



# **Olney Middle School**

## **Attendance Policy**

### **September 2022**

Policy to be reviewed by September 2023

## **Vision**

At Olney Middle School, we are relentlessly driven by our pursuit of excellence and high expectations of learning, behaviour and respect for every member of our community. We strive to promote and create responsible citizens who are punctual and who have consistently high rates of attendance.

Olney Middle School is a CARING school. It is our vision that our children are curious, inspired, and aspirational, develop a passion for learning and achieve without fear. As staff and governors, it is our role to support, guide and work with the community to ensure all the children in our care have the opportunity to fulfil our vision through our core values:

C – Co-operative A - Ambitious R – Resilient I - Integrity N - Neighbourly G – Gracious

## **Objectives**

To promote excellent attendance. This is vital to children's educational achievement, well-being and keeping them safe.

To convey clearly to parents and children that:

- Regular attendance is essential.
- Regular or frequent lateness at the start and end of each session is unacceptable.
- Unjustifiable absence will be investigated and may be recorded as unauthorised absence.

To keep records of attendance which:

- Clearly distinguish between authorised and unauthorised absence.
- Provide accurate information on actual attendance to enable monitoring and evaluation of attendance rates.
- Show lateness so that patterns may be addressed.

To build on existing good practice that fosters a positive attitude to good attendance by:

- Responding rapidly to children's absence.
- Recognising and celebrating children who maintain 'excellent', 'good' and 'improving' attendance.
- Sharing attendance figures with parents and carers.
- Targeting attendance where it has been an issue and putting in place strategies to support improvement.
- Targeting persistent lateness where it has been an issue and putting in place techniques to ensure improvement.

All staff at Olney Middle School understand their safeguarding responsibilities to keep children and families protected from safeguarding and child protection issues, for example radicalisation and/or extremist behaviour (Prevent Duty) and Female Genital Mutilation, by being alert to patterns of absence. If there are safeguarding or child protection concerns about a child's non-attendance, this would result in contact with the multiagency safeguarding hub (MASH) for further advice and support.

## **Success indicators**

To be successful, we follow these indicators:

- Average attendance for the school is above National Average.
- Persistent absence is below National Average.
- There is no difference between the attendance for any groups of pupils.

- All groups of pupils arrive punctually and ready for learning.
- Strategies and interventions in place to address any concerns with regards to attendance, absence and punctuality; these will promote attendance as a whole school approach and bespoke, personalised approaches for individual pupils and any vulnerable group(s) identified with concerns in relation to attendance and punctuality.

### Principles

Education is important. Missing school means missing out. Children should be at school, on time and ready to learn, every day that the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. Regular and punctual attendance at school is both a legal requirement and essential for pupils to maximise their educational opportunities. Permitting absence from school without a good reason is an offence on the part of the parent that can result in legal action.

As the May 2022 DfE attendance guidance says, “Central to raising standards in education and ensuring all [students] can fulfil their potential is an assumption so widely understood that it is insufficiently stated – [students] need to attend school regularly to benefit from their education. Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind. Children with poor attendance tend to achieve less in both primary and secondary school.” Research shows that every lesson missed leads to students getting behind. Unsurprisingly, students with better attendance achieve better academic and later, GCSE outcomes. There are 175 non-school days a year for holidays, cultural experiences and family time.

High levels of attendance are crucial for so many areas of development and gives a child the best opportunities to achieve and progress to their maximum potential. It promotes not only their learning and educational abilities, but provides many life skills and long term positive work ethics. Children who have good levels of attendance are more likely to be able to progress socially, have enhanced self-esteem and confidence, develop time management skills, have a good understanding of expectations for future life and develop a respect for the importance of punctuality and attendance.

Importantly, the more time they are in school the more time they have for learning. The table below demonstrates how much learning time is lost when a child is absent from school.

