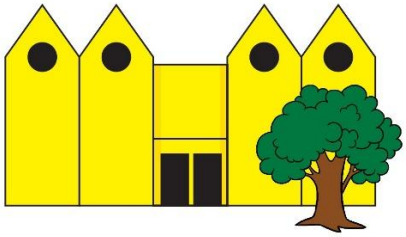
West Oxford Community Primary School



Attendance and Punctuality Policy

Approved by: FGB	**Date:** June 2026
Last Review on: July 2026	
Next Review due by: November 2027	

1. Introduction

At West Oxford Community Primary School, all staff work collaboratively to encourage every pupil to strive for excellence. Every child will be supported, challenged and valued. One way in which we strive to do this is by encouraging staff, parents and children to maximise the learning experience in order that all children reach their maximum potential. West Oxford Community Primary School encourages all parents/carers to work in partnership with the school in order to improve attendance and punctuality. It is expected that all children, including Reception age children, attend school full time. Children who are persistently late or absent soon fall behind with their learning. 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. A child whose attendance drops to 90% each year will, over their time at primary school, have missed two whole terms of learning.

This policy applies to all children registered at this school and is made available to all parents/carers of these pupils on our school website.

2. Aims & Objectives

This Attendance Policy ensures that all staff and governors in our school are fully aware of and are 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 95% for all pupils, 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 to parents, carers and pupils of the importance of uninterrupted attendance and punctuality at every stage of a child's education.
- Ensure that this policy applies to Nursery and Reception age children in order to promote good habits at an early age.
- Work in partnership with pupils, parents, staff and the Oxfordshire Learner Engagement Services 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 a sense of their own responsibility in pupils.
- Establish a pattern of monitoring attendance and ensure consistency in recognising achievement and dealing with difficulties.
- Recognise the key role of all staff in promoting good attendance.

3. Bringing children safely into school

- The front gate (entrance to the school) will be open from 08:45 – 08:55. All classes (excluding Nursery and Reception) are expected to move directly to class. Parents/carers and pupils should not be waiting on site before 8:45. In the event of adverse weather conditions, the front gate may be opened early.
- All parents/carers must leave the path between the children and the entrance to the school building clear. A member of staff will be on the playground ensuring that children safely and calmly enter the building.
- To ensure the learning in each class can begin immediately, parents/carers are not permitted to enter the school unless they have been authorised to do so by their child's class teacher. In this case, the parent/carer is required to report to the school office, state their business, and sign in before proceeding.

- If you arrive late to school, you **must** inform the school office as to why you are late. All cases will be recorded. You are required to wait with your child in the school reception area until a member of staff is able to take them to their class.

4. Lateness

If your child misses the start of the day, they can miss work and vital information or news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons; it can be embarrassing for the child and can encourage absence.

Registers are marked at 8:55 and your child will receive a late mark if they are not in class by 9:00.

4.1 It is the Parent/Carers Responsibility:

- To ensure that their children arrive at school on time. All children **must** be in the school grounds by 8:55am every morning. Children arriving at school late (arriving after 8:55am) **must** report to the school office. Pupils arriving late to school are recorded with an L code in the school register. Any child (Reception, KS1, KS2) arriving after 9:30am will be marked with a U code, equivalent to an unauthorised absence and this will affect the child's attendance figures. Fixed penalty notices may be issued to parents/carers whose children persistently arrive after this time.
- To ensure children are collected promptly at the end of the school day and that necessary arrangements are in place for the journey home. If these differ from the child's normal arrangements, the school office should be made aware of this in advance. Staff will not hand pupils over to unfamiliar adults or siblings under the age of 16 without warning and parental consent.
- To return a walking home permission form to the school office, if you intend your child to leave school independently at the end of the day. Walking home permission is only granted to pupils in Years 5 and 6 with parental approval.

4.2 Persistent Latecomers

Children who repeatedly attend school late after 8:55am will be brought to the attention of the County Attendance Liaison Officer. Warning letters will be issued to the parents/carers of these children.

5. Absence

5.1 Understanding types of absence

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school, as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required, preferably in writing.

Authorised half-day absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a reason like illness, medical/dental appointments that unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable causes. If this occurs, school will require evidence of the appointment to be able to authorise the absence.

Unauthorised half-day 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 without clear explanation
- 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

You can support your child by:

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

5.2 Children who are reluctant to come to school

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 give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually make things worse.

