



Attendance Policy

Including the Early Years and Foundation Stage, the Pre-Prep and Prep school

OJSB

Updated September 2026

Review and Amendment Record

Date	Person Conducting the Review	Changes Made
February 2024	DRW	New policy consolidating routines and expectations outlined in the parent contract and parent handbook into policy form
September 2024	DRW	Review and update for the academic year 2024-25, specifically with regard to the update in <i>Working together to improve school attendance (August 2024)</i> and the associated change in registration codes.
September 2025	DRW	Review and update for the academic year 2025-26. Clarification of steps taken when absence goes over 5% and 10% and the school's duty to inform the local authority when a pupil is absent for a continuous period of ten school days where their absence has been recorded with one or more of the codes statistically classified as unauthorised.
September 2026	OJSB	Updates on back up and retention of registers; articulation of details of separate codes used for late arrival before the register has closed and late arrival after the register has closed.

1. Introduction

High levels of attendance are essential for pupils to get the most out of their school experience, including maximising attainment, wellbeing, and wider life chances.

Government data has demonstrated that pupils with the highest attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 have higher rates of attendance over the key stage compared with those pupils with the lowest attainment. For example, the overall absence rate of pupils not achieving grade 9 to 4 in English and maths GCSEs at the end of KS4 was over twice as high as those achieving grade 9 to 5 (8.8% compared to 3.7%).¹

Not only can a child missing education limit their attainment, it can also act as a vital warning sign of a range of safeguarding issues including (but not limited to) neglect; sexual abuse; and child sexual and criminal exploitation.

i) Purpose of the policy

All schools should have a clear attendance policy. This should be understood by all staff, pupils and parents. This policy expresses our whole school culture of promoting the benefits of high attendance. It also explains the process by which admission registers are completed, as well as the daily attendance registers. It also outlines the day-to-day processes in place to follow-up absence.

Attendance is never 'solved'; efforts to maintain high attendance are continual, supported by regularly reviewing and updating messages, processes, and strategies. A key to high attendance is the strong relationship the school builds with families and an understanding on the part of parents of pupils of the importance of good attendance. Alongside good behaviour, high attendance is a central part of Summer Fields' vision, values, ethos, and day to day life.

The school's senior leadership team understands the interplay between attendance and other areas of school life. A consideration of attendance is built into strategies on attainment, behaviour, preventing bullying, special educational needs support, supporting pupils with medical conditions or disabilities, safeguarding wellbeing, and support for disadvantaged students.

Improving attendance is a school leadership issue. The senior leader responsible for the Pre-prep's strategic approach to attendance is the Head of Pre-prep. The senior leader responsible for the prep school's strategic approach to attendance is the Deputy Headmaster.

ii) Processes explained in this policy

This policy explains;

- The law on school attendance as it pertains to both parents and the school.
- The law on the Admissions Register and the (daily) Attendance Register and how this is applied at Summer Fields.
- The process for notifying the school of absence due to illness or other unplanned circumstances.
- The process for requesting leaves of absence in advance.
- The school's processes for following up on unexplained absence.
- How the school regularly monitors and analyses attendance and absence data to identify pupils that require support with their attendance and put effective strategies in place.
- Shares information and works collaboratively with other schools, local authorities, and other partners when absence is at risk of becoming 'persistent' (10% or more) or 'severe' (50% or more).

iii) Other considerations

¹ <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/the-link-between-absence-and-attainment-at-ks2-and-ks4/2018-19>

This policy is applied fairly and consistently. In applying this policy, the senior leadership team takes consideration of the individual needs of pupils and their families who may encounter specific barriers to attendance. This policy is applied with an understanding of the school's obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

2. The law on school attendance

The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have.

i) The law on school attendance (parents)

It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives the full-time education to which they are entitled either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school. Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly. In practice, regular attendance means the child must attend school every day that their registered school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances, e.g. being too ill to attend or being given permission for absence in advance from the school.