If a child’s attendance during the school year is .....	A child would have lost approximately.....	A child would have missed approximately....
95%	9 days	50 lessons
90%	19 days	100 lessons
85%	29 days	150 lessons
80%	38 days	200 lessons
75%	48 days	250 lessons
70%	57 days	300 lessons

65%	67 days	350 lessons
-----	---------	-------------

Every child is sometimes unhappy about attending school. Families may be going through unsettled times that can make regular school attendance difficult. Any problems with regular attendance, especially any concerns about possible bullying or learning difficulties, are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child at an early stage. Our attendance team; Mrs Lamble, Mrs Bould and Mrs McNally are always available to help and will actively contact parents to offer support if there are concerns with a child's attendance.

### Definitions

Every half-day absence from school has to be recorded by staff at the school as either authorised or unauthorised. Any information about the cause of each absence is always required, if possible in writing, evidence will be required to support some absences.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason, such as illness or other unavoidable causes.

Unauthorised absences are those that the staff at school do not consider reasonable, or for which no 'leave' has been given. These are an offence on the part of the parent and include:

- Keeping children off school without a good reason.
- Truancy from a whole session.
- Absences that have never been properly explained.
- Children arriving at school too late to get a mark.
- Taking holidays during term-time, this includes attending a family wedding.

The DfE have the following definitions/terminology for attendance linked directly to the percentage attendance:

<b>Above 98%</b>	<b><i>Excellent Attendance</i></b> Less than 3 days absence in a year
<b>96%</b>	<b><i>Good Attendance</i></b> Less than 9 days absence in a year. Olney Middle School attendance target for all students is 97% and above.
<b>90%</b>	<b><i>Persistent absentee / low attendance</i></b> 19 days absence over the year. Students have missed <b>95 lessons</b> . Students with 90% or below are persistently absent from school and parents of students with this level of attendance could be issued with a Penalty Notice from the Local Authority.
<b>Below 90%</b>	<b><i>Cause for concern</i></b> Without good reason for absence, court process can begin to take place at this level of absence.

### Parents and Carers' Responsibilities

We believe close and collaborative working relationships with parents/carers are very important and central to all children being as successful as they can be. Parents and carers are expected to contact school staff and to work with them in resolving any problems together.

### Reporting an absence

- All absences must be reported before 8.30am each day by notifying the school.
- If parents/carers know their child is going to be absent, they need to let us know in advance and ensure they give a clear and precise reason for the absence.
- **Written notification**, giving the details of all absences, must be given to the attendance office on their child's return to school. If a child has been absent due to a medical appointment, parents/carers will need to attach the appointment card/hospital letter.
- Unexplained absences will be unauthorised by the school.
- Absences of 5 or more days must be supported by medical evidence.
- Absences of 5 or more days without supporting medical evidence will not be authorised.
- Holidays during term time will not be authorised.
- Any form of unauthorised absence may be subject to a Penalty Notice from the Local Authority.

### Examples of authorised absence

- Hospital or Orthodontist appointment (evidence required).
- Reported illness of less than 4 days (unless medical evidence has been requested).
- Illness of 5 or more days with medical evidence.
- Emergency doctor or dental appointments (evidence required). Routine appointments should be made outside school hours.

### Examples of unauthorised absence

- Leave of absence not approved by school **including any term time holidays**.
- Absence not reported on the day or supported by written explanation upon return to school.
- Absence of 5 or more days without medical evidence.
- Arriving late after registers have closed.
- Truancy (both internal and external).

### Examples of medical evidence

- Appointment card confirming attendance.
- Medical appointment letter.
- Copy of prescription showing name and date.
- Prescribed medication with pharmacist label showing name and date.
- Hospital discharge letter.

Parents/carers need to help their child to maintain good attendance by booking doctor, dentist, and optician appointments either in the school holidays, in the afternoon after school or at weekends where possible. Parents/carers must provide the school with an appointment card/letter if their child needs to leave school for an appointment. If a child feels unwell in school, they must go to the office where a member of the Office Team will contact the child's parents/carers should their child need to go home. If a student needs to go home due to illness, a parent or carer **must** collect the child from school. Students are not allowed to travel home on their own.

