



# Larkrise Primary School

## Attendance Policy

### Introduction

Regular attendance at school promotes pupils' well-being, maximises progress in learning and helps pupils reach their potential. The attendance pattern for all children is monitored weekly with the school seeking to work actively with parents to ensure a regular pattern is maintained. One of our basic principles is to celebrate success. Good attendance is fundamental to a successful and fulfilling school experience. It is our duty to promote 100% attendance for all children. For our children to take full advantage of the educational opportunities offered it is vital that our pupils are at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. All children have the right to an education and we have put in place appropriate procedures to support this. We believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is development of positive attitudes towards school and learning. Good attendance is important because:

- statistics show a direct link between under-achievement and absence below 95%
- regular attenders make better progress, both socially and academically
- regular attenders find school routines, school work and friendships easier to cope with
- regular attenders find learning more satisfying
- regular attenders are most successful in transferring between primary school, secondary school, higher education and employment or training.

The Governing Body and Head teacher, in partnership with parents have a duty to promote full attendance at school.

As a school we aim to:

- maintain an attendance rate of a minimum of 96%, pupils not of statutory school age will be subject to the same procedures as the whole school,
- ensure that attendance is regularly monitored,
- follow up and closely monitor the absence of persistent non-attenders,
- reduce the rates of holiday absence and ensure that unauthorised absence is below 1%,
- maintain parents' and pupils' awareness of the importance of regular attendance.

### **Parental Responsibility**

Parents have a legal duty to ensure that their child attends school regularly and arrives on time. Full attendance is essential to the all-round development of a child and they should be allowed to take full advantage of educational

opportunities available to them by law. Poor attendance undermines their education and, sometimes, puts pupils at risk. The school will share the attendance percentage with parents at each parents' consultation meeting and more frequently.

## **Legal Framework**

Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act states that parents must ensure that children of compulsory school age receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. A child is of Compulsory School Age at the beginning of the term following their 5th birthday. A child ceases to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday in June of the school year in which they reach the age of 16. Under the Education Act 1996, the Local Authority has a statutory responsibility to ensure that parents secure education for children of compulsory school age and where necessary, use legal enforcement. The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, require schools to take an attendance register twice a day, once at the start of the morning session and then again during the afternoon session.

The register must record whether the pupil was:

- present
- absent
- present at approved educational activity; or
- unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

## **It is a parent/carers role to;**

It is the parents' responsibility to contact the school on the first day their child is absent. This is a safeguarding matter so that all parties know that your child is safe. Pupils are expected to arrive between 8.40am and 8.50am, when the doors are open for morning jobs and children go to class. All pupils who arrive late must report to the school office where they are registered. Parents can help us by:

- telephoning the school on 01865 721476, on the first morning of all absences before 9.30 am with the reason;
- arranging dental and doctor's appointments out of school hours or during school holidays;
- not arranging family holidays during term time;
- sending in a note explaining the reason for absence on your child's return to school after an illness;
- keeping us updated by telephone, letter or email if your child has an extended period of absence due to illness;
- discuss with school office/class teacher any planned absences well in advance and only request leave of absence if it is for an exceptional circumstance by completing the leave of absence form at the end of this document.

## **It is the school's role to;**

- promote and reward good attendance with pupils at all appropriate opportunities;
- follow our procedure for checking and marking registers;
- follow up unexplained absences by phone calls to parents on the first morning of absence;
- log any reasons for absence received by phone or personal visit;
- consider any absence in line with this policy and Government's guidance before authorising or not;

- remind parents of pupils with attendance below 90% that their child is then considered a persistent absentee;
- ask parents to provide medical proof if their child is absent from school immediately before or after a school holiday.

## Punctuality

- registration is at 8.50 am for all children from Year 1 to Year 6. Registration for Reception and Nursery is at 9am. The school operates a 'soft-start' where pupils can arrive at school from 8.40 am and go straight to their classroom to complete a morning job;
- late arrival can cause children to feel anxious or upset;
- it is important to be on time as the first few minutes of the school day are often used to give out instructions or organise schoolwork for the rest of the day;
- if children miss this short but vital session, their work for the whole day may be affected. Late arrivals are disruptive to the whole class and often embarrassing for the child. We take the view there are no late children, only late parents;
- parents of pupils who have patterns of lateness will be contacted to discuss the importance of good time-keeping and how this may be achieved. Arrival after the close of registration is marked as unauthorised absence in line with the government's guidance.
- as part of the safeguarding procedures of the school, children who remain uncollected at the end of school time, the child will be placed in our After School Club. A fee for this provision will be charged to the parent.

