



ATTENDANCE POLICY

Policy Author: Elizabeth Caldicott	Version No: 1
Date of Approval: 17th February 2026	Approved By: Georgina Mendez (Proprietor)
Effective Date: 17th February 2026	Next Review Date: 17th February 2026

Introduction

Orion school believes that good attendance is vital for all pupils if they are to gain the most from the education we provide. There is a clear link between good attendance and high outcomes. For our pupils to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly, and every pupil should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. Orion regards regular attendance as essential to ensure the best possible learning outcomes for all pupils, and that regular attendance is necessary to promote better life chances.

Context

- The government considers attendance below 90% to constitute persistent absence.
- 80% attendance means a pupil is missing 1 full day of education every week.
- 80% attendance all the way through secondary school is the equivalent of missing a whole year of education.
- For every 10% drop in attendance, a pupil is likely to achieve 1 less GCSE

Orion's ethos encourages pupils to feel that their presence is important and that they are missed when they are absent or late.

Practice

- All pupils should be in school by 9:30am.
- School Breakfast Club runs daily from 8.45 until 9.25 to encourage and support pupils to arrive on time and be ready to learn.
- Any pupil arriving after 9:30 will be classes as late and assigned an 'L' code and marked as late. Persistent late marks will mean contact home and then a meeting with parents.
- The school register will close at 10:00am.
- If pupils arrive after 10:00am they will be given a 'U code' which means pupils can be marked as having 50% attendance for that day- this absence is classed as unauthorised, unless there is medical evidence.
- Pupils 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 pupil 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.

Granting leaves of Absence

Only exceptional circumstances warrant a leave of absence. Orion will consider each application individually taking into account the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind the request. If a leave of absence is granted, it is for the head of school to determine the length of the time the pupil can be away from school.

As head teachers should only grant leaves of absence in exceptional circumstances a leave of absence will not be granted for the purposes of a family holiday, family holidays and doctor's appointments are not permitted during term time. Pupils 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.

- Pupil 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, pupils 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.

Monitoring and Supporting Attendance

- The school carefully monitors attendance on a daily basis and attendance is discussed weekly by the leadership team.
- In order to qualify for end of term attendance rewards, only pupils high attendance or improvements in attendance will be considered.
- Parental meetings are held to challenge and support parents in raising the attendance of any child the school has concerns about.
- Where a pupil 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.
- Pupils 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 pupils, 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 pupil's attendance falls below 90% (regardless of whether absences have been authorised or not), a letter will be issued advising the family of the potential outcome of continued poor attendance.
- When a pupil's attendance continues to fall 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 pupil'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, the child's commissioning school or Local Authority will be contacted and proceedings may begin to issue legal penalty notices to parents.

Pupils with medical conditions or special educational needs and disabilities

Some pupils face greater barriers to attendance than their peers. These can include pupils who suffer from long term medical conditions or who have special educational needs and disabilities. Their right to an education is the same as any other pupil and therefore the attendance ambition for these pupils should be the same as they are for any other pupil. That said, Orion is mindful of the barriers these pupils face and puts additional support in place where necessary to help them access their full-time education.

This includes:

- Supporting pupils with physical or mental health conditions. For example, making reasonable adjustments where a pupil has a disability or putting in place an individual healthcare plan where needed. Considering whether additional support from external partners (including the local authority or health services) would be appropriate, making referrals in a timely manner and working together with those services to deliver any subsequent support.
- Working with parents to develop specific support approaches for attendance for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities, including where applicable ensuring the provision outlined in the pupil's education, health and care plan is accessed.
- Work with families to help support routines where school transport is regularly being missed and work with other partners to encourage the scheduling of additional support interventions or medical appointments outside of the main school day.

- Establish strategies for removing the in-school barriers some pupils face, including considering support or reasonable adjustments for uniform, transport, routines, access to support in school and lunchtime arrangements.
- Ensure joined up pastoral care is in place where needed and consider whether a time-limited phased return to school would be appropriate, for example for those affected by anxiety about school attendance.

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 pupil 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; pupil 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 pupils 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?
- ✓ Designated Safeguarding Lead 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 pupil may have had contact with.
- ✓ Appropriate staff will be tasked to check with the pupil friends, siblings and known relatives at Orion or other schools.
- ✓ Appropriate school staff will conduct telephone calls to ALL numbers held on the pupil file.
- ✓ Appropriate staff will conduct home visit(s) to the last known address of the pupil
- ✓ 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 pupil is at risk or there have been past suspicions concerning the pupil and family which, together with the sudden disappearance, are worrying.
- ✓ If the pupil is subject to a Child Protection plan or investigation, the child's social worker will be informed of the pupil's absence?
- ✓ Similarly as above if the pupil is 'looked after'?

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

The pupil will be referred to the BCC 'CME' team within the first five days of the pupil's absence and the BCC's CME officer telephoned on - 0121 303 4983. A 'Children Missing in Education' referral form will be completed and sent to; cme@birmingham.gcsx.gov.uk

Orion will not remove any pupil 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 pupil has enrolled at a new school before removing a pupil from roll when transfers take place.

Attendance codes

Register Code	Description
/	Present AM
\	Present PM
L	Late (before registers closed 10.00am) marked as present
K	Attending education provision arranged by the local authority
C	Authorised absence as pupil is absent due to other authorised circumstances
C1	Leave of absence for the purpose of participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad.
C2	Leave of absence for a compulsory school age pupil subject to a part-time timetable
E	Authorised absence as pupil is excluded, with no alternative provision made
I	Illness (NOT appointments)
M	Authorised absence due to medical/dental appointments
R	Authorised absence due to religious observance
S	Authorised absence due to study leave
T	Authorised absence due to traveller absence
J1	Leave of absence for the purpose of attending an interview for employment or for admission to another educational institution
B	Approved education activity as pupil being educated off site (NOT dual registration)
P	Approved educational activity as pupil is attending an approved sporting activity
V	Approved education activity as pupil is away on an educational visit or trip
W	Approved educational activity as pupil is attending work experience
K	Attending education provision arranged by the local authority
G	Unauthorised absence as pupil is on a family holiday, NOT agreed, or is taking days in excess of an agreed family holiday

N	Unauthorised absence as pupil missed sessions for a reason that has not yet been provided
O	Unauthorised absence as pupil missed sessions for an unauthorised absence not covered by any other code/description
U	Unauthorised absence as pupil arrived after registers closed
D	Dual registered (at another establishment - NOT counted in possible attendance
X	Not required to be in school - for non-compulsory school age children
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances - not counted in possible attendances
Z	Pupil not yet on roll - not counted in possible attendances
#	Planned whole or partial school closure - NOT counted in possible attendances
Q	Unable to attend the school because of a lack of access arrangements
Y1	Unable to attend due to transport normally provided not being available
Y2	Unable to attend due to widespread disruption to travel
Y3	Unable to attend due to part of the school premises being closed
Y4	Unable to attend due to the whole school site being unexpectedly closed
Y5	Unable to attend as pupil is in criminal justice detention
Y6	Unable to attend in accordance with public health guidance or law
Y7	Unable to attend because of any other unavoidable cause