### Requests for absence during term time

The law does not grant parents an automatic right to take their child out of school during term time. Any absence from school will disrupt a child's learning. Parents/carers may consider that a holiday will be educational, but a child will miss out on the teaching that their classmates will receive during their holiday. Attendance is vital to academic success and lost education poses a potential risk of under achievement. This is something we all have a responsibility to avoid.

The DfE has also updated the role they want schools to play in ensuring good attendance for all students which has required us to adapt some of our practices. There are certain things which we have to action once specific thresholds are met and, whereas, there was previously some discretion, exceptions are now more difficult.

### **Attendance Guidance and Procedures**

If parents/carers consider their request for absence to be an exceptional circumstance, then parents/carers must complete the relevant form which can be collected from school, or can be downloaded from our website. If parents/carers have any concerns about their child's attendance, they should contact the school.

Parents/carers should note that postponed holidays in term time due to COVID do not fall under the DfE guidance for special circumstances. Although the school remains sympathetic to such instances, we cannot authorise such holidays. The school is required by law to inform the LA of unauthorised absences. Unauthorised holidays will lead to a FPN (fix penalty notice) being issued. Please help us to avoid the situation where we have to inform the LA to raise a FPN for any of our families in the Olney school community.

### **Punctuality**

Arriving late to school and into lessons is very disruptive for the teacher and other class members. It also means that late students themselves miss important input from teachers. Late students must sign in at reception.

### **Targets and Expectations for Olney Middle School**

- The target for attendance for each school will be in line with or above National averages.
- Persistent absence is to be in line with or lower than National averages.
- If a pupil falls below the school target, strategies will be implemented quickly to raise their attendance. There will be a staged approach to increasing concerns with lowering percentages of attendance and these will be stated within the school Attendance Policy.
- All children with attendance less than 90% (persistent absentees) will be placed upon the persistent absence register and parents/carers formally informed and support interventions for the pupil and their family implemented. This adheres to government recommendations.
- Fixed Penalty Notices, in line with government recommendations, will be issued for parent/ carers who remove pupils from schools for unauthorised events and this includes holidays within term time for 10 or more unauthorised sessions. (Since September 2013 the Government have clearly stated that schools cannot authorize any family holiday and authorisation can only be given for 'exceptional circumstances' for example attending a funeral and the day to observe a religious festival).
- All schools will have clear procedures in place formally recorded, for example in the Attendance Policy, for pupils where there are concerns about a 'Child Missing in Education.'
- All pupils within all schools will be expected to arrive punctually to school. The expected times of arrival into each school and the process to address any 'lates' will be clearly stated within each of the school's Attendance Policy. Punctuality will be closely monitored and addressed as a whole school, group or individual level as appropriate.

### **Admission Registers, Attendance Registrations and In-Lesson Monitoring**

At Olney Middle School, we ensure admission registers are completed for every child on entry into the school. Formal registration periods both in the morning and the afternoon are completed and pupil absence is followed up as a matter of urgency (Appendix C). In-Lesson monitoring will occur within each classroom to ensure all pupils are accounted for at all times of the day whilst in school and under the care of the school.

Olney Middle School will ensure:

- Registers of attendance will be kept accurately, indicating clearly when a child is present or absent.
- Lateness will be recorded.

### **Systems to monitor attendance, absence and punctuality**

The attendance for all children, and individual groups of children, at Olney Middle School (OMS) needs to be assessed on a regular cycle to ensure compliance with legal procedures, safeguarding and also to provide context in relation to an individual's performance within school. Persistent absence is monitored by the Pastoral Support Officer, office staff and the Deputy Headteacher. In line with most recent safeguarding legislation, the school have adopted a first day absence calling procedure to ensure absence is reported as soon as possible. In addition, we now have updated our records to ensure there are at least two different adult's contact details for each child at the school.