It is the expectation at Summer Fields that each child attends school every day that the school is open unless the child is too ill to attend or they have been given permission for absence in advance of the day in question.

ii) The law on school attendance (the school)

Schools should have a named senior leader who is the Senior Attendance Champion, responsible for the school's strategic approach to attendance. The law requires all schools (including independent schools) to have an admission register and - except for schools where all pupils are boarders - an attendance register. All pupils (regardless of their age) must be placed on the admission register and have their attendance recorded in the attendance register.

iii) The Senior Attendance Champion

- a. The Senior Attendance Champion responsible for the school's strategic approach to attendance is the Deputy Headmaster. The Deputy Headmaster can be contacted via office@summerfields.com.
- b. The senior leader with day to day oversight of the Pre-prep's strategic approach to attendance is the Head of Pre-prep. The Head of Pre-prep can be contacted via preprepsecretary@summerfields.com.
- c. It is important to note that, just as with safeguarding, whilst the Deputy Headmaster and the Head of Pre-prep have specific responsibilities in this area, attendance is the responsibility of everyone. All staff have a role to play in ensuring the highest levels of attendance amongst pupils.

iv) The Admissions Register ('the school roll')

- a. The Admissions Register (sometimes referred to as the school roll) must, by law, contain specific personal details of every pupil in the school along with the date of admission or re-admission to the school, information regarding parents and carers, and details of the school last attended. A pupil's name can only lawfully be deleted from the admission register for a reason set out in regulation 9 of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024.
- b. The admissions register is kept electronically. A back-up copy is made at least monthly. Every entry in the admission register is preserved for six years. Where an amendment is made, the register will show the original entry, the amended entry, the reason for the amendment, the date of the amendment and the name of the person making it.

v) The Attendance Register

- a. Schools must take an attendance register at the start of the morning session of each school day and once during each afternoon session. The arrival times and departure times for day boys in each year group at Summer Fields are detailed in the table below. Also detailed in the table below are the times at which the Attendance Register for each morning and afternoon session opens and closes.

Year group	Age	Earliest arrival time	Time at which the school day begins	Morning register window	Time at which afternoon register closes	Time at which the school day finishes	Latest departure time	Saturday School
PRE-PREP								
Reception	4-5	7.45am*	8.15am	7.45am-8.15am	1.00pm-1.30pm	3.25pm [#]	5.45pm*	No
Year 1	5-6	7.45am*	8.15am			3.30pm [#]	5.45pm*	No
Year 2	6-7	7.45am*	8.15am			3.35pm [#]	5.45pm*	No
Year 3	7-8	7.45am*	8.15am			3.40pm [#]	5.45pm*	No
PREP SCHOOL								
Junior School								
Year 4	8-9	7.45am+	8.00am	7.45am-8.15am	1.00pm-1.30pm	5.55pm	6.05pm ⁺	Yes, to 3.45pm (when not in fixtures)
Year 5	9-10	7.45am+	8.00am			6.00pm	6.10pm ⁺	Yes, to 3.50pm (when not in fixtures)
Year 6	10-11	7.45am+	8.00am			6.05pm	6.15pm ⁺	Yes, to 3.55pm (when not in fixtures)
Senior School								
Year 7	11-12	7.45am+	8.00am	7.45am-8.15am	1.00pm-1.30pm	6.35pm	6.45pm ⁺	Yes, to 4.05pm (when not in fixtures)
Year 8	12-13	7.45am+	8.00am			6.40pm	6.50pm ⁺	Yes, to 4.10pm (when not in fixtures)

[#] Optional clubs (available on specific days throughout the week) can be signed up for at the start of term; clubs finish at 4.15pm

* Breakfast Club and After School Care are available for the Pre-Prep by prior arrangement; information regarding cost is available on enquiry

+ Breakfast and/or supper are available for day boys in the prep school only by prior arrangement with the prep school office; information regarding cost is available on enquiry

- a. On each occasion the attendance register is completed the school must record whether every pupil is present, attending an approved educational activity, absent

(and the reason for this absence), or unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances. Late arrival at school before the register is closed is marked by use of code L. Late arrival in school after the register is closed is marked by use of code U. For a full outline of government codes see [Working together to improve school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\)](#).

