

# OAK Attendance Policy



# OAKs Vision and Values

**The OAK is a short term therapeutic provision for secondary age pupils who are not able to engage in education due to trauma or mental health issues.**

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## **Who does the Policy Apply to?**

This policy applies to all pupils who attend the OAK. In addition to understanding this attendance policy all pupils, parents/carers and referring schools need to sign contracts which highlight their responsibilities in supporting the young person attending the OAK. Contracts can be found in Appendix A.

## Overview

The policy is set out to reflect statutory requirements and the most recent guidance from the DFE. We expect all our children to attend the OAK and their referring school, on time every day, unless the reason for absence is unavoidable. As a provision, we aim for all children to have 100% attendance.

## Aims

- To promote positive behaviour and good attendance is the responsibility of the whole OAK community.
- Regular attendance is crucial if OAK pupils are to achieve their potential and maximise their life chances.
- National statistics show that poor attendance can have a profound effect on a child's attainment and achievement;
  - Of pupils who miss more than **50** per cent of school, only three per cent manage to achieve five 4 to 9s including English and Maths.
  - Of pupils who miss between **10** per cent and **20** per cent of school, only **35** per cent manage to achieve five 4 to 9s GCSEs including English and Maths.
  - Of pupils who miss less than five per cent of school, **73** per cent achieve five 4 to 9s including English and Maths.

## Why Regular Attendance is so important

### Learning:

- Any absence disrupts the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will have a detrimental impact on their learning. Any pupil's absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others on the OAK.
- Ensuring your child's regular attendance at the OAK is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence (1996 Education Act) and may result in prosecution or a penalty notice for poor attendance under the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003.

### Promoting Regular Attendance:

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility - parents, pupils and all members of staff.

### The Law relating to attendance

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that 'the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him / her to receive efficient full time education suitable:

(a) to age, ability and aptitude and (b) to any special educational needs he/ she may have .Either by regular attendance at school or otherwise'.

(b) The Law relating to safeguarding Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 places a duty on local authorities and governing bodies to have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State with regard to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and pupils under the age of 18.

## **Safeguarding**

Your child may be at risk of harm if they do not attend the OAK regularly. Safeguarding the interests of each child is everyone's responsibility and within the context of this provision, promoting the welfare and life opportunities for your child encompasses:

- Attendance
- Behaviour Management
- Health and Safety
- Access to the Curriculum
- Peer on Peer abuse

Failing to attend this provision on a regular basis will be considered a safeguarding matter.

## **Parental/Carer Responsibility**

Parents/carers are expected to promote excellent levels of attendance and punctuality for their child. Any problems that arise with attendance are best resolved between the OAK, parent/carers and the child and when relevant, the referring school. Permitting absence from OAK without a good reason is an offence by the parent/carers.

The OAK expects that all parent / carers communicate with the OAK giving a reason for child's absence;

- in advance of any planned absence
- immediately following any unplanned absence (the next session)
- during any periods of absence.

It is the parent's responsibility to follow OAK procedures relating to all aspects concerning attendance, absence and punctuality as outlined within this policy. Parents are expected to support the OAK and attend meetings to discuss and resolve any issues arising in relation to attendance and punctuality.

## **What is the role of the child?**

We understand that there are some incidents where pupils are reluctant to attend the OAK. On occasions issues arise that make it difficult for the young person to attend it is the responsibility of the pupil to seek help and guidance from their parent/ carer or a member of staff in the OAK so that any concerns can quickly be resolved.

Unless unavoidable, it is the pupil's responsibility to attend the OAK regularly and on time and to attend all sessions punctually.

## **The role of the Behaviour, Attendance & Children Missing Education Officer (BACME)**

The Behaviour, Attendance & Children Missing Education Officer (BACME) meets with the OAK manager and is the point of contact between the Local Authority BACME, the OAK and the referring school.

They advise the OAK and monitor performance in relation to attendance and punctuality. They also take referrals from the OAK for more focused interventions with particular families. Intervening with children who are causing concern because of punctuality or attendance

These interventions include home visits, interviews at school, support for families with particular problems which affect attendance and punctuality. Where necessary, appropriate legal action against families who are not fulfilling their responsibilities under the Education Act will be taken. These include penalty notices, fines (£60 per parent per child, rising to £120 if not paid within 28 days (Anti-social Behaviour Act 2004) or prosecutions in the Magistrates' Court.

