*We have carefully considered and analysed the impact of this policy on equality and the possible implications for pupils with protected characteristics, as part of our commitment to meet the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) requirement to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations.*

North Kidlington School

# ATTENDANCE

## A POLICY STATEMENT

North Kidlington School is a nurturing and inclusive school and we are proud of what we achieve. We want our pupils to 'be the best they can be' and for them to gain the greatest benefit from their education, it is vital that they attend school regularly. This is part of our whole school value of being Kind to Ourselves.

## Aims

This policy aims to support a whole school system which:

- Develops a culture that promotes the benefits of good school attendance.
- Sets high expectations of attendance for all children.
- Works with families to remove barriers to attendance.
- Follows effective day-to-day procedures of recording, reporting and following up absences.
- Recognises that children missing education can be a vital safeguarding warning.
- Uses data to spot patterns of absence and provide early intervention to improve attendance.
- Targets support for persistent and severe absentees including working with external agencies.

This policy is based on the requirements of the 2024 working together to improve school attendance guidance from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance for parents on school attendance. We apply the actions from this policy fairly and consistently, however we also make sure that we always consider the individual needs of pupils and their families who may have specific barriers to attendance, taking into consideration the Equality Act 2010 and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Guide for Parents on school attendance

## Roles and Responsibilities

*"The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude and any special educational need they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school."* (Working together to improve school attendance guidance, DfE, 2024)

It is the responsibility of a parent that their child should be in school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for absence is exceptional or unavoidable and it is our responsibility as a school to support you in doing this. We also have a responsibility as a school to provide a *'calm, orderly, safe and supportive environment where all pupils want to be and are keen and ready to learn.'* (DfE 2024).

DfE guidance states that all schools have a continuing responsibility to proactively manage and improve attendance across their school community and attendance is seen as everyone's responsibility. Within the school, all teaching staff work to promote attendance and we are fully committed to building relationships with families. We know that working together with families to identify the root cause of absence and removing barriers to attendance is key in improving children's attendance. This is supported by our wider school community including Office Staff who support Keri Dallimore-Gray (Deputy

Headteacher and Attendance Lead), Zoë Claxton (Headteacher) and Sarah Müldür (DSL & SENCO) in monitoring attendance data for individuals and groups and providing early intervention and targeted actions for children with low attendance levels. Our Governing body is responsible for overseeing school attendance.

Staff responsible for attendance are listed below. They can be contacted through the school office or by phone (01865 372607) or email (office.2357@north-kidlington.oxon.sch.uk).

Ms Zoë Claxton, Headteacher
Ms Keri Dallimore-Gray, Attendance Lead and Deputy Headteacher
Mrs Sarah Müldür, DSL & SENCO
Mrs Elaine Heaven, Administration Assistant
The governing body appoints a governor with responsibility for attendance.

Governors receive regular attendance reports and provide strategic challenge and support to ensure the school fulfils its statutory attendance duties.

## Why is attendance important?

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning and academic attainment and consequently their wider life chances. Any pupil's absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class.

Frequent absence from school can also increase anxiety in children when they return to school and can significantly impact on their wellbeing, friendships and other social interactions. For vulnerable pupils, "regular attendance is also an important protective factor and the best opportunity for needs to be identified and support provided." DfE 2024

Parents are asked to consider the effect that unreasonable or unnecessary absences may have on their children's attitude to school. If parents do not take seriously the issue of school attendance, children may fail to recognise how important it is to be at school and miss opportunities. In the younger year groups, where parents usually bring the children to school, this may not initially seem important, but families could be creating potential future problems when attendance shifts more directly to the child.

## Promoting Regular Attendance

Promoting attendance is everybody's responsibility: parents, pupils and all members of school staff and governing body.
The school will regularly:

- Create a welcoming and nurturing environment.
- Celebrate good and improved attendance.
- Communicate attendance expectations clearly and consistently to pupils and parents.
- Communicate and work with parents of children whose attendance and punctuality data is below the thresholds of whole school, Persistent Absence (>10% absence) and Severe Absence (below 50%), offering support and guidance.
- Work closely and collaboratively with children and their families who are experiencing Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA).

## Attendance Expectations & Attendance Target 2026-2027

*"When parents decide to have their child registered at a school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure that their child attends that school regularly. This means that their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend*

*or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school."* (Working together to improve school attendance guidance, DfE, 2024)

The school sets attendance targets each year. Our school target for the whole school and for individual pupils in 2026-2027 is an average expected attendance of 97%.

