



Ewelme Church of England (VA) Primary School

Ready Respectful Responsible Reflective Resilient

Attendance policy

Approved by: Full Governing Board **Date:** 01.10.2024

Last reviewed on: February 2024

Next review due by: September 2026

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. 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)

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 newsletters and on our school website,
- Report to you at least termly at Parents' evening on how your child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainment,
- When appropriate, celebrate good attendance,
- When necessary, run promotional events, such as a coffee morning, when parents, pupils and staff can work together on raising attendance levels across the school.

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 95% attendance, although we are striving to achieve 97% as an overall whole-school average. We will keep you updated regularly about progress to this level and how your child's attendance compares.

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 school 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.

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 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 reading, spelling and times tables practice
- 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)

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 and the school may request for a Penalty Notice to be issued.

It is widely known that the link between a pupil's attendance and attainment is irrefutable. Early poor attendance habits follow through into secondary school, further education and employment.

All schools in Oxfordshire are encouraged to adopt a policy of not authorising requests for holidays.

The Head Teacher will liaise with every family applying for Exceptional Leave to stress the importance of good school attendance habits and links between attendance & attainment.

Exceptional leave is most unlikely to be authorised when a pupil's attendance is less than 96%.

Exceptional leave should always be refused when school is aware of any truancy.

Exceptional leave should always be refused when requests are regular (annual) or when patterns become identifiable.

Reasons for Exceptional Leave should be logged on the pupil's record and shared as part of the transfer/transition process.

Whilst exceptional leave at Ewelme C.E. Primary School is not an entitlement, we recognise the characteristics and needs within our community and, therefore, it has been agreed by the Governing Body that the following exceptions may be applied, at the head teacher's discretion, for children and families with at least one parent or carer serving in the British Armed Forces:

- 1 absence per lengthy deployment (4 months or more) totalling no more than 5 days within six weeks before or after deployment. Please note, proof of deployment (letter/email evidence from line manager) may be requested to accompany the Exceptional Leave Form. Requests will need to be submitted 15 working days ahead of the requested exceptional leave to be authorised
- Visiting a school on notification of being posted (1 day)

Exceptional leave may also be granted, at the head teacher's discretion, in the following circumstances:

- Other educational activity such as ballet exam, attending military ceremony of parent etc. (1 day)
- Travelling to a family event that is a significant distance away

Should you need to request leave, please the following steps must be completed:

- 1.Complete an Exceptional Leave form from the School Office
- 2.Submit the form with any supporting documentation to the school office at least 15 working days ahead of the date.

- 3.If requested, you must meet with the Headteacher as arranged with the school office to discuss the leave. A decision will be made as to whether the leave will be authorised or not for the majority of requests in this meeting or via written communication (email or letter).

The Penalty for parents removing their children from school for unauthorised exceptional leave 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)

Please note: Penalty Notices are issued per parent/per child.

Absence Procedures

If your child is absent you must:

- Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence with the reason for the non-attendance.
- Or you can call into school and report to reception, who will arrange for a member of staff to speak with you.
- Be honest about the reason for absence including if you are on holiday

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;
- Follow School Attendance processes including inviting the parent/carer to a meeting in the school to identify the barriers to attendance and ensure support is put in place.
- Offer a Strengths and Needs assessment to support positive attendance
- Gain the voice of the child to ensure we are taking a child centred approach.
- 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.

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 08:45 am and we expect your child to be in class at that time. If your child arrives to school and registration as expected, they will receive a present mark (/)

Registers are marked by 9:00 am and your child will receive a late mark (L) 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 (U) 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 1:00pm in order to support safeguarding and early identification of pupils who are Late to return or whom do not return. If your child is present for this registration they will be marked (\)

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.

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 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.

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 which 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.

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 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

Summary

The school has a legal duty to report and publish its absence figures & it's 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 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.