### **Monitoring Attendance and Punctuality**

The OAK team works closely with the London Borough of Waltham Forest Education BACME Service. OAK registers are monitored daily to identify session attendance and punctuality percentages. Individual attendance and punctuality is monitored on a daily basis.

### **Co-ordinating responses to concerns about attendance & punctuality**

The OAK staff are in contact with parents/carers on a daily basis to explain the reason for absence. Only the OAK may authorise this absence. Parents/carers are expected to contact the OAK at an early stage and to work with staff in resolving any problems together.

If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the OAK can liaise with the BACME Officer from the London Borough of Waltham Forest and the referring school. They will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed, court proceedings to prosecute parents can be used.

### **Authorised and Unauthorised Absence**

Authorised absence is where the OAK accepts there is a good reason for absence. Authorised absence requires communication from the parent/carer which is recorded by the OAK based attendance officer.

An unauthorised absence is where the school does not consider the absence reasonable or where no reason has been given. The school has a **Zero Tolerance approach** to unauthorised absence.

Examples of absences that the school will authorise include;-

- Sickness (below 5 counts)
- Unavoidable medical appointments
- Days of religious observance - up to a maximum of 3 days per academic year.
- Interviews or entrance exams for secondary school.
- Exceptional Circumstances – up to a maximum of 3 days – as authorised by the Head Teacher.
- Sporting events- where the child is involved in the event.

Examples of absences which the school will not authorise include;

- Shopping for new school shoes
- Birthday treats

- Waiting in for the gas man
- Holidays taken in term time
- Having your hair done for a special occasion
- Trips to the airport to drop off or collect family and friends.
- Accompanying a parent/sibling/family member to a doctor or hospital appointment.
- Visits to family / friends

### **Long term Sickness:**

If a child becomes ill and will require a week or more off from school, we recommend that pupils use online learning platforms as a way of keeping up with studies. If your child is going to be absent from school for a longer period of time please liaise with Ruth Peters, the OAK manager, so that we can decide what support they need from the OAK or whether the placement is to be put on hold.

Where a child has to be admitted to hospital for a long period of time, the hospital will usually provide education to the child.

### **Registration**

Legal Registration is taken at 9.20am and 13.00pm. The registers are legal documents and must be treated accordingly.

Truancy of sessions is also monitored via the session registers. Failure to not report persistent absence to sessions could be considered as failure to meet safeguarding expectations and this could result in disciplinary procedures.

### **Lateness**

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. Late arriving pupils disrupt therapeutic sessions on the OAK, it can be embarrassing for the pupil and can also encourage absence.

### **How we manage lateness:**

The school doors open at **9.00 am** and we expect your child to be **in their first session by 9.30 am** at the latest. Any time after 9.20 am pupils will be marked as late (L).

If your child has a persistent late record, you will be asked to meet with the OAK manager to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time; we are here to support you and your child if there are difficulties. As the OAK is a short term provision, we will meet with families within the first two weeks if there are concerns over lateness/attendance.

## **Absence Procedures:**

### **If your child is absent you must:**

1. Contact us as soon as possible **on the first day of absence**; ring the school on 0208 498 5110 ext 315/02085295324 and ask to be put through to THE OAK. You can also email [rpeters@heathcote.waltham.sch.uk](mailto:rpeters@heathcote.waltham.sch.uk)
2. Send a note in on the first day they return with an explanation of the absence – **you must do this even if you have already telephoned us; this can be a letter or a signed and dated note.**
3. Medical Evidence will be requested if your child's attendance drops below 92% to allow the absence to be authorised or if the child has 5 counts of illness.
4. If you are unable to ring or email, you can come into the OAK and report to staff directly.

