

# OXON CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL

## ATTENDANCE POLICY

This document is based upon the DfE guidance 'Working Together to improve school attendance' - published May 2022 and applicable from September 2022. This policy should be read alongside that guidance which provides a fuller explanation of the legal, procedural and contextual information.

### AIMS

- a) To promote good attendance in school from all pupils.
- b) To have systems in place that ensure that attendance and absence are recorded accurately and in accordance with the legal requirements.
- c) To effectively monitor rates of absence.
- d) To act in a positive, supportive and effective way to address any issues brought to light by the monitoring systems.

### MEMBER OF STAFF WITH STRATEGIC RESPONSIBILITY FOR ATTENDANCE

Mark Rogers, Headteacher

### THE LAW ON SCHOOL ATTENDANCE AND RIGHT TO A FULL-TIME EDUCATION

'The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school.

Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school.'

(DfE 2022 guidance 'Working Together to improve school attendance', paragraphs 9 and 10)

### THE IMPORTANCE OF HIGH LEVELS OF SCHOOL ATTENDANCE AT OXON CE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Our school is committed to providing the highest possible quality of education over the course of a child's journey through school. Apart from any days when children are genuinely too ill to attend school and a very small number of exceptional circumstances, our expectation is that children will attend for every day of the school year.

Some of our thinking in relation to this:

- The school year has 190 teaching days. This equates to 52% of the days in a calendar year. Time within school during a year is 1,235 hours. This equates to 14% of the hours in a calendar year. Each day is very important to a child's learning.
- Our school curriculum is very full. Teachers routinely find it very challenging to manage time in a way that enables them to deliver all the learning and activities that they want the children to undertake.

- Lessons and activities routinely link together and build upon each other in a sequence – missing a day often makes the learning more challenging when a child returns.
- In terms of mental health and wellbeing, it is extremely beneficial to attend each day. We observe that children can often be unsettled after an absence from school where they have missed out on activities and relationships.
- The school curriculum at Oxon may be very different to parents' own memories of school. We have no 'winding down' time in the last weeks of term – every day is planned for and is valuable.
- The 190 days of the school year mean that missing even a small number of days very quickly reduces the attendance percentage.
- The DfE note that 'The pupils with the highest attainment at the end of key stage 2 and key stage 4 have higher rates of attendance over the key stage compared to those with the lowest attainment.'

## THE IMPORTANCE OF PUNCTUALITY

Parents and carers are asked to support their child and the school by ensuring that they arrive punctually at the start of the school day. This enables the learning and activities to start on time and provides a calm start to the day for the child.

Please find below a reminder of the arrangements for the start of the school day.

- Start of day drop off:
  - 8.45am – external gates open and children enter school.
  - The Pump Lane gate is entry and exit; the Frinton Close double gate is entry only; and the Y2,3,4 gate is exit only. Once on the school site, the children enter the 'enclosures' through designated entrances, where school staff will greet them.
  - 8.50am – external gates are closed.
  - **Parents and carers are asked to arrive outside the school grounds prior to 8.45am to be ready to move into the grounds as the gates open and the lines move forward.**

## REPORTING ABSENCE

- Parents and carers are asked to inform the school if their child is absent **before 8.45am** each school day. This can be done by e-mail or by telephone. A reason for the absence should be provided as part of the message.

## REGISTERS

- Attendance registers are carried out electronically in SIMS.
- Teachers complete the register by 8.50am and 1.00pm (KS1) / 1.10pm (KS2), daily (registration times). Teachers can take registers prior to 'registration times'. Pupils present will be marked using /. If a child is not present when the register is taken N should be used.
- Any pupil who is not present must be recorded in the Fire Register. Should a pupil arrive later in the day, their name needs to be removed from the Fire Register.
- If a pupil is absent and the teacher is aware of the reason for absence this can be entered in SIMS. The most frequently used codes will be:

I – Medical illness (not medical/dental appointments) – Authorised Absence

M – Medical/dental appointments - Authorised Absence

V – Educational Visit – Marked as Present

C – Exceptional circumstances only i.e. Bereavement and Family Crisis etc - Authorised Absence

