

# Lewknor Church of England Primary School

## Attendance and Punctuality Policy

### December 2018 - Review December 2021

#### **Introduction**

Regular and punctual school attendance is important. For a child to reach their full educational achievement a high level of school attendance is essential. Lewknor Church of England Primary School fully recognises its responsibilities to ensure pupils are in school and on time. We expect all children on roll to attend school every day, when the school is in session, as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so. Our partnership with parents plays a vital role in ensuring that this is achieved and through our home-school agreement, parents agree to make sure their child is at school regularly and on time.

We believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is the development of positive attitudes towards school. To this end, we strive to create a happy and rewarding environment for all children.

Our policy applies to all children registered at this school and this policy is made available to all parents/carers of pupils who are registered at our school on our school website. This policy has been written to adhere to the relevant Children Acts, Education Acts, Regulations and Guidance from the Department for Education in addition to guidance from the Local Authority.

Although parents/carers have the legal responsibility for ensuring their child's good attendance, the Headteacher and Governors at our school work together with other professionals and agencies to ensure that all pupils are encouraged and supported to develop good attendance habits. Procedures in this policy are followed to ensure this happens. All attendance data is shared with Oxfordshire County Council and the Department for Education.

#### **Why Attendance Matters**

Children who are persistently late or absent soon fall behind with their learning. Statistics show there is a direct link between under-achievement and absence below 95%. Children who are absent from school frequently develop large gaps in their learning which will impact on their progress and their ability to meet age-related learning expectations.

**Less than 5 days absence = 98%+ attendance**  
**14 days absence (approx.) = 93.5% attendance**  
**20 days absence (approx.) = 90% attendance**  
**30 days absence (approx.) = 88% attendance**

**If a child has 80% attendance this means that they have missed approximately 40 days of education over the academic year, averaging 1 day per week.**

## **Aims and Objectives**

This attendance policy ensures that all staff and governors in our school are fully aware of and clear about the actions necessary to promote good attendance.

Through this policy we aim to:

- Improve pupils' achievement by ensuring high levels of attendance and punctuality.
- Achieve a minimum of 97% attendance for all children, apart from those with chronic health issues.
- Create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm and seen to be valued by the school.
- Raise awareness of attendance and punctuality issues among staff, parents and pupils.
- Ensure that our policy applies to Reception-aged children in order to promote good habits at an early age.
- Work in partnership with pupils, parents, staff and Oxfordshire County Council's Attendance Team so that all pupils realise their potential, unhindered by unnecessary absence.
- Promote a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure, and valued, and encourage in pupils a sense of their own responsibility for good school attendance and punctuality.
- Establish a pattern of monitoring attendance and ensure consistency in recognising achievement and dealing with difficulties.
- Recognise the key role of all staff, but especially class teachers, in promoting good attendance.
- Maintaining effective means of communication with parents, pupils, staff and governors on school attendance matters.
- Developing and implementing procedures for identifying, reporting and reviewing cases of poor attendance and persistent lateness.
- Supporting pupils who have been experiencing any difficulties at home or at school which are preventing good attendance.

## **Definitions**

### **Authorised absence**

An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or carer. For example, if a child has been unwell and the parent telephones the school to explain the absence.

Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents do not have this authority. Consequently not all absences supported by parents will be classified as authorised.

### **Unauthorised absence**

An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the school.

Therefore the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent.

### **Continued or Ongoing Absence**

If your child misses 10% or more schooling across the school year, for whatever reason, they are defined as persistent absentees.

### **Procedures**

Our school will undertake to follow the following procedures to support good attendance:

- To maintain appropriate registration processes.
- To maintain appropriate attendance data.
- To communicate clearly the attendance procedures and expectations to all staff, governors, parents and pupils.
- To have consistent and systematic daily records which give detail of any absence and lateness.
- To follow up absences and persistent lateness if parents/carers have not communicated with the school.
- To inform parents/carers what constitutes authorised and unauthorised absence.
- To strongly discourage unnecessary absence through holidays taken during term time.
- To work with parents to improve individual pupils attendance and punctuality
- To refer to the County Attendance Team any child whose attendance causes concern (ie falls below 90%) and where parents/carers have not responded to school initiatives to improve.
- All staff should be aware that they must raise any attendance or punctuality concerns to the Headteacher.

### **Responsibilities**

By law, schools must take a morning and afternoon register and record the attendance or absence of every pupil. All members of school staff have a responsibility for identifying trends in attendance and punctuality. The following includes a more specific list of the kinds of responsibilities which individuals might have.

#### **Class teacher**

Class teachers are responsible for:

- Keeping an overview of class and individual attendance looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/ or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/ carers.
- Informing the Headteacher where there are concerns and acting upon them.
- Monitoring follow-up once actions have been taken to correct attendance concerns.
- Emphasising with their class the importance of good attendance and promptness.
- Following up absences with immediate requests for explanation which should be communicated to the Office Administrator / Headteacher.
- Discussing attendance issues at parent evenings where necessary.

#### **Headteacher**

The Headteacher is responsible for:

- Overall monitoring of school attendance.
- Trends in authorised and unauthorised absence.
- Contacting families where concerns are raised about absence including arranging meetings to discuss attendance issues.

- Monitoring individual attendance where concerns have been raised.
- Liaising with other professionals to determine potential sources of difficulties and reasons for absence.

### **Administration staff**

Staff in the School Office are responsible for:

- Collating and recording registration and attendance information.
- Taking and recording messages from parents regarding absence.
- Contacting parents of absent children where no contact has been made.
- Keeping an overview of class and individual attendance looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/ or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/ carers and reporting concerns to the Headteacher
- Sending out standard letters regarding attendance.

