



# Attendance Policy

## Introduction

We are committed to meeting our obligation with regards to school attendance through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- Promoting good attendance
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence
- Building strong relationships with families to ensure pupils have the support in place to attend school
- Promoting attendance through termly and annual rewards for those with good attendance.

We will also promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

Any school absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence disrupts teaching routines so may also affect the learning of others in the same class. Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

## Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the [working together to improve school attendance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of [The Education Act 1996](#)
- Part 3 of [The Education Act 2002](#)
- Part 7 of [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006 \(and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments\)](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)
- This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.

## Roles and responsibilities

The governing board is responsible for:

- Promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school
- Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance
- Making sure that a link governor for attendance meets with relevant staff regularly to monitor and review attendance procedures
- Holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

The headteacher is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the school
- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary
- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data.

The school attendance officer (currently the Headteacher) is responsible for:

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data
- Arranging calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues

- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff
- Working with the county attendance team and other officers to tackle persistent absence.

Class teachers are responsible for:

- Recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office by 8:55am each day.

School Admin staff are responsible for:

- Taking messages from parents about absence on a day-to-day basis and recording it on the school system
- Contacting parents immediately if children are absent from school without explanation
- Advising the school attendance officer of any absence that may require following up.

Parents/carers are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day on time
- Call the school to report their child's absence before 8:55am on the day of the absence, and advise when they are expected to return
- Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day.

### **Recording attendance**

We will keep an attendance register and place all pupils onto this register.

We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark (using [DFE attendance codes](#) ) whether every pupil is:

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

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment.

We will also record:

- Whether the absence is authorised or not (for pupils of compulsory age)
- The nature of the activity if a pupil is attending an approved educational activity
- The nature of circumstances where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Pupils must arrive in school by 8:55am on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at 8:45am and will be kept open until 8:55am. The register for the second session will be taken at 1:00pm and will be kept open until 1:05pm.

## **Procedures for reporting absence**

### **Unplanned absence**

Parents/Carers must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 8:55am or as soon as practically possible by calling the school office on 01608 658366, or by notifying absence using ParentMail.

We will mark absence due to illness as 'authorised' unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness. If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask the pupil's parent/carer to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily. If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

### **Planned medical appointments**

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as 'authorised' as long as the pupil's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment. However, we encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary. Medical/dental appointment requests must be accompanied by an appointment card or other written confirmation.

### **Exceptional Leave**

Other than sickness and medical absence, the headteacher will only authorise leave in 'exceptional circumstances' Taking holidays in term time will affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking children away in school time. Remember that any savings you think you may make by taking a holiday in school time are offset by the cost to your child's education. There is no automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday, and as there are thirteen week's school holiday, requests for term time holiday will be refused.

Considerations:

- It is widely known that the link between a pupil's attendance and attainment is irrefutable
- Early poor attendance habits follow through into secondary school, further education and employment
- Graduates earn, on average, double that of young people that leave school with no qualifications.
- The Head Teacher will meet with every family applying for Exceptional Leave to stress the importance of good school attendance habits and links between attendance & attainment
- Exceptional leave is most unlikely to be authorised when a pupil's attendance is less than 95%.
- Exceptional leave is likely to be refused when school is aware of any truancy
- Exceptional leave will always be refused when requests are regular (e.g. annual) or when patterns become identifiable
- Reasons for Exceptional Leave will be logged on the pupil's record and shared as part of the transfer/transition process.

The County Attendance Team may issue Penalty Notices for any unauthorised 'Exceptional Leave'. Penalty Notices can be issued to each parent/carer concerned. Please note that it will be per parent, per child. Payment within 21 days of receipt of notice is £60 and £120 if paid after this period, but within 28 days. If the Penalty Notice remains unpaid after 28 days you will each receive a summons to Oxford Magistrates Court. If unauthorised leave is repeated the County Attendance Team may summons each parent to Court without a Penalty Notice being issued.

### **Following up unexplained absence**

Where any pupil does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the school will:

- Call the pupil's parent on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason
- Call the parent/carer on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the school will consider involving a county attendance officer or social worker
- Visit the family home if we have not heard by day 3 of absence
- Invite parent(s) in to discuss the situation with our attendance officer, or refer the matter to the county attendance team, if absences persist.

