



ODYSSEY HOUSE SCHOOL

Attendance Policy

Odyssey House School is part of Odyssey Education Services.

Odyssey Education Services is Registered in England and Wales, company number 1162321, registered at 224 Venture House, Arlington Square, Downshire Way, Bracknell, RG12 1WA.

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Date: January 2026

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Review: September 2026

This policy is published on the school website and available on request

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Introduction

At Odyssey, attendance is not viewed in isolation, but as part of a wider process of engagement, emotional wellbeing and a child's sense of belonging. A core and priority focus of Odyssey's work is supporting students who are non-attenders or who have historically very low attendance, including those experiencing anxiety, school-based trauma, emotionally based school avoidance (EBSA), or previous negative educational experiences.

Odyssey specialises in working with students whose attendance may begin at extremely low levels, including students who are not attending at all. Through a personalised, relational and trauma-informed approach, we work to re-engage students in education by first creating a sense of safety, trust and enjoyment in learning. Central to this work is helping students develop a positive relationship with school, staff and learning, and fostering a genuine sense of belonging within the school community.

Our experience shows that, with the right support, students can make significant and sustained improvements in attendance over time. It is not uncommon for students to move from 0% attendance to 70–80% attendance, and beyond, as confidence, regulation and engagement improve. Progress is measured from each individual student's starting point, recognising that for some students, even small initial increases represent meaningful and significant success.

This work is a key priority for Odyssey and sits at the heart of our educational model. Attendance improvement is achieved through bespoke transition plans, flexible and graduated timetables where appropriate, close partnership working with families, and collaboration with external professionals. The ultimate aim is to support students to attend as fully as possible, at a pace that is sustainable for them, while building long-term engagement with education.

Odyssey is committed to ensuring that every student, regardless of their starting point, is supported to reconnect with learning, experience success, and increase their attendance over time in a way that prioritises wellbeing, dignity and positive outcomes.

Principles

- Receiving a full-time, suitable education is a child's legal entitlement, and regular school attendance is essential to securing this entitlement.
- Parents and carers have a legal responsibility to ensure that their child attends school, and the school has a duty to promote, monitor and support attendance in a way that is responsive to individual need.
- Odyssey recognises that for some children, difficulties attending school may be linked to anxiety, emotionally based school avoidance (EBSA), mental health needs or previous adverse educational experiences. These difficulties are understood as barriers to attendance rather than behavioural choices.
- Regular attendance supports academic progress, emotional wellbeing and social development, and enables children to build positive relationships and a sense of belonging within the school community.
- Poor or declining attendance is recognised as a safeguarding concern. Children whose attendance is affected by EBSA or other barriers will be considered potentially vulnerable and will be supported through early identification, careful monitoring and proportionate intervention.
- Improving attendance for students experiencing EBSA is a shared responsibility, requiring consistent collaboration between the school, parents/carers, the student and, where appropriate, external agencies.

Aims

- To secure each child's legal entitlement to a full-time, suitable education by promoting regular attendance and addressing the underlying barriers that may prevent attendance.
- To safeguard students' welfare by identifying attendance concerns early, particularly where anxiety or EBSA is a contributing factor, and responding with appropriate support.
- To work in partnership with parents, carers and external professionals to reduce anxiety, build confidence and support gradual, sustained re-engagement with education.
- To minimise absence, including persistent and severe absence, through a graduated, trauma-informed and child-centred approach that balances high expectations with appropriate flexibility.
- To support children and young people to develop resilience, emotional regulation and positive engagement with learning, improving long-term outcomes and life chances.
- To ensure that any adjustments made to support attendance are regularly reviewed, with the aim of increasing attendance over time and supporting reintegration into full-time education wherever possible.

Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the Department for Education (DfE) guidance *Working together to improve school attendance* (August 2024) and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on parental responsibility measures for school attendance.

The policy is underpinned by the following legislation, which sets out the legal powers and duties relating to school attendance and safeguarding:

- The Education Act 1996
- The Education Act 2002
- The Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2010
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2011
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2016
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007 (as amended)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (DfE, 2025)

The school expects students to:

- Attend school regularly and engage positively with learning, unless they are too unwell to do so.
- Follow and engage in the school timetable or their bespoke agreed support or transition plan.
- Arrive on time, appropriately dressed and prepared for the school day, with support provided where individual needs require reasonable adjustments.

The school expects parents / carers to:

- Encourage and support their child to attend school regularly and on time.
- Work in partnership with the school to address any barriers to attendance, including anxiety, emotionally based school avoidance (EBSA), or other identified needs.
- Inform the school as soon as possible if their child is unable to attend, providing reasons for absence.
- Contact the school promptly if they become aware that their child is reluctant or anxious about attending school, so that early support can be put in place.
- Engage with meetings, plans and agreed strategies to support their child's attendance and reintegration into school.