- b. The attendance register is kept electronically on the school's management information system (MIS). This is automatically backed on the school's MIS. Every entry in the attendance register is preserved for six years.
- c. In the 2026-27 academic year, certain weekends are 'closed' for boarders. On these weekends, the whole boarding community stays at school throughout the Saturday and Sunday of the weekend in question and the site is closed to unscheduled visitors whilst boarders participate in formal, important events in the life of our community. Remaining in school during 'closed' weekends is compulsory for boarders. A boarding register is taken on both days. 'Closed' weekends in the 2026-27 academic year are;
 - Saturday 5 & Sunday 6 September 2026 (first weekend of the Michaelmas term)
 - Saturday 5 & Sunday 6 December 2026 (last weekend of the Michaelmas term)
 - Saturday 20 & Sunday 21 March 2027 (last weekend of the Lent term)
 - Saturday 26 & Sunday 27 June 2027 (last weekend of the Summer term, Year 8 only; boarders in Years 4 to 7 can be signed up for Weekend Leave as usual)
- d. On weekends that are not closed and Weekend Leave is in effect, boys are collected at the conclusion of school commitments - games or fixtures - on Saturday afternoon. If the weekend service is Evensong on Sunday, boarders must return to school and register between 5.45pm and 6.00pm on the Sunday in question, before attending the service. Attendance at Evensong is compulsory for boarders. If there is no Evensong service at the end of Weekend Leave, boarders return directly to lodge on the Sunday in question where their attendance is registered at the same times as at the end of Short/Long Leave. These times are as follows. Years 4 & 5 return to Lodge between 7.00pm and 7.30pm; Year 6 returns to Lodge between 7.15pm and 7.45pm; and Years 7 and 8 return to Lodge between 7.45pm and 8.15pm.

3. The process for notifying the school of absence due to illness or other unplanned circumstances

i) Day pupils

- a. If a boy is unwell or cannot attend school as a result of other unplanned circumstances, parents of Pre-prep pupils must contact the Pre-prep secretary on 01865 951 253 / preprepsecretary@summerfields.com as soon as possible on the day in question.
- b.
- c. Parents of prep school day pupils must contact the prep school office on 01865 454 433 / office@summerfields.com as soon as possible on the day in question. Parents with sons in both the Pre-prep and prep schools should contact both school offices to notify them of their son's absence. Parents may also wish to inform their son's form taker or tutor of their child's absence; however, they must notify the relevant school office as detailed above.
- d. If a child is absent from school due to illness or other unplanned circumstances, parents will be asked to provide an estimated date of return to school (i.e. after 48 hours from the last incident of sickness or diarrhoea). There is no need for parents to separately contact the school office each day that their child is absent from school up to the anticipated date of return. If a child continues to be absent beyond the anticipated date of return, parents will be contacted to confirm the reasons for the ongoing absence.

- e. If a Pre-prep pupil feels unwell at school they will be assessed by their class teacher who may take the child in question to Hobson's (the school medical centre) for assessment. A determination will be made as to whether the child in question is well enough to return to lessons or whether they should be collected from school. Parents will be contacted to explain that their child needs to be collected from school if it is determined that they are not well enough to return to lessons.
- f. If a prep day pupil feels unwell at school they must report to Hobson's (the school medical centre). The sister/s on duty – and the sister/s on duty ONLY - will make a determination as to whether the child in question is well enough to return to lessons or whether they should be collected from school. Parents will be contacted by Hobson's to explain that their child needs to be collected from school if it is determined that they are not well enough to return to lessons. It is not appropriate for pupils to contact their parents to tell them they are unwell and need to be collected from school; any parent whose child communicates with them in this way should immediately be in touch with the school medical centre to ensure their son is being assessed by Hobson's.

