

# Oakham Church of England Primary & The Parks School

Passion, Fellowship, Pride, Humility, Perseverance, Hope, Purpose & Thankfulness



## Attendance & Punctuality Policy

<b>Date</b>	<b>February 2019</b>
<b>Approved by Headteacher</b>	<b>Stephen Cox</b>
<b>Approved by Chair of Governors</b>	<b>Nick Cooper</b>
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**Oakham Church of England Primary School  
The Parks School**

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“In loving Christian **Fellowship** we equip everyone to have a **Passion** for life and learning. To have **Pride** in our local community and be **Thankful** for all the parts which make us whole. Building **Hope** and resilience to **Persevere** and develop a sense of **Humility** and **Purpose** in our lives.”

### **Attendance and Punctuality Policy**

Oakham Church of England and The Parks School fully recognises its responsibility to protect and safeguard the welfare of children and young people in its care. Our Vision is at the forefront of our thinking and decision making when writing, reviewing and updating all school procedures and policies. This is evident as we promote understanding, respect and tolerance for all beliefs and faiths. We teach and live by Christian values and we believe that all children and adults deserve to be treated fairly and equally.

Oakham Church of England Primary School and The Parks promotes the view that regular, punctual attendance is vital to ensure the best possible learning outcomes for all of our children and we take seriously our responsibility to monitor and promote this. We feel the whole school community has a responsibility for punctuality and attendance and we work closely with parents and carers to promote regular, punctual attendance.

Any absence affects the pattern of a child’s schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any child’s absence disrupts teaching routines and may affect the learning of others in the same class.

### **Positive approach**

We promote excellent attendance to children and their parents at every opportunity and through various mediums, (Word of mouth, Worship, any parent sessions, school information meetings, Twitter and termly newsletters).

We reward good attendance and punctuality in the following way:

- The weekly attendance for each class is shared with the children in Friday’s celebration worship and the winners published in the school newsletter.
- Every week the class with the highest attendance in KS1 and KS2 gets the ‘Attendance Cup’ for the week.
- The class with the highest attendance over each term receives a non-uniform day as a reward.
- Children with 100% attendance for a whole term receive a certificate.
- Children with 100% attendance for the school year receive a special reward during our end of year celebration worship.

### **Term time leave of absence**

In exceptional circumstances the Headteacher may grant you leave of absence during the school term. This is not a parent’s right and **WILL NOT** include time out for any type of family holiday. Parents/carers must apply to the Headteacher to request leave of absence who will judge each application on its own merit.

The Headteacher cannot authorise any leave of absence which overlaps with the beginning or end of a term. Leave of absence request forms signed by one parent must be accompanied by a letter of consent by the other parent. Leave of absence request forms must be signed by the parents with

legal responsibility for the child. If a parent does not reside with the child due to family separation, an application must also be sought in writing from the absent parent; this must accompany the request by the residing parent, and it is the responsibility of both parents to provide the information required by the school. Leave of absence requests will only be accepted from the child's legal guardians and not by extended family members.

#### **LEAVE OF ABSENCE – Change to School Attendance Regulations from September 2014**

From September 2013, The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 **remove provision for Headteachers to grant term time leave of absence in 'special circumstances' and only allow leave to be granted in 'exceptional circumstances' .**

The government has not defined the 'exceptional circumstances' referred to in the 2013 regulations other than it is a one off life time event – this does not include family holidays. The Department for Education states that it is for the Headteacher to decide what he/she views as exceptional circumstances. The current guidance on granting leave of absence in exceptional circumstances says that schools should consider each request individually.

At Oakham Church of England Primary and The Parks school we will consider factors such as:

- The nature of the request and why it could not be taken in school holiday.
- Past and present attendance rates.
- General welfare of the child and family circumstances.
- Where the child is in their learning compared to the age related expectations and expected rates of progress.
- Proximity to any type of assessments and statutory testing.
- The frequency of such requests from the child's parents
- Amount of time requested
- Whether the parent followed the request procedure and gave the required notice.

Exceptional circumstances will be regarded as one-off situations. Should a Service family wish to cite serving overseas as a reason for absence the Army Welfare Office (or equivalent) will be asked to verify the application.

If an event can be reasonably be scheduled outside of term time then it is very unlikely that the absence will be authorised.

The following will **not** be considered as 'exceptional':

- Relatives or family friends coming to visit or going to visit them in this or another country.
- Cheaper holidays in England and abroad.
- Family day trips.
- Visiting family/friends who have different half terms or holidays.
- Attending medical appointments for other family members.

#### **Examples of Authorised Absence**

- Sickness/illness (although if absences are excessive, a doctor's note/paperwork will be required).
- Emergency medical/dental appointments.
- Days of religious observance (As formally recognised by the DfE).

