



Ewelme Church of England (VA) Primary School

Ready Respectful Responsible Reflective Resilient

Attendance policy

Approved by: Date: 09.06.22

Last reviewed on: June 2022

Next review due by: June 2022

1. Introduction

Good attendance is crucial to a child's education and central to our approach to safeguarding. Children are safest when they are consistently attending school.

Over the course of a complete academic year, time missed through absence can build up to very significantly. For instance:

a 95% attendance = about 2 weeks missed

a 90% attendance = about 1 month of missed learning and teaching. This is classed as persistent absence and legal action can be taken

an 85% attendance = an entire term of missed learning and teaching

an 80% attendance = about 1.5 terms of missed school.

Therefore, good attendance is in everyone's interests and is everyone's business.

Our aim at Ewelme CE (VA) Primary School is to achieve and maintain attendance at or above the pre-pandemic national average of 96%.

To this end, this policy sets out:

- expectations of parents/carers, pupils and staff with regard to attendance,
- daily routines and procedures,
- The school's definition of unauthorized, persistent and severe absence,
- how the school will address poor attendance (including how the school will use attendance data and thresholds for different actions and levels of intervention to improve attendance where it is not good enough),
- how planned absence will be addressed by school, including the definition of exceptional circumstances

2. Daily expectations – routines and procedures (including unexplained absence procedures)

2.1 Pupils and parents

Pupils are expected to arrive at school on time each day. The morning session begins at 8.45am and finishes at 12.00noon for reception and Key Stage 1 and 12.20pm for Key Stage 2. The afternoon session begins at 1.00pm for reception and Key Stage 1 and at 1.20pm for Key Stage 2 and ends at 3.15 pm for all pupils.

If a child arrives after the register closes (after 8.55 am and/or after 1.00pm/1.20 pm) he/she will be marked as 'late' for that session. Any child arriving later than 8.55 am should enter the school via the main entrance and sign into the 'Late Arrival Book' on reporting to the School Office. The child will then be sent and/or accompanied to his/her classroom.

When absence is unavoidable because of illness, parents/carers must contact the school by 9.30 am on the first day of absence. This can be done by telephone, email (office.3752@ewelme.oxon.sch.uk) or in person. If the parents/carers fail to make contact, then the school will attempt contact by telephone and/or email on the initial day (see the Unexplained Absence procedure below). In the event of a child being absent due to illness, parents/carers must provide an update each day of the child's absence to confirm they remain unwell and cannot attend school. This can be provided via email, on the phone or in person.

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents/carers), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the reason for each absence is always required.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for illness reported to the school or for exceptional circumstances on dates shared and pre-arranged with the Headteacher.

Unauthorised absences are those for which no 'leave' has been given. This includes absence for illness which has never been properly explained.

2.2 School staff

Registers provide the daily record of the attendance of all pupils; they are digital documents that may be required in a court of law, for example as evidence in prosecutions for non-attendance at school. They also contribute to pupils' end of year reports. For these reasons, registers have to be marked at the start of each session within the expected timeframes set out above.

Registers are completed digitally via the school's MIS (RM Integris) and are kept secure through individual staff logins to an online portal.

The head teacher will monitor attendance regularly (at least every short term) to identify those whose attendance is not good enough.

School staff will follow up on unexplained absence promptly, following the procedure below:

First Day Absence – The school expects parents to notify them of any child absence by contacting the school office as soon as possible and by 09:30am at the latest. There is an answering machine for times when office staff are not available to take your call. Messages regarding illness must come from parents/carers and not siblings. Once registers have closed and there is still no information, the school will contact the parents to find out the reason for the absence. If the school is unable to make contact with the parents/carers and ascertain the reason for the pupil's absence, a record will be made by school and logged in our safeguarding files.

Third Day Absence – If a child has been absent and without any notice two members of school staff (usually including the HT) will go to the house to find out why the child is absent and why school is unable to get through. If there is no response, a letter will be put through the door asking the parents to contact school that day.

Continuing Absence – If there has still been no contact from the parent, a further letter is sent requesting that parents contact the school as a matter of urgency before the issue is passed on to the local authority.

Ten Day Absence - Any pupil who is absent without an explanation for 10 consecutive days will be referred to Oxfordshire County Council, Attendance and Engagement Team. This is a legal requirement. The school will include details of the action they have taken.

3. Unauthorised, persistent and severe absence

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" or permission 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

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' (PA) 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.

A pupil is experiencing 'severe absence' when their attendance falls below 50%.

4. How poor attendance will be addressed:

Attendance will be monitored by the head teacher every short half-term. Specifically, children's attendance will be checked against the key 'thresholds for action' set out below.

