

Attendance Policy

Policy Author	Mr K Hopkins	Date of Approval	06.03.23
Policy Approval	Full Governing Board	Next Review Date	March 2026

At Oldbrook First School and Nursery, we recognise the importance of regular school attendance and believe that children can only learn effectively if they attend school regularly. It is also vitally important that children arrive and leave school on time.

Education provides a means of enhancement for all young people. Pupils need to attend regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. Irregular attendance seriously disrupts continuity of learning, undermines the educational process and leads to underachievement and low attainment.

The Law

By law, all children of compulsory school age must receive suitable education. Parents are responsible for making sure this happens, either by registering the child at a school or by arranging an effective alternative to school.

Local Authorities have various powers to ensure that parents meet their duties.

Responsibilities of Parents

There are legal obligations on parents to secure education for their children of compulsory school age, whether at school or otherwise, and to send them to school regularly once they are on the school roll.

If the school is to achieve its attendance targets, parents must see themselves as partners with the school in their children's education, and support the school in the following ways:

- ensure the fullest possible attendance of their child by keeping requests for their children to be absent from school to a minimum;
- when absence is unavoidable, provide a note of explanation, preferably on the first day of absence or when the child returns to school **or** contact the school by telephone
- when absence continues for more than a day, contact the school by 'phone or via Parentmail absence reporting;
- ensure that their child arrives at school on time.

The Role of Ofsted

The school's Ofsted grade is dependent on pupil's attendance and punctuality and it is important that parents support the school to achieve high attendance and punctuality.

Ofsted Guidance 2022 – Behaviour and Attitudes

Inspectors will consider the following:

- a strong focus on attendance and punctuality so that disruption is minimised
- Pupils **have** high attendance, come to school on time and are punctual to lessons. When this is not the **case**, the school takes appropriate, swift and effective action
- There is demonstrable improvement in the behaviour and attendance of pupils who have particular needs.

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The Role of the Local Authority

Local Authorities are charged in law with enforcing school attendance and must ensure that schools and parents are fulfilling their statutory obligations including, where necessary, the taking of action through the courts.

The Role of the School

It is the responsibility of the school to support attendance and to deal with problems which may lead to non-attendance. The school will employ strategies to improve and encourage good attendance. The Headteacher will inform governors termly of the school's attendance analysis.

The Importance of Registration

Registers are important legal documents and are kept securely. The law requires schools to call the register twice-a-day:

- at the start of the morning session, i.e. 8.45 am;
- once during the afternoon session. At Oldbrook the register is called at the start of the afternoon session, i.e. 1.00pm.

Calling the register is a key part of the school day and should be seen as such by staff, children and parents.

At Oldbrook First School and Nursery, the registers are computerised. Children are marked either present or absent. Particular attention is given to accurate registration; staff use consistent rules and coding for registration.

When a child is absent, the register must also show whether the absence was authorised by the school or unauthorised. This information is entered onto the computer by the School Business Manager / Administrator.

Notification of Absence

All parents are asked to contact school if their child is absent, giving a reason for the absence. This can be done by:

- **telephone:** the School Business Manager / Administrator will then pass the message to the class teacher and enter the reason for absence directly onto the computer;
- **Parentmail:** the School Business Manager / Administrator will then pass the message to the class teacher and enter the reason for absence directly onto the computer;
- **in person:** an explanation may be given personally to either the class teacher or the School Business Manager / Administrator when the child returns to school.

If no notification is received about a child's absence, a member of staff will make contact to seek reason for the absence.

School Responses to Absence

Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

Where a child is absent at the time of registration, the law requires schools to indicate on their attendance register whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.

Authorised absence means that the school has either given approval in advance for the child to be away or that an explanation offered afterwards has been accepted. The law requires that absences not agreed in advance are recorded as unauthorised, unless (and until) a satisfactory explanation is given.

The school will:

- investigate all unexplained absences;
- contact parents on the first day of absence for an explanation if no message is received.
- contact parents if it has any concerns over attendance;
- involve the Senior Attendance Officer if parents fail to support the school in ensuring the fullest possible attendance of their children (Attendance below 90%).
- withdraw a Nursery place if attendance falls below the minimum requirement.

By law, only the school can approve absence, not parents. The school need not accept a parental explanation for a child's absence if it doubts the explanation. If the school is satisfied that the circumstances are both genuine and exceptional, the absence may be authorised. Where parentally condoned and/or unjustified absence appears to be a problem, the school will involve the S.A.O. at the earliest opportunity and issue sanctions in accordance with Milton Keynes policy.

Excessive amounts of authorised absence can disrupt continuity of learning. The school will, therefore, watch for emerging patterns of authorised absence by individual children.

Examples of Unauthorised Absence

The school cannot accept any of the following:

- shopping during school hours;
- special occasions, e.g. birthdays;
- no uniform, shoes, etc.;
- overslept;
- haircut;
- sham illnesses;
- at home due to family illness.
- Children arriving at school after the register has closed (Arriving after 9:30)
- Family Holidays
- Routine dental appointments

Holidays During Term Time

- Headteachers are no longer allowed to authorise requests for children to be taken out of school in term time. If you take a holiday which is not authorised by the school then they may refer the matter to the Local Authority who will consider the issue of a Fixed Penalty Notice. Oldbrook First School and Nursery follows the Local Authorities guidance.
- If Parents/Carers take children out of school for a holiday, which results in the child missing 10 or more sessions, (5 school days) a referral will be sent to the Local Authority (Appendix 1). Fixed Penalty Notices (FPN) are issued to each parent and are for each child. A FPN is £60 if paid within 21 days, and £120 if paid between 22 and 28 days. If the fine is not paid, parents will be prosecuted in the magistrates' court.
- The school will follow the guidance as set out in the 'School Attendance Enforcement Policy in relation to non-school attendance and Code of Conduct for the issue of Fixed Penalty Notices'. Further information can be found [here](#).

Examples of Authorised Absence

- *Sickness/Illness of the Child:* if the school is satisfied that a child is absent as a result of illness, the absence must be treated as authorised. Where there is doubt about the authenticity of absence attributed to illness, the school and S.A.O. can refer the matter to the school doctor to arrange a special medical or make contact with the child's GP. If a child is absent for a prolonged period or the school notices a pattern of absence emerging, early contact will be made with the S.A.O and/or the School Health Service.
- *Medical and Dental Appointments:* leave for medical or dental appointments requested by the organisation for treatment or procedures may be authorised (however this will still be recorded as an absence from school). It would be preferable if parents would make such appointments out of school hours. Routine dental checks should be taken out of school hours.

Where a child is present for registration, but then has to leave school to attend an appointment, the School Business Manager / Administrator must record, in the register, the fact that the child, although registered, is not physically present in a signing out book. Similarly, the School Business Manager / Administrator will note in the late book, the presence of a child who was not there when the register was being taken but returns later from an appointment.

- *Close Family Bereavement:* the school will respond sensitively to requests for leave of absence for close family bereavements. However extended periods of time will not be authorised.
- *Days of Religious Observance:* children may be absent from school in order to participate in a day set aside exclusively for religious observance by the religious body to which the parents belong. It is helpful if parents can give the school advance notification of religious observance days.

Both in the school prospectus and at the pre-school induction meeting, parents are informed that family holidays within term time will not be authorised so that their child's education is not disrupted.

In exceptional circumstances parents are asked to write a letter to the Headteacher outlining the circumstances. A meeting will be organised with the Headteacher to discuss the request focusing on the child's progress, current attendance, any previous term time absences, whether the absence coincides with a key assessment period and also the nature of exceptional circumstance. The school will respond in writing to these requests. Absences are counted as an authorised absence on the register but the reason for the absence is recorded so that no further action is taken.

If a family takes extended leave (above 5 days) a return to school date will be set for the child. If the child fails to return to school after the agreed date their place at Oldbrook First School and Nursery and Nursery may be rescinded.

Suspensions and Exclusions

Where a child has been suspended or excluded [fixed term or permanent], they will remain on the school roll. The absence will be regarded as authorised. Once a permanent exclusion is confirmed, the child will be removed from the school roll.

Parental Concerns

Children learn best when they are happy and relaxed. All the staff at Oldbrook First School and Nursery are concerned about children's regular attendance and the importance of continuity in each child's learning. They are also concerned about each child's safety, welfare and happiness.

Parents are asked to share any worries their child might have in school. Sometimes, little things upset children, which mean they become unhappy and may not want to attend school. Parents are encouraged to bring their child to school, so that reasons for the child not wanting to attend can be discussed and, hopefully, resolved.

The class teacher or Headteacher will talk to the child concerned to find out if there are any worries or problems in school that might make that child not want to attend. If there are, then these will be discussed with the parent/guardian and appropriate action taken.

Lateness

It is our policy at Oldbrook First School and Nursery to actively discourage the late arrival of children at school. A child who arrives late may seriously disrupt not only his or her continuity of learning but also that of others. A firm line is taken on late arrivals. Where children miss registration altogether, they are marked in the late book along with their time of arrival with the reason for lateness. Particular attention is paid to emerging patterns of late arrival. If a child is regularly late for school or is often absent, then the Headteacher will contact the parent concerned to have a discussion about this. If there is no improvement a warning letter will be issued (Appendix 2). If lateness continues the parent will be invited to attend an attendance interview with the Headteacher (Appendix 3 and 4). Persistent problems will be referred to the Senior Attendance Officer (SAO) and issue sanctions in accordance with Milton Keynes policy.

Communication

At Oldbrook we believe that children need to develop an awareness of the importance of good attendance and punctuality. Attendance is celebrated regularly.

As attendance is crucial to effective learning and the continuity of learning experiences, the school places great emphasis on this in its communication with parents.

- **School Prospectus:** information on lateness, illness and absence is given to parents in the school prospectus. This highlights the importance of being at school on time and notifying school if their child is absent for any reason.
- **Preschool Induction Meeting:** at the pre-school induction meeting, held for children about to enter our Foundation Stage, the importance of regular attendance is discussed and explained. This talk also includes parents and children arriving at school on time so that each child can be given the best possible start to each school day. Being picked up on time is also stressed, especially for young children who can be very upset if they are the only child left in the building.
- **Mobile Children:** children are also admitted to school at various times of the year into various year groups. All parents requesting a place are asked to make an appointment with the Headteacher. At this meeting, the importance of regular attendance will be highlighted, along with other school routines.
- **Parent Consultation Meetings:** individual attendance data is shared at parent consultation meetings and discussions take place where attendance or lateness may be an issue.

Monitoring Attendance

Close liaison between the school and the Local Authority Senior Attendance Officer is crucial in attempts to improve attendance. The principle function is to help parents and LA's meet their statutory obligations on school attendance. At Oldbrook First School and Nursery, we refer cases to the Senior Attendance Officer [SAO] for advice and support.

The headteacher looks at individual pupil attendance regularly and once a term analyses individual data to identify patterns of absence/lateness. Where concerns are highlighted parents are informed in writing of their child's attendance, the impact this may have on their education and steps which may be taken if the attendance does not improve. Parents are invited into school to discuss their child's attendance further with the Headteacher to explore ways of improving attendance. If attendance improves then a letter is sent to parents to inform them of the improvements and to congratulate the child. The SAO for the school is contacted if necessary to discuss individual cases. Contact may be made by telephone if the situation needs discussing before a visit.

After the school has sent a warning letter (appendix 2), if there is no improvement, the Headteacher will write to parents and invite them to an Attendance Interview (appendix 3 and 4). A Parenting Contract will be put in place (Appendix 5) and a review meeting booked.

Following this, if there is no improvement then the school will refer the case to the SAO for review. The parent will be invited back to the school for a Police and Criminal Evidence (PACE) interview. The parent will be formally cautioned at the beginning of the interview and then asked a series of prepared questions. Their answers will be written down and read back to them at the end and they will be asked to sign the form. Then, if there is a decision to prosecute the parent or parents, this interview will form the basis of the evidence against them. As it is a legal interview, the parent will be entitled to have a legal representative, however they will not be able to have the support of a friend, family member or other professionals who may interfere with the legal process.

Full information on this process will be given to the parent prior to the PACE interview by way of an information leaflet and verbal feedback given at the Attendance Interview.



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2022/2023 ACADEMIC YEAR

**REFERRAL FOR THE ISSUE OF FIXED PENALTY NOTICE(S)
FOR UNAUTHORISED LEAVE IN TERM TIME (V3)**

Does the school have the FPN process in their attendance policy for term time holiday?	YES/NO
Name of Student/YP:	
Date of Birth:	
Year:	
Attendance:	
Current Attendance:	
Parent 1: Full Name (<u>including first name</u>) of parent or carer: #	
Parent 2: Full Name (<u>including first name</u>) of parent or carer: #	
Address of Parent(s) or carers:	
Email address of parent (s) or carers:	

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What reason did the parent give for requesting a term-time holiday? (Copy of request form to be enclosed) #	
Was a letter sent informing the parent that the holiday was unauthorised and that a FPN might be issued? (If so, the letter sent to the parent <u>MUST</u> be attached).	
Were there any verbal communications with the parent?	
Dates of Absence (<u>Attendance Certificate to be attached with absence marked as a "G" code</u>) # The certificate must be signed (see below).*	
Has the parent requested a holiday previously?	
If so, was the holiday authorised?	
Are there other attendance concerns?	

Name of school referrer

Date.....

- # NB If this information is not provided by schools to support the FPN application then the FPN will NOT be processed.
- * we must have certificates signed by the Head or Deputy to ensure we can process speedy prosecutions for non-payment.
- Due to changes in working practices we are only able to accept electronic copies of this referral form. "Hard Copies" will not be processed.
- Return completed form, and supporting documentation, as an email attachment to attendance@milton-keynes.gov.uk. This form can also be completed through the school attendance website.

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Appendix 2

Dear

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE WARNING LETTER

NAME: _____ DOB: _____ YEAR: _____
SCHOOL _____

I write to advise you that you could face a legal sanction if you fail to ensure that your child attends school regularly and punctually.

During the period _____ to _____ the school was open for _____ sessions and _____ attended on _____ occasions and/or was late after the register on _____ occasions. Your child's overall attendance is ____%.

Section 7 of The Education Act, 1996 states that you have a legal duty to ensure your child's regular attendance at school; therefore, if your child's attendance does not improve the matter will be referred to the Local Authority who will commence legal proceedings. This could mean, under the terms of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act, 2003, a Fixed Penalty Notice will be issued to you and a fine of £60 will become payable in 21 days or £120 will be payable after 21 days but within 28 days. A Notice could be issued three weeks after the date of this letter, if there is no improvement in your child's attendance or punctuality. This warning is in place for 12 (twelve) schools weeks as set out in the Milton Keynes Code of Conduct for their issue.

Alternatively, we will write to invite you to an Attendance Interview or refer the case to the Local Authority who will invite for an Attendance Interview. If there is no improvement after the interview, legal sanctions will commence and the Local Authority will invite you to a PACE interview. You will receive a formal caution interview as required by the PACE Act* which will lead to a prosecution in the magistrates' court under Section 444 (1) or Section 444 (1a) Education Act, 1996: if convicted you will receive a fine of up to £2,500 and/or 3 months imprisonment for an "aggravated" offence or a fine of up to £1000 and a criminal record for a Level 3 offence.

Yours sincerely,

*Police and Criminal Evidence Act, 1984

Address

<Date>

Dear

ATTENDANCE INTERVIEW

RE:

DOB:

A REGISTERED PUPIL AT

SCHOOL

As you are aware the Local Authority is considering pursuing legal proceedings against you in respect of your child's poor school attendance.

I am writing to invite you to an Attendance Interview at **<Time>** on **<Date>** at **<School>**.

and I will be available to discuss any issues regarding attendance prior to any future court proceedings which could result in a £1000 fine and a criminal record.

Should you be unable to attend this interview please contact me on the number above as soon as possible to arrange an alternative time, as failure to attend this meeting could result in a prosecution.

If you are unable to make this appointment please contact NAME on

Yours sincerely

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE INTERVIEW

HELD AT on

Name: DOB: Year Group:
Ethnicity: Gender:
School: Attendance:

Present at meeting:

SEN Stage:

Children's Family Practice:

Children's Services:

CAMHS:

Siblings:

Warning Letter sent:

Date:

Actions Agreed:

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PROSECUTION INFORMATION

Name of Parent/Guardian:

Address:

Offence Code:

Section.444 (1) Education Act, 1996

Dates of offence period: TBA

PACE Leaflet / Information provided: **Yes / No**

Signed: .

Date:



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NAME

ADDRESS

Dear NAME

ATTENDANCE INTERVIEW

RE: NAME **DOB:**

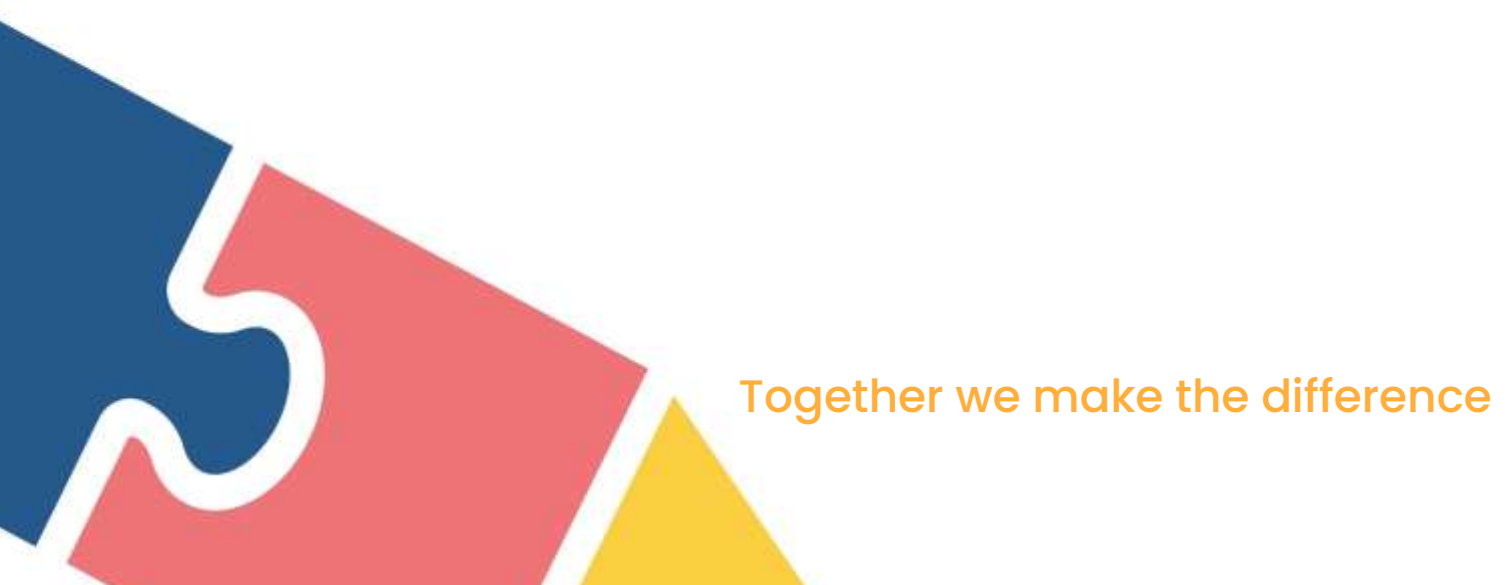
A REGISTERED PUPIL AT SCHOOL NAME

Further to the Attendance Interview on **DATE**, please find enclosed a copy of the minutes. If you disagree with anything in these minutes, please contact me on the number above so they can be amended, otherwise we will assume they are an accurate record of what was said and agreed.

I hope **NAME** will attend school regularly to enable them to gain the best outcomes from his/her education.

Yours sincerely

cc: SCHOOL
File



Appendix 5

Parenting Contract Template

School Name:

Date/time of meeting:	
Venue:	

Pupil name:	
DOB/YG:	
SEN:	
Pupil Premium:	
Address:	
Current Attendance:	

Present at meeting:	

Attendance Issues:	

Agreed Targets for the next 6 weeks
•
•
•
•

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Parent agrees to:

•
•
•

School agrees to:

•
•
• XXXXXX to contact XXXXX in school if any issues
• If targets met school will XXXXX

General Agreements:

<i>GP or other medical evidence required to authorise any future absence</i>	
<i>Parent/care grants permission to contact GP or other medical professional regarding attendance if required. This permission expires after two school terms from the date of this meeting.</i>	

Date for first review meeting:	
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I confirm that this Parenting Contract was agreed by all present.

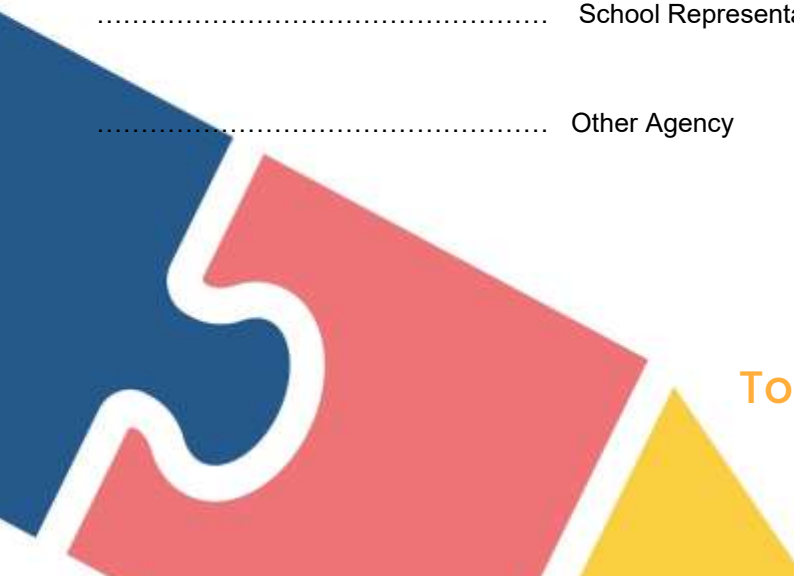
Signed:

..... Parent/carer

..... Pupil

..... School Representative

..... Other Agency



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