ii) Boarders

- a. If a prep boarding pupil is at home during a holiday and cannot return to school at the published time because they have become unwell or as a result of other unplanned circumstances, parents must contact their son's lodgeparents and the school office (01865 454 433 / office@summerfields.com) as soon as possible on the day in question.
- b. If a prep boarding pupil is at home during Weekend Leave and cannot return to school (when the weekend service is Evensong) or lodge (when there is no Evensong service) because they have become unwell or as a result of other unplanned circumstances, parents must contact their son's lodgeparents and Hobson's as soon as possible. The best way to contact these staff is by email, a message into which the School Office should be copied for the following morning's registration. However, please do not expect an immediate response to emails sent over the weekend; on Saturday afternoons and Sundays staff are busy looking after boarders at school. The prep school office closes at 12.30pm on Saturday afternoons and messages to the school office will not be received until the following Monday.
- c. If a prep boarding pupil feels unwell in the boarding house they must report to their lodgeparents for assessment. Lodgeparents will determine whether the child in question is well enough to remain in the boarding house or whether they should be taken to Hobson's (the school medical centre) for further assessment. If a prep boarding pupil feels unwell during the school day they must report to Hobson's (the school medical centre) for assessment.
- d. The sister/s on duty – and the sister/s on duty only - will make a determination as to whether the child in question is well enough to return to lodge/lessons; OR if the child in question should remain in the medical centre for rest and further observation; OR if the child in question should be collected from school to go home; OR if the child in question should be collected from school to have further medical assessment. Parents will be contacted by Hobson's to explain that their child needs to be collected from school if it is determined that they are not well enough to remain on site.
- e. If a child is in the medical centre for rest and further observation; OR has been collected from school go home; OR has been collected from school to have further medical assessment; the sister/s on duty will notify the school office and lodgeparents for the purposes of completing the Attendance Register.
- f. During the absence of their child from school, parents must liaise with Hobson's regarding the date of their son's likely return. The sister/s on duty will notify the school office and lodgeparents for the purposes of completing the Attendance

Register; there is no need for parents to separately contact the school office each day that their child is absent from school. If a child continues to be absent beyond the anticipated date of return, parents will be contacted to confirm the reasons for the ongoing absence.

4. The process for requesting leaves of absence in advance

i) Expectations of attendance

- a. As the law on school attendance details, parents have a legal duty to ensure their child attends the school at which they are registered every day that it is open. Apart from illness, at Summer Fields all boys are expected to attend school on each day detailed in the school calendar unless permission for absence from school has been applied for - and granted - in advance.
- b. As detailed in government guidance, only exceptional circumstances warrant an authorised leave of absence.
- c. Permission for leave of absence is only granted if the request received by the school is judged to meet the threshold of exceptional circumstances. All requests for leave of absence must be received at least a week in advance of the absence for which permission is being requested.
- d. A child's absence will be noted in the Attendance Register as 'authorised' only if permission for absence has been applied for in advance AND it has been judged to meet the school's threshold of exceptional circumstances. All other absences will be noted in the Attendance Register as 'unauthorised'.
- e. In the prep school, attendance at Evensong services is compulsory for boarders. If the weekend service is Evensong on Sunday, boarders must return to school from Weekend Leave on Sunday evening and register between 5.45pm and 6.00pm. If there is no Evensong service at the end of Weekend Leave, boarders must return directly to lodge on the Sunday in question where their attendance is registered at the same times as at the end of Short/Long Leave. Apart from illness, permission for absence from Evensong must be applied for and granted in advance in order for a child's absence to be registered as 'authorised'. Please note, permission is never given to be absent from Evensong services due to external commitments or activities (e.g. sports training), nor is permission ever given for a return to lodge on a Monday morning rather than a Sunday evening.
- f. At Summer Fields, all boys are expected to remain at school until the formal end of term, ensuring attendance at important events such as Prize Giving. Taking holiday in our term dates – including on the last/first day of term - does not meet the criteria of exceptional circumstances. Absence for this reason will be noted in the Attendance Register as 'unauthorised'.

ii) The Pre-prep

- a. All requests for planned absence of Pre-prep pupils must be made to the Head of Pre-prep via the Pre-prep secretary on 01865 951 253 / preprepsecretary@summerfields.com.

iii) The prep school

- a. In the prep school, all requests for planned absence must be made to the prep school office in the first instance. The office will pass on requests to the person best placed to deal with it. For example, the Headmaster's PA (hm.pa@summerfields.com) co-ordinates all planned absences relating to senior school visits/open days/interviews; the PA to the Deputy Heads (ejb@summerfields.com) co-ordinates all other non-medical planned absences.