Students and parents/carers can expect the school to:

- Maintain regular, efficient and accurate recording of attendance and punctuality.
- Make contact with parents/carers on the first day of unexplained absence.
- Carry out home visits where concerns about attendance arise, including after three consecutive days of absence or sooner where safeguarding concerns are identified.
- Identify patterns of lateness or absence early and respond with timely, proportionate and supportive intervention.
- Respond promptly to concerns raised by students or families, particularly where anxiety, EBSA or mental health needs are identified.
- Provide a welcoming, safe and neuro-affirming environment in which students feel understood, valued and supported.
- Implement a graduated, trauma-informed approach to attendance, including personalised support, transition planning and regular review.
- Set clear expectations while offering appropriate flexibility, with the aim of increasing attendance over time and supporting reintegration into full-time education wherever possible.
- Work in partnership with parents/carers, local authorities and external agencies to support attendance and safeguard students' wellbeing.
- Maintain confidentiality and treat all attendance matters with sensitivity and professionalism.

Attendance register

In accordance with the Working together to improve school attendance (Department for Education, August 2024), Odyssey keeps an attendance register for all its pupils, and all pupils must be recorded on this register on every school day.

The attendance register is taken at the start of the morning session and again during the afternoon session on each school day. The register records whether each pupil is:

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

Attendance is recorded using the appropriate Department for Education (DfE) attendance codes, as set out in Appendix 1 of this policy.

Where a pupil is attending an approved off-site educational activity or is following an agreed transition, outreach or adjusted timetable plan, attendance will be recorded in line with DfE guidance and the individual arrangements in place.

Any amendment made to the attendance register will be clearly documented and will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date the amendment was made
- The name and role of the person who made the amendment

Attendance records are completed accurately, consistently and in a timely manner, as they form part of the school's safeguarding responsibilities and support the early identification of attendance concerns.

In line with statutory requirements, all attendance register entries will be preserved for a minimum of six years from the date on which they were made.

Where a pupil's attendance is affected by anxiety or emotionally based school avoidance (EBSA), attendance will be recorded accurately in line with DfE guidance, alongside the use of agreed support plans to promote gradual re-engagement and increased attendance over time.

School Procedures

All students who are absent from school during the morning or afternoon registration period will have their absence recorded on the attendance register as either authorised, unauthorised, or as an approved educational activity, in line with DfE guidance.

Only the Headteacher, or a member of the Senior Leadership Team acting on their behalf, can authorise absences. Where no reason for absence is known at the time of registration, the absence will initially be recorded as unauthorised until further information is received.

Accurate attendance recording forms part of the school's safeguarding responsibilities and supports the early identification of attendance concerns.

Lateness

Morning registration takes place at 9:00am. Registers remain open until 9:30am.

Students arriving after the start of the school day but before the close of the register will be recorded as present for statistical purposes but marked as late.

A reasonable explanation is expected for lateness (for example, delayed local authority transport). Where a student misses registration due to a medical appointment, the appropriate authorised absence code will be applied.

Afternoon registration takes place at 12:45pm and closes at 1:00pm.

Persistent lateness will be monitored and addressed in partnership with parents/carers.

Attendance Procedures

Parents and carers have a legal responsibility to ensure their child attends school regularly and to inform the school of any absence.

Parents/carers are required to:

1. Contact the school before 9:00am on the first day of absence if their child is unable to attend school for part or all of the day.
2. Maintain regular communication with the school if an absence continues beyond one or two days, including providing an expected return date where possible.
3. Respond promptly to school contact if an absence has not been reported. Where contact cannot be established, the school may attempt contact via multiple methods, consider a home visit, and liaise with external professionals or safeguarding partners as appropriate.
4. Understand that absences without an agreed or legitimate reason will be recorded as unauthorised.
5. Engage with school-led support where attendance concerns arise. Where attendance remains a concern despite support, the school may notify the Local Authority and consider further action in line with statutory guidance.
6. Where attendance does not improve despite sustained support, the school may escalate concerns in line with statutory attendance and safeguarding procedures.
7. Where applicable, the school may refer unauthorised leave to the Local Authority for consideration of statutory action

Student Attendance – Signing Out

Older students (Years 9, 10 and 11) may be permitted to sign out during the lunch period once they and with the approval of parents/carers and the Headteacher.

This privilege may be extended to other students where agreed by the school, parents/carers and the student, and where the student demonstrates an appropriate level of independence.