Our school day is from 8.45am to 3.15pm (32.5 hours a week). We open our gates to children at 8.30 am and expect all children to be in the classroom at 8:45 am.
Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without good reason creates an offence in law and may result in a fine and/or prosecution by the County Attendance Team (CAT). Fixed-penalty notices, notices to improve and other legal interventions for absence might be initiated by the school or the CAT where the usual support from the school has not been successful/engaged with or is either not appropriate for the situation (e.g. for an unauthorised holiday in term time). Please refer to the DfE guide for parents on school attendance for more detailed information regarding parental responsibility.

## Monitoring Attendance

Children's attendance data is monitored daily through the registers and any unexplained absences followed up that same day.

The Attendance Lead (Keri Dallimore-Gray), regularly monitors and analyses attendance and absence data to identify individual pupils, cohorts or groups that require support with their attendance or lateness and ensures that effective strategies are put in place.

Weekly and termly attendance data is systematically and carefully tracked and if a child's attendance falls below 97% their attendance patterns will be monitored by staff. If their attendance falls below 97%, parents will be informed of their child's attendance with the expectation that their child's attendance will improve.

If their attendance continues to fall to levels below 90%, there will be communication between parents and the class teacher or attendance lead to discuss the reasons behind the absences and if necessary put in place an attendance improvement plan or an attendance contract. Attendance contracts are voluntary agreements developed collaboratively between school, family and pupil to support improved attendance and remove identified barriers. A child with attendance of 90% or below is classified as Persistently Absent (PA) and this situation must be addressed as a significant cause for concern and a County Attendance Team Officer may become involved. Attendance at 50% or below is deemed as Severe Absence (SA) and requires multi-agency priority action.

High levels of unauthorised absence, for any reason, could result in a referral to consider legal action. The County Attendance Team has the power to issue fixed-penalty notices, notices to improve and other legal interventions for absence where the usual support from the school has not been successful/engaged with or is either not appropriate for the situation (e.g. for an unauthorised holiday in term time).

## Supporting pupils with medical conditions or Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

We are aware that some families and children have particular needs or circumstances that might impact on school attendance. We are committed to working sensitively and collaboratively with families, pupils and outside agencies to put in place strategies to help a pupil attend school successfully. The school recognises that some pupils face additional barriers to attendance, including those with SEND, mental health needs, neurodivergence, medical conditions and emotionally based school avoidance (EBSA). We

will work with families and relevant agencies to understand and remove barriers to attendance and will consider reasonable adjustments where appropriate. Support will normally be prioritised before formal enforcement action is considered.

## Reporting Absence

If your child is too ill to attend school, please contact the school **in person, via Parentmail or by phone** on 01865 372607 by 9am, leaving a message explaining the reason for absence and expected day of return. Please inform the school on each morning of absence.

If you do not inform the school, we will call you and we may also send a reminder via text message or ParentMail. To comply with our statutory safeguarding duties, where we are unable to establish a pupil's whereabouts and there are safeguarding concerns, the school may undertake additional welfare checks, including requesting support from external agencies or the police. Failure to provide a reason for absence will result in the absence being recorded as unauthorised.

You may submit a request for leave of absence for your child to the school office which will be handed to the headteacher. Leave of absence requests are only ever granted for **exceptional** circumstances.

## Absence from school during term time

Every half-day absence from the school must 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. Legitimate absences will be authorised but where an absence is considered avoidable, unnecessary or unreasonable, it will not be authorised by the school.

Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence to pupils during term time unless they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, considering specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the headteacher's discretion.

## Unauthorised Absences

North Kidlington has a statutory duty to monitor attendance and report any unauthorised absences.

An unauthorised absence is where a child is not in school and the school is not satisfied with the reasons given for the absence. In addition to this, where a child has arrived at school after 9.15 a.m., too late to be marked as 'L' (Late), they have to be recorded as a 'U' in the register. This is also legally considered as an unauthorised absence.

Where a child has multiple unauthorised absences, (G,N,O or U codes) there is a National Framework for Penalty Notice Fines. Please refer to this document which outlines the thresholds for fines and costs.

### Lateness

It is a legal requirement that your child arrives in school on time. Children may come onto the school premises at 8.30 a.m. At 8.45 a.m. all children are welcomed into class by their class teacher. Morning registers are taken by 9.00 a.m. Pupils who arrive between 9.00 a.m. and 9.15 a.m. must report to the School Office and they are marked in as late in the class register. The official register closes at 9.15 a.m. and if a child arrives after this time, they lose an attendance mark for the whole morning session; this is classified as unauthorised. Afternoon registers are taken at 1:00 p.m. and the register closes at 1:15 p.m.

