

ST. MICHAEL'S C.E. PRIMARY SCHOOL

Attendance Policy

RATIONALE

For a child to reach their full educational achievement a high level of school attendance is essential.

We are committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all our pupils and endeavour to provide an environment where all pupils feel valued and welcome. Parents and pupils play a part in making our school successful. Every child has a right to access the education to which he/she is entitled. Parents and teachers share the responsibility for supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and punctuality for all.

It is our duty to consistently strive to achieve a goal of 100% attendance for all children. Every opportunity will be used to convey to pupils and their parents or carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance.

For our children to take full advantage of the educational opportunities offered it is vital your child is at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. The routines children develop around attendance and punctuality at school are the same as the expectations of any future employer in the world of work. High attainment, confidence with peers and staff, and future aspirations depend on good attendance.

Good attendance is important because:

- Statistics show a direct link between under-achievement and attendance below 95%
- Regular attenders make better progress, both socially and academically
- Regular attenders find school routines, school work and friendships easier to cope with
- Regular attenders find learning more satisfying
- Regular attenders are more successful in transferring between primary school, secondary school, and higher education, employment or training

Promoting good attendance

The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the school, parents and the child. The Home School Agreement will contain details of how we will work with parents and our expectations of what parents will need to do to ensure their child achieves good attendance.

To help us all focus on this we will:

- Report to you on how your child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainment.
- Celebrate and reward good attendance with the use of certificates

1. Roles and responsibilities

Responsibility of the school's attendance leader

A member of the senior leadership team will oversee, direct and co-ordinate the school's work in promoting regular and improved attendance and will ensure that the attendance policy is consistently applied throughout the school. This person will also ensure that attendance is both recorded accurately and analysed. They will ensure that attendance issues are identified at an early stage and that support is put in place to deal with any difficulties.

If absence is frequent or continuous, except where a child is clearly unwell, staff will discuss with parents/carers the need and reasons for their child's absence and will encourage them to keep absences to a minimum. A note or explanation from a pupil's home does not mean an absence becomes authorised. The decision whether or not to authorise an absence will always rest with the school.

Responsibilities of classroom staff

- Ensure that all pupils are registered accurately
- Promote and reward good attendance with students at all appropriate opportunities
- Liaise with the attendance leader on matters of attendance and punctuality
- Communicate any concerns or underlying problems that may account for a child's absence
- Support pupils with absence to engage with their learning once they are back in school

Responsibilities of pupils

- Attend school every day unless they are ill or have an authorised absence
- Arrive in school on time
- Register at the school office if they are late or leaving the school site during school hours

Responsibilities of parents/carers

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is a parent/carer's legal responsibility (Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act) and permitting absence from school that is not authorised by the school creates an offence in law.

Parents will:

- Inform the school on the first day of absence
- Discuss with the class teacher any planned absences well in advance
- Support the school with their child in aiming for 100% attendance each year
- Make sure that any absence is clearly accounted for by telephone or email on the first and subsequent days of absence, or by letter if phone or email is unavailable
- Avoid taking their child out of school for non-urgent medical or dental appointments
- Only request leave of absence if it is for an exceptional circumstance

Children are sometimes reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents/carers and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give into pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and may make things worse.

Contact your child's class teacher immediately and openly discuss your worries. Your child could be avoiding school for a number of reasons – difficulty with school work, bullying, friendship problems, family difficulties. It is important that we identify the reason for your child's reluctance to attend school and work together to tackle the problem. In some cases you may find it helpful to discuss the circumstances of your child's difficulties with another professional.

2. Recording attendance

Legally the register must be marked twice daily. This is once at the start of the school day, 8:50am, and again for the afternoon session at 1:00pm.

3. Lateness/punctuality

It is important to be on time at the start of the morning and afternoon school sessions. If your child is late they can miss work time with their class teacher, miss getting vital information, cause disruption to the lesson for others, and it can be embarrassing leading to possible further absence.

- The school day begins at 8:50am and all pupils are expected to be in school at this time.
- Morning registration will close at 9:10am
- All lateness is recorded daily. This information will be required by the courts, should a prosecution for non-attendance or lateness be necessary.
- Arrival after the close of registration will be marked as unauthorised absence and coded U in line with Oxfordshire County Council and Department of Education guidance. This mark shows them to be on site, but is legally recorded as an absence.
- If a pupil is late due to a medical appointment, they will receive an authorised absence, coded M. Please be advised that, where possible, doctors and dentists appointments are to be made outside of school hours or during school holidays.

Pupils who are consistently late are disrupting not only their own education but also that of the other pupils. Parents, guardians or carers of pupils who have patterns of lateness will be contacted to discuss the importance of good time keeping and how this might be achieved. If lateness persists parents, guardians or carers will be invited to attend the school and discuss the problem and support offered. If support is not appropriate or declined and a child has 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence due to lateness recorded in any 10 week period, the school or Oxfordshire County Council will be required to issue parents with a Penalty Notice in accordance with Oxfordshire County Council's *Code of conduct: issuing Penalty Notices for unauthorised absence from schools* (See Section 8 of this policy for further detail.)

Please collect your child promptly at the end of the school day. Where late collection is persistent and/or significantly late, the school is obliged to take any uncollected pupil to a place of safety and share concerns, as necessary, with other agencies.

