

Policy for Attendance & Lateness



September 2023

Review Date September 2026

Old Earth School Policy for Lateness & Attendance

At Old Earth School we believe that children can only learn effectively if they attend school regularly. It is also important that children arrive and leave school on time.

For the purpose of this policy the term 'extended absence' refers to parents/carers making the decision to remove their child from school with the Headteachers authorisation.

For the purpose of this policy the term 'extended leave of absence' refers to a request made by parents/carers for their child to be absent from school. Please note that a leave of absence is not a 'right' and can only be authorised by the Headteacher if the criteria of exceptional circumstances are met.

Old Earth School believes;

- It is important that children attend school regularly if they are to benefit from the learning opportunities provided.
- Children who are absent from school due to a leave of absence in term time will miss out on important learning.
- The time teachers have to help children in a class is reduced if they spend time helping a child catch up after a leave of absence.
- Educational experiences in school missed as a result of a leave of absence cannot be recaptured later.
- If a child does not attend school regularly they will not be able to keep up with the work. This has a serious impact on opportunities later in life.

Absence

Safeguarding

Parents are required to make a phone call on the first day of absence to explain this. We always follow up first day absence to ensure that there is good reason for the child's absence and to ensure a child has not gone missing on the route

to school. If the school is unable to obtain a reason for absence the sessions missed will remain unauthorised.

If the school is unable to contact a parent/carer and receive a satisfactory explanation the case will be referred to the Educational Welfare Team and treated as a potential safeguarding issue. The school may also deem it necessary to contact other agencies including the Local Authority Multi Agency Screening Team (MAST) and the police for unexplained absences.

The school will also monitor lateness and punctuality both internally and in conjunction with our Educational Welfare Officer.

Achievement

There is a clear link between attendance and pupil performance. Long-term absence and regular short-term absence are both disruptive to a child's education. Absence means that a pupil misses vital teaching and will find it difficult to catch up on their return without considerable effort from the school, parents and pupil.

As attendance is crucial to effective learning and the continuity of learning experiences we place great emphasis on this in communication with parents.

Extended Leave

Amendments have been made to the 2006 regulations in the [Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#). These amendments came into force on 1 September 2013.

The amendments make clear that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence for family holidays during term time. Leave may be granted if there are exceptional circumstances (see appendix 2).

Parents/ carers wanting authorised absence should consult the Headteacher. The Headteacher will only grant extended leave in 'exceptional circumstances.' **This extended leave will be granted or not depending on the circumstances.** Please note that **leave will not be granted during exam/test periods** at both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2.

The issues that the school will take into account when considering a request for leave of absence include:

- the amount of time requested;
- age of pupil;
- the pupil's general attendance record;

- proximity of tests i.e. Key Stage 1 and 2 Statutory Assessments (SATs) & Key Stage 1 phonic screening, Year 4 times table check;
- length of the proposed leave;
- pupil's ability to catch up the work;
- pupil's educational need;
- general welfare of the pupil;
- circumstances of the request;
- purpose of the leave;
- frequency of the activity; and
- when the request was made.

All requests for leave of absence must be made in writing by the parent/carer with whom the child resides using the appropriate forms from the school office. **Parents/ carers are advised to attach additional information in writing to explain why it is not possible to take this leave in the published school holiday times.**

When consulting with the Headteacher parents/carers will be asked to consider changing their plans to overlap with school holidays and thereby reduce the effect on their child's education.

Unauthorised applications for extended leave.

Once an application for extended leave has been made to the Headteacher the School will inform parents/carers of the Headteachers decision in writing within 5 working days.

In the event that the Headteacher refuses to authorise 'leave of absence' parents/carers are advised to make an appointment to discuss the reasons for this at a mutually convenient time. Any unauthorised leave of absence for a period of 5 days or more will be referred to Calderdale Education Welfare Team and may result in Calderdale Council issuing a penalty notice to the parents.

On authorisation of a leave of absence the school will inform the parents/carers of the date you expect the child/children to return to school. If the child does not return on the given date, and the time missed is 10 school days or more a Penalty Notice will be issued by Calderdale Council. If the child fails to return and is absent for 20 consecutive days the school can remove from the school roll as a consequence of being absent for '20 consecutive school days without good reason'. The date of removal will be at the close of the 20th school day.

Appendix 1 – Attendance information sheet.

Appendix 2 - Unauthorised Absence, Holidays, Exceptional Circumstances and Fines

Attendance in the School Nursery

Parents/carers can access up to 30 hours government funded places in our Nursery.