If a pupil is late due to exceptional circumstances, no action will be taken. If a pupil is frequently late with the same thing or similar explanations, a meeting will be arranged with parents to identify any issues that are causing the pupil to arrive late at school and an attendance-contract may be issued.

### Family holiday during term time

Parents do not have an automatic right to withdraw pupils from school for a holiday, and government guidance has removed the 'H' code from registers indicating that we should never authorise any holiday. Holidays taken during term time will be recorded as unauthorised (Code G). Fixed-penalty notices will be issued for term-time holiday when the national threshold has been met when a pupil has been recorded as absent for 10 sessions (usually equivalent to 5 school days) within 10 school weeks. Penalty notice information for Parents

As a school, we have concerns about pupils taking time off school for the purpose of a holiday. Pupils have thirteen weeks holiday from school each year which we feel is a sufficient amount of time to organise and take a family holiday. The school curriculum is closely structured and any absence during term time seriously affects a pupil's progress and damages their continuity of learning. There is a consequent risk of underachievement, which the school and parents must seek to avoid. Children returning to school after periods of absence may also show signs of anxiety as they attempt to catch up with missed work.

**A 2-week holiday means that your child cannot get more than 94.7% attendance for the year so will not achieve the school target of AT LEAST 97% Attendance.**

## Authorised Absences

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 causes. Exceptional or special events involving close family members may also be authorised at the headteacher's discretion.

### Medical Appointments

We understand that medical appointments are unavoidable, but we ask that where possible dental and doctor appointments are made outside of school hours. If, however, a child is taken out of school for such an appointment, they are expected to come into school before and after the appointment. While we do understand that sometimes it is unavoidable to make these outside of school hours and in some cases, it is impossible for a child to get back into school, every effort possible should be made for every child to be at school during school hours.

### Sickness

Absences for sickness can, but may not always, be authorised. Parents should inform the school on the first day of the absence, in person, by Parentmail or by telephone and then again on every further day of illness.

In addition to the points above, if a child is repeatedly absent due to illness, the school may request medical evidence for further absences. This can take the form of a GP appointment card, a consultant letter, a copy of a prescription etc. The school may request medical evidence where there are concerns regarding the authenticity, frequency or pattern of absence, or where absences are significantly impacting attendance.

If your child is well enough to return to school but has been prescribed medication from a GP which needs to be administered during the school day, the school has the facilities to store the medication and staff will administer the medication if the appropriate forms have been completed.

If your child has shown symptoms of being unwell before school and is not in school for the morning session but then shows an improvement throughout the course of the morning, we encourage you to bring your child in to school at break time or lunch time to minimise the loss of learning time.

### Special Family Events or Occasions

Absences are sometimes requested for special family events or occasions. Special occasions will be considered for authorisation individually with regards to the nature of the event, its frequency, whether advance notification was given and the historic and overall attendance pattern of the child. Requests will be considered on an individual basis and there is no automatic entitlement to authorised absence for family events or associated travel.

### Off-site Educational Activities, Sporting or Artistic Events

Parents sometimes request absences for children to take part in interviews or activities at other educational establishments, other off-site educational activities, sporting or artistic events. These will usually be authorised if the event is supervised, legitimate, and the absence does not clash with national testing. Advanced notification is expected of these absences.

### Religious Observance

Children undertaking religious observance **on days exclusively set aside** by a religious body will be authorised.

### Extended Visits to a Country of Family Origin

It is recognised that extended visits to the country of family origin provide important opportunities to reaffirm family, linguistic and cultural identities. As such they can be positive, personal and educational experiences. At the same time there is evidence to indicate that visits, resulting in significant absence from school during term time, are disruptive to the pupil's education and have a negative impact on attainment.

Parents are encouraged to arrange visits to their country of family origin during school holiday periods. An extended period of absence may be granted in special circumstances, at the discretion of the school. If we such an absence, it is very important that your child comes back to school on the agreed date. If the child does not return on the specified date, safeguarding procedures will be followed.

## Penalty Notices and Legal Action

## The Law

The Education Act 1996 Part 1, Section 7 states that "the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable—to his age, ability and aptitude, and to any special educational needs he may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise."

If a child's attendance has 10 sessions (5 days) within 10 weeks of school recorded as unauthorised – either as a late, unauthorised holiday or any other reason deemed as not exceptional, the school reserves the right to issue a Penalty Notice Warning which could result in a referral to The County Attendance Team to issue a fine or take further legal action through the courts. These sessions do not have to be consecutive days and can be made up of a combination of types of unauthorised absence.