L – Late arrival between 8.50am and 8.55am – Marked as present with L code

- Children who arrive in school after the gates have been locked will need to enter through the front entrance. The child's name and time of arrival should be entered in the book that is kept in the entrance hall.
- E-mails and telephone messages relating to absence will be taken by the school office and the reason entered in SIMS. This will show on the class registers by the afternoon session.
  - The school office will run a report each morning to check for unexplained absences. If no reason has been given for a pupil's absence a telephone call will be made or a text message sent via Parentmail. If no reply is received, office staff will continue to try to contact the parent throughout the day. This is recorded on the absence list in the attendance folder. Office staff will liaise with the headteacher about whether it is appropriate to ask the police to carry out a 'self and well check' or to contact Children's Services at the local authority.
  - If the absence has been reported but no reason given, on the pupil's return to school, the office will send a letter to the parent. If no explanation is received or if the explanation for the absence does not make it eligible to be classed as authorised the absence is coded as unauthorised.
- The codes for unauthorised absence are:
  - O – Unauthorised Circumstances
  - G – Family Holiday not agreed by the school – Unauthorised absence
  - U – Late after the register closes (8.55am) – Unauthorised absence

## **PUPIL LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

### **Extract from DfE 2022 guidance 'Working Together to improve school attendance':**

#### Granting leaves of absence

28. Only exceptional circumstances warrant a leave of absence. Schools should consider each application individually taking into account the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind the request.

29. If a leave of absence is granted, it is for the headteacher to determine the length of the time the pupil can be away from school.

30. As head teachers should only grant leaves of absence in exceptional circumstances it is unlikely a leave of absence will be granted for the purposes of a family holiday.

### **Extract from Shropshire Council Website:**

#### 'What does the law say?

As of 1 September 2013 there has been a change to The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006. Where there used to be the option for Headteachers to grant leave of absence for the purpose of a family holiday during the term time in 'special circumstances' of up to ten days in a year, this has been removed.

Headteachers are now only allowed to authorise any leave of absence when an application has been made in advance and it is felt to be for an exceptional circumstance; the annual family holiday would not be deemed an exceptional circumstance".

What should I do if I wish to request a leave of absence?

You should contact your child's school to find out how to make a request for permission. We would strongly recommend that you do this before planning any leave of absence.

Who should make the request?

The request should be made by the parent or carer with whom the child lives. This is the case even where it is another person who wishes to take the child out of school.

What happens if my child goes on holiday in term time or takes leave of absence for other reasons without permission from the school?

The absences will be marked in the school register as unauthorised absences and this may result in a Truancy Penalty Notice of £60 (rising to £120) per parent per child being issued by the Local Authority. In some cases, parents may be prosecuted for the offence of failure to ensure regular attendance at school.

Parents/carers should never simply add the amount of a penalty notice to the cost of a cheaper holiday, because this is a criminal offence and when doing so they are always risking prosecution.'

## **MONITORING AND ANALYSIS OF ATTENDANCE DATA**

- The school office staff monitor attendance on a daily basis. If a child is absent and the school has not been notified, then calls are made by office staff to parents and carers. This is part of the school's safeguarding procedures.
- Office staff carry out the first level of monitoring, alerting the headteacher or class teachers of specific concerns.
- Class teachers also play an important role in monitoring day to day absence. They will review reasons provided for absence and triangulate this information with their contextual knowledge.
- The school office team assign a member of staff to take the lead on monitoring individual attendance, initially through SIMS.
- The headteacher has a parallel role in monitoring overall school attendance. This is mainly done through FFT Attendance Tracker. Key elements of this system and tracking are:
  - The system draws 'live' data from the school's MIS (SIMS).
  - The system allows the school to monitor attendance rates at Oxon and compare them with schools nationally, for the same week of the year.
  - The system allows a variety of different data to be analysed including any patterns relating to specific groups of children.
  - The system enables the school to monitor and analyse weekly attendance patterns and trends and deliver intervention and support in a targeted way to pupils and families. This goes beyond headline attendance percentages and looks at individual pupils, cohorts and groups (including their punctuality) across the school.
  - The system enables the headteacher to share information with colleagues (including any special educational needs coordinators, designated safeguarding leads and pupil premium leads) to facilitate discussions with pupils.
  - Analysis of the SIMS data, combined with the FFT data, enables staff to identify the pupils who need support and to focus staff efforts on developing targeted actions for those cases.
  - Analysis of the SIMS data, combined with the FFT data, enables staff to conduct thorough analysis of half-termly, termly, and full year data to identify patterns and trends. This includes analysis of pupils and cohorts and identifying patterns in uses of certain codes and days of poor attendance.