### **Consequences of poor attendance**

1. The children who have attendance figures of <90% at the end of each half term will receive a letter detailing their daily attendance breakdown and an outline of the action the school will be taking (Appendix A). If a child has a long standing medical issue that we are aware of, we will not issue a warning letter each term as this is likely to cause unnecessary stress for parents. The first letter states that we will be monitoring the child's behaviour for the next half term/6-week period and expect to see an improvement otherwise further action will be taken. A phone call may be made to parents before the 6-week period ends if attendance of a pupil significantly decreases with no apparent reason. This action will be completed by the school's learning mentor.
2. If attendance is <90% after the next half termly reporting cycle, a second letter will be issued to parents (Appendix B) outlining their daily attendance breakdown and that they may face a legal sanction.
3. If attendance still doesn't improve (remaining below 90%), we will refer the case to the local authority who may issue a fixed penalty notice or arrange for an attendance interview to take place at OMS.

### **Monitoring and evaluation of attendance data**

Children's attendance patterns will be regularly analysed, including all key vulnerable groups, within each school. Actions to address any gaps within groups of children will be implemented in a timely manner and any particular specific concerns for a pupil will be discussed with the parent or carer. The impact of strategies implemented will be regularly monitored, each half term, to ensure they are improving the attendance or punctuality as planned. Attendance figures will be published and reported regularly to parents/ carers, staff and the Governing Body.

## **Government requirements**

- The law requires all schools to have an admission register (on first day of entry into the school) and an attendance register.
- All schools must notify the local authority when a pupil's name is to be deleted from the admission register under any of the grounds prescribed in regulation 8 of the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 as amended, as soon as the ground for removal is met and no later than the time at which the pupil's name is removed from the register.
- All schools (including academies) must agree with the relevant local authority, the regular interval that the school will inform the local authority of any pupil who fails to attend school regularly, or has been absent without the school's permission for a continuous period of 10 days or more.
- Home Educated Children - On receipt of written notification to home educate, schools must inform the pupil's local authority that the pupil is to be deleted from the admission register. Schools should not seek to persuade parents to educate their children at home as a way of avoiding excluding the pupil or because the pupil has a poor attendance record.
- Schools must take the attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. Schools should have a policy on how long registers should be kept open; this should be for a reasonable length of time but not that registers are to be kept open for the whole session.
- An approved educational activity is where a pupil is taking part in supervised educational activity such as field trips, educational visits, work experience or alternative provision. Pupils can only be recorded as receiving off-site educational activity if the activity meets the requirements prescribed in regulation 6(4) of the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006. The activity must be of an educational nature approved by the school and supervised by someone authorised by the school.
- Codes are clearly stated to be used within the registers and these must be adhered to by school staff

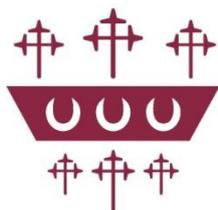
## **Summary**

Olney Middle School has a legal duty to promote good attendance. Equally, parents/carers have a duty to make sure that their children attend regularly. All school staff must be committed to working closely with parents/ carers as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

Heather Lambie

Deputy Headteacher and Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Appendix A



## Olney Middle School

Yardley Road, Olney, Bucks. MK46 5DZ

Telephone : 01234 711323

Fax: 01234 714389

Email: [office@olneymiddle.milton-keynes.sch.uk](mailto:office@olneymiddle.milton-keynes.sch.uk)

[www.olneymiddle.milton-keynes.sch.uk](http://www.olneymiddle.milton-keynes.sch.uk)

Headteacher: Mr Glenn Young

Dear parent/carer,

Please find enclosed your child's latest Attendance Report for the ..... term. You will see that ..... attendance is .....%, which means that he/she has had ..... days of absence since September.

I understand that these absences have been due to holiday/illness but as .....% attendance is less than 90%, **we will be closely monitoring your child's attendance in over the next 6 weeks in case we need to take further action.**

Regular attendance is important to help your child achieve and reach their potential. Please try to ensure your child attends school regularly in the future.

