



Latest update: Sept. 2025

Date for review: Sept. 2026

1. Introduction and aims

This Attendance and Engagement policy outlines the low demand approach to attendance and engagement that we take at Oaks Rise and outlines how we will support our learners to access our provision. It should be read in conjunction with our Child Protection & Safeguarding Policy and Teaching and Learning Policy.

At Oaks Rise we recognise that many of our learners have experienced education-based trauma, and/or have experienced Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA). Due to their neurodivergent identities, many Oaks Rise learners will have struggled to access educational environments that did not meet their needs, and as such we aim to make attending Oaks Rise feel as safe and accessible as possible.

Our overall aim is for learners to feel happy, safe, and able to attend Oaks Rise for the full length of sessions, on a regular basis. However, we understand that for many of our learners this will take a significant level of transition work, a long period of time, and learners may not make progress toward this goal in a linear way. We also recognise that for some of our learners, they may never be able to attend Oaks Rise for all 9 hours per week, but we still want to ensure that these learners feel welcome and appreciated as important and integral members of our community.

This document outlines the ways in which Oaks Rise teaching staff can support attendance and engagement, safeguarding considerations, and the role of commissioning schools, parents and carers.

2. Attendance

At Oaks Rise we will celebrate attendance in any form. We recognise that for our learners, leaving the house, transitioning to a new location, and getting through the door can be a huge accomplishment. We therefore recognise that there may have been a significant struggle for our learners before they arrive on site at Oaks Rise. As such we will never penalise, reprimand, or create consequences for any learner who is either late or unable to attend.

If a learner attends an Oaks Rise session for any length of time, however short, this will be considered attendance. We also recognise that due to the challenge of attending, many of

our learners will need time to regulate when they first arrive. Learners will have access to our low sensory room and to the support of staff (if desired) to support them with this, and will be encouraged to take time to settle in when they arrive.

Our expectation is that most of our learners will find it challenging to attend when they first start at Oaks Rise and as such bespoke transition plans are created for each of our young people. These outline bespoke attendance goals that are monitored and adapted whenever needed.

We also recognise that some of our learners may not be able to stay until the end of a session and may need to leave early, particularly when they first start at Oaks Rise. We want our learners to feel safe with us, and part of that safety is the adults around them listening to their needs. As such, if a learner's need is to leave early we will support them in this in any way that we can. We strive to ensure that learners do not feel forced to stay at the provision for longer than they feel comfortable and will respond to what our learners communicate - either verbally or in other ways - about their needs.

Where needed, we will endeavour to create bespoke attendance and engagement aims for our learners so that they can feel positive about what they are achieving rather than negative about what they are still finding challenging.

Gradually decreasing attendance over time

A decrease in attendance over time can be an indicator that a learner's needs are not being met. A gradually decreasing ability to attend a setting can be a particular indication of unmet needs for the profile of learners that Oaks Rise supports - that is those with internalised presentations of distress who are often 'high-maskers'. For this reason, Oaks Rise will pay close attention to attendance patterns to ensure we are supporting learners in a timely manner, providing additional support and adjusting practice where required.

The purpose of Oaks Rise's focus on attendance patterns is never to pressure, penalise, shame or create consequences for learners or their parents / carers when attendance decreases. It is always with the intention of ensuring we are fully aware of a learners' needs and wellbeing whilst at Oaks Rise and that we are providing the best support possible to meet needs. We are mindful of the difficult experiences many of our learners and their parents & carers will have faced in accessing previous education provisions and the negative association they may have towards conversations around attendance. As such we will emphasise the genuinely supportive motivation behind such discussions and handle these conversations with extreme care, sensitively and kindness.

The Oaks Rise Education Coordinator will monitor attendance on a weekly basis. If a learner does not attend for 3 sessions over the course of 2 weeks or 3 sessions in a row this will be highlighted to the relevant Senior Learning Facilitator and a follow up meeting or conversation with parents / carers may be scheduled depending on the circumstances around the absences. It will be made clear to the parents / carers that the purpose of any

follow up is to explore the barriers to the learner's attendance and ways that Oaks Rise can offer further support or adjustments.

3. Safeguarding Considerations

Whilst we want Oaks Rise to remain accessible for all of our learners, there are some safeguarding considerations related to attendance and engagement that we need to consider.

We need to ensure that all our learners are safe and as such we will need to know where our learners are at all times. This means that:

Attendance:

- Commissioning schools will be informed on the same day of absence for notified absences.
- For unnotified absences, we have a 15-minute soft start to sessions. After this time there will be a 30-minute window for contacting parents and carers. If we cannot reach either contact for the child within this time the DSL will assess the situation and the commissioning school will be informed. These timeframes may be shortened for individual learners should their individual risk assessment indicate the need for swifter follow up to absences.
- We will share termly attendance information with the commissioning school, parents & carers via termly progress reports.

Collection:

- We will be unable to allow a learner to leave Oaks Rise without an agreed adult collecting them unless we have received a permission form from parents/carers, permitting the learner to leave alone. In the absence of a permission form we will need learners to remain on site or with a staff member until they are collected.
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4. Engagement

At Oaks Rise we will consider engagement in a holistic and bespoke way. Engagement may look different for each of our learners and this will be reflected in their individual learning aims.

Engagement could look like:

- Spending time engaged in an independent activity.
- Doing an activity alongside peers.
- Engaging with a group activity.
- Feeling safe enough to stim around others.
- Communicating with members of staff.

- Communicating with peers.
- Engaging with a piece of independent work.
- Sharing their emotions or experiences with others.

If learners identify a particular engagement desire or goal that they would like to work toward - such as communicating more with peers - then they will be supported to achieve this by staff members.

We will also work with our learners to identify any barriers to their engagement that they may be experiencing and develop ways to remove these barriers by making any reasonable adjustments that we can.

5. Parent/Carer Support Required

We recognise that parents and carers play an integral role in supporting attendance and engagement, and in ensuring that our learners feel safe to attend. We also recognise that for many of the families involved with Oaks Rise, this can be a particularly challenging element of education.

To support our learners to attend Oaks Rise, and most importantly to feel safe whilst there, we will require parents and carers support in the following ways:

- Contacting Oaks Rise as soon as possible if a learner is going to be late.
- Contacting Oaks Rise as soon as possible if a learner is unable to attend due to illness, wellbeing, or any other reason.
- Being easily contactable whilst learners are at Oaks Rise in case a learner needs to leave early.
- Working with Oaks Rise to adapt transition plans when learners find these too challenging.
- Working with Oaks Rise to be transparent about any struggles that our learners or our learners' families are experiencing, particularly where these may impact attendance or engagement.
- Communicating openly at home about any barriers to engagement or attending and communicating these to Oaks Rise so that we can support with making reasonable adjustments.