### **If your child is absent we will:**

1. Telephone you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you and we may decide to complete a home visit.
2. If no contact can be made with the family via phone or no-one answered when we completed the home visit. We may decide to complete a Child Missing in Education Form (CME).
3. If a long absence occurs 3 or more days, we will invite you in to discuss the situation with the OAK staff. If there are repeated absences over a 2 week period a TAF will be called to discuss needs and set targets, this will be reviewed – where no improvement is made, discussions around whether OAK is the most suitable provision will be had with BACME and the referring school.
5. Referring Schools will be kept informed of attendance concerns and may process any attendance issues with the EWO if attendance drops below 90%.

## **Child Missing Education (CME)**

Children who have failed to take up a school place, or who have been unexpectedly absent from school for 5 or more consecutive school days, are potential Children Missing from Education. The referring schools will be informed if this is the case for an OAK pupil. In order to safeguard these children and ensure that they are able to access education, schools and other educational establishments the referring school must investigate the whereabouts of these children.

Investigations should include attempts to make telephone contact with all family members, home visits and liaison with partner agencies such as the School Admissions Service, Safer Schools Police Officers, the Revenue and Benefits Service and the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub.

## School Term Time

Our term times are set in accordance and with consultation with the Local Authority recommendations.

The confirmation of our school term dates are available from The Heathcote website or from the OAK staff. Please do not refer to any other sources as these are not confirmed by us.

## Change of Address

If a family is moving to a new address, parents/carers must provide the OAK and referring school with their new address and contact numbers. If the family is moving overseas, parents/carers must provide travel documents and a forwarding address. Failure to do this will result in a referral to the 'CME officer at the London Borough of Waltham Forest from the referring school.

## Telephone numbers/email

At the OAK we frequently need to contact parents/carers. You must provide the school with up to date numbers/email addresses, if you don't then something important may be missed. Please keep the OAK and the referring school up to date with any of these changes.

Detailed information about the coding of pupils attendance/absence at the OAK-

This area of tracking is particularly important for pupils who are experiencing such high anxiety that they cannot leave their home.

## Register Mark Codes

Pupils at the OAK will be marked with the following codes on the register:

- Unauthorised absence **O** – this means that the pupil is either not unwell but just not wanting to attend or has low attendance and does not have medical evidence for sickness
- Authorised absence for sickness **I** - If unwell with medical evidence or has good attendance and is rarely absent including COVID after the test result
- Not feeling well enough to attend due to existing anxiety but does engage with the online sessions - **Q**
- COVID related **X** - If symptoms/ waiting for a PCR test
- **J** code for any meeting with professional i.e. CAMHS

The expectation is that parents/carers will email the OAK a copy of any negative or positive LFT/PCR results so that the OAK can risk assess appropriately/can welcome pupils back to school.

For those pupils with **O** codes, parents/carers will be supported to get their pupil into school as soon as possible, or at least access online learning. This can be facilitated with a home visit from one of the OAK team and also the OAK team contacting the Early Help worker attached to the family to offer additional support. We aim to do a home visit on the day this is reported and contact the Early Help on the same day. The aim will then be for the pupil to return to the OAK the next day. As stated earlier in the **Absence Procedures section**, if

there are repeated absences over a 2 week period a TAF will be called to discuss needs and set targets, this will be reviewed – where no improvement is made, discussions around whether OAK is the most suitable provision will be had with BACME and the referring school.

Parents will be made aware of the attendance expectations in the admission meeting and also followed up in writing along with the home/school agreement.

## Appendix A:



### **Home Learning Agreement**

The OAK is a therapeutic provision; therefore, it is important that behaviour does not interfere with the work of staff and pupils. During your time at The OAK you will be expected to follow the behaviour and attendance policy, by signing this learning agreement you are acknowledging that you have read them both.

The key points are summarised below, alongside additional points that have been created by former OAK pupils:

I will:

- Comply with the rules of the OAK.
- Not bring personal belongings or valuables to school, unless absolutely necessary.
- Be polite and helpful to others.
- Take good care of equipment.
- Engage with sessions and do all my classwork/homework as well as I can.
- Keep the school free from litter and graffiti.
- Respect boundaries and always speak kindly to people.
- Not share confidential information about individual pupils with the wider OAK community but will always speak to a member of staff if I am worried about their safety/behaviour.
- Welcome pupils into the OAK and not isolate people.
- Be friendly and inclusive.
- Check in with people who are alone but respect their wishes if they wish to have time out.
- Not push someone to give me their personal information, or social media contacts.
- Talk with staff if I have any concerns about pupils or staff.
- Encourage restorative, healthy discussion.
- Not take photos on the OAK/Heathcote site.
- Be mindful of what I share in group sessions/break times and use language that is respectful of people's gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, religion and Trauma.
- Be considerate about how I talk about people's bodies and appearance.