Students who fail to return to school on time following lunch may have this privilege withdrawn.

If a student leaves the school site and subsequently becomes unwell, it is the responsibility of the student and parent/carer to inform the school immediately. Failure to do so may result in the absence being recorded as unauthorised.

Students on Adjusted or Transition Timetables

Some students may require a temporary adjusted or transition timetable as part of a planned, time-limited intervention to support reintegration into school, particularly where attendance has been affected by anxiety, emotionally based school avoidance (EBSA), trauma or other identified needs.

Adjusted or transition timetables will:

- Be agreed in writing with parents/carers and the Local Authority
- Be time-limited, with clear review dates
- Have a clear aim of increasing attendance and supporting a return to full-time education

Attendance will always be recorded on the main school register. For sessions where a student is not expected to attend due to an agreed adjusted or transition timetable, the absence will be recorded as authorised (Code C), in line with DfE guidance.

Attendance will be tracked separately against the agreed timetable, and progress will be reviewed regularly with parents/carers and, where appropriate, the Local Authority. Adjustments will be reduced as attendance and engagement improve.

Appointments

Parents/carers should make every effort to arrange medical or other appointments outside of school hours or during school holidays.

Where this is not possible, the school must be informed in advance, and students must sign out through the School Office.

Absence due to medical or dental appointments will be recorded as authorised where advance notice has been provided. Students should be absent for the minimum time necessary.

Emergency appointments should be discussed with the Headteacher as soon as possible.

Requests for other types of absence during term time must be made in advance, and authorisation will be considered in line with this policy.

Medical and Mental Health Appointments (including CAMHS)

Odyssey recognises that many students require regular medical and mental health appointments, including CAMHS and other therapeutic or clinical services, as part of their ongoing care and support.

Parents/carers should make every effort to arrange appointments outside of school hours. Where this is not possible, the school will support attendance around appointments wherever appropriate.

Absence due to medical or mental health appointments, including CAMHS, will be recorded as an authorised absence (Code M) in line with Department for Education guidance.

The school will:

- Work flexibly to support students before and after appointments where possible
- Record attendance accurately to reflect engagement with education and healthcare

- Monitor the impact of frequent appointments and work with families and professionals to minimise disruption to learning

Medical and mental health appointments will be recorded but will not be treated as a negative attendance concern.

Students Who Become Ill During the School Day

Students who become unwell during the school day must report to a staff first aider.

If it is agreed that the student needs to leave school, parents/carers or emergency contacts will be contacted and appropriate arrangements made. Students will only be permitted to leave once consent and safe travel arrangements have been confirmed.

Subject Attendance – Late Procedures

Students are expected to arrive on time for all lessons, as lateness disrupts learning for both the student and others.

Patterns of lesson lateness will be monitored, and concerns will be escalated to the Headteacher where appropriate.

Rest Days (Mental Health and Wellbeing Support)

Odyssey recognises that some students experience periods of heightened anxiety, emotionally based school avoidance (EBSA), burnout or mental health difficulty, which can significantly impact their ability to attend school consistently.

In exceptional circumstances, a rest day may be agreed as part of a planned, supportive intervention to reduce demand, prevent escalation, and support longer-term engagement with education.

Rest days:

- Must be approved in advance by the Headteacher (or delegated senior leader)
- Will only be agreed where there is a clear wellbeing or mental health rationale
- Are not an entitlement and will not be approved retrospectively
- Are not permitted for holidays, family events or recreational activities
- Form part of a wider support or attendance plan, with the aim of improving attendance over time
- Rest days will not be used routinely or as a replacement for attendance, and their impact will be reviewed weekly.

Attendance on agreed rest days will be recorded on the main attendance register as authorised absence (Code C), in line with DfE guidance.

The use of rest days will be time-limited, monitored and regularly reviewed with parents/carers, and reduced as the student's capacity for attendance improves.

Unplanned Absence

Parents/carers must notify the school by phone or email on the first day of an unplanned absence, for example where a student is unable to attend due to illness, **by 9:00am or as soon as reasonably practicable**.

Absence due to illness will normally be recorded as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern regarding the authenticity or frequency of the illness.

Where there is concern, the school may request appropriate medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment confirmation or other relevant documentation. Medical evidence will **not** be requested routinely and will only be sought where necessary to support accurate attendance recording or safeguarding.

If the school is not satisfied that the absence is due to illness and no alternative agreed support arrangement is in place (such as an approved rest day or adjusted timetable), the absence may be recorded as unauthorised. Parents/carers will be informed where this occurs.

