Attendance Policy 2024

This policy was adopted by governors on 14th November 2024

Regular school attendance is essential if children are to achieve their full potential. East Oxford Primary School believes that regular school attendance is the key to enabling children to maximise the educational opportunities available to them and become emotionally resilient, confident and competent adults who are able to realise their full potential and make a positive contribution to their community.

Our school community includes many children from a diverse range of backgrounds and throughout the world. Some are temporarily resident in our country, while others still have family overseas. We believe that providing equal access to the benefits of education through promoting and ensuring a child's regular attendance is essential to the core principles of our mission around equality and equity – being present helps to build a strong and cohesive community with mutual respect.

Any 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 affect the learning of others in the same class. Children are best safeguarded from exploitation and other risks in the wider community by attending school regularly where they are supervised by qualified and caring professionals.

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.

This policy works to meet the mandatory requirements laid out in "Working together to improve school attendance - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)"

School Targets

The school has targets to improve attendance and all families have an important part to play in meeting these targets. The minimum level of attendance for this school is 95% attendance and we will keep parents updated regularly about progress to this level and how their child's attendance compares. Our target is to achieve better than this however because we know that good attendance is the key to successful schooling and we believe our pupils can be amongst the best in Oxfordshire.

Through the school year we monitor absences and punctuality to show us where improvements need to be made. We analyse all absence carefully and draw trends based on pupils' characteristics, vulnerabilities, days of the week, subjects missed and repeat illnesses. We focus our attention on addressing these trends of absence.

Understanding Types of 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 good reason like illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause. If this occurs, school will require evidence of the appointment to be able to authorise the absence.

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 the Local Authority (County Attendance Team) using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This 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 late after the register has closed and are therefore given an unauthorised absence 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

Authorised Absence

Illness: In most cases a telephone call or a note from the parent informing the school that their child is ill will be acceptable. Parents may be asked to provide medical evidence where there are repeated absences due to reported illness. This will usually be in the form of an appointment card, prescription etc.

Medical/Dental Appointments: Parents are advised where possible to make medical and dental appointments outside the school day. Where this is not possible, pupils should attend school for part of the day. Parents should show the appointment card to school.

Other Authorised Circumstances: These will be treated on a case by case basis by the head teacher and will only be authorised if the circumstances are exceptional, for example, urgent appointments outside the area (eg embassy).

Excluded (no alternative provision made): Exclusion from attending school is counted as an authorised absence. The child's class teacher will make arrangements for work to be sent home.

Religious Observance: Some religious festivals fall outside school holiday periods or weekends. Code 'R' (religious observance) will be used where the guidance from the relevant national religious authorities requires celebration and/or abstinence from activities on that day.

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 resolved 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.

Parents can support their children by:

- Ensuring regular and early bedtimes
- Helping with homework
- Having uniform and equipment prepared the night before
- Providing a healthy breakfast
- Reporting any academic or social concerns promptly
- Retaining open & honest communication with your child's school
- Being positive about school (even if your own experience was less than positive)

Exceptional Leave

Taking holidays or visits abroad in term time will affect a 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 the school may request for a Penalty Notice to be issued. All schools in Oxfordshire are encouraged to adopt a policy of not authorising requests for holidays.The Head Teacher or designated representative will meet personally 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 96% Exceptional leave should always be refused when requests are regular (annual) or when patterns become identifiable. Reasons for Exceptional Leave should be logged on the pupil's record and shared as part of the transfer/transition process.

The Penalty is £80 if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice, increasing to £160 if paid between day 21 and day 28. This amount is prescribed by the Education Penalty Notices (England) Regulations 2007. Failure to pay a Penalty Notice within the prescribed period may result in prosecution for the underlying offence of failure to secure regular school attendance.

Any second penalty notice issued to the same parent for the same child within a rolling 3 year period will be charged at a higher rate of £160 with no option for this second offence to be discharged at the lower rate of £80. (The three-year period begins from the date of the first penalty notice issued on or after 19 August 2024). Please note: Penalty Notices are issued per parent/per child.

Contact Procedures

If a child is absent, parents should contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence with the reason for the non-attendance.

If a child is absent we will:

- Telephone or text on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you;
- Visit at home if we have not heard from you by day 3 of absence, or sooner if we have any other concerns.

In addition, we may:

- Follow School Attendance processes including inviting the parent/carer to a meeting in the school to identify the barriers to attendance and ensure support is put in place.
- Offer a Strengths and Needs form
- Gain the voice of the child to ensure we are taking a child centred approach.
- Refer the matter to the County Attendance Team if attendance moves below 90%.

Contact Details

There are times when we need to contact parents about lots of things, including absence, so we need to have current contact numbers and email addresses at all times. There will be regular checks on contact details throughout the year. We require both parents and at least a third emergency person's contact details.

Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If a child misses the start of the day they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons, it can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage absence. The school day starts at 8.50am and we expect children to be in class at that time. If a child arrives to school and registration as expected, they will receive a present mark (/)

Registers are marked by 9 am and children will receive a late mark (L) if they are not in by that time.

