



Community † Compassion † Wisdom

Attendance Policy

Written by:	R Joannou/OCC	Date: January 2020
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Introduction

This is a successful school and your child plays their part in making it so. We aim for an environment which enables and encourages all members of the community to reach out for excellence. For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and your child should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

It is very important therefore that you make sure that your child attends regularly and this Policy sets out how together we will achieve this.

Why Regular Attendance is so important:

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.

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.

Promoting Regular Attendance:

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility - parents, pupils and all members of school staff.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Give you details on attendance in our Newsletters;
- Report to you on how your child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainments;
- Celebrate good attendance by displaying individual and class achievements;
- Reward good or improving attendance through class competitions, certificates and outings/events.
- Monitor the attendance of pupils. The table appended outlines the school's approach for monitoring and enabling attendance.

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 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.

You can support your child by:

- Ensuring regular and early bed times
- 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)
- Encouraging your child to invite friends home for play dates

Persistent Absenteeism (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 case 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 and their parents may become subject to an Action Plan and the plan may include: allocation of additional support, 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 may seek your

consent to complete an Early Help Assessment with you and consider convening a Team Around the Family.

Absence Procedures:

If your child is absent you must:

- Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence via the attendance line;
- Give the reason for the absence, including type of illness. To enable the appropriate coding of attendance or the authorisation of absence, the school may request additional information or evidence, e.g. in relation to medical appointments or illness. (Medical evidence may include: an appointment letter, a GP appointment card signed / stamped by a receptionist, a prescription, prescribed medication.)

If your child is absent we will:

- Telephone or text you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you;
- Invite you in to discuss the situation with our Attendance Officer and/or Deputy Headteacher or Headteacher if absences persist;
- Refer the matter to the County Attendance Team if attendance moves below 90%.

Telephone Numbers:

There are times when we need to contact parents about lots of things, including absence, so we need to have your current contact numbers at all times. So, help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have an up to date number – if we don't then something important may be missed. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year.

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 the Local Authority. The County Attendance Team 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 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

Lateness:

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your 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.

How we manage lateness:

The school day starts at 8:45am in KS2 and 8:50am in KS1 and we expect your child to be in class at that time.

Registers are marked at these times and your child will receive a late mark if they are not in by that time.

At 9:15am the registers will be closed. 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.

Where there are concerns about punctuality, the Headteacher will initially write to the parents/carers, including a copy of the child's registration record, and stating the total number of late marks over a determined period.

If your child's persistent late record continues, you will be asked to meet with the Deputy or Headteacher to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

Exceptional Leave:

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.

1. It is widely known that the link between a student's attendance and attainment is irrefutable.
2. Early poor attendance habits follow through into secondary school, further education and employment.
3. All schools in Oxfordshire are encouraged to adopt a policy of not authorising Exceptional Leave.

4. The Deputy Headteacher, Attendance Officer or Headteacher will meet personally with every family applying for Exceptional Leave to stress the importance of good school attendance habits and links between attendance & attainment.
5. Exceptional leave is most unlikely to be authorised when a student's attendance is less than 95%.
6. Exceptional leave should always be refused when school is aware of any truancy.
7. Exceptional leave should always be refused when requests are regular (annual) or when patterns become identifiable.
8. Reasons for Exceptional Leave should be logged on the pupil's record and shared as part of the transfer/transition process.

The County Attendance Team can 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.

School targets and special initiatives:

The school has targets to improve attendance and your child has an important part to play in meeting these targets.

The minimum level of attendance for this school is 96% attendance and we will keep you updated regularly about progress to this level and how your 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.

Information on any projects or initiatives that will focus on these areas will be provided in our Newsletter and we ask for your full support.

Why attendance and punctuality matter

Across one school year:

- Less than 5 days absence = 97.3% attendance
- 14 days absence (approx.) = 92.6% attendance
- 20 days absence (approx.) = 89.4% attendance
- 30 days absence (approx.) = 84.2% attendance

If a child achieves 80% attendance this means that they have missed approximately 39 days of education over the academic year, averaging 1 day per week.

