

## **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. 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.

This policy works to meet the mandatory requirements laid out in [Working together to improve school attendance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance)

## **Promoting Regular Attendance:**

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility - parents, pupils and all members of school staff.

## **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
- 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 can have lifelong consequences. All SA pupils at our school will have an Individual Attendance Plan which will incorporate multi-agency 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 our 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 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.

PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system 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 a Mentor or a TA, 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 Assessment with you and consider convening a Team Around the Family.

### **Absence Procedures:**

#### **If your child is absent you must:**

- Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence;
- Or you can call into school and report to reception;

#### **If your child is absent we will:**

- Telephone or email you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you;
- Visit you at home if we have not heard from you by day 3 of absence;
- Invite you in to discuss the situation with our Attendance Officer and/or Family Support Worker and Senior Leadership Team if absences persist;
- Refer the matter to the County Attendance Team if unauthorized 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. There will be regular checks on contact details throughout the year. Please ensure we contact details for anyone with parental responsibility and at least one other emergency contact.

### **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. 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 Strengths and Needs Assessment. 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](mailto:attendance@oxfordshire.gov.uk)

### **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.

### **How we manage timekeeping:**

The school day starts at **8.40 a.m. (8.45 a.m. in Early Years Foundation Stage)** and we expect your child to be in class at that time.

Registers close at **8.50 a.m. (9.00 a.m. in Early Years Foundation Stage)**

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.

Whilst there is no mandatory time for pm registration, the school will seek to take the register directly following the lunchtime period at 1 p.m.(1.30 p.m. for Years 5&6) in order to support safeguarding and early identification of pupils who are late to return or whom do not return. Registers will close after ten minutes.

If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with a member of the School Leadership Team and/or Attendance Officer 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 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. 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 when a pupil's

- attendance is less than 95%.
6. Exceptional leave should always be refused when school is aware of any truancy.
  7. Exceptional leave should always be refused when requests are regular (annual) or when patterns become identifiable.
  8. Reasons for Exceptional Leave should be logged on the pupil's record and shared as part of the transfer/transition process.
  9. Exceptional leave should be applied for in writing, see **Appendix A** for the appropriate form.

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 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:**

The school has targets to improve attendance and your child has an important part to play in meeting these targets.

The minimum level of attendance for this school is 95% 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 bulletin and we ask for your full support.

We analyse all absence carefully and draw trends based on pupils' characteristics, vulnerabilities, days of the week, subjects missed and repeat illnesses. We focus our attention on addressing these trends of absence.

### **The people responsible for attendance matters in this school are:**

Mrs L Stewart, Attendance Officer

Mrs K Poole, Family Support Worker

Ms C Stanley, Assistant Headteacher /SENDCo

Ms R Eastwood, Deputy Headteacher

Mrs H McSweeney, Headteacher

Ms K Whiteley, Governor with responsibility for attendance

**Summary:**

The school has a legal duty to report and publish its absence figures & its attendance policy to parents and to promote attendance. School attendance data must be available to Oxfordshire County Council, & the Department for Education. Our school is obliged to share all attendance data daily Oxfordshire County Council and the Department for Education. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend regularly and on time.

We have a lead Governor who scrutinises our attendance arrangements on behalf of all our pupils.

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 well-being.

Date of Policy: December 2022

Appendix A



**Cholsey Primary School**

**Request for leave due to exceptional circumstances**

Pupils attend school for 190 days each school year. Full attendance is vital for your child's educational progress. Absences during term time could hinder academic attainment.

Absences other than illness will only be approved in exceptional circumstances – please refer to our attendance policy for further information.

**Please complete all boxes in the following section:**

Child's surname:		Child's first name:	
Class:		Date of birth:	
Address:			
Telephone number:			
Reason for absence: <i>(note: absences will not be authorised unless circumstances are exceptional)</i>			
Length of absence:		Destination:	
Date of departure:		Date due back in school:	
Parent signature:			

**To be completed by school:**

Absence approved?	Yes	No	Headteacher's signature:	
Previous absences:	days		Meeting with parents?	Yes      No
Reason if granted				