



**ASPIRATIONS**



# **Wykham Park Academy (Banbury) ATTENDANCE POLICY**

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| <b>Type of policy</b>      | Attendance     | <b>LAB or Board approval</b> | LAB                 |

## Introduction

**This Policy is written for all parents, carers, students and members of staff, and sets out how together we will achieve and maintain excellent attendance.**

This is a successful school and all students play their part in making it so. We aim for an environment which enables and encourages all members of the community to reach out for excellence. For our students to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and all students should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

The academy will consistently work towards a goal of 100% attendance for all students. Every opportunity will be used to convey to students and their parents or carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance, including the use of newsletters and school reports. The academy therefore has an attendance target of 100% for each student.

School attendance is subject to various education laws and this school attendance policy is written to reflect these laws and the guidance produced by the Department for Education (DfE).

The school will review its systems for monitoring attendance at regular intervals to ensure that all students are receiving the best possible education by attending school every day. This policy contains within it the procedures that the school will use to monitor and improve the attendance of students.

## Why regular attendance is so important

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

It is parents' legal responsibility to ensure their child's regular attendance and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

## School Procedures

### **If a child is absent parents/carers must:**

- Contact the school by 8.30am on the day of absence (every day of the absence if it's more than one day).
- Send a note in on the first day the child returns with an explanation of the absence – parents must do this unless they have already emailed the attendance officer with an explanation. Written confirmation is required to authorise all absences.

### **If a child is absent Wykham Park Academy will:**

- Telephone or text parents on the day of absence if the academy has not heard from the parents. This is to ensure effective safeguarding of all students.
- Send an e-mail or letter requesting immediate contact if no contact can be made by the third consecutive day of absence.
- Arrange a meeting with an attendance coordinator or an Assistant Principal if the absences persist.
- Refer the matter to the County Attendance Team if attendance moves below 90%.

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required in writing.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness (coded as I), medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time (coded as M), emergencies or other unavoidable causes. If this occurs, school will require evidence of the appointment to be able to authorise the absence.

Unauthorised 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 which have never been properly explained
- Children who arrive at school too late to get a mark (coded as U)
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- Day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed (coded as O or G depending on the time-frame)
- Excessive illness without medical evidence

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance must be resolved immediately between the school, the parents and the child. If a student is reluctant to attend, parents and carers must never cover up his/her absence or give in to pressure to excuse him/her from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually make things worse.

**Parents must support their child by:**

- Ensuring regular and early bed times
- Helping with homework
- Having uniform and equipment prepared the night before
- Providing a healthy breakfast
- Reporting any academic or social concerns promptly
- Retaining open and honest communication with the school
- Being positive about school

**Wykham Park Academy will support all students and parents/carers by:**

- Taking all registers accurately and carefully during mentor time and at the start of every lesson
- Recording any absence in the first instance as N if there is no known reason for the absence
- Notifying "on-call" if a student is absent from a lesson who should be present
- Notifying parents/carers if the student has been marked absent and his/her whereabouts is unknown
- Ensuring the student's mentor meets with the student on his/her return to school to discuss his/her absence and confirm the authorisation or otherwise of the absences (a "return-to-school" interview)
- Keeping all notes explaining absences until the end of the academic year. If there are attendance concerns about the student that may require further investigation, then the notes may need to be retained for a longer period.
- Contacting the parents/carers if there are concerns over unauthorised absences or

there is an emerging pattern of absences that could lead to the student becoming a persistent absentee

- Making reward trips available to all students with excellent or improved attendance

## **A Welcome Back**

It is important that on return from an absence that all pupils are made to feel welcome. This should include teachers ensuring that the student is helped to catch up on missed work and mentors ensuring that the student is brought up-to-date on any information that has been passed to other students.

## **Incentives and initiatives for excellent attendance**

The school will use the following system to reward pupils who have good or improving attendance:

- *Weekly celebration of attendance and punctuality in assembly*
- *An attendance star board for all mentor groups which recognises all students with attendance of 96%+*
- *Certificates given to pupils that have achieved 100% attendance termly with prize draw*
- *Improved attendance certificates*
- *Inter-college weekly competition for highest attendance*
- *Termly attendance reward trips for students attaining 96%+ overall attendance for year to date or a clearly improved attendance rate over a fixed period of time*
- *End of academic year attendance reward trip for pupils attaining 96%+ overall*

## **Persistent absenteeism**

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for any reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and the academy needs parents' fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence 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 parents will be informed of this immediately.

The attendance coordinators are responsible for tracking and monitoring the attendance of students with the support of the mentors. They inform the Assistant Principal with overall responsibility for attendance of any concerns. A weekly meeting is held to confirm actions and arrange School Attendance Action Meetings for parents of students whose attendance is a concern.

All our PA students and their parents are subject to an Action Plan which will be drawn up at the School Attendance Action Meeting. All PA cases are also automatically made known to the County Attendance team. If a child becomes a PA student, the school will seek parents' consent to complete an Early Help Assessment and consider convening a Team Around the Family.

### **Student missing:**

Any student who is absent without an explanation or contact after 10 consecutive school days will be referred to Thames Valley Police in order to conduct a welfare check.

Pupils missing from school for 20 consecutive days will be passed to the County Tracking Officer to be removed from the school roll.

## **The County Attendance Team**

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful.

A Penalty Notice is a fine that the County Attendance Team may decide to issue instead of taking legal action through the Magistrates' Court system.

A Parent/Carer can be issued with a penalty notice if:

- they fail to ensure that their child attends school, or other education provision, regularly, usually defined as six or more unauthorised absence sessions over a six week period;
- they allow their child to take exceptional leave of absence during term time without the school's authorisation (explained further on page 6 "Exceptional Leave" section);
- 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.

The County Attendance Team will issue a Penalty Notice per parent/carers, per child (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).

Parents that have previously been issued with Penalty Notices for their children's unauthorised absences, in the event of further unauthorised absences may receive summonses to Court. The County Attendance Team has a range of legal powers open to them to enforce attendance including parenting orders, education supervision orders and prosecutions. If convicted of an offence a parent could face a fine of up to £2,500 per parent and/or 3 months imprisonment.

Alternatively, parents 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 and their email address is [attendance@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:attendance@oxfordshire.gov.uk).

## **Lateness**

1. All students are expected to be in school by 8.40am. Morning registration takes place at the start of school at 8:45am. The registers will remain open until the end of Period 1.
2. In line with safeguarding procedures, any student arriving after this time will be marked as having an unauthorised absence (U) unless there is an acceptable explanation, eg) school transport was delayed (L). If a student is coded as U it means

that the parents/carers could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists.

3. The afternoon registration is at 12:30pm. The registers close at 1:00pm.
4. Pupils arriving after the start of school but before the end of the registration period will be treated for statistical purposes as present, but will be coded as late (L) before registers close.
5. Parents/Carers must inform the school if their child is going to be absent on or before the first day and on every day of the absence as required. This must be followed up in writing to explain the reason for the absence. A letter, note in the student's planner or email will be accepted. If no reason is given within 2 weeks the absence will remain unauthorised.
6. When making medical/dental appointments, every effort must be made to ensure appointments are outside school hours but we acknowledge that this is not always possible. Medical/Dental appointments must be accompanied by an appointment card or other written confirmation.

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If students miss the start of the day they can miss parts of the pastoral programme, parts of the literacy and numeracy programme and important information required for the day. Students who arrive late also disrupt lessons, which can be embarrassing for the child and may also encourage absence.

## Exceptional Leave

Taking holidays in term time will affect every child's schooling as much as any other absence and the school expects parents to help by not taking children away in school time. Any savings that parents think they may make by taking a holiday in school time are offset by the cost to the child's education.

There is **no** automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday.

1. It is widely known that the link between a student's attendance and attainment is irrefutable.
2. Early poor attendance habits follow through into secondary school, further education and employment.
3. Graduates earn, on average, double that of young people that leave school with no qualifications.
4. All schools in Oxfordshire are encouraged to adopt a policy of not authorising Exceptional Leave.
5. Exceptional leave is most unlikely to be authorised when a student's attendance is less than 95%.
6. Exceptional leave should always be refused when school is aware of any truancy.
7. Exceptional leave should always be refused when requests are regular (annual) or when patterns become identifiable.
8. Reasons for Exceptional Leave should be logged on the student's record and shared as part of the transfer/transition process.

**The County Attendance Team can issue Penalty Notices for any unauthorised 'Exceptional Leave'. Penalty Notices can be issued to each parent/carer concerned. Please note that it will be per parent per child. Payment within 21 days of receipt of notice is £60 and £120 if paid after this period but within 28 days. If the Penalty Notice remains unpaid after 28 days you will each receive a summons to Oxford Magistrates Court. If unauthorised leave is repeated the County Attendance Team may summons each parent to Court without a Penalty Notice being issued.**

## Attendance Targets

The school will set attendance targets each year. A system for analysing performance towards the targets will be established and a senior school leader will be responsible for overseeing this work.

## Register and Admission Roll keeping

The legal requirements regarding register and admission roll keeping can be found in The Education [Pupil Registration] (England) Regulations 2006.

## Categorisation of Absence

Any pupil who is on roll but not present in the school at the time of registration must be recorded within one of these categories:

- [1] Unauthorised Absence;
- [2] Authorised Absence;
- [3] Approved Educational Activity.

### 1. Unauthorised Absence

This is for those pupils where no reason has been provided, or whose absence is deemed to be without a valid reason.

### 2. Authorised Absence

This is for those pupils who are away from school for a reason that is deemed to be valid under the Education Act 1996.

### 3. Approved Educational Activity

This covers types of supervised educational activity undertaken off site but with the approval of the school. This would include:

- Field trips and educational visits;
- Sporting activities;
- Link courses or approved education off site;
- Most types of dual registration.

**Note: Pupils recorded in this category are deemed to be present for attendance returns purposes.**

## Summary

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures and its attendance policy to parents and to promote attendance. School attendance data must be available to the Local Authority and the Department for Education. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend.

All members of staff are committed to working with parents and pupils as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible. Regular attendance supports optimising every child's life chances.