Parents / carers may be issued with a Penalty Notice of **£80 per parent, per child** (which will be doubled to **£160 per parent, per child** if not paid within 21 days of issue) if:

- they fail to ensure that their child attends school, or other education provision, regularly, usually defined as 10 unauthorised absence sessions over a 10 week period;
- they allow their child to take leave of absence during term time without the school's authorisation;
- they fail to return their child to school on the agreed date after a period of authorised leave of absence;
- their child persistently arrives late for school after registration is closed.

For second offences within 3 years, the Penalty Notice amount is fixed at **£160 per parent, per child** and for a third or further offences (within 3 years), cases can be submitted straight to the **Magistrates Court** and **prosecution** can result in **criminal records** and **fines of up to £2,500**. Cases found guilty in a Magistrates Court can show on the parent's future DBS certificate (Disclosure and Barring Service) due to a 'failure to safeguard a child's education'.

Please refer to the Oxfordshire County Council Statutory Code of Practice for issuing Penalty Notices for unauthorised absence from school and the County Attendance Team document 'helping parents understand penalty notice fines for school attendance.'

Further information about Oxfordshire County Council policy can be found here: https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/schools/school/attendance

Written: September 2026
Next Review: September 2027

Keri Dallimore-Gray
Deputy Headteacher and Attendance Lead

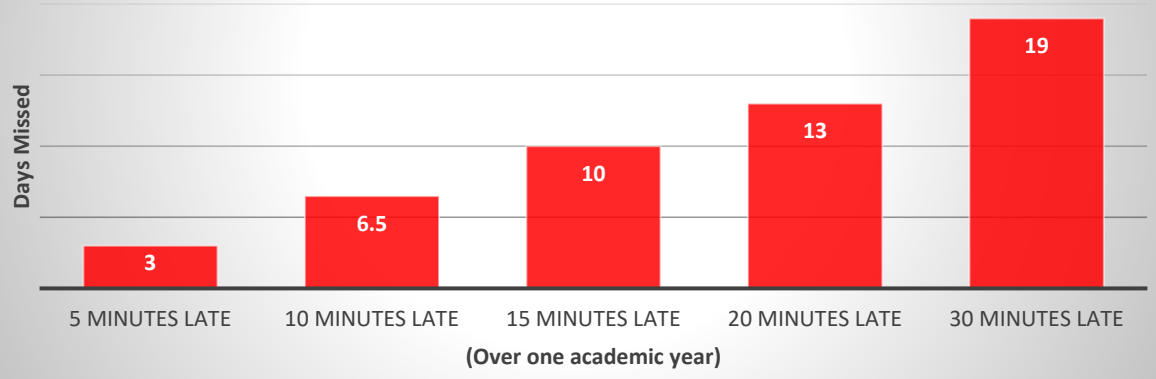
## IMPACT ON ATTENDANCE THROUGH ABSENCE

| Threshold Attendance | Actual Attendance | Whole Days Absent | Learning Hours Lost |
|---|---|---|---|
| 100% | 190 days | 0 | 0 |
| 99% | 189 days | 2 | 10 |
| 98% | 186 days | 4 | 20 |
| 97% | 184 days | 6 | 30 |
| 96% | 182.5 days | 7.5 | 37.5 |
| 95% | 180.5 days | 9.5 | 47.5 |
| 94% | 179 days | 11 | 55 |
| 93% | 177 days | 13 | 65 |
| 92% | 175 days | 15 | 75 |
| 91% | 173 days | 17 | 85 |
| 90% | 171 days | 19 | 95 |
| 89% | 169 days | 21 | 105 |
| 88% | 167 days | 23 | 115 |
| 87% | 165 days | 25 | 125 |
| 86% | 163 days | 27 | 135 |
| 85% | 161.5 days | 28.5 | 142.5 |
| 84% | 159.5 days | 30.5 | 152.5 |
| 83% | 158 days | 32 | 160 |
| 82% | 156 days | 34 | 170 |

| 81% | 154 days | 36 | 180 |
|---|---|---|---|

# Impact of Lateness

## Being 15 minutes late each day is the same as missing 2 weeks of school




## Working together to improve attendance

13. Successfully treating the root causes of absence and removing barriers to attendance, at home, in school or more broadly requires schools and local partners to work collaboratively with, not against families. All partners should work together to:

**EXPECT**

Aspire to high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents and build a culture where all can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across the school.

**MONITOR**

Rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.

**LISTEN AND UNDERSTAND**

When a pattern is spotted, discuss with pupils and parents to listen to understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.

**FACILITATE SUPPORT**

Remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. This might include an early help or whole family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues.

**FORMALISE SUPPORT**

Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners should work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances this may include formalising support through a parenting contract or education supervision order.

**ENFORCE**

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, enforce attendance through statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.