Children missing from education

Where a pupil has 10 consecutive school days of unexplained absence and all reasonable steps have been taken by the school to establish their whereabouts without success, the school will make an immediate referral to Oxfordshire County Council 's Safeguarding Team.

Reasonable steps to be taken by school staff include:

- Telephone calls to all known contacts (parents are asked to provide a minimum of two emergency contacts in the event of children not arriving at school without prior notification and also for other emergency purposes).
- Letters home (including recorded delivery)
- Contact with other schools where siblings may be registered
- Possible home visits
- Enquiries to friends, neighbours etc. through school contacts
- Enquiries with any other Service known to be involved with the pupil/family

All contacts and outcomes to be recorded on the pupil's file.

The staff responsible for attendance matters:

Miss Checksfield, Business Manager (Attendance Officer)

Mrs Legge, Deputy Headteacher

Mrs Joannou, Headteacher

Summary

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures & it's attendance policy to parents and to promote attendance. School attendance data must be available to the Local Authority & the Department for Education. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend.

All school staff are committed to working with parents and pupils as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible. Regular attendance supports optimising your child's attainment.

Appendix A

Staged Approach To the Management of Attendance		
<p>Whole school attendance is monitored at a minimum of every half term but more frequently as appropriate to the needs of the school. The whole school attendance target is based on an evaluation of the last 3/5 years previous attendance. Attendance is more closely evaluated of pupils whose attendance is below the whole school target.</p>		
Stage	Trigger	Outcome
1	Attendance falls below 95% and the child's attendance is of concern	<p>Letter 1 will be sent to parents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expressing concern about attendance • Informing the parents of current attendance • Enclosing a copy of child's registration record • Reminding parents of their legal responsibilities and the nature of 'persistent absence' • Welcoming the parents to arrange contact the school if they wish to discuss attendance further. <p>Attendance is monitored for a fixed period.</p>
2	Parents have received a Stage 1 letter and attendance remains of concern	<p>Letter 2 will be sent to parents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informing parents of ongoing concern about attendance • Informing the parents of current attendance • Enclosing a copy of child's registration record • Reminding parents of their legal responsibilities and the nature of 'persistent absence' • Notifying parents that the child's attendance is being monitored and of the duration of the monitoring period. • Welcoming the parents to arrange contact the school if they wish to discuss attendance further. <p>Attendance is monitored for a fixed period.</p>
3	Parents have received a Stage 2 letter and attendance remains of concern.	<p>Letter 3 will be sent to parents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informing parents of ongoing concern about attendance • Informing the parents of current attendance • Enclosing a copy of the child's registration record • Reminding parents of their legal responsibilities and the definition of 'persistent absence' • Requesting that the parents provide medical evidence of absence for illness, to enable the school to consider the authorisation of absence. • Inviting parents to an appointment with the Headteacher on a specific date, with the purpose of discussing attendance, agreeing an action plan of support, considering whether it may be appropriate to involve outside agencies, and setting an internal school attendance target. • Notifying parents that should they chose not to attend, the meeting may take place without them and a target set

4	Parents have failed an internal school attendance target and attendance is below the level of Persistent Absence (90%)	Letter 4 will be sent to parents: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Informing parents of ongoing concern about attendance• Informing the parents of attendance during the target period.• Enclosing a copy of the child's registration record• Notifying parents that the school intends to discuss their child's attendance with the OCC Attendance Team
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Appendix 2- Leave of Absence (Holiday in Term Time) Request Form

Child/Young Person Details

Full name: _____

Date of birth: _____

School name: Combe CE Primary School

Parent/Carer Details

Parent/Carer 1

Full name: _____

Relationship: _____

Address: _____

Postcode: _____ Telephone Number: _____

Date of Birth: _____

Parent/Carer 2

Full name: _____

Relationship: _____

Address: _____

Postcode: _____ Telephone Number: _____

Date of Birth: _____

About the request for your child/young person's absence from School

Please state the reason for taking your child/young person out of school:

Length of absence: (school days) _____

From: (date) _____ To: (date) _____

Parent/guardian signature: _____ Date: _____

