**Mill Lane Community School &**

**The Windmill Community Nursery**

**Growing, Thriving, Flying**

**Attendance Policy**

**Introduction**

Mill Lane School is committed to providing the best quality 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.

This 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. 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. 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.

**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 regular Home – School Bulletin;
* Report to you at least half-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;
* Reward good or improving attendance through class competitions, certificates and outings/events;
* Run promotional events when parents, pupils and staff can work together on raising attendance levels across the school.

**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

**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 case 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;
* 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 if we have not heard from you;
* Invite you in to discuss the situation with our Deputy Headteacher or Headteacher if absences persist;
* 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.

**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 the Local Authority. At the school’s request, they may issue a Penalty Notice per parent/carer, 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 £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.

“If any child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school fails to attend regularly at the school, his/her parent is guilty of an offence.’’

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

**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:**

We expect your child to be in class at the designated start time of day for their class.

Registers are marked by 9.30a.m. and your child will receive a late mark if they are not in by that time.

At 9.30a.m. the registers will be closed. In accordance with the Regulations, if your child arrives after that time they will receive a mark 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.

If your child has a persistent late record, you will be asked to meet with the Assistant Headteacher 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 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. The Head Teacher will meet personally with every family applying for Exceptional Leave to stress the importance of good school attendance habits and links between attendance & attainment.

6. Exceptional Leave is most unlikely to be authorised in Years 2, 6, 9 and 11.

7. Exceptional leave is most unlikely to be authorised when a student’s attendance is less than 95%.

8. Exceptional leave should always be refused when school is aware of any truancy.

9. Exceptional leave should always be refused when requests are regular (annual) or when patterns become identifiable.

10. 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. 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 initiatives**

The school has targets to improve attendance and your child has an important part to play in meeting these targets. 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 School targets, projects and special initiatives will be provided in our Home - School newsletter and we ask for your full support.

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

Miss Tineke van der Ploeg – Headteacher

Mr Sam Thompson – Deputy

Mr Jackie Wingrove – Inclusion manager

**Summary**

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

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.

**Policy was reviewed and adapted:** January 2022

**Next review:** January 2024

**Covid-19 and Attendance**

Attendance expectations In March when the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak was increasing, we made clear no parent would be penalised or sanctioned for their child’s non-attendance at school. Now the circumstances have changed and **it is vital for all children to return to school** to minimise as far as possible the longer-term impact of the pandemic on children’s education, wellbeing and wider development.

Missing out on more time in the classroom risks pupils falling further behind. Those with higher overall absence tend to achieve less well in both primary and secondary school. **School attendance will therefore be mandatory again from the beginning of the autumn term.**

This means from that point, the usual rules on school attendance will apply, including:

* parents’ duty to secure that their child attends regularly at school where the child is a registered pupil at school and they are of compulsory school age;
* schools’ responsibilities to record attendance and follow up absence
* the school’s ability to issue sanctions, including fixed penalty notices in line with local authorities’ codes of conduct

**Pupils who are shielding or self-isolating**

We now know much more about coronavirus (COVID-19) and so in future there will be far fewer children and young people advised to shield whenever community transmission rates are high. Therefore, the majority of pupils will be able to return to school. You should note however that:

* a small number of pupils will still be unable to attend in line with public health advice because they are selfisolating and have had symptoms or a positive test result themselves; or because they are a close contact of someone who has coronavirus (COVID-19)
* shielding advice for all adults and children will pause on 1 August, subject to a continued decline in the rates of community transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19). This means that even the small number of pupils who will remain on the shielded patient list can also return to school, as can those who have family members who are shielding.
* if rates of the disease rise in local areas, children (or family members) from that area, and that area only, will be advised to shield during the period where rates remain high and therefore they may be temporarily absent. some pupils no longer required to shield but who generally remain under the care of a specialist health professional may need to discuss their care with their health professional before returning to school (usually at their next planned clinical appointment).

Where a pupil is unable to attend school because they are complying with clinical and/or public health advice, they should access remote education provided by the school. School will monitor engagement with this activity.

Where children are not able to attend school as parents are following clinical and/or public health advice, absence will not be penalised.

**Attendance and Covid-19 Symptoms**

*In order to continue to work together to minimise the spread of Corona Virus (COVID-19) school will implement measures to minimise contact with individuals who are unwell by ensuring that those who have coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms, or who have someone in their household who does, do not attend school*.

Staff will work with families to ensure that pupils, staff and other adults do not come into the school if they have coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms, or have tested positive in the last 7 days, and ensuring anyone developing those symptoms during the school day is sent home.

If anyone in the school becomes unwell with a new, continuous cough or a high temperature, or has a loss of, or change in, their normal sense of taste or smell (anosmia), they must be sent home and advised to follow ‘stay at home: guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) infection’, which sets out that they must self-isolate for at least 7 days and should arrange to have a test to see if they have coronavirus (COVID19). Other members of their household (including any siblings) should self-isolate for 14 days from when the symptomatic person first had symptoms.

If a child is awaiting collection, they will be escorted to a room where they can be isolated behind a closed door, with appropriate adult supervision. School will provide reassurance until a parent or carer has arrived.

If they need to go to the bathroom while waiting to be collected, they will use a separate bathroom.

Staff caring for the child while they await collection will be wearing PPE.

Parents must support school and the community by taking any symptomatic child for a test at the earliest opportunity.

Parents must work with school to communicate in a timely fashion should any member of their household test positive for coronavirus.

Parents must make the school aware if they have received a track and trace text or call so that the school can seek advice and guidance from public health.