- Parents/carers must inform their child's teacher if their child has been finding it consistently difficult to come to school.
- Through discussions with the child and parents/carers, the class teacher will aim to establish why the child is finding coming to school difficult. Together the teacher and the parents/carers will establish an action plan that will encourage attendance and settling them into the school day.
- If the child remains reluctant to come to school, the class teacher will organise a meeting with the parents/carers to discuss strategies/actions. They will work together to develop a school attendance contract aimed at supporting the child into school each day with minimum upset.
- If the child is upset upon arriving at school, the child must be supported into class by a teacher or teaching assistant. Our expectation is that each child remains in school for the day. If the child continues to be upset throughout the school day, the class teacher will inform the parent/carer of the upset by phone or in person at the end of the school day.

Children with a special educational need:

- Parents/carers must inform the child's class teacher if their child is reluctant to come to school. Teacher, parents/carers must include and refer to any action/strategies in the child's pupil profile.
- Where appropriate, parents/carers and teachers must refer to the child's EHCP.

5.3 Reporting an Absence

It is the parent/carer's responsibility:

- To notify the school on the first day of absence as soon as possible. Parents can report an absence by contacting the school office via phone (01865 248862). You will be required to follow the instructions on the telephone recording i.e. leaving your child's name, class and reason for absence.
- To provide medical evidence where requested, on the child's return to school.
- To ensure that as far as possible, medical appointments are arranged for outside school hours. Where this is not possible, parents are expected to provide evidence of the appointment in advance, and the child should attend school before/after the appointment. Parents/carers are required to fill out an absence request form to be signed by the headteacher.
- To liaise with the school as soon as possible regarding any specific issues that might cause absence or lateness, e.g. a sick parent/carer.
- Parents/carers of children for whom we do not know the reason for absence will be contacted after 9:30 (all classes).
- The school will automatically request medical evidence for any illness absence taken immediately before or after a school holiday.

6. Term time Leave

Parents/carers are expected to take their children on holiday during the school holidays to minimise the impact of missing education. 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. **We are not permitted to authorise absences in school time for holidays**. If parents/carers decide to take a holiday, the child's absences will be marked as unauthorized and the parents may be liable for a penalty notice.

6.1 Exceptional leave

If there are exceptional circumstances, parents/carers must complete a leave of absence request form *(appendix i)* in advance of the trip (ideally at least 4 weeks prior). These requests will be considered on a case-by-case basis by the headteacher, and they will use their discretion whilst applying government recommendations.

It is the parent/carer's responsibility:

- To obtain a leave of absence form from the school office or online via the school website.
- To complete and submit the form in advance of the period of absence (ideally 4 weeks prior).

6.2 Absence for Other Reasons

Absences for reasons such as religious observance or close family bereavement may be authorised by the headteacher. These requests must be discussed with the school in advance.

It is the parent/carer's responsibility:

- To inform the office in advance, by completing an absence request form stating the reason.
- To inform the school as soon as possible when circumstances occur which prevent a family bringing a child to school, so that the appropriate code can be recorded in the register.

6.3 Unexplained Absence

When a child is repeatedly absent and no satisfactory reason is given, an investigation will take place to establish the reasons behind the repeated absence. The results of the investigation may lead to the parent/carers being investigated and monitored by the Education Welfare Officer. They may also be found liable for prosecution and/or a fine.

7. Persistent Absenteeism (PA) and Severe Absenteeism (SM):

A pupil becomes a Persistent Absentee (PA) when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for any reason. A child becomes Severely absent (SA) if their attendance drops below 50%. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to a child's educational prospects and we need parents' fullest support and cooperation to tackle this. We monitor all absences 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 with a warning letter that your child has dropped below 90%. If attendance continues to drop then we will issue an attendance contract in line with the attendance team. PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system. We combine this with academic mentoring where absence affects attainment.

All PA and SA 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 Strength and Needs Assessment with you and consider convening a team around the family (TAF) in order to avoid SA. In these circumstances, teachers, parents/carers are required to adhere to the advice/guidance set out to them by the County Attendance Liaison Officer (CALO). In turn, the CALO will liaise with all parties involved while monitoring the child's progress. If parents/carers fail to comply, they could be investigated.

For further guidance visit: https://www.gov.uk/school-attendance-absence/help-with-getting-your-child-to-go-to-school

8. Children Missing in Education

If a child is absent (unexplained) for at least five consecutive days, the County Attendance Liaison Officer will be notified. A home visit may be carried out. If the absence continues for a total of 10 days, the family will be referred as a Children Missing in Education case for the Local Authority.

8.1 Role of the Oxfordshire County Attendance Liaison Officer

- To ensure parents are aware of their legal duty under the Education Act to ensure their children attend school.
- To refer cases to the Local Authority for prosecution where persistent absenteeism has not improved despite thorough intervention and support from the school and Education Welfare Officer.

9. Penalty Notices

Penalty notices are issued in line with the Education Penalty Notices Regulations 2007, and can only be issued by the headteacher or someone authorised by them. They must also be issued in line with Local Codes of Conduct, which are drawn up and maintained by Oxfordshire County Council.

9.1 Penalty Notices in practice

Penalty notices are issued to parents as an alternative to prosecution where they have failed to ensure that their child of compulsory school age regularly attends the school where they are registered or, in certain cases, at a place where alternative provision is provided.

Penalty notices can be used where a pupil's absence has been recorded with one or more of the unauthorised codes and that absence(s) constitutes an offence. A penalty notice can be issued to each parent liable for the offence or offences.

9.2 Notice to improve

A *Notice to Improve* is a final opportunity for a parent to engage in support and improve attendance before a penalty notice is issued. If the threshold of issue has been met and support is appropriate but offers of support have not been engaged with by the parent or have not worked, a *Notice to Improve* should usually be sent to give parents a final chance to engage in support.

9.3 Threshold of issue

- The threshold is 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks. A school week means any week in which there is at least one school session.
- This can be met with any combination of unauthorised absence (e.g. 4 sessions of holiday taken in term time plus 6 sessions of arriving late after the register closes all within 10 school weeks).
- These sessions can be consecutive or sporadic.
- The period of 10 school weeks can also span different terms or school years (e.g. 2 sessions of unauthorised absence in the Summer Term and a further 8 within the Autumn Term)

9.4 Process for issuing Penalty Notices

- In Oxfordshire, the County Attendance Team will issue Penalty Notices
- Penalty Notices will only be issued by first class post and never as an on the spot action (e.g. during a truancy sweep).
- Where schools, the police or neighbouring local authorities consider the issuing of a Penalty Notice is appropriate, this request will be investigated and actioned by the County Attendance Team
- The County Attendance Team should respond to all requests within 10 working days of receipt, and where all criteria are met, will issue a Penalty Notice within 10 days.

9.5 Fining Legislation

- The Penalty is £80 if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice, increasing to £160 if paid between day 21 and day 28.
- 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)

- In cases where a pupil has moved school or local authority area in the previous 3 years, an additional check should be made to try and ascertain whether previous penalty notices have been issued to the parent in respect of the pupil.

9.6 Fine and Payment

- Timely payment of a Penalty Notice discharges the parents' liability for the offence specified on the Penalty Notice. This means the parent cannot be prosecuted subsequently for the same period. However, the issue of an earlier Penalty Notice (or failure to pay) may be relevant to what action is taken over subsequent offences and this information may be given in evidence in any later court proceedings in accordance with relevant legal provisions.
- A penalty notice is an out of court settlement which is intended to change parental behaviour without the need for a criminal prosecution. If repeated penalty notices are being considered for the same parent, a further penalty notice is unlikely to be the most appropriate tool available.

Parents/carers or children may wish to contact the Oxfordshire County Attendance Team directly to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. The team can be contacted on 01865 323513 or attendance@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Appendix i

West Oxford Community Primary School

Absence Request

West Oxford School is committed to ensuring that your child receives the best possible education to prepare them for the next stage of their life. Each school day is carefully planned, and each lesson informs a wider programme of learning. Therefore, every lesson really does count. Every child is a valued member of our school community and every day missed is a day lost without them.

It is the policy of this school not to authorise absence for holidays during term-time. While advance permission can be given in exceptional circumstances, this is rare and can only be granted by the Head Teacher. Any such request should be addressed to Mr Stead in writing before the holiday is taken and you should not assume that permission will be granted.

Permission must be sought in advance for any absence including medical appointments, holidays and religious events. You must have parental responsibility for the child/ren. If parental responsibility is split between 2 parents/carers, then permission for pupil absence must be sought by both parties.

The school will only consider requests from those who have parental responsibility

WARNING: If the school refuses your request and the child is still taken out of school, this will be recorded as an **unauthorised absence** and this may make you liable to a £60 fine, rising to £120 after 21 days.

I wish to apply for the following child(ren)

Name	Class

To be authorised as being absent from school from

	to		inclusive

Reason for request for absence during term time. If holiday request, list the exceptional circumstances which mean that the holiday must be taken in term time:

Signature of Parent/Carer		Date:	

☐ **APPROVED** The school agrees to your child being absent from school on the specified dates.

☐ **Absence dates** ____ /____ /_____ **to** ____ /____ /_____

☐ **UNAUTHORISED** The school does not authorise your request for leave in term time for the following reason:

Signed (Head teacher)		Date:	