

Attendance Policy

The Batt CE Primary School



The Batt C.E. School

St Mary's CE Infant School



Approved by	Joint Local Governing Body
Date	11 September 2023
Next Review Date	September 2026

Love Everyone, Love the adventure of learning 'Love your neighbour, as you love yourself'

Luke 10:27

Together we love to learn and learn to love 'Do Everything in Love'

1 Corinthians 16:14

This guidance meets the requirements of [working together to improve school attendance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#).

1. Introduction

We believe that for children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and that children should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. 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. Children are best safeguarded from exploitation and other risks in the wider community by attending school regularly where they are supervised by qualified and caring professionals. Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is the legal responsibility of parents and registered carers and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution. It is very important therefore that parents and registered carers make sure that the children they are responsible for attend school regularly and this guidance sets out how together, we will achieve this.

The Batt CE Primary and St Mary's CE Infant Schools offer an environment in which pupils and families feel valued and welcome and where they know that their presence is essential. Our Christian visions emphasise our dedication towards the flourishing of every individual and, as partner schools, we believe that this is achieved through an understanding of the importance and a commitment to regular school attendance.

Children of school age who are registered at a school must, by law, attend school regularly. The law states that parents do not have any right or entitlement to take their child out of School for the purpose of a term time holiday. Regular attendance is the best way of ensuring that children make the most of the educational opportunities which are available to them and can achieve their potential.

We are committed to meeting our obligation with regards to school attendance through a culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- Promoting good attendance
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence
- Building strong relationships with families to ensure pupils have the support in place to attend school
- We will also promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

2. Legislation and Guidance

This policy guidance meets the requirements of the [working together to improve school attendance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of [The Education Act 1996](#)
- Part 3 of [The Education Act 2002](#)
- Part 7 of [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006 \(and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments\)](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.

3. Definitions

- Where the term "relevant body" has been used within this policy guidance, this means the Board of Trustees of ODST. The relevant body has chosen to delegate some of its functions to Local Governing Bodies (LGBs) as set out in this procedure.
- Unless indicated otherwise, all references to "school" include both schools and academies
- Unless indicated otherwise, all references to "teacher" include the Headteacher, Executive Headteacher, Principal or Head of School
- Unless indicated otherwise. All references to "Headteacher" include Executive Headteacher, Principal or Head of School
- Unless indicated otherwise, all references to 'staff' include both teaching and support staff

4. Consistency of Treatment and Fairness

The relevant body is committed to ensuring consistency of treatment and fairness and will abide by all relevant employment and equality legislation.

5. Monitoring and Evaluation

Any feedback or concerns from ODST schools regarding this policy guidance will be reported back in the first instance to the ODST Education, Quality, Standards and Impact (EQSI) Committee.

6. Date of Review

The procedure will be reviewed as required by the Education, Quality, Standards and Impact (EQSI) Committee of the Board of Trustees of ODST to take account of any revised guidance, legislative changes and / or national policy development.

7. Roles and Responsibilities

7.1 The Board of Trustees of Oxford Diocesan Schools Trust

The Board of Trustees is responsible for:

- Promoting a culture that sets high expectations for attendance across all ODST schools
- Supporting schools to prioritise attendance
- Ensuring that school leaders are able to fulfil high expectations and statutory duties
- Regularly reviewing attendance data from across the Trust and directing school improvement resource to help school leaders focus support on the pupils who need it

7.2 The Local Governing Body

The Local Governing Body is responsible for:

- Promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school
- Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance
- Holding the Executive Headteacher to account for the implementation of a policy based on this guidance

7.3 The Executive Headteacher

The Executive Headteacher is responsible for:

- Implementation of a policy based on this guidance at our schools
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to the Local Governing Body and to the ODST School Improvement Team.
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary

7.4 Class teachers and teaching assistants

Class teachers and teaching assistants are responsible for:

- recording attendance on a daily basis
- using the correct codes
- submitting this information to the school office on the same day.

