



**Radley CE Primary School  
& Foundation Stage Unit**

*Jesus said, "I come to give life - life in all its fullness," John 10:10*

## **Primary Attendance and Absence Policy**

### **Introduction:**

Radley CE Primary School is a successful school and your child plays 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, as our vision indicates, we aim for all children to be able to live their fullest possible life. For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and your child should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

It is very important therefore that you make sure that your child attends regularly and this Policy sets out how together we will achieve this.

### **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 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 Working together to improve school attendance - GOV.UK ([www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk))

### **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:

- Give you details on attendance in our newsletter;
- Report to you at least termly on how your child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainments;
- Celebrate good attendance by displaying individual and class achievements;

### **Understanding types of absence:**

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, preferably in writing.

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 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
- 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 sorted out between the school, the 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 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 & honest communication with your child's school
- Being positive about school (even if your own experience was less than positive)
- Encouraging your child to invite friends home for play dates

### **Severe Absenteeism (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 can have lifelong consequences. All SA pupils at our school will have an Individual Attendance Plan which will incorporate multi-agency input. You will be expected to engage with all partners to improve your child's attendance to 96+%. SA pupils are our highest priority at our school.

### **Persistent Absenteeism (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 parents fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence 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.

PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system and we also combine this with academic mentoring where absence affects attainment.

All our PA pupils and their parents are subject to an Action Plan and the plan may include allocation of additional support through a Mentor or an LSA, use of circle time, individual incentive programmes and participation in group activities around raising attendance. All PA cases are also automatically made known to the County Attendance team. If your child becomes a PA pupil, we will seek your consent to complete an Early Help Assessment with you and consider convening a Team Around the Family.

### **Absence Procedures:**

If your child is absent you must:

- Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence by 9.30;
- Send a note in on the first day they return with an explanation of the absence – you must do this even if you have already telephoned us;
- Or you can call into school and report to reception, who will arrange for a member of staff to speak with you.

If your child is absent we will:

- Telephone or text you on the first day of absence after 9.30am if we have not heard from you;
- Visit you at home if we have not heard from you by day 3 of absence;
- Invite you in to discuss the situation with our Headteacher if absences persist to identify barriers to attendance and ensure support is put in place;
- Refer the matter to the County Attendance Team if attendance moves below 90%

### **Telephone numbers:**

There are times when we need to contact parents about lots of things, including absence, so we need to have your current contact numbers at all times. So, help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have an up to date number – if we don't then something important may be missed. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year. Please ensure we have both parents and at least a third emergency contact person's contact details.

### **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. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the child to the County Attendance Team at Oxfordshire County Council.

At the school's request, they may issue a Penalty Notice per parent/carer, per child. Or take action via a Non-Attendance referral, the legislation is 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 form. Education Supervision Orders may be discussed with you to support rapidly improved attendance.

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.

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 [attendance@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:attendance@oxfordshire.gov.uk)

### **Lateness:**

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, it can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage absence.

### **How we manage lateness:**

The school day starts at 8.45am (9.00am Nursery) and we expect your child to be in class at that time. Registers are marked by 9.00 am (9.10 in Nursery) and your child will receive a late mark if they are not in by that time.

At 9.10am the registers will be closed. In accordance with the 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 they have 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 1pm 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 (I).

If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with a member of the School Leadership Team and/or Attendance Officer to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

### **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.

1. It is widely known that the link between a pupil's attendance and attainment is irrefutable.
2. Early poor attendance habits follow through into secondary school, further education and employment.

3. All schools in Oxfordshire are encouraged to adopt a policy of not authorising Exceptional Leave.
4. The Head Teacher or designated representative will meet personally with every family applying for Exceptional Leave to stress the importance of good school attendance habits and links between attendance & attainment.
5. Exceptional leave is most unlikely to be authorised when a pupil's attendance is less than 96%.
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 pupil'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. **Please note that it will be per parent per child.**

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.

### **School Targets, Projects and Special Initiatives**

The school has targets to improve attendance and your child has an important part to play in meeting these targets.

Targets for the school and for classes are displayed in the school and you should take time to study them.

The minimum level of attendance for this school is 95% attendance and we will keep you updated regularly about progress to this level and how your child's attendance compares.

Our target is to achieve better than this however because we know that good attendance is the key to successful schooling and we believe our pupils can be amongst the best in Oxfordshire.