## **Frequent absence**

Where incidents of poor attendance and/or lateness are identified through monitoring, parents/carers will be notified in writing that this is a cause for concern. If this continues, the school will invite parents/carers in to discuss causes and ways forward, this may or may not require a 'Parenting Contract'. A parenting contract is a written, signed agreement between parents and the school. Parenting contracts are voluntary, but any non-compliance could be recorded by the school and may be used as evidence in court.

The Headteacher will liaise with the county attendance team to ensure necessary action is taken when incidents of poor attendance and/or punctuality continue.

## **Reporting to parents/carers**

The school will regularly inform parents about their child's attendance and absence levels. This will be done annually for all parents and whenever attendance falls below the minimum expected level (96%) for other parents.

## **Lateness and punctuality**

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your child regularly misses the start of the day, they miss the beginning of important English or Maths sessions. Your child will also miss an opportunity to get vital information and messages for the day. For many pupils it can also be embarrassing for the child.

A pupil who arrives late will be marked as late, using the appropriate code

The school day starts at 8:45am, and we expect your child to be in class at that time. Registers are marked by 8:55am, and your child will receive a late mark if they are not in by that time. In accordance with the Regulations, if your child arrives after that time they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will not count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. This may mean that you could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists. Whilst there is no mandatory time for pm registration, the school will seek to take the register directly following the lunchtime period at 1:05pm in order to support safeguarding and early identification of pupils who are late to return or whom do not return.

If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with a member of staff to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

## **Attendance monitoring**

We analyse all absence carefully and draw trends based on pupils' characteristics, vulnerabilities, days of week, and repeat illnesses. We focus our attention on addressing these trends of absence.

## **Understanding types of absence**

### **'Authorised' and 'Unauthorised' absence**

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents), as either 'authorised' or 'unauthorised'. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required, preferably in writing.

'Authorised' absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a valid reason like illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, or other unavoidable cause.

'Unauthorised absences' are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This type of absence can lead to sanctions and/or legal proceedings.

'Unauthorised' absence includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- truancy before or during the school day
- absences which have never been properly explained
- children who arrive at school too late to get a mark
- shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed
- excessive illness without medical evidence

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If your child is reluctant to attend, never cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually make things worse.

### **‘Persistent’ absence (PA)**

A pupil becomes a ‘persistent absentee’ when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for *any* reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child’s educational prospects and we need parents fullest support and co-operation to tackle this. We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any child that is seen to have reached the PA threshold or is at risk of moving towards that threshold is given priority and you will be informed of this immediately. PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system and we also combine this with academic mentoring where absence affects attainment. All our PA pupils and their parents are subject to an Action Plan and the plan may include allocation of additional support through a Mentor or a TA, use of circle time, individual incentive programmes and participation in group activities around raising attendance. All PA cases are also automatically made known to the County Attendance team. If your child becomes a PA pupil, we will seek your consent to complete an Early Help Assessment with you and consider convening a ‘Team Around the Family’.

### **‘Severe’ Absenteeism (SA)**

A pupil becomes a ‘severe absentee’ when they miss 50% or more schooling across the school year for any reason. Absence at this level is doing *significant* damage to any child’s academic and social progress and can have lifelong consequences. All SA pupils at our school will have an Individual Attendance Plan which will incorporate multi-agency input. You will be expected to engage with all partners to improve your child’s attendance to 95+%.

### **The County Attendance Team**

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with our staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the child to the county attendance team at Oxfordshire County Council. At the school’s request, they may issue a Penalty Notice per parent/carer, per child (currently £60 rising to £120 if unpaid after 21 days. If unpaid after 28 days a summons to Court will be issued for each unpaid Penalty Notice for prosecutions in the Magistrates Court. This can result in a criminal record and a fine of up to £2,500, a Community Order, Parenting Order or ultimately a custodial sentence).

The county attendance team, with the school, will encourage you to engage with an Early Help Assessment. Education Supervision Orders may be discussed with you to support rapidly improved attendance. Parents that have previously been issued with Penalty Notices for their children’s unauthorised absences, in the event of further unauthorised absences may receive summonses to Court. Alternatively, parents or children may wish to contact the county attendance team themselves to ask for help or information. The county attendance team is independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is 01865 323513 or email: [attendance@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:attendance@oxfordshire.gov.uk).

### **Attendance targets**

The school will set attendance targets each year. A system for analysing performance towards the targets will be established and a senior school manager will be responsible for overseeing this work. The current school target is 98%

<b>Policy Approved by:</b>	Governing Body	<b>Date:</b> October 2022
<b>Last reviewed on:</b>	November 2022	
<b>Next review due by:</b>	October 2024	