



ATTENDANCE POLICY

<i>Written by:</i>	OHC SLT
<i>Reviewed by:</i>	Quality, Standards & Safeguarding Committee
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Attendance Policy

INTRODUCTION

Orchard Hill College (OHC) is committed to providing outstanding educational opportunities for all our students. We recognise the importance of regular attendance in maximising the benefit of any educational opportunity. Encouraging and supporting excellent attendance is a crucial part of supporting our students to learn effectively.

This policy is written with reference to DfE guidance [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#).

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all OHC stakeholders including students and parents/carers understand the importance of regular attendance at College and their roles and responsibilities regarding attendance. Research has shown that there is a direct correlation between absence from education and overall achievement. Poor attendance also affects students' ability to make and sustain friendships and can interrupt the routine of College life, making it hard to settle when they do attend.

RESPONSIBILITY FOR ATTENDANCE

Although OHC admits students from the age of 16, the majority of OHC students are currently 18 or over, with a wide range of learning difficulties/disabilities and additional needs. This means that responsibility for their attendance at College may be shared between the student, a parent/carer and/or other responsible adult e.g. supported living staff.

For students of compulsory school age (5 to 18 years), parents/carers have the primary responsibility for ensuring they attend an establishment authorised by their Local Authority. This includes a legal obligation to ensure students attend regularly and on time.

Ensuring regular attendance is an essential part of supporting students to achieve and enjoy their College experience.

OHC will always seek to work collaboratively with students, families and other stakeholders in order to support regular attendance.

Recording attendance

We will keep an attendance register and place all students onto this register. Attendance registers will be taken electronically.

We will take an attendance register at the start of the College day and once after lunch break. It will mark whether every student is:

- Present.
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity.
- Absent.
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

We will also record:

- Whether the absence is authorised or not.
- The nature of the activity if a student is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 6 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Roles and responsibilities

OHC Board of Trustees

The OHC Board of Trustees is responsible for:

- Promoting the importance of attendance across the College, through policies, process and ethos.
- Making sure College leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties.
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data.
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole College.
- Holding the Principal to account for the implementation of this policy.

The Principal

The Principal is responsible for:

- Monitoring College-level absence data and reporting it to Trustees.
- Monitoring the implementation and impact of attendance strategies.

The Deputy Principal/DSL

The Deputy Principal/DSL will:

- Monitor and analyse whole College attendance.
- Meet with Heads of College monthly to discuss reasons for absence and any safeguarding concerns.
- Ensure that relevant interventions/targeted support are in place for any student with attendance below 90%.

Heads of College

The Heads of College are responsible for:

- Implementing this policy at centre level.
- Having oversight of attendance data within their centres, including monitoring and analysis.

- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data.
- Arranging calls and meetings with students/parents/carers/Local Authorities to discuss attendance issues.
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to students and families.
- Raising any safeguarding or welfare concerns relating to attendance.

Lecturers

Lecturers are responsible for timely and accurate recording of attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes.

AUTHORISED AND UNAUTHORISED ABSENCES

While there is no legally determined framework for authorised or unauthorised absence at College, it is important to note that College placements are predicated and funded on each student receiving an agreed amount of directed learning hours. Prolonged or high levels of absence from College may lead to a student's placement being reviewed.

The College recognises that sometimes absence is unavoidable, e.g., when a student is unwell or has a medical appointment. We ask that students and parents/carers notify us promptly of any unavoidable absence.

If a student is reluctant to attend College, or if circumstances arise that may impact on a student's attendance e.g., issues with transport, this should be communicated as soon as possible to the relevant Head of College so that support strategies can be put in place.

ILLNESS AND MEDICAL APPOINTMENTS

When a student is unwell, the College should be contacted before morning registration on the first day of absence. A call must be made for each day of absence. When a student is absent due to illness or a medical appointment, evidence may be requested e.g. appointment card, letter, prescription, prescribed medication packs or boxes with the student's name printed on them.

Student absences will be monitored regularly by the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and Senior Leadership Team (SLT). Where a concern regarding attendance is highlighted, this will be shared with external agencies such as the local SEND team and / or social services.

Students and parents/carers should ensure that every effort is made to make or arrange medical appointments outside College hours.

OHC recognises that many students' additional needs may include significant health concerns and involve regular or unexpected medical support e.g. admission to hospital

or attendance at specialist clinics. We will always seek to work with our students and their families to support good attendance, and to work in partnership with other external agencies (e.g. local authority/healthcare providers) as required. Where students are temporarily unable to attend onsite, we will seek to support continued learning through initiatives such as home learning programmes or temporary reduced timetables. Any such initiative will:

- have the agreement of both the College, the student and/or parent/carer.
- have a clear ambition and be part of the student's wider support, health care or reintegration plan.
- have regular review dates which include the student and parents/carers where applicable, to ensure it is only in place for the shortest time necessary.
- have a proposed end date that takes into account the circumstances of the student, after which they are expected to attend full-time.

