

September 2024

Dear Parents/Carers

Start of the new school year 2024: we need your help

Welcome back to the start of the new academic year. This year, we have a clear focus on attendance and with your support we can ensure all our pupils have the highest level of attendance. We believe that our school is stronger together with all of our pupils in school, on time, every day.

In some schools across the country, attendance levels are back to pre-pandemic levels. Pupils in these schools are achieving some of the highest outcomes across the UK.

You make a difference

We know that parents can have a significant effect, and we really appreciate your help and support in ensuring your child comes to school every day. Simply put, high attendance tends to lead to the best possible outcomes for children. We want to work with you to achieve this and encourage you to contact us if there are any barriers, large or small, that we can address to help your child attend school. We appreciate that every child and every family's situation is unique.

We know that sometimes our pupils cannot come to school because they are really unwell—and that's the right thing to do, for themselves and other students. Medical advice is clear however, children with a mild illness will often be well enough to attend—for example if they have a cough, or cold, without a temperature. The NHS guidance *Is my child too ill for school?* NHS (www.nhs.uk) is designed to support parents in their decision-making about mild illness.

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/is-my-child-too-ill-for-school/>

We understand some children experience emotions that can make them anxious or worried about attending school, along with those who may have mental or physical ill health or special educational needs. We will continue to support and work with our families and their child to ensure they have the best outcomes.

Granting leaves of absence is only under specific circumstances. Exceptional circumstances fall into this and is at the discretion of the Headteacher and must be requested in advance using our Leave of Absence form.

<https://www.oatlandsjuniorschool.co.uk/parentcarers/parent-information-and-forms>

Generally, the Department for Education does not consider a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation to be an exceptional circumstance.

What are local schools doing about this?

Since the pandemic, schools have been exploring and implementing many initiatives to boost attendance. It has been a key priority for most schools across the country, including Oatlands Junior School. The initiatives we have implemented are:

- a greater focus on attendance in assemblies,
- closer work with identified groups,
- improving communication between home and school,
- increasing staffing to support attendance
- our Attendance Strategy

Despite our best efforts, we are still not back to where we would ideally like to be and that is why we are writing to you at the start of the new term. Research from the Department for Education states pupils in Key Stage 2 who do not meet the expected standard in reading, writing and maths had an overall higher absence rate compared to those pupils who are meeting the expected standard and was higher again compared to those pupils meeting the higher standard. We need to get this right from the start of term.

Thank you for your support

We hope that you welcome this letter in the spirit with which it is intended and that you share our mission to do the very best for the children of Oatlands Junior School. We want to be open about our aim to return to the high levels of attendance before the pandemic.

Should you have any concerns, please do contact us and we will be more than willing to provide you with additional support and guidance.

Yours sincerely



Estelle Scarth