Through the school year we monitor absences and punctuality to show us where improvements need to be made. Information on any projects or initiatives that will focus on these areas will be provided in our newsletter and we ask for your full support.

We analyse all absence carefully and draw trends based on pupils' characteristics, vulnerabilities, days of the week, subjects missed and repeat illnesses. We focus our attention on addressing these trends of absence.

### **Those people responsible for attendance matters in this school are:**

School Business Manager: Mrs Jackie Crook

Headteacher: Mrs Claire Thomas

Governor with responsibility for attendance:

**Summary:**

The school has a legal duty to report and publish its absence figures & it's attendance policy to parents and to promote attendance. School attendance data must be available to Oxfordshire County Council & the Department for Education. Our school is obliged to share all attendance data daily with Oxfordshire County Council and the Department for Education. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend regularly and on time.

We have a lead Governor who scrutinises our attendance arrangements on behalf of all our pupils.

All school 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 your child's attainment, mental health and social wellbeing.

Claire Thomas  
September 2023

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I have read and understood the terms and conditions of the attendance policy at Radley CE Primary School.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Child's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

# Letters to parents about their child's absence, attendance and punctuality

Use these 8 sample letters to help you communicate with parents about absence, attendance and punctuality.

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The letters cover the following scenarios:

- Letter 1 – Concerns about a pupil's high level of absence
- Letter 2 – Concerns about a pupil's unauthorised absence
- Letter 3 – Formal notice about unauthorised absence
- Letter 4 – Accepting a request for a holiday in term-time
- Letter 5 – Declining a request for a holiday in term-time
- Letter 6 – After an unauthorised holiday
- Letter 7 – Accepting a request for absence for religious observance
- Letter 8 – Concern about punctuality

[Insert school name, address  
and/or logo here]

## Letter 1 – Concerns about a pupil's high level of absence

Use this letter in situations where a pupil's absence has been authorised, but absence levels are high.

For example:

- A pupil is regularly ill, but doesn't have an identified medical need
- Combined circumstances (such as a family bereavement and pupil illness) means the pupil has missed a lot of lesson time

### Absences from school

I'm writing to express my concern at [name's] recent high levels of absence from school.

Their current attendance has fallen to [percentage]. Falling below 95% attendance will likely have an impact on their academic achievement.

We acknowledge that each family's circumstances are different and we aim to work with parents to provide the best education for every child.

Our pupils' welfare is of paramount importance to us and we believe that regular attendance throughout the year is essential for their success and fulfilment.

We want to make sure that we can support [name's] education in the best way possible, including looking into how we can help them to address gaps in learning due to absence.

Please contact the school office on [number] as soon as you can so we can arrange to discuss this.

Yours sincerely,

[Name]

Headteacher

[Insert school name, address  
and/or logo here]



## Letter 2 – Concerns about a pupil's unauthorised absence

Use this letter as the first step to address unauthorised absence.

### Unauthorised absence from school

I'm writing to express my concern at [name's] recent unauthorised [absence/absences] from school.

[Name] has been absent from school for a total of [number] unauthorised sessions ([number] days) on the following dates:

> [date]

> [date]

> [date]

We acknowledge that each family's circumstances are different and we aim to work with parents to provide the best education for every child.

Our pupils' welfare is of paramount importance to us and we believe that regular attendance throughout the year is essential for their success and fulfilment.

Amend the line below based on your local authority's code of conduct for penalty notices:

Please note that unauthorised absences can result in a penalty notice being issued if your child has more than [number] unauthorised absences within [time period]. You can find more information about penalty notices in our school attendance policy. Copies of the policy are on the school website, or available from the school office.

Please contact the school office on [number] as soon as you can so we can arrange to discuss this.

Yours sincerely,

[Name]

Headteacher

[Insert school name, address  
and/or logo here]

## Letter 3 – Formal notice about unauthorised absence

Use this letter if:

- You have previously tried to address a pupil's unauthorised absence
- The pupil's unauthorised absence has reached the threshold set by your local authority for the use of a penalty notice

### Unauthorised absence

With reference to our letter dated [date], [name] has now had a total of [number] unauthorised absences within [time period]. These absences occurred on the following dates:

➤ [date]

➤ [date]

➤ [date]

In line with our attendance policy, and the local authority's code of practice, we have to now request a penalty notice be issued by the local authority.

On receipt of the notice, you must pay:

- £60, if paid within 21 days
- £120, if paid after 21 days but within 28 days

If payment is not made within 28 days, the local authority may decide to pursue further legal action.

