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Excellence Through Endeavour
"Let your Light Shine" – Matthew 5:16

POLICY DOCUMENT

Attendance Policy

Policy approved by:	**The Full Governing Body**
Policy adopted:	**November 2023 (Updated January 2024 in line with new start times)**
Policy review date:	**November 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 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.

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.

Aims

To provide clear guidelines about how the school promotes and attains high levels of pupil attendance. This will ensure that all stakeholders understand the school's expectations of themselves, and each other, and strive to attain them.

Objectives

1. To achieve a 96% + attendance rate.
2. To restrict days taken as holiday, during term time in any one year.
3. To promote partnership between parents and school, working for the benefit of the children's learning.

4. To involve other agencies when all possible school based supportive measures have been put in place.

The policy will give clear guidance on expectations and procedures for the following personnel:

- Pupils
- Parents
- Staff
- Governors

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. (Please see code of practice from the county attendance team).

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:

- Attendance data will be checked termly (six times) by the Senior Leadership Team to identify any issues.
- Attendance will be discussed at regular staff meetings where staff have the opportunity to express any concerns.
- Reasons for regular attendance and arriving on time, well prepared for school will be raised in assemblies and PHSCE sessions.
- Parents will receive reports on their child's level of attendance three times a year.
- Children with attendances below 95% will receive a pack with information about attendance from the LEA.
- Each week a Certificate is awarded to the class with the best attendance.

Monitoring and Evaluating Effectiveness

- The SLT will analyse attendance data across the terms to identify issues and trends.
- The school will work closely with other agencies in their monitoring of the attendance and registration procedures in the school.
- The school will evaluate the success of the procedures by measuring the annual attendance % against their target at the end of the year, and their progress towards attaining the target in February.
- Targets are set with the school improvement partner annually.
- At the end of Terms 2,4 and 6 (in the school report) parents will receive an update of their child's attendance

Procedures for Implementation

Expectations of Pupils:

- That they will attend school regularly, aiming for an attendance rate of 96% +
- That they will arrive punctually and appropriately prepared for the day.
- That they will inform a member of staff of any problem or reason that may hinder them from attending school.

Our Expectations of Parents:

- That they will ensure their child/ren attend school, aiming for a 96 – 100% attendance rate.
- That they will contact school as soon as it is reasonably practical (eg by 9.15am) whenever their child is unable to attend.
- That any absence is followed by a written explanation of why the child was absent and for what period of time if it is more than one day
- To ensure that their child arrives in school well prepared for the school day
- To contact the school, in confidence, whenever any problem occurs that may keep their child away from school
- To refrain from taking the child out of school for holidays, or occasional days, unless there are significant exceptional circumstances

Expectations of Staff:

- To ensure regular, efficient and accurate recording of presence / absence.
- To make early contact with parents when a child fails to attend.
- To refer to appropriate support agencies as required.
- To communicate clear expectations of what is good attendance.
- To give clear guidance as to how good attendance is promoted.

Expectations of Governors:

- To monitor the effectiveness of the policy through Head teacher reports.

- To support the school in encouraging good attendance through role modelling.
- To communicate with parents and other agencies as appropriate.
- To attend celebration assemblies for good attendance.

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.

- Absence will be authorised if the school has notification from the parents that the child is ill. This should usually take the form of an initial notification at the beginning of the period of absence and for longer absences please confirm with a letter stating the date of return; medical confirmation might be asked for.
- If the child has a medical appointment with the doctor or dentist that cannot be made outside school hours, this will be considered as an authorised absence. Regular absences for medical reasons will be raised as a concern with parents. Parents must request the period of absence or inform the school in advance.
- If the absence has been requested and approved in line with the school procedures then this will be an authorised absence.

An absence may not be authorised, even if the parents give a reason, if the absences are persistent. In the case of repeated absence due to illness, the school will request confirmation from the GP that the child has a medical condition that seriously impacts on their ability to attend school regularly.

Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

The decision to authorise an absence is taken by the Head teacher, following statutory requirements and the school's policy on attendance.

Unauthorised absences

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 make things worse. Letters will be sent to parents explaining why absence requests have not been approved.

