

Horspath Primary School

ATTENDANCE POLICY 2019

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:

- Report to you at least twice a year on how your child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainment;
- Celebrate good attendance by displaying class and house achievement;
- Reward good or improving attendance through competitions, certificates.

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 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)
- Encouraging your child to invite friends' home for play dates

Persistent Absenteeism (PA):

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they have missed 10% or more schooling **at any time** during the school year **for any reason**. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parent's 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 are tracked and monitored carefully through 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 small group work or 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 (TAF).

Absence Procedures:

If your child is absent you must contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence you can do this by;

- Calling the school office – Leaving a message if there is no one available to answer your call
- Emailing the school office office@horspathschool.org
- Sending a note via a sibling or family friend
- Calling into school in person

If your child is absent and we have not heard from you, we will:

- Telephone or text you on the first day of absence

If we have concerns about your child's attendance because it has dropped below 95% or because their periods of absence are frequent, we will;

- Contact you to inform you of our concerns
- Invite you in to discuss the situation with our Headteacher

Below is a table setting out how we monitor attendance

Concern	What happens	What happens next
A child's attendance drops below 95%	An advice letter is sent to parents	School will continue to monitor
A child's attendance drops below 90%	A letter is sent informing parents' that immediate improvement is needed	Close monitoring of attendance and absence
After 3 weeks of monitoring if attendance does not improve	Parents are contacted and invited to a meeting and a parent contract drawn up	Close monitoring will continue, illness may not be authorised unless the pupils is seen by a GP
After 3 further weeks of monitoring if attendance does not improve	The matter is referred to the County Attendance Team	Possible legal proceedings

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. Please 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. 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 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 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 door is opened at **8.50am**. The school day starts at **9.00am** and we expect your child to be in class at that time.

Registers are marked by **9.05am** and your child will receive a late mark if they are not in by that time.

At **9.10a.m.** 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.

If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with the 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 Circumstances:

The Headteacher may only grant leave of absence for exceptional circumstances. Examples of any exceptional circumstances where leave may be granted during term time are as follows:

- If a parent is service personnel and is returning from a tour of duty abroad where it is evidenced the individual will not be in receipt of any leave in the near future that coincides with school holidays.
- Where an absence from school is recommended by a health professional as part of a parent or child's rehabilitation from a medical or emotional issue.
- The death or terminal illness of a close relative, only if Headteacher is satisfied that the circumstances are truly exceptional; if travelling abroad for funerals only flight duration times will be considered
- Out of school programmes such as music, arts or sport operating at a high standard of achievement. Documentary evidence of this event will be required.
- Religious observance – The Education Act 1996 S444(3) (c), states "on any day exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which his/her parent belongs";
- To attend a wedding or funeral of a close relative if the Headteacher is satisfied that the circumstances are truly exceptional; Leave should only be authorised for this purpose when the Headteacher is satisfied that there is a persuasive reason for holding the wedding during term time and there WILL be an onus on parents to show clear evidence that this absence is absolutely an exceptional circumstance.

- Where leave is granted it will only be for the event and flights if appropriate. 'Wrap- around' holidays will not be authorised.
- In difficult family situations the Headteacher may use his/her discretion in granting leave and each case should be addressed on its individual merits, taking into account the overall welfare of the child.

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.

Taking time off during term time for a cheaper holiday is not considered as an exceptional circumstance. There is no automatic entitlement in law to time off in term time to go on holiday.

9 things to note about attendance in Oxfordshire:

1. There is a proven link between a student's attendance and attainment.
2. Early poor attendance habits follow through into secondary school, further education and employment.
3. Graduates earn, on average, double that of young people that leave school with no qualifications.
4. All schools in Oxfordshire are encouraged to adopt a policy of not authorising Exceptional Leave.
5. Exceptional leave is most unlikely to be authorised in Years 2, 6, 9 and 11.
6. Exceptional leave is most unlikely to be authorised when a student's attendance is less than 95%.
7. Exceptional leave should always be refused when school is aware of any truancy.
8. Exceptional leave should always be refused when requests are regular (annual) or when patterns become identifiable.
9. 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 can issue Penalty Notices for any unauthorised 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, projects 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 target level of attendance for this school is **97%** attendance, we will keep you updated regularly about progress towards this target and how your child's attendance compares.

Our target is deliberately kept high 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.

Those people responsible for attendance matters in this school are:

Head Teacher: Mrs Rachel Medley
 School Business Manager: Mrs Sue Ackland

School Administrator: Mrs Linda Watkins

Governor Committee with responsibility for attendance: Children, Learning and Communication Committee (CLaC)

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.

Policy Review Schedule

Most recent review:

Summer 2019

Next review:

Summer 2021