HOLIDAYS

Absence during term time can seriously disrupt students' continuity of learning. Students and parents/carers should avoid booking family holidays in term time. It is important to note that College placements are predicated on a certain level of directed learning, and that prolonged or high levels of absence may lead to a student's placement being reviewed.

PUNCTUALITY

Wherever possible, students should arrive on time for their scheduled provision. Late arrival is disruptive and can lead to students missing out on important work and information.

Where a student has learning or health needs that are likely to impact on punctuality, the College should be informed of these so that appropriate strategies can be put in place.

SAFEGUARDING

OHC has a duty to effectively safeguard all students. Supporting regular attendance is part of this safeguarding duty. Poor attendance and unexplained absence can indicate a possible safeguarding concern including (but not limited to) physical, emotional or sexual abuse, neglect, female genital mutilation (FGM), radicalisation, substance misuse or peer on peer abuse.

OHC staff will always seek to work with students and families to minimise absence and ensure clear communication regarding any absence that might occur. Where safeguarding concerns are raised, these will be managed in accordance with OHC's Child Protection, Adult Protection & Safeguarding Policy and Procedure.

STUDENTS MISSING EDUCATION

As vulnerable adults, OHC students are entitled to safeguarding in line with government guidance around children missing education. Safeguards in place to prevent students missing education at Orchard Hill College include:

- OHC must hold a minimum of two emergency contact numbers for each student, unless there is a genuine reason why this is not possible e.g. student or parent/carer fleeing domestic violence.
- Attendance is monitored regularly by the DSL and SLT.
- Where a student's attendance falls below 85%, the College will write to the student and their parent/carer offering support with attendance and any related factors that might impact on this. This may also be raised with the local authority SEND team and/or social services to ensure the appropriate support is in place for the students and their family.
- Any student going missing from education will always get immediate attention from the DSL. Staff are trained to be alert to signs to look out for and the individual triggers to be aware of when considering the risks of potential safeguarding concerns such as travelling to conflict zones, FGM and forced marriage.
- Where a student does not present for College as expected, the College will endeavour to ascertain that student's whereabouts and wellbeing without delay, using all available student, parent/carer and secondary/emergency contact details. Where no contact can be made with either the student or any named emergency contacts, a member of OHC staff should generally attend the student's home. If the student or a named contact still cannot be contacted, the College must report this to relevant personnel in the Local Authority (LA) and, where deemed necessary, the police. However, it is acknowledged that in some exceptional, local circumstances, such action may be counter-productive and it is for the College to risk assess such a scenario on the first day. Regardless of this, if a student is absent for a second consecutive day without notification from a named contact, the College **must** report this to relevant personnel in the Local Authority and, where necessary, the police.
- Where a student has been absent without explanation for 5 consecutive days, the College will write to the student, their parent/carer and their home Local Authority.
- Staff will always report to the Local Authority the name of any student who has been newly registered to attend the College but does not arrive on the expected day.
- Staff will always report to the Local Authority the continued absence of a student known or thought to have been taken overseas if the student does not return to College on the expected return date.
- OHC maintains accurate attendance and admissions registers (all students are on both), in line with statutory requirements. This includes paying careful attention to off-rolling students in association with the Local Authority and knowing, and recording, student destinations consistently on the admissions register. Where a student destination is unknown, and unable to be sought after significant follow-up, the Local Authority and/or Social Care Services will be informed.

- Students will not be deleted from the admissions register. Staff will alert the student's Local Authority immediately if:
 - the student has been taken out of College by their parents/carers and is being educated elsewhere e.g. home education
 - the student has ceased to attend College
 - the student has been certified as medically unfit to attend College or is in custody.

Keeping Local Authorities up to date is crucial so that they can work with us to ensure that all students are receiving the education to which they are entitled and are not at risk of abuse or neglect.

There may be occasions when a student's timetable needs to be temporarily reduced, in order to safeguard the student and support them with specific needs. In these instances OHC will work collaboratively with the student, their parents/carers and the relevant Local Authority to ensure that the student is supported to remain safe and access learning as appropriate while they are unable to attend College.

Where a student decides that they no longer wish to attend College, an Emergency EHCP meeting must be arranged for as soon as possible to enable OHC, the student, their parents/carers and the Local Authority to enact a planned transition to another provider or into the community as required.

RELATED POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Anti-Radicalisation Policy

Child Protection Adult Protection & Safeguarding Policy and Procedure

Positive Behaviour Policy

Remote Education Policy

Supporting Students with Medical Conditions in Education Policy