7.5 School office staff

School office staff will:

- Take calls from parents and registered carers about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system

7.6 Parents/carers

Parents/carers are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends school every day on time
- Call the school to report their child's absence as soon as possible on the day of the absence and on each subsequent day of absence, and advise when they are expected to return
- Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day

7.7 Pupils

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school every day on time

8. Recording Attendance

8.1 Attendance register

We will keep an attendance register and enter all pupils onto this register.

We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

We will also record:

- For pupils of compulsory school age, whether the absence is authorised or not
- The nature of the activity if a pupil is attending an approved educational activity
- The nature of circumstances where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances
- We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

The school day starts at 8.45am when the school bell is rung;

- Registers will be taken each day at the beginning of the morning and afternoon sessions;
- If a pupil arrives after the registers close at 9.00am, the parent/carer should report to the school office and the child is registered as late;
- If children arrive after 9.15 am, this will be recorded as an unauthorised absence unless the Executive Headteacher/Head of School deem that there are exceptional circumstances.

8.2 Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 8:45am or as soon as practically possible by calling the school. If the phone is not answered, the pupil's parent/carer must leave a voicemail message to notify the school of the reason for the absence.

We will mark absence due to illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

- If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask the pupil's parent/carer to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.
- If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised, and parents/carers will be notified of this in advance.

8.3 Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised if the pupil's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment via phone call or email.

However, we encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

The pupil's parent/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Go to section 9.1 to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

8.4 Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code
- After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code

The School adheres to the Attendance Team guidelines regarding persistent lateness, and may therefore implement parenting contracts to enable the school to work with families to support attendance and punctuality. If parents/carers fail to work with school to address the issues and there is no improvement, a Penalty Notice could be issued.

8.5 Following up unexplained absence

If there are concerns about a child's absence, whether this absence is authorised or not, parents/carers will be contacted by the school to discuss the absences with the Headteacher.

If a pupil is persistently absent or repeatedly late and the school's efforts to effect an improvement have been unsuccessful, the matter will be referred to the County's Attendance Team. Consultation between the school and the Attendance Team will be arranged to set targets for, and to support, poor attendees. Other services such as the Early Intervention Hub may also be involved in the support arrangements.

In extreme circumstances, where the issue cannot be resolved between school and parents, with the support of the Attendance Officer, the school will refer the matter formally to Oxfordshire County Council. Where necessary, Penalty Notices may be issued in line with Oxfordshire County Council's Code of Conduct (January 2015).

Any pupil who is absent without an explanation for 10 consecutive days will be referred to Oxfordshire County Council, Attendance Team. (*This is a legal requirement*). The school will include details of the action they have taken.

Where any pupil we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the school will:

- Call the pupil's parent/carer on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the school cannot reach any of the pupil's

emergency contacts, the school may attend the pupil's home and/or contact the police

- Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session
- Call the parent/carer on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the school will consider involving an education welfare officer

8.6 Reporting to parents/carers

At the end of each half term the headteacher reviews attendance figures and the reasons stated for absence. Some children may have poor attendance due to frequent illness, long term sickness or hospitalisation. The school will seek to work with parents and carers to overcome barriers to attendance and schooling (see Managing Medical Conditions in School Policy).

At the Headteacher's discretion, and based on attendance information available, the following actions may be triggered:

- Frequent lateness or significant minutes late will receive an awareness letter;
- Attendance of 95% will be monitored through the following half term to see if high levels of absence continue;
- Attendance fallen below 95% will trigger an awareness letter;
- Attendance fallen below 90% will trigger a letter of concern and target to improve;
- Attendance fallen below 85% will trigger a request for a meeting with parents/carers;
- Attendance falling below 80% may trigger a response from the local authority.
- See Appendix A for example letters.

A copy of the child's attendance register will be enclosed for parents/carers information.

Parents and Carers who are finding it difficult to get their child to attend school can ask for help from the Local Authority and/or School. Parents/Carers can agree a plan with School/Local Authority to help improve their child's attendance. This can result in drawing up a "Parenting Contract". A Parenting Contract is a voluntary agreement between Parents/Carers and the Local Authority or School governing body to encourage school attendance. The agreement is not legally binding as such, but can be used as evidence if the Local Authority later pursues prosecution. The Local Authority or governing body should fund any support needed to implement the parenting contract e.g. a requirement to attend parenting classes.

If attendance fails to improve, Local Authorities can take further action to ensure children regularly attend school. For more information regarding school attendance please use the links below:

<http://childlawadvice.org.uk/information-pages/school-attendance-and-absence/>

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/564599/school_attendance.pdf

The Governing Body will analyse attendance data throughout the year to identify issues and trends and will evaluate the success of the procedures by measuring the annual attendance % against that of previous years and against national benchmarking.

9. Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

9.1 Approval for term-time absence

The Headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the Headteacher's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least two weeks before the absence, and in accordance with any leave of absence request form, accessible via the school office. The headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments (see section 8.3)
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travellers, fairground people and circus people, bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and new travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether

9.2 Legal sanctions

The school or local authority can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

If issued with a fine, or penalty notice, each parent must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

Penalty notices can be issued by a Headteacher, following the procedures set out in the local authority policy, by a local authority officer or by the police.

The decision on whether to issue a penalty notice may take into account:

- The number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

10. Strategies for Promoting Attendance

The promotion of a pattern of regular attendance is the responsibility of parents, pupils, all members of school staff and the Local Governing Body.

11. Attendance Monitoring

The school will:

- Monitor attendance and absence data half-termly, termly, and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil level
- Identify whether there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern

Pupil-level absence data will be collected each term, reported to relevant body, and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. The school will compare attendance data to the ODST and national average and share this with the Local Governing Body.

11.1 Analysing attendance

The school will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these pupils and their families
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns

11.2 Using data to improve attendance

The school will:

- Provide regular attendance reports to class teachers and other school leaders, to facilitate discussions with pupils and families
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place to modify them and inform future strategies

11.3 Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school.

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance

12. Attendance Policy Monitoring Arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from ODST, the local authority or the DfE is updated, and as a minimum every three years by the Headteacher. At every review, the policy will be approved by the Local Governing Body.

13. Links with other Policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- ODST Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- School Behaviour Policy

Appendix A



The Batt C.E. School

THE BATT CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL

Corn Street, Witney, Oxon, OX28 6DY

Executive Head: Ms Debbie Seccull
Head of School: Mrs K Harding-Jones

Telephone: 01993 702392
office@thebattschool.org.uk
www.thebattschool.org.uk
April 2023

Dear Parents/Carers of _____,

Awareness of Low Attendance

As part of our commitment to best possible outcomes for all children, we monitor pupil attendance on a termly basis. We are therefore writing to you as our termly attendance report for the Spring term has identified that your child's overall attendance for this academic year has fallen below 90%. Your child's attendance is currently at ___%.

We are aware that all of these absences are illness or medical related and are therefore authorised, and that illness can be unavoidable, however in line with government recommendations we are taking this opportunity to raise a concern over your child's attendance figure. We are keen to work in partnership with you to support you in improving this attendance figure and would welcome you to contact Katy Harding-Jones, Head of School, to discuss what support we can put in place. I look forward to seeing a return to full attendance this term.

Yours faithfully,
Ms D Seccull

Executive Headteacher



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Witney
Oxfordshire
OX28 4AZ



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Assistant Headteacher: Miss Julie Atkinson
E-mail: office@stmarysinfants.co.uk

(01993) 702387
www.st-marys-witney.oxon.sch.uk

Dear Parents/Carers of _____,

Awareness of Low Attendance

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We are aware that all of these absences are illness or medical related and are therefore authorised, and that illness can be unavoidable, however in line with government recommendations we are taking this opportunity to raise a concern over your child's attendance figure. We are keen to work in partnership with you to support you in improving this attendance figure and would welcome you to contact Julie Atkinson, Assistant Headteacher, to discuss what support we can put in place. I look forward to seeing a return to full attendance this term.

Yours faithfully,
Ms D Secull

Executive Headteacher