We would like to invite you in for a meeting with [appropriate member of staff], so we can discuss how we can support you to help improve [name's] attendance.

Please contact the school office on [number] urgently so we can arrange this meeting.

Yours sincerely,

[Name]

Headteacher

[Insert school name, address  
and/or logo here]

## Letter 4 – Accepting a request for a holiday in term-time

### Your request for a holiday absence

Thank you for your request to take [name(s)] out of school between [date] and [date].

Having considered the exceptional circumstances set out in your application, I'm able to agree to your request.

I haven't come to this decision lightly. Our school is dedicated to the education of all our pupils and believes regular attendance throughout the year is essential to every child's success and fulfilment.

Each request for a holiday absence is considered on its merits at the time. Please note that my decision in this instance does not set a precedent and does not mean I'll be able to agree to a similar request, from you or other parents, in the future.

Yours sincerely,

[Name]

Headteacher

[Insert school name, address  
and/or logo here]

## Letter 5 – Declining a request for a holiday in term-time

### Your request for a holiday absence

Thank you for your request to take [name(s)] out of school between [date] and [date].

In this case I regret I cannot consent to your request.

Our school, while acknowledging that each family's circumstances are different, is dedicated to the education of all our pupils and believes regular attendance throughout the year is essential to every child's success and fulfilment.

I have not made this decision lightly. A request for an absence is considered on its merits at the time and many variables are taken into consideration.

Because each request is unique, my decision in this instance can't be directly compared with decisions made by the school in the past, and nor does it set a precedent for the future.

I'm sorry to have to disappoint you on this occasion.

Yours sincerely,

[Name]

Headteacher

[Insert school name, address  
and/or logo here]

## Letter 6 – After an unauthorised holiday

### Holiday absence

I'm writing about your action in taking [name(s)] out of school for a family holiday between [date] and [date].

We're treating this as an unauthorised holiday because [explain the evidence you have].

Our school works with parents to provide the best education for each child and believes that regular attendance throughout the year is essential to every child's success and fulfilment.

We expect you to consult the school before booking holidays that mean your child will be absent, or before making any plans that will involve your child's absence from lessons or other commitments.

If in line with your local authority's code of conduct for penalty notices, add:

We have the power to request that the local authority issue a penalty notice for unauthorised term-time holidays.

If issued with a penalty notice, you must pay:

- £60, if paid within 21 days of receiving the notice
- £120, if paid after 21 days but within 28 days

If you don't pay the penalty within 28 days, the local authority could pursue legal action.

Continue with:

Absences like these could have a detrimental effect on [name(s)] education.

We would like to arrange a meeting so that we can discuss this further. Please contact the school office urgently on [phone number].

Yours sincerely,

[Name]

Headteacher

[Insert school name, address  
and/or logo here]

## Letter 7 – Accepting a request for absence for religious observance

### Your request for absence for religious observance

Thank you for your request to take [name(s)] out of school on [date] because of [religious occasion].

In this case, I'm prepared to agree to your request and it will be considered an authorised absence.

Each request for an absence is considered on its merits at the time. We recognise that a family's religious beliefs and traditions are intrinsic to their sense of identity. However, please note that my decision in this instance does not set a precedent and does not necessarily mean I'll agree to a similar request, from you or other parents, in the future.

Yours sincerely,

[Name]

Headteacher

[Insert school name, address  
and/or logo here]

## Letter 8 – Concern about punctuality

### Poor punctuality

I'm writing to you because [name] has been late to school [number] times in [timeframe].

They have arrived at school after the register had closed on the following dates:

> [date]

> [date]

> [date]

They also arrived at school late (but before the register had closed) on the following dates:

> [date]

> [date]

> [date]

The school day begins promptly at [time] and registration closes at [time]. Afternoon registration takes place between [time slot].

Arriving promptly makes sure that your child doesn't miss work, and that disruption to the teacher and other pupils is minimised. Persistent lateness can lead to a significant loss in learning time.

Amend the following sentence in line with your local authority's code of conduct for penalty notices:

Persistent lateness can result in a penalty notice. The school can request that the local authority issues a penalty notice related to lateness when:

> [Insert the conditions set out in your local authority's code of practice]

We're committed to working with families to make sure every pupil gets the support they need. We would therefore like to arrange a meeting to discuss how we can work with you to help improve [name's] punctuality.

Please contact the school office on [number] to arrange a meeting.

Yours sincerely,

[Name]

Headteacher