- b. The prep school office closes at 12.30pm on Saturday afternoons and messages to the school office will not be received until the following Monday.
- c. In the prep school, certain weekends in the school year are 'closed' for boarders. These weekends are considered as school days which all boarders must attend; a boarding register is taken on both the Saturday and Sunday of the weekend in question. Apart from illness, permission for absence during a closed weekend must be applied for and granted in advance in order for a child's absence to be registered as 'authorised'.

5. The school's processes for following up on unexplained absence

If a pupil does not attend school; they have not requested a leave of absence in advance of the day in question; and parents have not contacted the school to explain that their child's absence is due to illness or other unplanned circumstances; the relevant school office (Pre-prep or prep) will contact parents by phone in the first instance to ascertain why the pupil is not attending school. If it is not possible to contact parents by phone, parents will be contacted by email.

Where the reason for absence has not been established before the register closes, the absence will be recorded using Code N (Reason for absence not yet established). For a full outline of government codes see [Working together to improve school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\)](#). The school will amend Code N to the appropriate code as soon as the reason is established and, in any event, within five school days. If no reason can be established within five school days, the record will be amended to Code O (unauthorised absence).

The school has a duty to provide the local authority (no less frequently than once per calendar month) with the names and addresses of all pupils of compulsory school age who fail to attend school regularly or who have been absent for a continuous period of ten school days where their absence has been recorded with one or more of the codes statistically classified as unauthorised. The local authority can be contacted via attendance@oxfordshire.gov.uk.

Parents will be asked to provide an estimated date of their child's return to school (i.e. after 48 hours from the last incident of sickness or diarrhoea). There is no need for parents to separately contact the school office each day that their child is absent from school up to the anticipated date of return. If a child continues to be absent beyond the anticipated date of return, parents will be contacted to confirm the reasons for the ongoing absence. This contact will also be by phone in the first instance and then by email if it is not possible to contact parents on the phone.

If parents cannot be contacted by either phone or email, another method of contact will be used, e.g. a house visit (if practicable) by school staff. Lack of response to phone calls or emails may result in the school contacting social services to raise a safeguarding concern.

The school has a duty to provide the local authority (no less frequently than once per calendar month) with the names and addresses of all pupils of compulsory school age who have been absent for a continuous period of ten school days where their absence has been recorded with one or more of the codes statistically classified as unauthorised. The local authority can be contacted via attendance@oxfordshire.gov.uk.

6. Additional support to aid high attendance

The school recognises that individual boys and their families may encounter additional challenges that might impact on their attendance. Pre-prep families that require additional support should, in the first instance, contact their child's class teacher who will liaise with the Head of Pre-prep. Prep school families that require additional support should, in the first instance, contact their child's tutor and Head of Year. They will liaise with the Deputy Headmaster.

Regular checks are made of the school's attendance data. Registration is downloaded from the school's management information system.

- Children whose level of absence at the time of the check is above 3% and below 5% are noted and their attendance monitored ahead of the next routine check.
- For children whose absence is above 5% and below 10%, more detailed analysis is undertaken. If the level of absence is predominantly due to illness or other unplanned circumstances (rather than due to authorised leave of absence, granted in advance), tutors make contact with parents about steps to take to improve attendance levels to above 95%. Further to that discussion, the school will look at what support may be put in place by the class teacher and Head of Pre-prep (Pre-prep) or the tutor and Head of Year (prep).
- For children whose absence from school is 'persistent' – 10% or more – further detailed analysis is undertaken. If the level of absence is predominantly due to illness or other unplanned circumstances (rather than due to authorised leave of absence, granted in advance) the school will contact parents. This may be by tutors and/or senior members of staff. The school will explain how the child's level of absence is 'persistent' and a discussion initiated to ascertain whether there are additional challenges the child is currently facing that are impacting on their attendance. Further to that discussion, the school will look at what support may be put in place by the class teacher and Head of Pre-prep (Pre-prep) or the tutor and Head of Year (prep). If the support put in place by the school does is not sufficient to address the challenges being faced by the child in question, the school will work in conjunction with the Oxfordshire County Council Attendance Team; the Oxfordshire County Council Education Inclusion Manager; and other external agencies to access further support.