At 9.30 am the registers will be closed. In accordance with the Regulations, if a child arrives after that time they will receive a mark (U) 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 parents 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 in order to support safeguarding and early identification of pupils who are late to return or whom do not return. If a child is present for this registration they will be marked (\ )

If a child has a persistent late record, parents will be asked to meet with a member of the School Leadership Team and/or Attendance Officer to resolve the problem, but they can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting a child to school on time.

Persistent Absenteeism

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 an LSA, 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 a Strengths and Needs form with you and consider convening a Team Around the Family.

Severe Absenteeism

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 will 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 96+%. SA pupils are our highest priority at our school.

The County Attendance Team

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the 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 for consideration of legal proceedings. At the school's request, they may issue a Penalty Notice per parent/carer; or take action via a Non-Attendance referral, in line with the Education Act 1996 sec. 444(1) and 444(1A).

The County Attendance Team, with the school, will encourage you to engage with a Strengths and Needs form. 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. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is 01865 323513 attendance@oxfordshire.gov.uk

The School Attendance Team

Gemma Manuell, Senior Administrator/Attendance Officer

Bridget Ledger-Doyle, Pastoral Leader

Russell Kaye, Headteacher

Alison Isherwood, SENDCo

Deletions from the School Register

A pupil's name can only be deleted from the admission register for a reason set out in regulation 9 of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2023. A pupil's name must not be removed for any other reason and doing so would constitute offrolling. In accordance with regulation 13(3) and (4) of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2023, a school must make a return to the local authority when a pupil's name is deleted from the admission register (a 'deletion return'). This does not apply where the pupil's name is deleted at the end of the school year when they are in the school's most senior class (for example, pupils who leave primary school at the end of Year 6).

Using Attendance Data

All pupils' attendance will be monitored and will be shared with the Local Authority, the DfE, and other agencies if a pupil's attendance is a cause for concern. We regard 'cause for concern' as:

- Attendance between 90% and 95%, and where there are patterns of repeated absence or unauthorised absence.
- Any child who has more than 10 unauthorised absences over a 10 week period
- Any family who have taken an unauthorised holiday
- Any child below 90% overall, except where there are significant reasons (e.g. a medical condition).

Home Visits

The school reserves the right to conduct home visits to establish the reasons for a child's non-attendance. These may include, but not exclusively:

(i) Where the school is not convinced by the explanation for a child's absence.
(ii) Where no reason has been given.
(iii) Where the school is concerned about the wellbeing of the child.
(iv) Where the school needs to identify where the child is living.
(v) Where a child has been absent for a significant period.

The school may also use the emergency contacts provided by the parent, or other contacts who may know the reasons for the child's absence (e.g. known extended family), where the reasons have not been provided by the parent.

Support for Attendance

The school employs a 0.8 Pastoral Leader, who supports parents who have difficulty with attendance. At every stage, parents will be offered access to support, including:

- Support with parenting, including putting in place home routines.
- Signposting to other available services
- Meetings and reviews
- Rewarding and encouraging good attendance in school, e.g. through tribe points, extra play
- Informal discussions with parents and carers
- Behaviour/learning/reintegration support to allay any anxieties

Appendix A – Actions taken when attendance is low

Triggers for the school to take action with regard to low attendance are as follows:

Attendance is below 90% (enter process at Step 1)

Attendance is below 95% and at risk of dropping below 90% due to repeated absences (informal contact initially, or Step 1 if this is not successful).

Unauthorised attendance of 10 sessions over ten weeks (enter process at Step 2 or 3)

The parent does not engage with the school over their child's attendance (enter process at Step 1 or 2)

An unauthorised holiday has been taken (see separate procedure)

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the 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 the Local Authority. At the school's request, they may issue a Penalty Notice per parent/carer, per child (currently 8rising to £160 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 £2,500, a Community Order, Parenting Order or 4/6 ultimately a custodial sentence). The legislation is the Education Act 1996 sec. 444(1) and 444(1A).

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.

"If any child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school fails to attend regularly at the school, his/her parent is guilty of an offence."

Alternatively, parents or children may wish to contact the County Attendance Team themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is 01865 323513 attendance@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Step 1: (Letter 1)

The parent will be informed in writing that their child's attendance is low, using the Oxfordshire template letter. The letter will indicate that their child's attendance will continue to be monitored.

Step 2: (Parent Contract)

The parent will be invited to a meeting to put in place a parenting contract. This may be with the attendance officer, pastoral leader, senior leaders, or the county attendance team. The contract will set out exactly what must be achieved, and the actions which will be taken if there is no improvement. At this stage, parents may be informed that evidence may be required for medical appointments, etc. The contract will also enable the parent to identify sources of support, if required.

Step 3: (Penalty Notice Warning Letter)

A penalty notice warning letter will be issued ('Letter 1') in line with Oxfordshire County Council guidance. This will provide the parent with the opportunity to take appropriate steps to improve their child's attendance within a defined timeframe.

Step 4: (Penalty Notice)

A penalty notice will be requested from Oxfordshire County Council.

