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# ATTENDANCE

## POLICY

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This policy will be kept up to date and will be reviewed once per year as part of the company's Quality Assurance arrangements.

**Review Period**  
1 Year

**Approved by**  
Directors/Governors

**Review Carried Out By**  
Quality Team

**Date of Approval**  
November 2020

## **1: Introduction**

Orion regards regular attendance as essential to ensure the best possible learning outcomes for all students, and that regular attendance is necessary to promote better life chances. Orion's ethos encourages students to feel that their presence is important and that they are missed when they are absent or late.

There is a clear link between good attendance and high standards. For our students to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly, and every student should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. This policy sets out the principles and guidelines by which we seek to raise attendance, improve punctuality, to raise levels of achievement and to maximise opportunities both in school and in later life.

### **Practice**

- Students must arrive before 8.45am; morning registers are taken soon after arrival. Afternoon registers are taken at 1.00 pm after lunch.
- Students arriving after 8.45am will be marked as late
- Students late due to hospital appointments must provide a signed letter from a parent.
- In exceptional circumstances (such as severe weather or public transport disruptions) the closing of registration may be delayed at the discretion of the Head of School.
- Parents are expected to notify the school office of student absence. In the case of illness, parents should phone the school office on the first day of absence and then each day thereafter.
- The school will contact parents on a daily basis if they fail to inform the school of an absence. The school must be notified of the reason for a child's absence in order to safeguard the child and protect their educational well-being.
- Family holidays and doctor's appointments are not permitted during term time. Students have 13 weeks' school holiday per year and further time off on teacher training days. We kindly ask parents to make routine doctor and dental appointments during these dates in order to avoid unnecessary absence.
- Student absence will be recorded as 'Unauthorised' when the school is not satisfied with the reasons for the absence. Continued unauthorised absence may result in a penalty notice from the Local Authority (details below).
- For a day set aside exclusively for religious observance, students will be granted one day of authorised absence per religious festival, up to a maximum of three days per academic year. Time taken beyond this will not be authorised.

- Students must have strong attendance in order to qualify for the end of term rewards
- The school carefully monitors attendance on a daily basis and attendance is discussed weekly by the leadership team.
- Parental meetings are held to challenge and support parents in raising the attendance of any child the school has concerns about.
- Where a student is failing to attend school, a plan will be drawn up in consultation with the family and, possibly, external agencies, including Education and Social Welfare workers.
- Students who are off school for a long period due to severe illness will be issued with optional work to carry out at home to avoid falling behind.

### **Absence Procedures**

In order to ensure the safety and educational well-being of all students, we have a rigorous monitoring system and follow up process when absence occurs.

#### Absence Stages

- On the first day of absence, the school must be notified of the reason for the absence. If the school are satisfied with the reason, absence will be authorised. If we not satisfied, the absence will not be authorised.
- When a student's attendance falls below 90% (regardless of whether absences have been authorised or not), a warning letter will be issued advising the family that continued absence may result in prosecution.
- When a student's attendance falls below 90% (regardless of whether absences have been authorised or not), a second warning letter will be issued inviting the parents in to meet with a member of leadership team. During this meeting, support strategies will be discussed and parents will be made aware of the next stages in the procedure should their child fail to improve their attendance.
- After the parent meeting, the student's attendance is monitored for 8 weeks. If attendance improves during this time, the case is closed and monitoring will continue in the usual way.
- If attendance does not improve during this time, parents are invited for a further meeting where the attendance plan previously put in place is evaluated and updated.
- After the second meeting, attendance is monitored for a further 3 week period. If unauthorised absences continue after this point, proceedings will begin to issue legal penalty notices to parents.

## **Children Missing from Education (CME)**

The national definition of CME is:

“all children of compulsory school age who are not on a school roll, nor being educated otherwise (e.g. at home, privately or in alternative provision) and who have been out of any educational provision for a substantial period of time (usually agreed as four weeks or more)”.

