Hook Norton C of E Primary School

Attendance Policy

2025-26

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 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.

Support for Attendance

We support school attendance in a number of ways:

- Knowing our pupils well and removing any barriers to attendance,
- Greeting pupils at the school gate to give support to pupils entering school in the morning,
- Making school a place that children are excited to attend,
- Offering support for children struggling to attend,
- Supporting families with attendance,
- Reporting attendance in the child's end of year report,
- Sending letters home to the parents of poor attendees, warning of the impact it is having on their education.

Understanding types of absence

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school 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

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.

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 the school
- Being positive about school (even if your own experience was less than positive)

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 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.

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.

Absence Procedures

1. Any child who is absent from school at the morning or afternoon registration period must have their absence recorded as being authorised (/ \), unauthorised (O) or as an approved educational activity (V) (attendance out of school).
2. Only the Headteacher or a member of staff acting on their behalf can authorise absence. If there is no known reason for the absence at registration, then the absence must be recorded in the first instance as unauthorised.

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.

1. Morning registration will take place at the start of school at 8.55 a.m. The registers will remain open for 30 minutes.

2. Any pupil arriving after this time will be marked as having an unauthorised absence (U) unless there is an acceptable explanation i.e. school transport was delayed.

3. In cases for example, where the absence at registration was for attending an early morning medical appointment, the appropriate absence code will be entered.

The afternoon registration will be at 13.00

The registers will close at 13.30

4. Pupils arriving after the start of school but before the end of the registration period will be treated for statistical purposes, as present, but will be coded as late (L) before registers close.

5. Parents/Carers must inform the school if their child is going to be absent on or before the first day by 9.25 am.

6. When making medical/dental appointments, every effort must be made to ensure appointments are outside school hours but we acknowledge that this is not always possible.

If a child has a persistent late record parents will be asked to meet with the Headteacher to resolve the problem. We encourage parents to approach us at any time if they are having problems getting their child to school on time.

Absence from School

First Day Absence

- When a child is absent unexpectedly, the class teacher will record the absence in the register and a member of staff will telephone a parent or guardian. Until the reason for the absence is verified, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.
- A note or a telephone call or personal explanation is needed whenever a child is absent, between 8.45 and 9.15am. If a child is ill for more than one day, the parent should either state the return date for the child or contact the school daily until the child's return.
- A note or verbal notification may be given to the school prior to the day of absence. For example, if a child has a medical appointment.
- All instances of following up an absence by telephone are recorded in the Absence book, kept in the staff room.

Third Day Absence

- The school will continue to try to contact parents by telephone.
- A letter will be sent to the parents asking for an explanation for the child's absence and to contact the school immediately.

Continuing Absence

- See above
- 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 your current contact numbers and email addresses at all times. So, help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have an up to date number and email address – if we don't then something important may be missed. Please ensure we have both parents and at least a third emergency contact person's contact details.

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, the legislation is the Education Act 1996 sec. 444(1) and 444(1A). 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). Penalty Notices are issued per parent/per child.

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

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 pupil'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 requests for holidays.

4. The Head Teacher or designated representive 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. 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 unauthorized Exceptional Leave.

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.

Targets for the school and for classes are displayed in the school and you should take time to study them.

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.

Those people responsible for attendance matters in this school are:

School Office Staff:

- On a daily basis, phoning parents of any pupil who is absent from school without a known reason
- Bringing any concerns to the attention of the Headteacher
- Publishing attendance data in the school's weekly newsletter
- Processing of parental requests for absence during school time.

Class Teachers

- Daily monitoring of punctuality and attendance
- Bringing any concerns directly to the attention of the Headteacher or in her absence to the Deputy Heads

Headteacher

- Responsible for monitoring attendance data
- Following up all attendance and punctuality concerns; liaising with parents when appropriate
- Reviewing requests for absence during school time
- Reporting on attendance to governors on a termly basis

Summary

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures & its 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.

Joe Williams

Chair of Governors

October 2025

Review Date: 01/10/2026