- Exceptional family circumstances (e.g. bereavement).
- Approved sporting or musical activity/competition/examination.
- Fixed term exclusion.

Whilst the school places significant importance on high levels of attendance, the school does acknowledge that most children will have some unavoidable absence because of illness. It is important that children are not sent to school when they are too unwell. It is especially important in the event of a stomach upset (vomiting or diarrhoea) that the child has at least 48 hours clear at home after the last episode to avoid possibly spreading it to others.

The Guidelines to Parents from NHS (England) regarding when you should keep your child away from school are as follows:

- Would I take a day off work if I had this condition?
- Is my child too ill to leave the house?
- Does my child have a condition that could be passed on to other children or school staff?
- Is my child's immune system compromised by a pre-existing medical condition or treatment being under taken at the time eg. Chemotherapy.

You can visit <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-body/is-my-child-too-ill-for-school/> to find out more information about certain ailments and receive guidance about whether or not you should keep your child off school.

#### Examples of Unauthorised Absence

- Frequent absence attributed to minor ailments, which are not supported by medical evidence.
- Shopping or day trips.
- Birthdays.
- Looking after siblings or sick family members.
- Unexplained absence.
- Holidays.

**Teachers are not required or expected to set work for absent children where the absence is due to a holiday in term time.**

#### School Procedures

- Where staffing levels allow meet and greet staff are positioned on the Burley and Ashwell Rd gates. A whistle is blown at 8.50am to signify the children should go straight into class. Registration is taken at 9.00am. Pupils arriving between 9.00 and 9.20am will receive a late mark (Ten minutes of late for school each day equals 32 hours of lost learning each year!) Any child arriving after 9.20am will have been marked as absent and an absence code will be recorded in the register according to the reason given.
- Children are expected to be settled in class and ready for the afternoon register at 1pm in FS, 12:50 pm in KS1 and at 1:20pm in KS2.
- Parents should telephone the school before 9.00am **on every morning** of the child's absence.

- If no explanation for absence is received, the school will phone the parents as part of our safeguarding duties. If contact cannot be made a message will be left, where allowed, requesting that parents call the school.
- Children who arrive late must report to the school office to be signed in.
- Children who are leaving school before the end of the day, for whatever reason, must report to the school office to be signed out by whomever is collecting them.
- The Headteacher and Senior Leadership Team monitor attendance and lateness. Where there is a pattern beginning to emerge, parents will be contacted. A standard letter stating our concerns for punctuality or absence will be sent.
- If there is no significant improvement, the Headteacher or member of the Senior Leadership Team will contact the parents (phone, email or letter) and arrange a meeting to discuss the situation.
- If unresolved, the Headteacher or member of the Senior Leadership Team will contact the Local Authority Attendance/Inclusion Officer which could lead to a penalty notice and fine being issued to the parents.

### **How to make a Request for Absence**

Requests for leave during term time are made by filling in our school 'Leave of Absence Request Form.' This form must be submitted to the office at least **10 working days prior** to the absence. If you wish you may attach additional information to explain the any reasons for your request. The request should be to the Headteacher and made by the parent with who the pupil normally resides.

The Headteacher will only approve the request in exceptional circumstances. It is important to note that Headteachers can determine the length of the authorised absence as well as whether absence is authorised at all.

Unauthorised leave of absence will be reported to the Local Authority and may lead to prosecution under The Education Act 1996 or subsequent versions thereof. Further guidance can be found at <http://www.gov.uk>

### **Is your child missing out on learning? Each child's attendance can be summarised as:**

98%+	<b>Good</b> - attendance at this level will ensure your child has every opportunity to achieve their potential.
97%	<b>Average</b> – this level of attendance will now be beginning to impact on your child's learning and overall school experience.
Below 96%	<b>Poor</b> – This is likely to be in excess of 20 school sessions missed which is 10 or more days absent from school. The cumulative effect of this level of absence will now impact on your child's overall opportunity to achieve their potential and will affect levels at SATs and up to GCSE.
90% or below.	<b>Unacceptable – This is in excess of 40 school sessions missed which is 20 or more days absent from school.</b> Your child is now classed as <b>"Persistent Absence"</b> . This is of serious concern. It will be affecting attainment and progress and may lead to your prosecution for failing to ensure your child's regular attendance at school.

(1 school day equals 2 sessions).

### **Definitions**

Every half-day absence has to be classified by the school (not by the parents) as either **Authorised** or **Unauthorised**. This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required,

preferably in writing or by telephone. Reasons such as “unwell or ill” cannot be authorised; you will need to inform the school of the symptoms. Where children are consistently absent for illness and/or have a poor attendance record parents/carers will be asked to provide evidence, eg doctor’s appointment card, doctor’s note, prescribed medicine, etc.