## Action for low attendance

Non-attendance is an important issue that is treated seriously. However, each case is different and the school acknowledges that no one standard response will be appropriate in every case. Consideration is given to all factors affecting attendance before deciding what intervention strategies to apply.

- In every case, early intervention is essential to prevent the problem from worsening. It is essential that parents keep the school fully informed of any matters that may affect their child's attendance.
- Prior to the engagement of Oxfordshire's Attendance and Engagement Officer, the school may issue letters to parents clearly defining the concerns within school regarding a pupil's absence. It may also set up a parent meeting to discuss the pupil's absence. It is hoped that a quick response and change in levels of absence will prevent the need for external involvement.

## Attendance thresholds

97% plus	Excellent attendance. This will help all aspects of your child's achievement and life in school. This will give them a good start in life and supports a positive work ethic.
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96 - 97% Above average	Good attendance. We would like parents to focus on improving attendance to move to excellent attendance at school.
94 - 96% Average	Overall attendance is broadly average. Attendance may begin to affect your child's achievement at school.
93 - 94% Below average	Poor attendance is likely to affect achievement at school. School contact parent directly to seek ways of working together to improve attendance.
Below 93% Low	Absence is causing serious concern. It is highly likely to affect attainment and progress and is disruptive to the child's learning. Meetings between home and school to share strategies for improvement will be called. If improvement is not achieved a referral is made to the Attendance and Engagement Officer. A Fixed Penalty Notice will be considered where absence is not authorised.

For all children, we have a stepped approach to taking action. It will not always be appropriate to progress through all of these steps or even to carry them out in the order listed below.

- responsible staff will use discretion and consider each case carefully;
- where there has been no contact from parents, we will initiate first day calling for all pupils;
- for pupils with attendance below 90% there will be a discussion with the Oxfordshire Attendance and Engagement officer at our regular half-termly meeting;
- we will monitor trends in pupil attendance and punctuality, including our vulnerable groups;
- issuing a parental contract
- we will request for parent/carer to meet with school staff;
- if appropriate, will initiate procedures to access support from other agencies. Education Social Worker (ESW) actions may include:
  - home visits,
  - multi agency meetings,
  - sign-posting to supportive agencies,
  - issue of a Fixed Penalty Notice,
  - court action for poor attendance.

## Using Attendance Data

All pupils' attendance will be monitored and will be shared with the Local Authority and other agencies if a pupil's attendance is a cause for concern. We regard 'cause for concern' as:

- Attendance between 90% and 95%, and where there are patterns of repeated absence or unauthorised absence.
- Any child who has more than 10% (3 days) unauthorised absence over a 30 day period
- Any family who have taken an unauthorised holiday
- Any child below 90% overall, except where there are significant reasons (e.g. a medical condition).

Attendance will be reviewed by the Attendance Coordinator and Deputy Headteacher on an ongoing basis to identify any trends or concerns. Issues will be considered in the light of individual circumstances, and any concerns will be communicated with parents.

## Home Visits

The school reserves the right to conduct home visits to establish the reasons for a child's non-attendance. These may include, but not exclusively:

- (i) Where the school is not convinced by the explanation for a child's absence.
- (ii) Where no reason has been given.
- (iii) Where the school is concerned about the wellbeing of the child.
- (iv) Where the school needs to identify where the child is living.
- (v) Where a child has been absent for a significant period. The school may also use the emergency contacts provided by the parent, or other contacts who may know the reasons for the child's absence (e.g. known extended family), where the reasons have not been provided by the parent.

Home visits will always be conducted by two staff members.

## Support for Attendance

The school employs a Family Support worker who works alongside the Deputy Headteacher to support parents who have difficulty with attendance. At every stage, parents will be offered access to support, including:

- Support with parenting, including putting in place home routines.
- Signposting to other available services
- Meetings and reviews with the HSLW or Deputy Headteacher
- Informal discussions with parents and carers and class teachers
- Behaviour/learning/reintegration support to allay any anxieties
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## 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 writes a note, email or telephones the school to explain the absence. One day per year will usually be classified as authorised for religious observance.