- The FFT data enables the school to benchmark their attendance data (at whole school, year group and cohort level) against local, regional, and national levels to identify areas of focus for improvement. Comparative data is updated in 'real time'.
- The ability to generate summary data and reports to support the work of the governing body.

## DEALING WITH ATTENDANCE CONCERNS

- As described in the previous section, the school monitors attendance on a daily basis and over a period of time.
- As part of the strategic analysis, the office member of staff with responsibility for attendance meets with the Education Welfare Officer each half term. At that meeting they identify any trends in absence and highlight specific children causing concern.
- Concerns about attendance are dealt with in a variety of ways:
  - The school office team often play a key role in liaising with parents as they report absences. Support and guidance is frequently provided at this stage for parents.
  - Class teachers and other members of staff also play an important role in responding to parents as they share information relating to absence.
  - On occasions, it becomes clear that a child or a family requires support in relation to an absence issue. The school will support pupils and parents by working together to address any in-school barriers to attendance. This support is often provided by the class teacher, the SENDCO, the Early Help lead, a teaching assistant, a member of the office staff or one of the designated safeguarding leads. The headteacher has responsibility for ensuring that the best placed person in school works with and supports the family and wherever possible ensures that this is kept consistent.
  - Following regular monitoring working with the Educational Welfare Officer, letters are often sent to parents alerting them of attendance levels and offering further support.
- Where concerns become more significant:
  - Where barriers are outside of the school's control, all partners will work together to support pupils and parents to access any support they may need voluntarily. As a minimum, this will include meeting with pupils and parents at risk of persistent or severe absence to understand barriers to being in school and agreeing actions or interventions to address them. This may include referrals to services and organisations that can provide support. These actions will be regularly discussed and reviewed together with pupils and families. The Education Welfare Officer is likely to play a part in this process.
  - Where absence intensifies, so will the support provided, which will require the school to work in tandem with the local authority and other relevant partners:
    - If the needs and barriers are individual to the pupil this may include provision of support and mentoring from a member of school staff or where appropriate an education, health and care plan or alternative provision.
    - Where the needs are wider and a whole family response is more appropriate, this is likely to include a voluntary early help assessment.
    - Where engagement in support is proving challenging, school will hold more formal conversations with the parents. This is likely to be led by the headteacher or a member of the SLT and the local authority School Attendance Support Team (EWO). These meetings will clearly explain the consequences of persistent and severe absence to the parents and the potential need for legal intervention in future, but will also be an opportunity to continue to listen to and understand the barriers to attendance and explain the help that is available to avoid those consequences.
  - Where voluntary support has not been effective and/or has not been engaged the school will work with the local authority to:
    - Put formal support in place in the form of a parenting contract or an education supervision order.

- Issue a fixed penalty notice where support would not be appropriate or has not been successful or engaged with and it is likely to change the parents' behaviour.
- Intensify support through statutory children's social care involvement where there are safeguarding concerns, especially where absence becomes severe (below 50% attendance).
- Prosecute parents where all other routes have failed or are not deemed appropriate. This could include making the case for a community or parenting order where the parent is convicted to secure engagement with support.

## **PUPILS WITH MEDICAL CONDITIONS OR SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES**

- The school SENDCO works to support children facing challenges in this area. This includes establishing strategies for removing the in-school barriers pupils may face, including considering support or reasonable adjustments for school life and access to support in school.
- Pupils with long term illnesses or other health needs may need additional support to continue their education, such as alternative provision provided by the local authority. Local authorities are responsible for arranging suitable education for children of compulsory school age who, because of health reasons, would otherwise not receive suitable education. School staff will support liaison with the relevant agencies.

## **PART-TIME TIMETABLES**

- All pupils of compulsory school age are entitled to a full-time education. In very exceptional circumstances, where it is in a pupil's best interests, there may be a need for a temporary part-time timetable to meet their individual needs.
- A part-time timetable will only be in place for the shortest time necessary and will not be treated as a long-term solution. The school will follow the government guidance and LA procedures for this.

## **COLLABORATIVE WORK WITH OTHER SCHOOLS AND THE LOCAL AUTHORITY**

- The school will work with different schools in the area to help remove the barriers to attendance that families experience. In some cases, families may experience the same or similar barriers to attendance for multiple children who attend different schools in the area.
- The school will liaise with the local authority and other local partners and share data on individual cases where it is of benefit to the pupil. The school shares all the required information with the LA and DfE.