4.1 Thresholds for actions:

Attendance %	Steps taken by school
100%	Pupils with 100% attendance in any given short-term will receive a certificate of achievement.
96-100%	Attendance is good and is at or above the pre-pandemic national average – pupil's attendance will continue to be monitored at least short-termly.
92-96%	Individuals will be identified and flagged for a follow-up check at next monitoring cycle. If attendance remains between 92-96% across two monitoring cycles, a letter will be generated and shared with parents. Subsequent improvements will be recognised by a follow up letter acknowledging this. Parents/carers of pupils whose attendance remains between 92-96%, with no improvements, across three monitoring cycles will receive a second letter and be invited to discuss their child's attendance with the head teacher.
90-92%	If attendance is between 90 and 92% at one monitoring cycle, a letter will be generated and shared with parents/carers alerting them to the fact that their child is in danger, if attendance does not improve, of becoming a 'persistent absentee'. Subsequent improvements will be recognised by a follow up letter acknowledging this. Parents/carers of pupils whose attendance remains between 90-92%, with no improvements, across two monitoring cycles will receive a second letter and be invited to

	discuss their child's attendance with the head teacher.
>90%	<p>A child is categorised as a 'persistent absentee'. Their names are shared with the Attendance Team at Oxfordshire County Council.</p> <p>If a child has attendance below 90% at one monitoring cycle, a letter will be generated and shared with parents/carers and they will be asked to meet with the head teacher to discuss their child's attendance.</p> <p>Subsequent improvements will be recognised by a follow up letter acknowledging this.</p>
>90% with no improvement over 2 monitoring cycles	<p>If a child's attendance remains below 90% for two monitoring cycles, with no significant improvements, the school will ask the parents/carers for a further meeting to create an action plan which may include: allocation of additional support through use of circle time, individual incentive programmes and participation in group activities around raising attendance.</p> <p>The school may additionally suggest an Early Help Assessment (EHA) is carried out. This could lead to a Team Around a Family (TAF) being established, which could lead to involvement from the Locality Community Support Service and other external agencies, all with the aim of supporting the family in order to improve the child's attendance.</p> <p>If families do not wish to engage with an EHA, or if attendance remains below 90% despite support, the school may seek the involvement of the Attendance and Engagement Officer (AEO) from the Local Authority (see below for further details).</p>
>50%	<p>If a child's attendance falls below 50% this is categorised as 'severe absence'. The school will immediately contact the family to urgently discuss the child's attendance and seek support from the Learner Engagement Team at Oxfordshire County Council and the Attendance and Engagement Officer (AEO). An Attendance Action Plan will be put in place to improve attendance.</p> <p>Attendance will be monitored daily.</p> <p>The school will initiate an Early Help Assessment, alongside the Locality Community Support Service and Learner Engagement Team, plus any other external agencies who are identified as necessary in meeting the child's needs and improving their attendance.</p>

Please note: As detailed above, the school can refer a 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).

4.2 The role of the Attendance and Engagement Officer:

He/she will also try to resolve the situation by agreement, but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed, the AEO can use court proceedings to prosecute parents/carers. This could result in a fine or a term of imprisonment.

Parents/carers or children may wish to contact the AEO themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is available from the

school office or by contacting the Local Authority.

5. Planned Absence during term time

Parents do not have the right to take their child out of school for holiday and Headteachers are no longer able to grant leave of absence for holiday. In exceptional circumstances it may be necessary for planned absence to be applied for and for the duration of such absence to be determined by the Headteacher.

Applications should be made to the head teacher via email or letter well in advance of the proposed absence wherever possible. Each application for authorized absence will be considered on their individual merits and context. The head teacher may request a meeting (including via phone call or virtual meeting) to discuss the circumstances of the application for authorized absence should they require more information in order to make a decision about whether or not to authorize the absence.

The school will not usually authorise absence immediately prior to or during periods of assessment.

It is the head teacher's decision as to what constitutes 'exceptional circumstances' in each case. Examples of exceptional circumstances, due to which authorized absence may be granted at the head teacher's discretion, include (but are not limited to):

- particular family circumstances that make a family holiday and/or planned family time essential to the child and/or families' wellbeing and mental health (i.e. serious illness within the family, loss of a parent/carer)
- attendance at the wedding (or equivalent) or funeral (or equivalent) of a member of the immediate family
- participation in music or other performing arts examinations
- participation in other performing arts or sporting events where this event is a 'one-off' and where participation offers an opportunity for enrichment and/or advancement in a discipline in which the pupil has demonstrated a gift or talent
- visits to new schools (such as taster days) within the 'long-term' (12 weeks) of a school move (for example, when families from the RAF are aware of an upcoming posting and consequent school move).
- Particular circumstances involving families from the UK Armed Forces (see 5.1 below)

Even if a parents/carers' request for authorised absence is in line with one of the examples above, the head teacher will still take into account other circumstances for each case, including proximity to assessments, previous attendance record and any concerns around attainment or progress. Therefore, requesting authorized absence for one of the reasons set out above does not guarantee that that request will be granted.

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.

5.1 Absence arising from exceptional circumstances linked to service families

The school recognises the difficulties that can arise for families when parents/carers who are in the armed forces are deployed for long periods of time. We also recognise that time together as a family, either in the run up to, or at end of, a parent's/carer's deployment is often of great benefit to families in these circumstances. Therefore, the school retains the right to grant up to 5 days of authorised leave for pupils within 6 weeks of a deployment of 4 months or more starting or ending, for the purposes of a family holiday or dedicated family time. However, this decision will still be made at the discretion of the head teacher who will take into consideration the context for the pupil involved e.g. proximity to assessments, previous attendance record, any concerns around attainment or progress etc.

4. Summary

Attendance is a safeguarding issue. Good attendance is in everyone's interests and is everyone's business.

The school has a duty to promote good attendance and to publish its absence figures for parents/carers and the general public. Equally, parents have a legal responsibility to make sure that their children attend school. At Ewelme School we are committed to working with parents in order to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