Old Earth School accesses the funding through an annual agreement with Calderdale Council. Part of this agreement requires the school to monitor the attendance of children at Nursery sessions and inform the Council of child absences.

Old Earth School requests that parents/carers of Nursery aged children follow the policy and procedures outlined in **our suite of Early Years policies**. We ask they note that prolonged unexplained absences may result in the withdrawal of government funding by Calderdale Council. In such cases parents/carers will be asked to pay for these sessions at the cost of 'additional Nursery sessions' published in the current Nursery brochure. Failure to cover these costs may result in places being withdrawn.

In addition, parents/carers are expected to follow the schools first day absence calling procedures. Any unexplained absence of a child will be treated the same as an absence in main school.

Guidelines for staff on absence

1. Each morning the office checks class registers via the Bromcom electronic management system, and records pupils arriving late, and entering school via the office, in the register. A note will also be made of the time of arrival and reason for lateness (if given).
2. All unexplained absences will be followed up by the school office. In the first instance a text message will be sent to parents/carers requesting they contact school to explain the absence.
3. If parents/carers have not contacted the school office by 9:45am to explain the absence the office staff will contact them by telephone.
4. Before contacting the parents/ carers (where possible) the following will be checked:
 - a. If the pupil has arrived in school late and missed the register in class but has not reported to the office to get their mark.
 - b. Pupil absence telephone messages.
 - c. Letters from the parents in the classroom and the school office.
 - d. 'Leave of absence' forms in the school office.

5. If a child is absent and there are known safeguarding issues then the school office will make the 'Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)', Mr D Burns, or one of the 'Deputy DSL's' Mrs Emma Dixon or Mrs Jane Holden, aware of this immediately.

6. The School requires all parents/carers to provide a written letter to explain all absences on their return to school on the first day. Where appropriate the Headteacher may also require parents/carers to provide other written records to explain the child's absence, for example, a letter from a suitably qualified professional such as a doctor.

Lateness

We believe that lateness starts the day badly. The child misses initial instructions and information. The class is disrupted if the teacher spends time with the late child or children.

The school opens at 8:45am and pupils will be registered from this time. Office staff will record a late mark (L) in Bromcom if a pupil arrives after 9.00am. Any pupil arriving after 9.30am without a valid reason will be marked on Bromcom as an unauthorised late (U) and this is recorded as an absence for the session.

Guidance for staff on lateness

1. If a child shows a pattern of lateness on a particular day, the school will speak to the parent/carer, explaining that we are concerned when children are late. This will be followed up by giving the parents/carers a standard letter. For older children whose parents don't come into school, this letter should be sent by post.
2. If the pattern continues the school will refer the child with the date's letters have been sent, to the Head who will take further action.
3. Parents/Carers will be invited in to talk about the problem.
4. If the problem persists, a referral will be made to the Education Welfare Team (EWT)

Monitoring Absence/Lateness

The Headteacher and school's Leadership Team monitor absence/lateness assisted by the administrative staff who provide weekly and half-termly print-offs showing the percentage of lateness and absence. A child will be classified as late if they arrive after 9:00am until 9:30am. A child arriving after 9:30am without a suitable explanation will be recorded as an unauthorised absence. If

the absence/lateness is a cause for concern, the office will inform the Headteacher who will meet parents. If the problem persists a referral will be made to the Education Welfare Team (EWT).

Parents/carers of children who have high levels of absence i.e. around 90% in a term will be sent a letter stating this.

Parents/carers of children who have an attendance less than 90% will be made aware that their child meets the Department for Education definition of a persistent absentee and will receive a similar letter and a request to make an appointment to see the Headteacher or a member of the Leadership and Management Team. The purpose of this is for the school to listen and understand the barriers to attendance and facilitate support to remove the barriers. It may be appropriate to make a referral for Early Help or further support through a parenting contract which will include some targets for attendance to improve.

If the parent/carer fails to engage with the school then the matter will be discussed with the Education Welfare Team with possible further action. If a parent/carer does not attend the scheduled meeting the case will be referred to the Education Welfare Team. Where appropriate this may lead to more formalised support for the parents/carers from appropriate services and agencies. Failure to engage with this may lead statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education (*See section Persistent and severe absence*).

Parents/Carers should note that if a child is absent for 10 days within a 12 week period without a valid explanation their case will be referred to the Local Authority Education Welfare Team. They should also note that if the child is absent for a period of 20 consecutive school days they may be removed from the school roll following consultation with the Education Welfare Team.

Where the Local Authority deems it necessary to impose a fine Parents/carers must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. If payment is not received within 28 days referral will be made to Magistrate's Court.