Where unplanned absence appears to be linked to anxiety, emotionally based school avoidance (EBSA), mental health difficulty or emerging wellbeing concerns, the school will seek to work with parents/carers to identify appropriate support and reduce further absence.

Student Attendance – Mock Exams, Final Exams and Vacations

Attendance at mock examinations, GCSEs and all end-of-year assessments is regarded as a priority. Students are expected to attend all scheduled examinations and assessments, as these form an essential part of curriculum delivery, accreditation and progress monitoring.

Where a student does not attend a scheduled examination, the subject teacher will inform the Headteacher and contact parents/carers to establish the reason for absence and determine next steps.

If a student is absent from a mock examination due to illness or another authorised reason, the examination will be rearranged where possible once the student returns to school.

In the event that a student becomes unwell during a final or external examination series, the school must be notified immediately. Where required by the examination board, appropriate medical evidence may be requested. The school will liaise with the relevant examination board to consider alternative arrangements or special consideration where applicable.

Where attendance at examinations is affected by anxiety, emotionally based school avoidance (EBSA) or mental health needs, the school will work with parents/carers and relevant professionals to support participation wherever possible, while maintaining compliance with examination regulations.

Monitoring Absence, Illness and Welfare

First Day of Absence

Parents/carers are expected to notify the school by phone or email before 8:45am on the first day of any unplanned absence.

If no contact has been received, the School Office will attempt to contact parents/carers by 9:30am to establish the student's whereabouts and wellbeing. This forms part of the school's safeguarding responsibilities.

Once contact has been made, the School Office will record and categorise the absence appropriately on the attendance register.

Continuing Absence Due to Illness or Wellbeing

Where a student continues to be absent due to illness or wellbeing concerns, parents/carers are expected to maintain regular contact with the school, unless the expected duration of absence has already been agreed.

The school recognises that both physical and mental health difficulties, including anxiety and emotionally based school avoidance (EBSA), may affect attendance. In such cases, the school will seek to work in partnership with families to support the student and plan for a safe and sustainable return to school.

During periods of continued absence, the school will maintain **regular welfare oversight**, ensuring that the student is seen, heard from, or otherwise checked on **at least every three school days**. This contact may take the form of phone calls, welfare check-ins, online contact or home visits, depending on individual circumstances and level of need.

Safeguarding and Escalation

Where contact cannot be established, where absence becomes prolonged, or where there are concerns about a student's safety or wellbeing, the matter will be escalated to the Headteacher.

In line with safeguarding procedures, the school may:

- Carry out a home visit
- Liaise with the Local Authority, social care, or other relevant agencies
- Request a multi-agency discussion or welfare check

Unexplained absence will be treated as a potential safeguarding concern and responded to proportionately.

Prolonged or Unexplained Absence

Where a student has been absent without explanation for a prolonged period, the school will follow statutory guidance relating to children missing education (CME).

This may include notifying the Local Authority and working collaboratively to establish the student's whereabouts and ensure their safety. Removal from roll will only be considered in line with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations and following appropriate Local Authority processes.

Frequent or Emerging Absence Concerns

It is the responsibility of the Key Worker and School Administrator to monitor attendance patterns and alert the Headteacher to emerging concerns.

Where a pattern of absence develops, the school will work with parents/carers to identify barriers and agree supportive interventions. If attendance does not improve, further support or advice may be sought from the Local Authority or external professionals.

Returning to School After Absence

When a student returns to school following any period of absence, staff will ensure the student feels welcomed, supported and reintegrated.

This will include:

- Emotional check-ins
- Support to catch up on missed learning
- Re-establishing routines and expectations at a pace appropriate to the student

For students who have been absent due to illness, anxiety or EBSA, reintegration may be gradual and supported through agreed plans, with the aim of increasing attendance over time.

Absence Notes and Records

All absence notifications, including written explanations from parents/carers and evidence relating to appointments or authorised absence, are retained on the student's file in line with data protection and safeguarding requirements.

These records support accurate attendance recording, monitoring of patterns of absence, and the school's safeguarding duties.

Holidays During Term Time

The school strongly discourages holidays during term time, as regular attendance is essential to a student's educational progress, wellbeing and continuity of learning.

In line with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations, leave of absence during term time will only be authorised in **exceptional circumstances** and must be requested in advance.

Parents/carers must apply in writing to the Headteacher at least two weeks before the proposed absence, using the school's Application for Leave of Absence form, setting out the reasons for the request.

Each request will be considered on an individual basis. In reaching a decision, the Headteacher will take into account factors including, but not limited to:

- The student's overall attendance and recent attendance patterns
- The student's individual needs, including any identified SEND, EBSA or mental health considerations
- The timing and length of the requested absence
- The potential impact on learning, assessment or examination preparation

Where leave is not authorised, any absence taken will be recorded as unauthorised in line with statutory guidance.