If a child is absent from school and their whereabouts is unknown, Orion has a duty to carry out a reasonable enquiry **jointly** with the local authority to ascertain the whereabouts, which might be a result of:-

- The family moving within the city but the parents fail to inform Orion of the house move or transfer to a new school.
- The family move out of the city and relocate to a new area within the UK but parents fail to inform Orion.
- The family relocate abroad and fail to inform Orion of their destination.
- The family is displaced as a result of ‘crisis’ e.g. domestic violence, homelessness.
- Parent/school disagreement and parents withdraw the child from school.
- Family separation.

A student going missing, particularly repeatedly, can act as a vital warning sign of a range of safeguarding risks, including abuse and neglect, which may include sexual abuse or exploitation; student criminal exploitation; mental health problems; substance abuse and other issues. Early intervention is necessary to identify the existence of any underlying safeguarding risk and to help prevent the risks of them going missing in future.

Orion has adopted Birmingham City Council’s procedures for monitoring and reporting students who we believe are vulnerable and/or missing from education (CME). Should the child be the subject of a Child Protection Plan, or should Orion have child protection concerns, the Designated Safeguarding Lead will immediately notify Children’s Advisory Support Service (CASS).

### **CME Procedure**

Orion will ensure the following actions are taken from the first day of absence and recorded:

- ✓ CME team will be called to conduct background checks on the family e.g. schools attended by siblings?
- ✓ DSL will ensure that any safeguarding concerns have been promptly referred to the Children’s Advisory Support Service (CASS) on 0121 303 1888
- ✓ Appropriate staff will be tasked to check with all members of staff who the student may have had contact with.
- ✓ Appropriate staff will be tasked to check with the student friends, siblings and known relatives at Orion or other schools.

- ✓ Appropriate school staff will conduct telephone calls to ALL numbers held on the student file.
- ✓ Appropriate staff will conduct home visit(s) to the last known address of the student
- ✓ If possible, enquiries with neighbours will be made as to the location of the family.
- ✓ A letter will be sent to the last known address and the outcome recorded.

ALSO:

- ✓ If there is good reason to believe that a crime may have been committed, a prompt referral to the Police will be made. E.g. If this is a very sudden, unexpected situation and/or there are cultural reasons to suspect that the student is at risk or there have been past suspicions concerning the student and family which, together with the sudden disappearance, are worrying.
- ✓ If the student is subject to a Child Protection plan or investigation, inform the social worker of the student's absence?
- ✓ Similarly as above if the student is 'looked after'?

In the three instances above, CASS should be informed immediately.

Refer the student to the BCC 'CME' team within the first five days of the student's absence and inform BCC's CME officer telephone: - 0121 303 4983. Complete the 'Children Missing in Education' referral form. Completed referral forms should be sent as an email attachment to the secure address; [cme@birmingham.gcsx.gov.uk](mailto:cme@birmingham.gcsx.gov.uk)

Orion will not remove any student from roll without consulting the commissioning school if not on roll directly with us or the CME Team where appropriate. It is our policy to ensure that a place has been secured and the student has enrolled at a new school before removing a student from roll when transfers take place.

### **Absence and Attendance Codes**

Orion will utilise National codes to comply with regulations and will help in recording information in a consistent manner. The codes are as follows:

- Present AM in School: /
- Present PM in School: \
- Late (arriving before register has closed (9.00am): L
- Off-site Educational Activity: B
- At an Interview with Prospective Employers or another Educational Establishment: J
- Participating in a Supervised Sporting Activity: P
- Educational Visit or Trip: V
- Work Experience: W
- Leave of Absence Authorised by School: C
- Excluded But No Alternative Provision Made: E
- Holiday Authorised by School: H
- Illness (not medical or dental appointments): I

- Medical or Dental Appointments: M
- Religious Observance: R
- Study Leave: S
- Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Absence: T
- Holiday Not Authorised by School (or in excess determined by Head of School): G
- Reason for Absence not yet provided: N
- Absence from School without Authorisation: O
- Arrived in School After Registration Closed: U
- Not required to be in School: X
- Unable to Attend due to Exceptional Circumstances: Y
- Students Not on Admission Register: Z
- Planned Whole or Partial School Closure: #