4. What to do if my child is absent

A child not attending school is considered a **safeguarding** matter. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

If your child is absent you must:

- Contact us by telephone or email on the first day of absence or call into school and report the absence to reception

If your child is absent and contact has not been received from parents/carers we will:

- Telephone or text you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you – this is because we have a duty to ensure your child’s safety as well as their regular school attendance
- Where there is still no response after three days a visit to the pupil’s home address will be made by a member of the school’s staff. If we are still then unable to make contact a letter will be left asking for the parent/carer to make contact with the school that day
- Invite you in to discuss the situation if absence persists
- Refer the matter to Oxfordshire County Council’s Attendance team if absence is unauthorised and falls below 90%

Please note: If your child is not seen and contact has not been established with any of the named parents/carers, after three days of absence the school is required to start *child missing in education* procedures as set down by Oxfordshire County Council guidance. We will make all reasonable enquiries to establish contact with parents/carers and the child, including making enquiries to known friends and wider family.

We have a legal duty to report the absence of any pupil who is absent without an explanation for 10 consecutive days. If the child is not seen and contact has not been established with the named parent/carer then the local authority is notified that the child is *at risk of missing*.

5. Continued or ongoing absence

If your child misses 10% (three weeks/sessions) or more schooling across the school year, for whatever reason, they are defined as *persistent absentees*. Absence for whatever reason disadvantages a child by creating gaps in his or her learning. Research shows these gaps affect attainment when attendance falls below 95%. As such, we monitor all absence thoroughly and all attendance data is shared with the local authority and the Department for Education. If your child has absence and their attendance level is falling towards 90% we will contact you and, depending on the reasons for the absence, will work with you formulate an Attendance Plan. If additional support is refused and attendance continues to fall we will refer the matter to Oxfordshire County Council’s attendance team.

6. Requests for leave of absence

Amendments to school attendance regulations were updated and enforced from September 2013: The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations state that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. The headteacher has the authority to determine the length of any authorised absence, as well as whether the absence is authorised at all. The fundamental principles for defining *exceptional* are rare, significant, or unavoidable, which means the event could not reasonably be scheduled at another time. There is no legal entitlement for time off in school term time to go on holiday and in the majority of cases holiday will not be authorised. Taking holidays in term time

will affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help up by not taking children out during school time.

6.1 Absence through child participation in public performances, including theatre, film or television work and modelling

Parents of a child performer can seek leave of absence from school for their child to take part in a performance. They must contact the headteacher to discuss the nature and frequency of the work, whether the child has a valid performance licence and whether education will be provided by the employer during any future leave of absence. It is, however, down to the headteacher's discretion as to whether to authorise this and they will wish to discuss with you the nature and frequency of the absence and how learning will continue if absence occurs. Any absence recorded as part of a child's participation in a public performance will be recorded as an authorised absence.

6.2 Absence through competing at regional, county or national level for sport

Parents of able sportsmen and women can seek leave of absence from school for their child to take part in regional, county, national and international events and competitions. It is, however, down to the headteacher's discretion as to whether to authorise this and they will wish to discuss with you the nature and frequency of the absence and how learning will continue if absence occurs. Permission for your child to leave early or arrive late to attend coaching and training sessions is also at the discretion of the headteacher and is not likely to be approved if it is a regular event, unless the sports club or association is providing an education tutor as part of their coaching.

7. Understanding types of absence

Pupils are expected to attend school every day for the entire duration of the academic year, unless there is an exceptional reason for the absence. There are two main categories of absences:

- **Authorised absence:** is when the school has accepted the explanation offered as satisfactory justification for the absence or given approval in advance for such an absence. If no explanation is received, absences cannot be authorised.
- **Unauthorised absence:** is when the school has not received a reason for absence or has not approved a child's leave absence from school after a parent's request. This includes:
 - Parents giving their children permission to be off school unnecessarily, such as for shopping, birthdays, to look after siblings
 - Truancy before or during the school day
 - Absences which have not been explained

The school retains the right to change an authorised absence to an unauthorised absence and vice versa if new information is presented. Any changes will be communicated to parents/carers. An example of this would be where a parent states a child is unwell but on return to school there is evidence that they have been on holiday.

8. Penalty notices and other legal measures for non-attendance

In education law, parents/carers are committing an offence if they fail to ensure the regular attendance of their child of compulsory school age at the school at which the child is registered, unless the absence has been authorised by the school.

St Michael's C E Primary School will use the full range of legal measures and the support of the Oxfordshire County Attendance Team to secure good attendance. Legal measures will only be considered when there is unauthorised absence and:

1. The child or family do not require the support from any agency to improve the attendance.
2. The child has 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence and the parents are complicit in the child's absence.

The following measures will be used for pupils of compulsory school age who are registered at St Michael's C E Primary School:

- Parenting contracts
- Parenting orders
- Penalty notices
- Education Supervision Orders
- Prosecution

Parents/Carers will be warned of the likelihood of a Penalty Notice being issued for unauthorised absence via a letter. The Penalty Notice is a fine that is issued to each parent/carer who condoned (or was responsible for the child) during the period of unauthorised absence for which the fine has been issued.

Further information on Penalty Notices can be found at:

<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/schools/school/lateness-and-absence>

9. Leavers

There is strict guidance about the removal of pupils from school roll. This guidance is drawn from the school attendance regulations.

If your child is leaving our school (other than when transferring to secondary school) parents are asked to:

- Give the school comprehensive information about their plans, including any date of a move and your new address and telephone numbers, your child's new school and the start date when known. This should be submitted to our school in writing.

If pupils leave and we do not have the above information, then your child is considered to be a *child missing in education*. This requires schools and local authorities to carry out investigations to try and locate your child, which includes liaising with Children's Services, the police and other agencies. By giving us the above information, these investigations can be avoided.

10. Record preservation

School registers are legal documents. We will ensure compliance with attendance regulations by keeping printed copies of the attendance records for at least three years. Computer registers will be preserved as electronic back-ups.