### What your child's attendance figure means as learning time lost

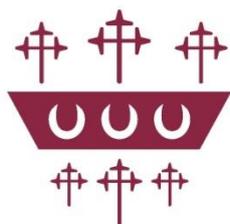
Attendance figure	Days absent by the end of the school year	School time missed by the end of Year 11
100%	0	0
95%	10	¼ of the year
90%	20	½ of the year
85%	30	¾ of the year
80%	40	1 whole year

If you feel that school can offer any support, please make an appointment through the school office.

Yours sincerely

Mr Young  
Headteacher

## Appendix B



# Olney Middle School

---

Yardley Road, Olney, Bucks. MK46 5DZ

Telephone : 01234 711323

Fax: 01234 714389

Email: [office@olneymiddle.milton-keynes.sch.uk](mailto:office@olneymiddle.milton-keynes.sch.uk)

[www.olneymiddle.milton-keynes.sch.uk](http://www.olneymiddle.milton-keynes.sch.uk)

Headteacher: Mr Glenn Young

## SCHOOL ATTENDANCE WARNING LETTER

Dear

**NAME:** School                      **DOB:**                      **YEAR:** 2016                      **SCHOOL:** Olney Middle 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, the Local Authority will write to you to invite you to an Attendance Interview at your child's school. If there is no improvement after the interview, legal sanctions will commence and you will be invited to 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.

Regular attendance is important to help your child achieve and reach their potential. Please try to ensure your child attends school regularly in the future.

**What your child's attendance figure means as learning time lost**

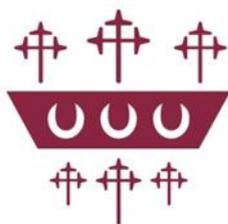
<b>Attendance figure</b>	<b>Days absent by the end of the school year</b>	<b>School time missed by the end of Year 11</b>
100%	0	0
95%	10	$\frac{1}{4}$ of the year
90%	20	$\frac{1}{2}$ of the year
85%	30	$\frac{3}{4}$ of the year
80%	40	1 whole year

If you feel that school can offer any support, please make an appointment through the school office.

Yours sincerely,

Mr Glenn Young  
Headteacher

\*Police and Criminal Evidence  
Act, 1984



## Olney Middle School

---

Yardley Road, Olney, Bucks. MK46 5DZ

Telephone : 01234 711323

Fax: 01234 714389

Email: [office@olneymiddle.milton-keynes.sch.uk](mailto:office@olneymiddle.milton-keynes.sch.uk)

[www.olneymiddle.milton-keynes.sch.uk](http://www.olneymiddle.milton-keynes.sch.uk)

Headteacher: Mr Glenn Young

### **First day absence calling procedure**

Dear Parent,

I am writing to make you aware of the school procedure for children who have unexplained absences from school.

There have been public cases in the past where schools have not chased up the reasons as to why children are off of school – some of which you may have heard about recently in the news. It has then transpired that there have been tragic circumstances around these absences, e.g. illness of a parent and a child unable to seek help.

We will do everything we can to prevent such situations occurring as I am sure you would agree that your child's safety is paramount to us all.

If your child is not going to be in school, please call the office on 01234 711323 to report their absence. Please do this before 8.30 on the first day of the absence.

If we have not heard from you by 9:30 then we will start to call all the contact numbers that you have provided in order to gain an explanation for the absence. If we still have not been able to ascertain where your child is then we will make a home visit. However, if we still haven't been able to get a response then we will report it to the police as your child will then be classed a 'missing child'. It is imperative that the office have the correct contact details for you. Please do let us know if they have changed. If we require further contact details, we will be in touch in the near future.

This procedure is to ensure that we know where your child is and that you are all safe. Please let us know in good time why your child is absent from school. If you would like to talk to me about this please make an appointment to see me.

Yours faithfully

Mr Young