### **Parents**

Parents/Carers are responsible for:

- Ensuring that their child attends school regularly and punctually unless prevented from doing so by illness or attendance at a medical appointment.
- Contacting the school office on the first morning of absence by 9.30 am.
- Informing the school in advance of any medical appointments in school time. For the absence to be recorded as a medical absence we do require evidence from the doctor or dentist. (Appointment card/letter).
- Making requests for authorised absence in term time, only if absolutely necessary as these are not automatically authorised.
- Talking to the school as soon as possible about any child's reluctance to come to school so that problems can be quickly identified and dealt with.

### **Registration**

All the school doors open at 8.50 am. This time is sufficient for all pupils to come into their classroom. The bell will ring in the playground and children will line up in their classes. Registration starts at 9am.

Each class teacher has the responsibility for keeping an accurate record of attendance. Any pupil who is absent must be recorded at the beginning of the morning and afternoon session. All attendance records are documented using SIMs / e-school software, which is supported by our IT support providers. Attendance registers are legal documents and these must be kept secure and preserved for a period of three years after the date they were last used.

### **Lateness**

Once the doors are closed at 9.00 am the only way to get into school is via the school office. Records are kept of those pupils who are late; this is documented on the electronic register for each pupil (Attendance code L). Any child who arrives for school later than 9.30am will be marked as having an unauthorised absence for the morning (attendance code U) in line with Oxfordshire County Council and Department of Education guidance.

Children who have attended a dentist or doctor appointment and subsequently come to school later than 9.05am will have the absence recorded as a medical absence (attendance code M). Please be advised that, where possible, doctor and dentist appointments should be made outside of school hours or during school holidays.

Children who are persistently late miss a significant amount of learning. Children do not like being late. They notice that they are disrupting the lesson, which can make them feel embarrassed. They also miss getting vital learning or information at the start of the school day. Pupils who are consistently late are disrupting not only their own education but also that of other pupils.

Where there have been persistent incidents of lateness parents/carers will receive a letter advising them of the concerns and the school will provide opportunities for parents/carers to seek support and advice to address these issues. If support is declined and a child has 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence due to lateness recorded in any 10 week period, the County Attendance Team will be required to issue parents with a Penalty Notice in accordance with Oxfordshire County Council's Code of Conduct.

### **Absences**

Parents/carers should contact the school on the first day of their child's absence by 9.30 am. When parents/carers notify us of their child's absence it is important that they also provide us with details of the reason for their absence.

It is important that we receive accurate information from parents with reasons for the child's absence as this information is used to determine whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised on the computer. The Headteacher has the responsibility to determine whether absences are authorised or unauthorised.

### **First Day Contact**

Where a child is absent from school and we have not received any verbal or written communication from the parent, then we initiate a first day contact process. Office staff check all of the registers from 9.40am on a daily basis, to identify those pupils who are absent. There are occasions when we are unaware why the child is absent and we will contact the parent to check the reasons for the child's absence.

### **Illness**

When children have an illness that means they may be away from school long term, the school will do all it can to send material home, so that they can keep up with their school work.

If the absence is likely to continue for an extended period, or be a repetitive absence, the school will contact the support services to see if arrangements can be made for the child to be given some home tuition outside school.

Where over the course of an academic year, a child has repeated periods of illness, the school will write to parents to ask them to provide medical evidence for each future period of illness related absence. This evidence could be a doctor's note, appointment card or copy

of a prescription. We may seek written permission from you for the school to make their own enquiries.

#### **Parental Request for Absence from School for Holiday**

With effect from September 2013 the government abolished the right of Headteachers to authorise absence specifically for holidays of up to 10 days per year if special circumstances exist. Instead, Headteachers will only be allowed to grant leave of absence for any reason if they are satisfied exceptional circumstances exist.

Each application for a Leave of Absence will be considered on a case-by-case basis and on its own merits.

Lewknor Church of England Primary School understands that holidays are generally less expensive during term time but this does not count as an exceptional circumstance. Leave which is taken for the following reasons will not be authorised:

- Availability of cheaper holidays
- Availability of desired accommodation
- Poor weather experienced in school holidays
- Overlap with beginning or end of term
- Booked the wrong dates by mistake
- Booked by another family member
- Attending a wedding that is not immediate family
- Family birthdays

#### **Addressing Attendance Concerns**

The school expects attendance of at least 97% for each child.

It is important for children to establish good attendance habits early on in their primary school career. It is the responsibility of the Headteacher and the governors to support good attendance and to identify and address attendance concerns promptly. In primary school we rely upon parents to ensure their child attends school regularly and punctually and therefore where there are concerns regarding attendance parents are always informed of our concerns. Initially concerns about attendance are raised with parents via letters which are sent home. There will be opportunities for the parent/carer to discuss reasons for absence and support to be given by the school with the aim to improve attendance. Where a child's attendance record does not improve over a period of time then the school has a responsibility to make a referral to the County Attendance Team.

The County Attendance Team will issue Penalty Notices (a £60 fine to be paid within 21 days of the Penalty Notice being posted) to parents where there has been a referral to them from the school as part of the school's processes to address poor attendance patterns.

In addition, education-related parenting orders are available by direct application by a school or Local Authority (LA) to the Magistrates' Court as an ancillary order following a

successful prosecution by the LA for irregular attendance or breach of a school attendance order.

The Attendance Officers carry out regular register checks to identify children with low attendance (below 90%). They work with the school to improve attendance and may issue fixed penalty fines if attendance support meetings held by the school do not improve attendance.

Returns of school data are made annually to the DfE and benchmark data exists to compare our school within local and national contexts.