## Unauthorised Absence

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

Unauthorised absences are those, which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'authorisation has been given. Unauthorised absences are an offence and can be liable to legal action or a fixed penalty fine. The following reasons are examples of the kinds of absence that will not be authorised:

- parents keeping children off school unnecessarily,
- absences that have not been properly explained,
- travel during term-time, including family holidays, that have not been agreed,

- repeated or persistent non-specific illness, for example, 'poorly/unwell',
- absence of other siblings if one child is ill,
- absence because a parent is ill (alternative arrangements should be made to get children to school),
- oversleeping,
- inadequate clothing,
- confusion over school term and holiday dates,
- medical and/or dental appointments of more than half a day without very good reason,
- child's and/or family birthdays,
- any routine family event or trip, for example, shopping. The school will instruct the Local Authority to issue a Fixed-Penalty notice for any unauthorised travel during term-time.

## **Authorising Absence**

Only the Headteacher can authorise absence for approved reasons. At the Headteacher's discretion, circumstances may be considered as 'exceptional circumstances' and authorised as an absence from school. Individual circumstances are considered on a case-by-case basis. In order that the absence is authorised the Headteacher will consider whether:

- the absence is/was unavoidable,
- and, beyond the control and/or decision-making of parents.

The Headteacher is not obliged to accept a parent's explanation and if the absence is not authorised, parents will be notified.

## **Leavers and Children Missing Education**

The school has a responsibility to safeguard pupils from harm. This includes knowing and taking reasonable steps to check the destinations of leavers. If a child is leaving other than at the end of Year 6 to go to secondary school, parents are asked to:

- give the school full information about their plans including date of move, new address or at least the town they will be moving to, new school and start date when known, and reasons for moving (a form is available at the school office),
- confirm the school has a current mobile phone number,
- let the school know when they move. When pupils leave and parents have not given us the above information, and we cannot contact the parent, a child is considered to be a Child Missing Education. This means that the Local Authority has a legal duty to carry out investigations to try to track and locate the child. By giving us the above information, unnecessary investigations can be avoided.

## **New admissions to school Nursery & Reception joiners**

When a child reaches compulsory school age, parents have a responsibility to ensure their child's regular attendance at school. Before a child reaches compulsory school age, the principles of this policy will apply to promote the benefits of regular attendance in Nursery and Reception classes. Where attendance falls below 90%, parents will be invited into school to meet with the Attendance Coordinator to discuss how attendance can be improved.

## **In-year joiners**

Schools share attendance records as part of common pupil information shared when a child changes school. If a new joiner has a history of poor attendance at their previous school, there will be a pre-start attendance meeting held and targets for attendance will be set.

## **Rewards for Positive Attendance**

The main benefit of regular attendance is that continuity and progression in learning are ensured. We promote positive attendance through:

- Individual children, certificates are awarded at the end of each school year for 100% attendance.
- Classes, weekly certificates issued for the classes with the highest attendance, also published to our website.

## **Religious Observance**

Some religious festivals fall outside school holiday periods or weekends. Code 'R' (religious observance) will be used where:

- The festival is a recognised celebration of the child's faith
- The period of absence is no more than one day on each occasion, and no more than three days over the school year. Absence in excess of this will be categorised as 'unauthorised'.

## **Monitoring**

Summary attendance information is reported to governors at least termly by the Headteacher.

## **Deletions from the School Register**

In accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, pupils will be deleted from the register only when one of the following circumstances applies:

- The school is replaced by another school on a School Attendance Order
- The School Attendance Order is revoked by the Local Authority
- The pupil has ceased to be of compulsory school age
- Permanent exclusion has occurred and procedures have been completed
- Death of a pupil
- Transfer between schools
- When a parent informs the school in writing that the pupil is to be withdrawn to be educated outside the school system
- Failure to return from an extended holiday after both the school and the school have tried to locate the pupil
- A medical condition prevents their attendance and return to the school before ending compulsory school age.
- In custody for more than four months (in discussion with The Youth Offending Team)
- 20 days' continuous unauthorised absence have elapsed and the school has attempted to locate the pupil, and has notified the local authority.
- A pupil has left the school but it is not known where he/she has gone after both the school and the Local Authority have tried to locate the pupil. We will follow Oxfordshire County Council's procedures when the

absence is unknown. All deletions from the school register are notified to Oxfordshire County Council, in line with DfE statutory guidance (September 2016).

**C. Stewart Deputy Headteacher**

**Written September 2018**

**Review Date September 2019**

**Signed Chair of Governors..... Date .....**

**Fi McGregor Head teacher ..... Date .....**