



Harwell Community Primary School

## Attendance Policy

This policy is based on the OCC Model Attendance Policy

Reviewed by Governor Working Party	1st November 2021
Ratified by FGB	17th November 2021
Next review due	Academic year 2022/2023

### COVID19

DfE has published an addendum on recording attendance and absence due to Covid19. Harwell School will comply with all attendance monitoring required by DfE and OCC during the pandemic and the recording of attendance for the 2021/22 Academic Year in accordance with DfE guidance updated 27 September 2021 [DfE addendum attendance](#)

## **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. At Harwell School, regular attendance is expected to be 97% or higher

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.

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 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 regular newsletters and on the school website
- Write to you if there are concerns with regards to attendance. (Early communication is always best).
- Include within the pupil's annual reports to parents an attendance breakdown for the year.
- Celebrate good attendance by displaying individual and class achievements
  - Class owls awarded in assembly on a weekly basis for each Key Stage
  - Good Attendance badges recognising all pupils who have achieved more than 97% attendance in a full term

This is currently under review due to COVID

## 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 (email).

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness, medical/dental appointments which **inevitably** fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable causes. If this occurs, the 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 makes things worse.

You can support your child by:

- Retaining open & honest communication with the school
- Ensuring regular and early bedtime
- Helping with homework
- Having uniform and equipment prepared the night before
- Providing a healthy breakfast
- Reporting any academic or social concerns promptly
- Being positive about school (even if your own experience was less than positive)

## 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 cooperation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence 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 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 Teaching Assistant, 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 an Early Help 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 preferably by email to the school office with an explanation for the absence;
- Email the school office each morning that your child is absent.

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

- Telephone you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you;
- Invite you in to discuss the situation with our Attendance Officer and/or Assistant Headteacher or Headteacher if absences persist;
- Refer the matter to the County Attendance Team if attendance moves below 90%.
- The school may need to refer to the Children Missing in Education Team.  
[OCC Children Missing in Education Policy](#)

### **Telephone numbers:**

There are times when we need to contact parents about lots of things, including absence, so we need to have your current contact numbers at all times. So, help us help you and your child by making sure we always have an up to date number – if we don't then something important may be missed.

### **The County Attendance Team:**

Parents are expected to contact the school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. A collaborative approach between school and families is nearly always more 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. The school is expected to issue a Post Holiday warning notice letter for holiday taken during term time advising that the County Attendance Team will investigate and may issue a penalty notice.

Penalty notices are intended as an alternative to prosecution, (although the local authority has discretion to pursue either course of action). If a penalty notice is not paid in full within 28 days of issue, the parent/carer will be at risk of prosecution for the underlying offence which caused the penalty notice to be issued.

The legislation is the Education Act 1996 sec. 444(1) and 444(1A):

“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.”

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.

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 lateness:**

The school day starts at 08:55 **a.m.** and we expect your child to be in class at that time. The school gates are open between 08:45 and 08:55 and children go straight to their classrooms. Parents of children in Foundation Class and Year 1 can take them to the gate for their child's respective classroom where they will be met by a member of class staff.

Registers are marked by 09:10 **a.m.** and your child will receive a late mark if they are not in by that time.

At 09:25 **a.m.** the registers will be closed. In accordance with the Education Act 1996: school registration 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.

If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with the Assistant Headteacher 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:**

The headteacher no longer has the power to authorise absence, except in exceptional circumstances such as attending a close family funeral.

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 to go on holiday.

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

- Attendance Officers: School Business Manager and SENCO
- Headteacher
- Assistant Headteacher

### **Summary:**

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures and its attendance policy to parents and to promote attendance. School attendance data must be available to the Local Authority & the Department for Education.

Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend.

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.





