

Windale Primary School
Attendance Policy
2023-2024

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.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Give you details on attendance in our school newsletters;
- Regularly update you on how your child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainments;
- Celebrate good attendance in school weekly in assemblies and in class with rewards;
- Run promotional events when parents, pupils and staff can work together on raising attendance levels across the school.

Understanding types of absence:

Where pupils of compulsory school age are recorded as absent, the register must show whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.

Absence can only be authorised by the school and cannot be authorised by parents. All absences will be treated as unauthorised unless a satisfactory explanation for the pupil's absence has been received. Parents should advise the school by telephone on the first day of absence and provide the school with an expected date of return, if this cannot be predicted, parents should contact school each day of their child's absence.

Absence will be categorised as follows:

Illness: In most cases a telephone call or a note from the parent informing the school that their child is ill will be acceptable. Parents may be asked to provide medical evidence where there are repeated absences due to reported illness. This will usually be in the form of an appointment card, prescription etc. If a child has more than three periods of absence over a school year due to illness any further illnesses will be recorded as unauthorised unless medical evidence has been provided. Unauthorised absences can lead to the Local Authority issuing Fixed Penalty Notices (fines).

Medical/Dental Appointments: Parents are advised where possible to make medical and dental appointments outside of the school day. Where this is not possible, pupils should attend school for part of the day. Parents should show the appointment card to school.

Other Authorised Circumstances: This relates to occasions where there is cause for absence due to exceptional circumstances, for example family bereavement, visiting a parent in prison or part time timetable agreed as part of a reintegration package.

Excluded (No alternative provision made): Exclusion from attending school is counted as an authorised absence. The child's class teacher will make arrangements for work to be sent home.

Religious Observance: Windale Primary School acknowledges the multifaith nature of British society and recognises that on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside school holiday periods or weekends and this necessitates a consideration of authorised absence or special leave for religious observance. However, in the interests of fulfilling the academic requirements of the school and limiting the authorised absence rate of the school, it is identified as reasonable that no more than one day be designated for any individual occasion of religious observance/festival and no more than three days in total in any academic year. Any further absence will be categorised as unauthorised.

Traveller Absence: The aim for the attendance of Traveller children, in common with all other children, is to attend school as regularly and as

frequently as possible. To protect Traveller parents from unreasonable prosecution for non-attendance, the Education Act 1944, section 86, states that a Traveller parent is safe from prosecution if their child accrues 200 attendances (i.e. 200 half days) in a year. This is only when the family are engaged in a trade or business that requires them to travel and when the child is attending school as regularly as that trade permits. It does not mean that part-time education for Traveller children is legally acceptable, nor does it relieve parents of their duties to ensure that their children are receiving suitable education when not at school.

Unauthorised absences: 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

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 96+%. 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.

All our PA pupils and their parents are subject to a parent contract and the action plan may include allocation of additional support such as 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.

Absence Procedures:

If your child is absent you must:

- Contact the school office (01865 777796) as soon as possible on the first day of absence and then ring each day they are absent.

If your child is absent we will:

- Telephone or text 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 or if we have concerns about the absence;
- Invite you in to discuss the situation with our Attendance Lead and/or a member of the Safeguarding Team if the absence persists.
- 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. There will be regular checks on contact details throughout the year. 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. 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, 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

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 time keeping:

The school day starts at **8.45 a.m.** and we expect your child to be in class at that time. The school gates open at **8.35am.**

Registers are marked by **9.00 a.m.** and your child will receive a late mark if they are not in by that time.

At **9.15 a.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.

Whilst there is no mandatory time for pm registration, the school will seek to take the register directly following the lunchtime period at 1.15 pm in order to support safeguarding and early identification of pupils who are Late to return or whom do not return.

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 96%.
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.

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, 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 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.

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.

Those people responsible for attendance matters in this school are:

Miss Whiteley, Attendance Lead/ Deputy Head Teacher/ SENCo
Mrs Watson, Assistant Headteacher
Ms Geran-Haq, Head Teacher
Mrs Laird, Governor with responsibility for attendance

Graduated response to Attendance:

At Windale, we analyse the attendance of our children carefully to ensure they have the best chance to aim high and be the best they can be. We have a graduated response to attendance.

100% attendance	Amazing!	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Celebrated weekly in class.• Celebrated termly in assembly.• Class and whole-
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		school rewards in place.
Above 96% attendance	Well Done!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Celebrated weekly in assembly. • Class rewards in place.
Between 94% - 96% attendance	Be careful...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Careful monitoring of attendance by the attendance team. • Informal conversations with families and support given if needed.
Between 90% - 94% attendance	Warning – Cause for concern...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A parent contract issued • Daily monitoring of attendance in place. • Regular contact with families
Below 90% attendance	Action required.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement from the County Attendance Team. • Possible penalty notices issued.

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 Multi-Academy Trust & the Department for Education. Our school is obliged to share all attendance data daily with our Trust, 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:
September 2023

Date of Review:
September 2024

