



ATTENDANCE POLICY

NORTHBOURNE.SP.003

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Northbourne CE Primary School

Cockcroft Road,
Didcot
OX11 8LJ

Attendance Policy

Northbourne CE Primary School is committed to providing the best possible education for all of our pupils and embraces the concept of equal opportunities for all. We strive to provide an inclusive environment where we nurture excellence, and all pupils feel valued, can learn about themselves and the world, and can learn and grow together.

For a child to reach their full potential and gain the greatest benefit from education, it is vital that they attend regularly and that children are at school, on time, every day unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

It is very important, therefore, that parents ensure their children attend regularly, and this policy sets out how school and parents will work together to achieve this.

Why regular attendance is 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. Children are best safeguarded from exploitation and other risks in the wider community by attending school regularly where they are supervised by qualified and caring professionals.

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 everyone's responsibility – parents, pupils and all members of school staff.

To help us all focus on this we will:

- Provide regular updates and information on attendance in our weekly newsletter;
- Share a weekly attendance 'leaderboard' with pupils in celebration assembly each Friday;
- Reward good or improving attendance with certificates and stickers: 100% (gold), 98 – 99% (silver) and 95% - 97% (bronze).
- Children with 100% attendance for the whole school year receive a gift voucher and the class with the best attendance over the school year receives a reward, such as a visit to the cinema.

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.

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 causes. If this occurs, school may ask for 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' is therefore granted. This type of absence can lead to the Local Authority County Attendance Team using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. Absence which might fall into this category 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;
- 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.

Severe absenteeism (SA)

A pupil becomes a 'severe absentee' when they miss 50% or more schooling across the school year for any reason. Absence at this level is doing significant damage to any child's academic and social progress and will have lifelong consequences. All SA pupils at our school will have an Individual Attendance Plan which will incorporate multiagency input. You will be expected to engage with all partners to improve your child's attendance to 95%+. SA pupils are our highest priority at school.

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 the fullest support and co-operation of parents to tackle this.

All absence is monitored 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 parents will be informed of this immediately.

Persistently absent pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system and we also combine this with academic mentoring where absence affects attainment.

In cases where a pupil begins to develop a pattern of absences, or where attendance over time is lower than 90%, the school will try to resolve the problem by making contact with parents. Initially this will be done through an informal discussion, either face-to-face or by phone, which will be followed up by a letter to the parent from the headteacher to document the conversation. The headteacher will liaise with the County Attendance Team to ensure necessary action is taken when incidents of poor attendance and / or punctuality are identified.

If attendance continues to be a problem despite these actions, the headteacher will invite parents in to school to discuss the causes of the problem and possible ways forward. At this point, a parenting contract will be agreed in consultation with parents. The headteacher will also consider the potential for involvement of other specific agencies and the possible need to complete an Early Help Assessment and begin Team Around the Family processes.

School procedures

Any child who is absent from school at the morning or afternoon registration period must have their absence recorded. If there is no known reason for the absence at registration, it is recorded as unknown (N) in the first instance. When further information is obtained, for example, from the school answer machine or through first-day absence phone-calling, the code will be amended to reflect the reason for the absence. Where absence is not due to illness or for medical reasons, the headteacher or, in his absence a member of the Senior Leadership Team, will determine whether the absence is authorised or not, and, again, the code will be amended to reflect this (U for unauthorised absence).

All authorisation of absence is at the discretion of the headteacher or, in his absence, a member of the senior leadership team with this delegated responsibility. The provision of a note or message does not authorise absence. Absence can only be authorised within the context of the law.

If your child is absent you must:

- Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence;
- You can call into school and speak to a member of our admin team, or leave a message on our answer phone, including the reason for the absence.

If your child is absent we will:

- Telephone you on the first day of absence if we haven't heard from you;
- Visit you at home if we haven't heard from you by the third day of absence;
- Invite you to school to discuss the situation with our Headteacher, Deputy Head or class teacher if the absences persist;
- Refer the matter to the County Attendance Team if attendance falls below 90%.

Telephone numbers

There are times when school needs to contact parents about many issues, including absence, so it is important to ensure current contact details are held by school at all times. To help us, we ask parents to ensure we always have an up-to-date number and email address. These are then checked throughout the year, but parents can help by being proactive in letting a member of staff in the office know of any changes. Please ensure we have both parents and at least a third person's emergency 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 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).

The County Attendance Team, with the school, will encourage you to engage with an Early Help Assessment. Education Supervision Orders may be discussed with you to support rapidly improving attendance.

Parents that have previously been issued with Penalty Notices for their children's unauthorised absences may receive summonses to Court in the event of further unauthorised absences.

"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, email: attendance@oxfordshire.gov.uk.

Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If a child misses the start of the day, they will miss work and miss information about the day. Late arrival is disruptive to teachers and other pupils, and can encourage absence.

Morning registration will take place at the start of school at 8:55am. The registers will remain open for 20 minutes.

In accordance with regulations, if your child arrives after that time they will receive a mark that shows them to be onsite, but this will not count as a present mark and will mean they have an unauthorised absence. This will mean that you could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists.

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

Two late arrivals in a week will prompt a letter from the headteacher alerting parents of the issue. Punctuality is then monitored carefully, and any recurrence leads to parents being invited to meet the headteacher to discuss the issue.

Exceptional Leave

Taking holidays in term time affects a child's schooling as much as any other absence; parents should not take children away on holiday in school time. Any savings parents think they may make by taking a holiday in school time are offset by the cost to a child's education.

There is no automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday.

- It is widely known that the link between a student's attendance and attainment is irrefutable;
- Early poor attendance habits follow through into secondary school, further education and employment;
- Graduates earn, on average, double that of young people that leave school with no qualifications;
- All schools in Oxfordshire are encouraged to adopt a policy of not authorising Exceptional Leave;
- The 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;
- 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 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 parents 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. Our aim is for attendance to be no lower than 97% for the school year-to-date at any given point. We will keep you updated regularly about our progress against this and how your child's attendance compares.

Please note that 97% is our minimum expectation and we aim to do better than this because we know that good attendance is the key to successful schooling, and we believe our pupils can be amongst the best in Oxfordshire.

Throughout the year we monitor absences and punctuality to show us where improvements can be made. Information on any projects or initiatives that will focus on these areas will be provided in our weekly newsletter, and we ask for your full support.

Summary

The school has a legal duty to report and publish its absence figures and its Attendance Policy to parents, and to promote attendance. School attendance data must be available to Oxfordshire County Council, our multi-academy trust and the Department for Education. Our school is obliged to share attendance data daily with our MAT, OCC and the DfE. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure children attend regularly and on time.

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, mental health and social wellbeing.