Step 5: (Prosecution)

Decisions on prosecution are made by Oxfordshire County Council. The school will also co-operate with the council by providing information which they have requested.

Appendix B- Children Missing Education *(Based on LSCB Child Protection Procedures)*

This document provides guidance for staff on what to do if a child is absent from school and there is no way of establishing that the child is safe and well. Staff should bear in mind that parents may not always give a full account of the reasons for their child's absence, and that any reasons given may need to be questioned or further explored.

Day One: The school identifies that a child is not in school. A staff member trained to do so, telephones the child's home to seek reasons for the absence and reassurance from a parent/carer that the child is safe at home.

Result of call	Action
There is no answer at the home or on mobile numbers	Call back. Risk assess after 2 hours
The parent/carer answered the call, the child is safe with them	Ask for reason for absence and record
The person answering is not the parent/carer and the school is not reassured that the child is at home or safe	The school's designated lead for child protection consulted on a risk assessment and the degree of vulnerability of the child
The parent/carer answered the call, the child is not with them or safe and the parent is concerned.	School to advise the parent to: • Contact all people and places the child is known to talk to and visit to tell them that the child is missing and ask if they can help to find the child, by providing information which may shed light on the child's whereabouts or actively searching for the child • Contact the family GP and Accident and Emergency Centres near where the child lives and goes to school, in case he/she has sustained an injury and been taken in for medical treatment • Contact the local police station to inform them that the child is missing • Report back to school if the child is found or remains missing

If contact is not established on Day One, then the school should consider the risk assessment below. Where the attendance officer is not working the full day, details of any children unaccounted for must be passed to an alternative member of office staff who can continue to seek clarification. Where a child remains is still absent without reason on Day Three, then the school should *either* (i) conduct a home visit or (ii) report the child as missing through official channels. Social Care should be informed of any concerns relating to children who they are involved with.

If the judgement on Day One is that there is reason to believe that the child is at risk of harm the school will contact Police and /or children's social care immediately.

If the judgement on Day One is that there is no reason to believe that the child is at risk of harm school continues to make enquiries and informs Education Welfare Service on Day Three that the child is missing education.

Risk Assessment: Children Missing from Education

Where a child is not in school, and their whereabouts is not accounted for, the following questions should be asked **on day one** and **on each subsequent day.** The office maintain a list of children – in liaison with the Designated Safeguarding Lead – of children who may be at risk. The Designated Safeguarding Lead (Russell Kaye) or his Deputies (Jane Heneghan, Bridget Ledger-Doyle) must be contacted immediately to assist with the risk assessment. A senior leader should be informed where a child is known to travel to school alone, is absent, and parental contact cannot be established.

The following criteria suggest a *very high risk* and action should be immediate and should involve other agencies:

Criteria	Risk	Action
Is there good reason to believe that the child may be the victim of a crime?		Inform Police and/or children's social care immediately
Does the child have a formal child protection plan?		
Is the child in care i.e. looked after by the local authority?		
Is there planned or current LA children's social care or LA adults' social care services involvement? E.g. section 47 enquiry about to start.		
Is there a person present in or visiting the family who poses an on-going risk to children, or who is suspected of previously harming a child?		
Is the child at risk of sexual exploitation?		

The following factors indicate risk:

Has there been LA children's social care or LA adults' social care or Criminal Justice System involvement in the past?		Give consideration to the vulnerability of the child and following risk assessment inform one or all of the following : • Police • Safer school officer • Children's social care. • Local Authority Designated Officer. • Education Welfare Service. • School Nurse Use other services to help with your risk assessment, including the above.
Are there religious or cultural reasons to believe that the child is at risk? E.g. FGM or forced marriage.		
Is there any known history of drug or alcohol dependency within the family?		
Is there any known history of domestic violence?		
Is there concern about the parent/carer's ability to protect the child from harm?		
Was there any significant incident prior to the child's unexplained absence?		
Has the child been a victim of bullying?		
Does the child need essential medication or health care?		
Was the child noted to be depressed prior to the child's unexplained absence?		
Has the child gone missing with their family?		
Have the parents been subject to proceedings in relation to attendance?		
Is there a history of poor attendance?		
Has there been any change in the child/family's financial circumstances?		
Age of the child		

Where any of the above factors apply, the decision should be made as to whether to conduct a home visit, or to refer to external agencies. This decision, and the reasons for it, should be logged in the attendance file.

Children who are missing education long-term

Received practice is that a child who has missed school without authorisation for a period of ten days is deemed to be a "Child Missing Education".

In line with guidance (DfE, 2024) we will:

- Notify the local authority when a child is removed from the school roll at points other than the normal time of transfer.
- Notify the local authority within five days when a child is added to the school roll.
- Notify the local authority when a child has a period of ten days unauthorised absence, or who does not return after a period of authorised absence, and assist the local authority in ascertaining their whereabouts.
- Only remove a child from the school roll when a child has been confirmed to be in education *or* with explicit (written) permission from the local authority. At this point, the responsibility for the child is transferred to the LA.