Signed:

Date:

My **start** date is:

My **midway** is:

My **end** date is:



## Parent and OAK Learning Agreement:

The OAK is a therapeutic provision; therefore, it is important that behaviour does not interfere with the work of staff and pupils. During your time at The OAK you will be expected to follow the behaviour and attendance policy, by signing this learning agreement you are acknowledging that you have read them both.

The key points are summarised below, alongside additional points that have been created by former OAK pupils:

I will:

- Contact the OAK staff if I have any concerns, queries or positive feedback
- Respond to phone calls and emails from the OAK

I will support my young person/child to:

- Attend the OAK on time by helping them to get up in the morning and leave with enough time for their journey.
- Comply with the rules of the OAK.
- Not bring personal belongings or valuables to school, unless absolutely necessary.
- Be polite and helpful to others.
- Engage with sessions and do all my classwork/homework as well as they can.
- Respect boundaries and always speak kindly to people.
- Not share confidential information about individual pupils with the wider OAK community but will always speak to a member of staff if I am worried about their safety/behaviour.
- Be friendly and inclusive.
- Check in with people who are alone but respect their wishes if they wish to have time out.
- Encourage restorative, healthy discussion at home and at the OAK.
- Not take photos on the OAK/Heathcote site.
- Be considerate about how I talk about people's bodies and appearance.

Signed:

Date:

My child's **start** date is:

My child's **midway** is:

My child's **end** date is:

Please find attached phone numbers/websites that may offer you, or your child, support during holidays/weekends and evenings. Please always let staff at the OAK know if you have any worries.

### **Childline**

[www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)

24 hr helpline: 0800 1111 (free, doesn't show on your phone bill)

Also a one-to-one counsellor chat service online (see the website)

### **The Mix**

[www.themix.org.uk](http://www.themix.org.uk)

Helpline open 11am till 11pm: 0808 808 4994

Text message support 24/7; one-to-one online chat (see website)

### **Kooth**

[www.kooth.com](http://www.kooth.com)

Chat to a qualified counsellor online

Mon-Fri: 12 noon -10pm; Sat & Sun: 6-10pm

### **Shout**

**Crisis text line: text 'Shout' to 85258** (for free) and a counsellor will respond to you as soon as possible and help you find ways to keep yourself safe if you are feeling overwhelmed or want to hurt yourself



## School and OAK Learning Agreement

The OAK is a therapeutic provision. While on the OAK pupils undertake academic work online, provided by their referring school, this is supported by OAK staff.

Parents and pupils at the OAK have signed learning agreements, please could you, as the referring school, read and sign the contract below. It is key for the mental health and academic progression of OAK pupils that referring schools provide regular and challenging work for their pupils while they attend the OAK.

The aim for all OAK pupils is for them to return to their referring schools at the end of their placement at the OAK, being up to date with their learning makes this transition substantially easier and they can only do that with your support.

The referral school will:

- Provide between two and six weeks of online work for pupils in the subjects agreed at the induction.
- This work is to be uploaded in advance of the placement starting onto the pupil's online learning platform.
- Respond to the OAK's engagement officer regarding levels of academic engagement and achievement, and supply other information as needed.
- Provide the OAK with all necessary information/paperwork for referred pupils.
- Attend, as a minimum, the Induction, Midway and Ending meetings related to their pupil.
- Name a key member of staff who will be the main point of contact, and who will read and respond to all communications from the OAK.
- Take consultation from staff at The OAK regarding the re-integration of pupils into the referral school, where appropriate. If it is decided that a pupil should not return to a mainstream school, the referral school will be responsible for overseeing the move.

Signed:

Date:

Pupil's **start** date is:

Pupil's **midway** is:

Pupil's **end** date is: