



CARTERTON PRIMARY SCHOOL

Attendance Policy

Policy has been approved: October 2026

Date policy due for next review: October 2027

Attendance Policy:

1. Introduction

Carterton Primary School is committed to providing a full and engaging education to all pupils and embraces the concept of equal opportunities for all. We will endeavour to provide an environment where all pupils feel valued and welcome and are able to flourish.

For children to benefit as fully as possible from their time in school, it is vital that they attend regularly – that they are at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. Regular attendance optimises a child's attainment, mental health, well-being and relationships with others.

The school has a legal duty to promote attendance, report and publish its absence figures and to share its Attendance Policy. School attendance data is made available to Oxfordshire County Council, Ridgeway Education Trust and the Department for Education on a daily basis.

All of our staff are committed to working with parents, carers and pupils to secure the highest possible levels of attendance. We have a lead Governor who scrutinises our attendance arrangements on behalf of all our pupils. In turn, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend regularly and on time.

This policy outlines how we go about achieving this by making our attendance procedures clear to parents and carers, so supporting close partnership working.

2. The importance of regular attendance

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling; regular absence seriously affects a child's 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 your child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

This policy works to meet the mandatory requirements laid out in the statutory guidance, Working Together to Improve School Attendance, 2026.

3. Promoting regular attendance

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility - parents, pupils and all members of school staff. To help us all to focus on this, we will:

- ∉ Provide regular attendance updates in the school newsletter
- ∉ Parents receive updates about their child's attendance at parents evening

4. Understanding types of absence

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the **school**, as either authorised or unauthorised. This is why information about the reason for any absence is always required.

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 cause. If this occurs, school requests to be notified via telephone call or email by 8:30am and will require evidence of any appointments 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 late after the register has closed and are therefore given an unauthorised absence mark.
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays.
- Day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed.
- 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 are best resolved between school, parents and the child. If your child is reluctant to attend, never cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually make things worse.

You can support your child by:
- Ensuring regular and early bedtimes.
- Helping with homework.
- Having uniform and equipment prepared the night before.
- Providing a healthy breakfast.
- Reporting any academic or social concerns promptly.
- Retaining open & honest communication with your child's school.
- Being positive about school (even if your own experience was less than positive).

4.i. Patterns of absence

Persistent absence (PA): 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 we need the fullest support of parents and carers to improve this.

All absence is monitored thoroughly. Any child that is seen to have reached the PA threshold or is at risk of moving towards that threshold is given priority and you will be informed of this immediately. The attendance of pupils who are persistently absent is then tracked and monitored carefully on a fortnightly basis and through meetings with parents every four weeks.

School staff draw on a range of strategies to support pupils whose attendance is below the 90% PA threshold. Actions may include the development of an action plan, the offer of a Strengths and Needs assessment, allocation of additional support, use of circle time, individual incentive programmes and participation in group activities around raising attendance. The County Attendance team may be notified.

Severe absence (SA): A pupil becomes a severe absentee when they miss 50% or more schooling across the school year for any reason. Absence at this level is doing significant damage to any child's academic and social progress which is likely to have lifelong consequences. All pupils at our school who are severely absent will have an Individual Attendance Plan incorporating multi-agency input. Parents and carers will be expected to engage with all partners to improve attendance to 96+%. SA pupils are our highest priority at our school.

5. Exceptional Leave

Taking holidays in term time will affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking children away in school time. Remember that any savings you think you may make by taking a holiday in school time are offset by the cost to your child's education.

There is **no** automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday and the school may request for a Penalty Notice to be issued.

Points to note about term-time holidays and exceptional leave:
- It is widely known that the link between a pupil's attendance and attainment is irrefutable.
- Early poor attendance habits follow through into secondary school, further education and employment.

- RET schools will not typically authorise requests for holiday.
- The Headteacher or their designated representative will meet personally with every family requesting Exceptional Leave to stress the importance of good school attendance habits and links between attendance and attainment.
- Exceptional leave is unlikely to be authorised when a pupil's attendance is less than 96%.
- Exceptional leave will always be refused when school is aware of any truancy.
- Exceptional leave will always be refused when requests are regular (annual) or when patterns become identifiable.
- Reasons for Exceptional Leave should be logged on the pupil's record and shared as part of the transfer/transition process.

The Penalty Notice for unauthorised holiday is £80 if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice, increasing to £160 if paid between day 21 and day 28. This amount is prescribed by the Education Penalty Notices (England) Regulations 2007. Failure to pay a Penalty Notice within the prescribed period may result in prosecution for the underlying offence of failure to secure regular school attendance.

Any second penalty notice issued to the same parent for the same child within a rolling three-year period will be charged at a higher rate of £160 with no option for this second offence to be discharged at the lower rate of £80. (The three-year period begins from the date of the first penalty notice issued on or after 19 August 2024)

Please note: Penalty Notices are issued per parent/per child.

6. Absence procedures

If your child is absent you must:

- Contact us by phone (01993 842502). You may leave a message on our absence reporting line.
- Or come into school and report your child's absence to reception.
- Be honest about the reason for absence including if you are on holiday.

If your child is absent we will:

- Telephone or text you on the first day of absence if we do not hear from you;
- Visit you at home if we have not heard from you by day 3 of absence.

In addition, if your child's attendance is at risk of becoming a cause for concern, we may:

- Invite parent/carers to a meeting in the school to identify the barriers to attendance and ensure support is put in place;
- Offer a Strengths and Needs assessment;
- Gain the voice of the child to ensure we are taking a child-centred approach to supporting improvements to attendance;
- Refer the matter to the County Attendance Team if attendance falls below 90%.