## **ROLE OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE SUPPORT TEAM (Inclusion and EWO teams)**

The Shropshire team will provide support for the school. This will include:

- Effective multi-agency working on attendance.
- Where required, legal intervention:
  - Where all voluntary support options are unsuccessful or are not appropriate (e.g. an unauthorised holiday in term time), the local authority's school Attendance Support Team will liaise with school and the early help lead practitioner or social worker (where applicable) to take forward attendance legal intervention to formalise support and/or enforce attendance.
  - All local authorities are therefore expected to:
    - Understand and make use of formal support options including parenting contracts and education supervision orders and use them fairly and consistently.

- Set out clearly for pupils, parents, and schools when and how attendance legal intervention will be used where voluntary support is not appropriate, or where absence was not for legitimate reasons and support has not been engaged with and/or been successful.
- Secure effective joint working between the School Attendance Support Team and statutory children's social care services to work together where there are safeguarding concerns or absence becomes severe.
- Issue fixed penalty notices in line with local codes of conduct where absence was unauthorised and support has been provided but has not worked or been engaged with, or would not have been appropriate in the circumstances of the offence (e.g. an unauthorised holiday in term time).
- Take forward attendance prosecution as a last resort where all other routes have been exhausted or deemed inappropriate.

## **PERSISTENT AND SEVERE ABSENCE**

- Where absence escalates and pupils miss 10% or more of school (equivalent to 1 day or more a fortnight across a full school year), the school and the local authority will work together to put additional targeted support in place to remove any barriers to attendance and reengage these pupils.
- Particular focus will be given by all partners to pupils who are absent from school more than they are present (those missing 50% or more of school). These severely absent pupils may find it more difficult to be in school or face bigger barriers to their regular attendance and as such are likely to need more intensive support across a range of partners. Were this to occur the school would follow all DfE and LA protocols.

## **GOVERNING BODY**

The governing body:

- Recognises the importance of school attendance and promotes it across the school's ethos and policies.
- Ensures school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties.
- Regularly reviews attendance data, discuss, and challenge trends, and help school leaders focus improvement efforts on the individual pupils or cohorts who need it most.
- Ensures school staff receive adequate training on attendance.

The governing body recognises the importance of school attendance and promotes it across the school's ethos and policies. This includes:

- Setting high expectations of all leaders, staff, pupils, and parents.
- Recognising that attendance improvement does not happen in isolation and therefore ensuring it is prioritised in wider improvement strategies, such as raising attainment, behaviour, special educational needs and disabilities, wellbeing, and safeguarding. The school has a link governor for attendance (from November 2022 onwards).
- Ensuring the schools' attendance management processes are delivered effectively, and that consistent attendance support is provided for pupils who require it most by prioritising the staff and resources needed.
- Ensuring high aspirations are maintained for all pupils, but that processes and support are adapted to the individual needs of particular pupils.
- Repeatedly evaluating the effectiveness of their school processes and improvement efforts to ensure they are meeting the needs of pupils as experiences and barriers to attendance evolve.

The governing body ensures school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties. This includes:

- Having an attendance policy which meets the DfE expectations, and which is published and publicised regularly so that it is easily accessible to pupils, parents and staff.

- Record attendance accurately in the register and share the required information with DfE and local authorities.
- Work effectively with local partners to help remove the barriers to attendance that go beyond the school gates, including building strong links with local statutory services (including social care, health and police) and the voluntary and community sector.

The governing body regularly reviews attendance data, discussing and challenging trends, and helping school leaders focus improvement efforts on the individual pupils or cohorts who need it most. This includes:

- Providing support and challenge to the school around current trends on attendance in the school community by:
  - Regularly reviewing attendance data at board meetings. This includes thorough examination of recent and historic trends at a school level as well as benchmarking to comparator schools within the local authority area, region and nationwide.
  - Paying particular attention to attendance of any pupil cohorts within the school that have historically had poor attendance or that face entrenched barriers to attendance. This may include pupils who have a social worker, are from a background or ethnicity where attendance has historically been low, have a long-term medical condition, special educational needs or a disability, or are eligible for free school meals.
  - Working with school leaders to set goals or areas of focus for attendance and providing support and challenge around delivery against those focus areas.

## **EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES**

We are committed to equality of opportunity for all children in all areas of school life including the vitally important entitlement to attend school. The school will, as part of the routine monitoring process, be particularly vigilant of any patterns of absence that may be related to race, disability, sex, religion or belief, sexual orientation, or gender reassignment.

## **POLICY DATE – JULY 2022**