### **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 guardian. For example, if a child has been sick during the night and the parent telephones the school to explain the absence. Only the Headteacher can authorise an absence.

### **Unauthorised Absence**

An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the Headteacher. Unauthorised absences are those, which the school does not consider reasonable, for which no explanation for the absence has been given, the absence has never been properly explained, and planned term time absence that has not been agreed by the Headteacher prior to the absence.

### **Safeguarding**

Your child may be at risk of harm if they do not attend school regularly. Safeguarding the interests of each child is everyone’s responsibility and within the context of this School, promoting the welfare and life opportunities for your child encompasses:-

- Attendance
- Behaviour Management
- Health and Safety
- Access to the Curriculum
- Anti- bullying

Failing to attend school, on a regular basis, is considered a safeguarding matter and will be investigated by the school and possibly the local authority.

### **Telephone numbers**

There are occasions when we need to contact parents about lots of things, including absence, so we need to have your most up-to-date contact numbers at all times. Help us to help keep you informed and your child safe 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. It is the parents’/carers’ responsibility to ensure that we have up-to-date telephone numbers for those with parental responsibility and an emergency contact too.

### **Flexi Schooling**

There is no legal obligation for us to agree to a parent’s request for flexi schooling. This includes children who are electively home educated where parents also want their children to be enrolled at our school. Any requests for a school place will follow schools Admissions Policy.

### **Local Authority Issued Penalty notices:**

These will be issued by the local authority for absence from school in the following circumstances:

- Truancy.
- Parentally-controlled absence.

- Term time absence which has not been previously agreed by the Headteacher or when permission has not been previously sought (eg unauthorised holiday, persistent illness without appropriate evidence).
- Persistent lateness.
- Absence that has not been authorised by the Headteacher.

A child has to be absent from school in one of these circumstances for at least 10 sessions (5 school days) in an academic year before the Local Authority are able to issue a Penalty Notice. They do not have to be consecutive absences.

Where a Penalty Notice is issued, each parent is required to pay a fine to the Local Authority at the current rate set by the DfE. Currently the fine equates to £60 per parent per child if paid within 21 days; £120 per parent per child if paid within 22-28 days. Failure to pay will lead to prosecution through the Magistrates Court. (The DfE have indicated that the fine is due to increase during the next academic year to £125 per parent per child if paid within 21 days and £250 if not paid within 22-28 days).

Where an absence has been unauthorised, a letter will be sent to the parents. A copy of this letter is sent to the Local Authority along with a copy of the attendance register, a copy of the request for absence, and contact details of both parents. The inclusion officer will then contact the family directly.

When the Local Authority has issued a Penalty Notice in respect of unauthorised absence, this is both Term Time Leave of Absence and other absence (Illness), should there be a repeat offence the Penalty details will be forwarded to the Leicestershire Police for inclusion on the NPC. This is recorded as an offence against a child and will show up on DBS checks requested by Parents for support in their work role. This may prevent them from working with children.

#### **Rewards: Ways for parents to encourage excellent attendance:**

- Ensure that your child has the correct uniform and equipment.
- Ensure that school uniform, including PE kit, swimming kit, are ready the night before and encourage your child to help you do this.
- Find out regularly your child's absence from the school office and keep your own record. (It will be formally reported at the end of year in your child's school report.)
- Talk regularly with your child about school and how they feel about it. Children are more likely to attend if they feel supported and parents speak positively about the school and their class teacher. If you have any concerns speak to the school about them rather than share them with your child.
- Phone the school before 9:00am on the morning of **each day** of absence each time giving an idea of when you expect your child to return.
- Only allow days at home for genuine illness.
- Avoid any absence from school for reasons other than your child's illness.
- Make any medical appointments that are not an emergency out of school hours or during school holiday times.
- Have good routines at home to ensure homework is completed and know the school day routines.
- Praise and reward excellent attendance: even small successes e.g. going in to school promptly.

**Other tips to help secure excellent attendance:**

- If there is a problem with your child's attendance, talk to your child and their class teacher there maybe something which seems trivial to you, but is enough to make your child anxious.
- Talk to the school to resolve any possible issues. They may be able to help and support you and your child. You are not alone.
- Be particularly watchful and supportive in the run up to tests and be aware of homework deadlines.
- Regularly read with and to you child and support them catch up with any missed learning.
- Remember to praise your child.
- Praise your child's part in achieving individual and collective attendance recognition such as certificates and medals and whole class awards such as the weekly attendance cup or termly treat.
- Model the importance of punctual attendance to your child. As their first and most enduring educator- your modelling of behaviour is really important- for example attending parents' evenings etc. on time.