7. Contact details

There are times when we need to contact parents about lots of things, including absence, so we need to always have your current contact numbers and email addresses. Please ensure we have up-to-date phone numbers and email addresses – if we don't, then something important may be missed. Please ensure we have both parents, if applicable, and at least a third emergency contact person's contact details. We will check the contact details we hold on record yearly.

8. Punctuality

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your child misses the start of the day, they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons, which is embarrassing for the child and can also encourage absence.

Managing punctuality: The gate opens at 8:40 and the school day starts at 8:45am and we expect your child to be in class at that time. If your child arrives to school and registration as expected, they will receive a present mark **(/).**

Registers are completed by 8:50am and your child will receive a late mark **(L)** if they are not in school by that time.

At 9:15am registers will be closed. In accordance with relevant regulations, if your child arrives after that time, they will receive a mark **(U)** that shows them to be on site, but this will **not** count as a present mark and it will mean this session is classed as an unauthorised absence. This may mean that you could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists.

Whilst there is no mandatory time for **pm** registration, the school will seek to take the register directly following the lunchtime period at 12:45pm in order to support safeguarding and early identification of pupils who are late to return or whom do not return. If your child is present for this registration, they will be marked **(\)**

As with attendance, patterns of punctuality will be monitored and analysed carefully to identify any persistent problems as early as possible. If your child is starting to be persistently late their arrival times will be checked fortnightly, warning letters will be sent to parents, a request to meet Headteacher or a member of the Senior Leader Team will be made and a Strengths and Needs assessment will be offered.

9. County Attendance Team

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with staff towards resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the child to the County Attendance Team at Oxfordshire County Council for consideration of legal proceedings.

At the school's request, they may issue a Penalty Notice per parent/carer, or take action via a Non-Attendance referral (in line with legislation in the Education Act 1996 sec. 444(1) and 444(1A)).

The County Attendance Team, with the school, will encourage you to engage with a Strengths and Needs assessment. Education Supervision Orders may be discussed with you to support rapidly improved attendance.

In the event of further unauthorised absences, parents that have previously been issued with Penalty Notices for their children's unauthorised absences may receive summonses to Court.

Alternatively, parents 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 the email address is: attendance@oxfordshire.gov.uk

10. School contacts

Staff responsible for attendance in our school are the Headteacher, the Home School Link Worker and the School Administrator (Attendance Champion).

Appendix 1: Attendance and Punctuality Procedure

Purpose

At Carterton Primary School, we believe that excellent attendance and punctuality are fundamental to ensuring every child achieves their full potential, develops positive learning habits and enjoys a strong sense of belonging within our school community.

We are committed to working in partnership with parents and carers to promote excellent attendance and identify and overcome barriers as early as possible. Our approach is based on a graduated response, with support and intervention increasing where attendance or punctuality becomes a concern.

PUNCTUALITY PROCEDURE

Stage 1: 4 Lates in a Term
- Letter sent home informing parents/carers that their child has accumulated 4 late arrivals.
- Reminder of school start times and the impact of lateness on learning.
- Punctuality monitored throughout the remainder of the term.
- Information provided about support available through the Home School Link Worker (HSLW).

Stage 2: 6 Lates in a Term
- Contact from the Home School Link Worker.
- Discussion with parents/carers to identify any barriers to punctuality.
- Advice and support offered to improve morning routines.
- Monitoring period agreed.

Stage 3: 10 Lates in a Term
- Formal meeting with the Home School Link Worker.
- Strengths and Needs discussion completed where appropriate.
- Punctuality Support Plan/Contract agreed.

Stage 4: 15 or More Lates in a Term
- Formal meeting with the Headteacher.
- Attendance and Punctuality Action Plan implemented.
- Consideration of Early Help support and external agencies.

Note: When referring to a term, the school follows a six-term academic year model.

ATTENDANCE PROCEDURE

Stage 1: Attendance Falls Below 96%
- Attendance monitored.

Stage 2: Attendance Falls Below 94%
- Attendance concern letter sent home (from Term 2 onwards).
- Home School Link Worker support offered where appropriate.

Stage 3: Attendance Falls Below 92%
- Formal attendance concern letter sent home (from Week 3 of Term 1 onwards).
- Identification of barriers and early support offered.

Stage 4: Attendance Falls Below 90% (Persistent Absence)
- Meeting with the Home School Link Worker.
- Strengths and Needs discussion.
- Attendance Support Plan/Contract put in place.

Stage 5: Attendance Falls Below 85% (Severe Concern)
- Case reviewed by senior leaders.

• Multi-agency involvement and Local Authority support considered.
• Increased attendance reviews.

Stage 6: Severe Absence (Attendance Below 50%)
A pupil becomes a Severely Absent pupil when they miss 50% or more of their schooling across the academic year.

Severely absent pupils are the highest attendance priority within our school.

School Response:
• Immediate involvement of the Headteacher and Attendance Lead.
• Urgent meeting with parents/carers.
• Strengths and Needs Assessment completed or reviewed.
• Individual Attendance Plan (IAP) implemented.
• Intensive monitoring and multi-agency support.

Parents and carers will be expected to work in partnership with the school and other agencies with the shared aim of achieving attendance of 96% or above.

HOW WE SUPPORT FAMILIES

✓ Talk with parents and carers at an early stage.
✓ Listen to and understand barriers.
✓ Offer Home School Link Worker support.
✓ Complete a Strengths and Needs Assessment.
✓ Agree a personalised Attendance Support Plan.
✓ Signpost families to relevant services.
✓ Work collaboratively with external agencies.
✓ Celebrate improvements in attendance and punctuality.