Persistent and severe absence

In cases where persistent absence does not improve or meets the threshold of a severely absent pupil (attendance below 50%) and all avenues of support have been exhausted it could be that this meets a threshold to be described as neglect. In such cases the school will consult with Local Authority and conduct the necessary assessments in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education

Mr D Burns (September 2022 updated December 2022)

ATTENDANCE INFORMATION SHEET

Above 97%: Less than 6 days absence a year

Excellent attendance! These young people will almost certainly get the best results they can, leading to better prospects for the future. Pupils will also get into a habit of attending school regularly which will help in the future.

95%: 10 days absence a year

These pupils are likely to achieve good grades though increased attendance would be more likely to enable them to do the very best they can. Nonetheless, they will probably form a habit of attending school regularly

90%: 19 days absence a year

Young people in this group are missing a month of school per year; it will be difficult for them to keep up with work so they are likely to fall behind their peers. If a child's attendance is at this level it will almost certainly be referred to the Education Welfare Service which will rigorously monitor the situation in order to secure improvement. The government classes children with attendance below 90% as "**persistent absentees**" and it will be impossible for them to keep up with work. Parents of young people in this group could face the possibility of legal action taken by the Local Authority.

85%: 29 days absence a year

Young people in this group are missing six weeks of school per year; it will be almost impossible for them to keep up with work so they will fall behind their peers. If a child's attendance is at this level it will certainly be referred to the Education Welfare Service which will take immediate action in order to secure improvement.

Appendix 2

Unauthorised Absence, Holidays, Exceptional Circumstances and Fines

Unauthorised Absence - Definition

Unauthorised absence is when a child misses one or more school sessions without a valid reason provided by a parent or carer. The validity is determined by the head teacher and will generally cover medical absences; attendance at external examinations, auditions or sports trials; half day or full day attendances at funerals and weddings of immediate family members or an emergency where a parent has to travel a significant distance and no immediate plans can be made to arrange child-care for the rest of the day.

Unauthorised Absence - Frequency

Absence for any of the above reasons does not automatically mean that the absence will be authorised by the head teacher. If, for example, absences are frequently occurring for medical reasons, auditions, sports trials or even emergency travel, then the absence may not be authorised. Schools have the right to refrain from authorising regular absences for medical reasons unless a senior leader in school decides that a child is unfit to attend; refers them to a school nurse or doctor; or a medical report is obtained from a health professional.

Holidays

Amendments to the law which came into force 1 September 2013 mean that head teachers may not grant leave of absence for family holidays during term time. Therefore, if a child is absent because of a family holiday all absences in this period must be recorded as unauthorised. However, the head teacher has discretion to grant leave of absence in exceptional circumstances.

Exceptional Circumstances

Whilst these are at the discretion of the head teacher, schools have agreed the following guidelines in consultation with the Education Welfare Service with due regard to national guidance and judgements from local legal "test" cases. Schools may grant leave of absence in the following circumstances;

- Critical illness in the immediate family
- When a parent is home on leave from the armed forces
- Where a parent produces a bona fide letter from an employer which states that the parent can only take holiday leave between specific dates throughout the year
- Where siblings are in schools with different holiday times
- A maximum of 3 days for a family wedding abroad of a close family member (including a day to travel each way). Anything more would be looked upon as a holiday.
- A maximum 1 day for a family wedding or funeral of a close family member in the UK. Where a parent is getting married, recent test cases have suggested that either parent knows a child should legally be in school and therefore should make wedding arrangements within school holiday periods.

Fines

Schools may refer pupils with unauthorised holidays to Calderdale Education Welfare Team so that a fine is issued to parents.

Dear

I am writing to inform you that your child, attendance at Old Earth School up to 2nd December 2022 was %.

Our school attendance target is 97%.

An attendance of 90% or less is classified as persistently absent.

As you can see from the enclosed printout your child's attendance has fallen well below the target.

We are working closely with Calderdale Education Welfare Team and they will support us in working with parents/carers of children with a low level of attendance to ensure this improves. As a result we will be monitoring the attendance of your child over the next 6 weeks of term time.

You must notify school on each day of absence and provide us with a letter about the illness or the other circumstances that caused the absence on your child's return to school. We ask that all appointments such as medical and dental are made out of school hours. Where this is not possible we require proof of the appointment in order to authorise the absence. Failure to provide these will mean the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

If your child's attendance is still a cause for concern in the future we may have to make a reference to the Education Welfare Team.

You can track the attendance of your child using the Bromcom "MyChildAtSchool" app. If you feel the attendance shown is not correct please contact the school office.

Yours sincerely

Mr D Burns
Head Teacher