Parents/carers will be notified in writing of the decision.

Monitoring, Targets, Data and Governance

Leadership Responsibility and Oversight

The Headteacher holds overall responsibility for attendance across the school and for ensuring that attendance is monitored, analysed and responded to effectively.

Attendance is monitored at both pastoral level and Senior Leadership Team (SLT) level, ensuring that emerging concerns are identified early and that appropriate support and intervention are implemented.

Attendance monitoring forms part of the school's safeguarding responsibilities and supports early identification of vulnerability.

Individual Attendance Targets and Support

Attendance improvement targets are set for each individual student, taking into account their starting point, identified needs and any agreed support arrangements.

Targets focus on:

- Improving attendance over time
- Increasing engagement and consistency
- Supporting reintegration into fuller attendance where possible

Targets are reviewed regularly and are supported by personalised strategies, including pastoral support, transition planning, adjusted timetables or other agreed interventions.

Attendance Data and Analysis

Odyssey recognises that raw attendance percentages alone do not provide a full or accurate picture for a specialist cohort. Attendance data is therefore analysed using a range of measures, including:

- Overall attendance percentage
- Percentage change over time
- Individual progress from baseline

Attendance data is collected, monitored and reviewed across defined cohorts, including:

- Core students accessing a full or near full timetable
- Students on two-term transition programmes

- Students on adjusted or adapted timetables, with clear start dates, review points and expected timescales

Attendance for students on adjusted or transition timetables is tracked separately against their agreed timetable, alongside statutory attendance register data.

Review, Escalation and School Improvement

Attendance data is reviewed regularly at pastoral and SLT meetings. Where attendance does not improve despite support, plans are reviewed and adjusted, and further intervention may be considered.

Attendance analysis directly informs school improvement planning, including the evaluation of pastoral systems, curriculum accessibility, wellbeing support and reintegration strategies.

Persistent concerns may result in:

- Increased pastoral oversight
- Multi-agency involvement
- Liaison with the Local Authority

Governance and Reporting

The Headteacher provides termly attendance reports to the Executive Team as part of governance oversight.

These reports include:

- Whole-school attendance data
- Percentage change and attendance trends over time
- Cohort-specific analysis (core students, transition programmes, adjusted timetables)
- Progress against individual and cohort attendance improvement targets

The Executive Team provides strategic oversight, challenge and support, ensuring that attendance practice remains robust, proportionate and aligned with statutory guidance.

Appendix 1: Data definitions we use in attendance reports

Data definitions in the reports may change.

Absence

Number of absent sessions divided by number of possible attendance sessions.

Absent sessions

Number of sessions with the absence code C, (internal use only C1, C2), E, G, I, J1, M, N, O, R, S, T and U.

Attendance %

Number of present sessions divided by number of possible attendance sessions.

Authorised %

Number of authorised absence sessions divided by number of possible attendance sessions.

Authorised sessions

Number of sessions with the absence code C, (internal use only C1, C2),, E, I, J1,M, R, S and T.

Appendix 2: Breakdown of Codes

Present at school

- / – Present (AM)
- \ – Present (PM)

Authorised absence

- C – Authorised absence (exceptional circumstances agreed by the school)
- E – Excluded (authorised absence)
- H – Authorised holiday (exceptional circumstances only)
- I – Illness (physical or mental health)
- M – Medical or dental appointment (includes CAMHS and mental health appointments)
- P – Approved sporting activity
- R – Religious observance
- S – Study leave
- T – Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence

Unauthorised absence

- G – Holiday not authorised by the school
- O – Absent without authorisation
- U – Late after registers close

Approved educational activity / other circumstances

- B – Approved off-site educational activity
- D – Dual registered (attending another educational establishment)
- J – At interview
- K – Attending education provision arranged by the Local Authority
- L – Late (before registers close)
- N – No reason yet provided for absence
- V – Educational visit or trip
- W – Work experience (not dual registered)

Not required to attend

- X – Non-compulsory school age (below or above compulsory age)
- Y – Partial or enforced closure
- Z – Pupil not yet on roll

Important notes (especially for Odyssey)

- **Mental health illness** is correctly recorded as **Code I**
- **CAMHS and therapy appointments** are **Code M**
- **Adjusted / transition timetable sessions not expected to be attended** should be recorded as **Code C** (authorised absence), with progress tracked separately
- **Rest days** (approved, planned, Headteacher-authorised) should also use **Code C**
- Any **sub-codes** (e.g. C1, C2) are **internal only** and must map back to the national codes above