.

Commentary

We do understand that appointments with mental health professionals can take time and getting "evidence" can take longer. However, we do stress that having prolonged time off school due to these issues can heighten the problem and make it hard to get into a routine. We can put support in place in a variety of ways to ensure a sense of "normality" is maintained as much as possible.

14. Leave of Absence Requests (LOA)

For every planned absence we request a leave of absence request form to be completed at least 4 weeks prior to the absence.

LOA forms can be found on our website and collected directly from reception.

They must be fully completed with reasons (and attached evidence where appropriate).

We review LOAs on a case by case basis, but as a general rule:

We do not approve leave of absence, unless there are exceptional reasons.

Family Holidays will not be counted as exceptional.

Common Example

In general, "family holidays" are not exceptional. We have had many LOAs that state because of an "unavoidable shift change" or a "a change to a medical procedure" or "sickness or bereavement in the family", holidays have had to be moved. The change in a medical procedure or family bereavement is exceptional, the family holiday is not. A family holiday can be taken at a different point of the year.

Commentary

As a rule of thumb we consider, "would a teacher be allowed to take this absence?" Would a teacher be allowed to take holiday to match their non-teaching spouse's shift patterns? No. So we apply this judgement to deciding on LOAs.

15. Other circumstances of absence

The school is extremely thorough when investigating prolonged absence. We trust our parents to be honest with us and inform us of planned absences and holidays, no matter the potential outcome. In the past, we have had incidents of parents not being honest with us, which leads to difficult conversations. All situations like this can lead to not only a fine, but also to families and students having to lie to the school about their whereabouts. Clearly, we would rather this not happen as it is not a pleasant experience for anyone.

16. Home Visits

Home visits are when members of staff will attend a home to check on the wellbeing of a student. We rarely conduct home visits but will do for one of the following reasons:

1. If we believe a child is in danger.
2. Parents have not made contact for the absence of a student for the duration of a prolonged absence.
3. If a student is refusing to come into school.
4. If attendance is poor and students are not attending.

During a home visit, someone from the school will attempt to make contact to inform parents that this is happening. Staff conducting the home visit will attend in pairs. You do not have to invite us in, however, parents usually do and appreciate the support.

17. Punctuality

Punctuality is a key life skill for students that translates into the working world and we strive to ensure students are in good habits from a young age. We expect students to attend school on time, every day. Form Time begins at **8:25am**, students should be in their year group zones by this time. Students who arrive at the school gate after 8.25am will be marked down as late.

18. Genuine issues

Newbury Park can be busy in the morning due to close proximity to the A12, so we understand that traffic can be bad at times. We also understand that “life happens” and unavoidable events such as punctures, sickness etc can make people late. If there is a genuine reason for lateness you should call the school, as you would do for work, to inform us of the reasons. If these reasons are persistent, you may be invited into school to discuss them, to see if we can support in some way.

19. No reason for lateness

Any student arriving after 8:25am with no genuine reason will be marked as ‘Late’ which will be recorded on their attendance record. Students in Years 7 - 11 who accumulate three or more lates over a 2 week period will be placed on a punctuality report. Persistent lateness will lead to a School Attendance Meeting and Pastoral Leader detention.

Students in the Sixth Form who are late to Form Time will receive a same day detention.

Failure to attend this will result in further consequences and more time with their Pastoral Leaders.

20. Prosecution for persistent lateness

If a student is persistently late for no reason, then parents are liable to be prosecuted in the same way prosecution happens for poor attendance. Parents of students who are persistently late will receive an initial warning letter stating that punctuality needs to improve or we will start the process of not authorising late marks and this could lead to a potential prosecution. Subsequently, if punctuality still does not improve, this will result in prosecution in the way of a Penalty Notice from the London Borough of Redbridge.

21. Communication

The key to a successful relationship with us is communication.

- Communicating when your son/daughter is off school, every day.
- Communicating if your son/daughter has prolonged medical issues (with evidence).
- Communicating if there are on-going issues which could stop your son/daughter attending.
- Communicating if there are genuine reasons why your son/daughter may be late.

22.Frequently Asked Questions/Concerns

Parent: *I have received a letter and I do not like the tone.*
School: *We are sorry you feel this way, however, we have to state certain phrases in our letters and make things really clear to leave no ambiguity. If you have any concerns, please do not hesitate to discuss this with the Pastoral Leader or School Attendance Team.*

Parent: *I have received a letter, but my son/daughter has just been unlucky with sickness this year.*
School: *This is understandable; bugs can be passed easily. However, we still have to address this with parents and most meetings and calls are supportive. Some parents do not know how many days their son/daughter has had off school. These discussions provide some focus and will remind families of attendance when students are sick in the future. You can monitor your child's attendance on My Child at School.*

Parent: *We have had to move our family holiday as our son/daughter is having an emergency operation, but the letter states we could get a fine. This does not seem fair.*
School: *We can see why you feel this way and we are sorry your son/daughter is having this operation. However, family holidays are not exceptional, they can be rearranged for a different time of the year during a different school holiday. The operation is an exceptional circumstance that we can authorise absence for, however the family holiday is not.*

Parent: *I was abroad during half term and could not fly back for a further week as I was ill, I emailed but you have sent a letter saying I will be fined, why is this?*
School: *We require evidence to support your email, this is crucial to approving the absence. This could be a discharge form from the hospital or doctor or medicine you were taking with a date on it.*