You can support your child by:

● Ensuring regular and early bed times
● Helping with homework
● 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)
● Encouraging your child to invite friends’ home for play dates

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 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 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 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;
● Send a note in on the first day they return with an explanation of the absence – you must do this even if you have already telephoned us;
● Or, you can call into school and report to reception, who will arrange for a member of staff to speak with you.

If your child is absent we will:

● Telephone or text 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 by day 3 of absence;

● Invite you in to discuss the situation with our Attendance Officer and/or Pastoral Leaders, Assistant Headteacher or Headteacher if absences persist;
● Refer the matter to the County Attendance Team if attendance moves below 90%.
● 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.
● Consider/Offer a Strengths and Needs form
● Gain the voice of the child to ensure we are taking a child centred approach.

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 to 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. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year.

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 the Local Authority. 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 £2,500, a Community Order, Parenting Order or
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ultimately a custodial sentence). The legislation is the Education Act 1996 sec. 444(1) and 444(1A).

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.

"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.''

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

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. If the lateness is persistent and parents/carers fail to work with school to address the issues, the matter can be referred to the Education Social Work Service, who will offer support. Where appropriate the school will report on lateness issues on the annual report.

If a child is repeatedly late, the school will initially write to parents expressing concerns about late arrival and offering support if required. If the situation does not improve, the head will invite the parents in to discuss the issue and may request the support of the ESW if appropriate.

School Times:

8.30 a.m. Children can enter school classroom to be supervised by teaching staff
8.45 a.m. Registration
8.50 a.m. Class registration closes.

Children arriving between 8.45am and 9.15am will be marked with a "Late after registers closed" mark (annotated U on the Registration Certificate). If your child is ill and cannot attend school, please ring the office and advise us by 9.05am at the latest,

If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with the Headteacher to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

Registration:

- Registration periods are 8:45 – 8:50am / 1.00 – 1.05 pm.
- Registers will be completed during these periods by class staff and returned to the office at the end of registration.
- If a child is not present, the staff will complete with a circle and leave office staff to follow up and fill in.
- If no information, regarding the absence of a child, has been received by 9:15am, the office will telephone the parent to check the reason for absence.
- If there is no initial reason given for the absence, or letter of explanation on the child's return, this will be recorded as unauthorised absence.

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.

It is widely known that the link between a student's attendance and attainment is irrefutable.

Early poor attendance habits follow through into secondary school, further education and employment.

With effect from the 1 September 2013 legislative changes were made by the Government to "The Education (Pupil Registration) 2006 Regulations" which amended the registration regulations removing references to family holidays and extended leave as well as the threshold of ten school days. The amendments make it clear that head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Schools are unable to consider requests for absence for holidays during term time. All applications will be referred to the Head Teacher.

The Head Teacher will meet personally with every family applying for Exceptional Leave to stress the importance of good school attendance habits and links between attendance & attainment.
With all pupils who are in school full time, any holiday requests will not be authorised regardless of age/ being of school age where full time place has been taken up.

Exceptional leave is most unlikely to be authorised when a student's attendance is less than 95%.

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.

Requests for absence for holidays during term time will only be authorised if there are special circumstances. Parents will be expected to attach a form outlining their special circumstances with the absence request form. Issues such as parents' employment conditions related to non-negotiable holiday dates, the time of year and level of previous attendance may be taken into consideration.

Leaflets about attendance will be supplied to parents as they request a holiday form.

If the school refuses a holiday request, but the child is still taken on holiday, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. If a second holiday is taken, the matter can be referred to the Education Social Work Service. The Governors have agreed to implement where necessary consequences and may enforce a penalty fine by informing the LEA and Schools Attendance.

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.

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 96% attendance and we will keep you updated regularly about progress to this level and how your child's attendance compares.

Our target is to achieve better than this however because we know that good attendance is the key to successful schooling and we believe our pupils can be amongst the best in Oxfordshire.

Through the school year we monitor absences and punctuality to show us where improvements need to be made.

Headteacher – Sarah Reynolds
Deputy Headteacher – Heather Wright

Summary:

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

(Date)

I have read and understood the terms and conditions of the attendance policy at Shenington C of E VA Primary school

Signed:

Child's Name: Year: