



Stonesfield Primary School
Learning together to achieve our best

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Approved by governors: January 2022
To be reviewed: January 2024

Introduction

Stonesfield Primary School has high expectations for all our pupils and this is outlined in The Stonesfield Way: *'Stonesfield Primary School sets high academic standards for all our pupils: supporting and challenging everyone to achieve their best.'* Good attendance and punctuality is crucial to children flourishing and succeeding at school academically, socially and emotionally. The school is committed to working in partnership with parents to achieve the best possible outcomes for our pupils. The school encourages parents/carers to approach staff if they are having problems getting their child/children to school on time.

As part of the school's commitment to creating an environment for successful learning, this policy is designed to promote high levels of pupil attendance. The policy was adopted from a model recommended by Oxfordshire County Council and is also in line with guidance from the Department for Education.¹

Important registration times

The school day starts at 8.45am when registers open; children should be in class promptly at this time.

Registers are open for 30 minutes and at 9.15am the registers will be closed.

If a child is absent, a parent/carers must notify the school office by 9.15am.

Absence procedures

If a child is absent a parent/carers must:

- Contact school on the first day of absence by 9.15am;
- Notify school on each day of absence by 9.15am unless the length of absence has been agreed with school in advance.

If a child is absent school will:

- Telephone or text you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from a parent/carers by 9.15am;
- Following persistent unauthorised absences, invite parents/carers in to discuss the situation with our Headteacher or refer the matter to the County Attendance Team if attendance moves below 90% and attempts to address issues affecting attendance have not been successful.

Why regular attendance is so important:

Research by the Department for Education shows that there is a strong link between attainment and attendance.²

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.

The average level of attendance in primary schools nationally is 96.3%³. 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.

Attendance data is scrutinised by the Local Authority (Oxfordshire County Council), the Department for Education, and Ofsted, and is included in their assessments of the school.

Ensuring regular attendance at school is a parent/carer's legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a legitimate reason creates an offence in law and may, in extreme cases, result in prosecution.

Promoting regular attendance:

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility: parents/carers, pupils and all members of school staff.

To promote high attendance rates the school may:

- Display attendance targets clearly around the school;
- Report attendance numbers in our regular weekly newsletter;
- Report to parents/carers at least termly on how their child is performing in school and what their attendance and punctuality rate is. School will take opportunities at parent-teacher meetings and in end of year reports to make the link between attainment and attendance, if appropriate;
- Celebrate good attendance;
- Have clear and consistent communication with parents on issues of attendance. This includes issuing a letter to all parents every September warning of the implications of taking unauthorised holiday in term time;
- Run promotional initiatives/events for parents/carers, pupils and staff to work together on raising attendance levels across the school. Information on these areas will be provided in the school newsletter;
- Give advice on how to promote high attendance, providing a parents/carers guide to explain the importance of high attendance and to encourage close working with parents/carers where attendance problems arise.

Recording absence

Government guidance requires that every half-day absence from school has to be recorded and classified by the school (not by the parents). The school will use absence and attendance codes set out in DfE's School attendance guidance.¹

Absence has to be classified as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED and information about the cause of any absence is required, preferably in writing, by the school office. Both authorised and unauthorised absence contribute to a child's overall level of attendance.

Authorised absence is when a child is away from school for reasons such as illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause. If this occurs, school may require evidence of the appointment to be able to authorise the absence.

Unauthorised absences are any other time away from school for which no "leave" has been given. Reasons for unauthorised absences may include:

- truancy before or during the school day
- absences which have never been properly explained
- children who arrive after 9.15am without a legitimate reason
- shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- day trips and holidays in term time
- repeat illness without medical evidence

Punctuality

Good punctuality is vital for children to achieve well at school. Conversely, poor punctuality has a detrimental impact on a child's learning. If children miss the start of the day, they can miss work and may miss vital information and news for the day from their class teacher getting. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons, it can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage absence.

A pupil arriving after the register has been taken but before 9.15am will be marked with an 'L' code.

In accordance with the regulations, if a child arrives after that time without the absence having been authorised in advance, they will receive a mark (U) 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. If a child has a persistent late mark parents/carers will be asked to meet with the headteacher to resolve the problem and could lead to the process for addressing persistent absenteeism being triggered.

Children Missing Education

Keeping children safe in education (DfE, 2019)⁴ outlines the safeguarding responsibilities of schools regarding children missing in education. The school has also adopted Oxfordshire County Council's Children Missing Education policy⁵. Stonesfield Primary School will hold more than one emergency contact number for each pupil. It is the responsibility of parents to update the school if contact information changes. In the event that a pupil does not turn up at school and no contact is made by parents by 9.30am the school will phone each of the emergency contact numbers in turn in order to establish the reason for an absence and the safety and welfare of the pupil. If no contact can be made then the school will continue to phone the emergency contact numbers at regular intervals during the day. This will continue on the second day of an absence. If a pupil fails to appear for a third day and no contact has been made with the family then two members of staff will make a home visit to establish the welfare of the pupil. If no contact with the pupil is made then appropriate actions will be taken, including referrals to the Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and Oxfordshire County Council's County Attendance Team. Where school staff have concerns about a child, they will use their professional judgement and knowledge of the individual pupil to inform their decision as to whether welfare concerns should be escalated – this may result in a home visit on day 1 or day 2 of an absence. In addition the County Attendance Team will be informed in the event of a pupil having 10 days unauthorised absence.

Persistent Absenteeism

We monitor all absence thoroughly. A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling in a 12-month period for any reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects.

Any case that is seen to have reached the persistent absenteeism threshold or is at risk of moving towards that threshold is of great concern to school and we will contact parents to understand the situation and how we can work together to improve it. This may involve putting an action plan together which 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 or any other measure deemed useful during consultation between school and parents.

All persistent absentee cases are made known to the County Attendance team. When a child becomes OR REMAINS persistently absent, we will seek parent/carer consent to complete an Early Help Assessment and consider convening a Team Around the Family to add additional support to improve attendance.

Telephone numbers

School may at times need to contact parents/carers about a child's absence and so will need to maintain a record of contact numbers. The school is required to hold more than one contact number for each child in case of an emergency. The maintenance and storage of these records is the responsibility of the school administration under guidance from the Headteacher and in accordance with data storage laws and school policy.

The County Attendance Team

In extreme cases where all school efforts to improve attendance have failed, the school may refer the child to the County Attendance Team at the Local Authority. At the school's request, the Local Authority may issue a Penalty Notice per parent/carer, per child. This is 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 to £2,500, a Community Order, Parenting Order or ultimately a custodial sentence. The legislation is the Education Act 1996 sec. 444(1) and 444(1A) which places a duty on parents to ensure that their child of compulsory school age receives a suitable education either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. It states:

"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."

A child is of compulsory school age at the beginning of the 1st term after their 5th birthday, so:

- children who turn 5 between 1st January and 31st March will be of compulsory school age at the beginning of the school term after 31st March;
- children who turn 5 between 1st April and 31st August will be of compulsory school age at the beginning of the school term after 31st August;
- children who turn 5 between 1st September and 31st December will be of compulsory school age at the beginning of the school term after 31st December.

If parents/carers have previously received Penalty Notices for their child's unauthorised absenteeism and there

are further instances of unauthorised absence, a Court summons may be issued.

Alternatively, parents/carers 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

Email address: attendance@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Exceptional Leave

Authorised absence must be approved but can only be approved for a limited number of reasons at the headteacher's discretion. Authorised absence counts towards a child's overall attendance.

Leave of absence can be applied for using a form available from the school office.

Applications will be reviewed by the Headteacher. Reasons to approve include:

- medical/dental treatment or appointments
- bereavement
- external exams e.g. music

Time cannot be taken off school to go on holiday.

If leave is not granted, then any time off will be recorded as unauthorised absence.

People responsible for administering this policy

Mr. Ben Trevail, Headteacher

School administrators: Mrs. Shirley Mee and Mrs. Zena Rozee

Governing body

1. Department for Education: School attendance – Guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities (Aug 2020)
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1039223/School_attendance_guidance_for_2021_to_2022_academic_year.pdf
2. Department for Education: The link between absence and attainment at KS2 and KS4 (Feb 2015)
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/412638/The_link_between_absence_and_attainment_at_KS2_and_KS4.pdf
3. Department for Education: Pupil absence in schools in England, Autumn term 2018 (May 2019)
<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/pupil-absence-in-schools-in-england-autumn-term-2018>
4. Department for Education: Keeping children safe in education (Sept 2019)
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2>
5. Oxfordshire County Council: Children Missing Education Policy (2019)
<http://schools.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/sites/schools/files/folders/folders/documents/safeguarding/ChildrenMissingEducationPolicy.pdf>