Parent: *My son/daughter is anxious and her attendance has dropped, but you still want to meet me to discuss this matter. You know why she can't attend, what is the point of this meeting?*
School: *Anxiety, along with any other prolonged absence requires medical evidence, explaining why he/she cannot attend school. Please see section 13 (Social, Emotional Mental Health and Attendance) of this booklet for more guidance.*

Parent: *My son/daughter has the same sickness issue that he/she had the day before, do I need to call in again?*
School: *Yes, absolutely. You need to contact the school every day your son/daughter is off sick. The only exception to this is if we are aware of the absence beforehand for example a pre-arranged operation.*

Parent: *It says that after 4 days of sickness you require medical evidence. Doctors' appointments are hard to come by, is evidence necessary?*
School: *Yes, it is. A student being sick for 4 days or more should be attended to by a Doctor. Remember, you do not need a Doctor's note, a prescription with a date on during the absence is sufficient.*

Appendix 1: *This simple table outlines the number of days off a student will have if attendance declines. Less than 90% attendance is 19 days or more absent and at least 95 lessons lessons missed*

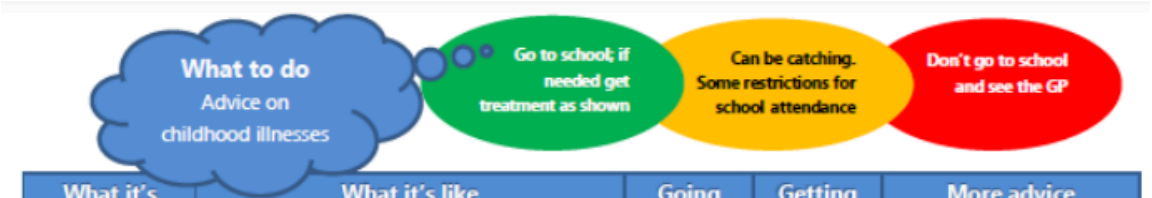
Getting your child to school really matters. Did you know…

If your child's attendance during the school year is….	Your child would have lost approximately…	They would have missed approximately …
96%	8 days	40 lessons
Persistent Absence Threshold → 90%	19 days	95 lessons
85%	29 days	145 lessons
80%	38 days	190 lessons
75%	48 days	240 lessons
70%	57 days	285 lessons
65%	67 days	335 lessons

You should not take your child on holiday during term time.
Please encourage excellent attendance and punctuality.

Attendance Matters: Every Day Counts!

Appendix 2: *This document outlines common illnesses children can suffer from. This is good guidance as to whether or not children should attend school.*



What it's called	What it's like	Going to school	Getting treatment	More advice
Chicken Pox	Rash begins as small, red, flat spots that develop into itchy fluid-filled blisters	🟡	Pharmacy	Back to school 5 days after on-set of the rash
Common Cold	Runny nose, sneezing, sore throat	🟢	Pharmacy	Ensure good hand hygiene
Conjunctivitis	Teary, red, itchy, painful eye(s)	🟢	Pharmacy	Try not to touch eye to avoid spreading
Flu	Fever, cough, sneezing, runny nose, headache body aches and pain, exhaustion, sore throat	🟡	Pharmacy	Ensure good hand hygiene
German measles	Fever, tiredness. Raised, red, rash that starts on the face and spreads downwards.	🔴	G.P.	Back to school 6 days from on-set of rash
Glandular fever	high temperature, sore throat; usually more painful than any before and swollen glands	🟢	G.P.	Child needs to be physically able to concentrate
Hand, foot & mouth disease	Fever, sore throat, headache, small painful blisters inside the mouth on tongue and gums (may appear on hands and feet)	🟢	G.P.	Only need to stay off ill feeling too ill for school
Head lice	Itchy scalp (may be worse at night)	🟢	Pharmacy	
Impetigo	Clusters of red bumps or blisters surrounded by area of redness	🔴	G.P.	Back to school when lesions crust or 48 hours after start of antibiotics
Measles	Fever, cough, runny nose, and watery inflamed eyes. Small red spots with white or bluish white centres in the mouth, red, blotchy rash	🔴	G.P.	Back to school 4 days from on-set of rash
Ringworm	Red ring shaped rash, may be itchy rash may be dry and scaly or wet and crusty	🟢	G.P.	
Scabies	Intense itching, pimple – like rash Itching and rash may be all over the body but commonly between the fingers, wrists, elbows, arm	🟢	G.P.	Back to school after first treatment
Shingles	Pain, itching, or tingling along the affected nerve pathway. Blister-type rash	🟡	G.P.	Only stay off school if rash is weeping and cannot be covered
Sickness bug/ diarrhoea	Stomach cramps, nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea	🟡	Pharmacy	See GP if symptoms persist after 48 hours
Threadworms	Intense itchiness around anus	🟢	Pharmacy	Ensure good hand hygiene

Appendix 3

Attendance - explanation for students

96 – 100%: *Continue to model the highest standards of attendance to your peers. Encourage others in your tutor group to attend well.*

93 – 95%: *Avoid any absence other than serious illness; work harder at being in school every day. Work towards becoming a Oaks Park High Attendance Leader*

90 - 93%: *Ensure you take immediate action to improve your attendance as you will not be making as much progress as you should. Reduce the number of days you are ill by not being off unless you are physically sick. Headaches, stomach-aches, coughs and colds are not reasons to take time off school. If you take time off, come back as soon as you are up and about.*

<90%: *Urgently improve your attendance as you will not be making progress and your achievement is suffering. Don't take time off for minor illnesses such as sore throats, coughs, colds or when on antibiotics. Make sure your parent/carer contacts the School whenever you are absent. If your attendance does not improve your parents/carers may be fined for not helping you to attend school*