

Attendance

A Guide for Parents & Carers



Fitzharrys
School

Supporting Students' Attendance

At Fitzharrys, success is achieved by 'being in the right place, at the right time, doing the right thing'. Excellent behaviour and attendance underpin this principle, allowing students to access the full benefits of a broad and balanced curriculum, fortified by an ethos of Aspiration, Opportunity, and Integrity.

With around 175 non-school days a year available for holidays, trips or non-urgent appointments, the aspiration for all students must be 100% attendance each term. This will develop desirable habits and integrity: prompt, full attendance will be a basic expectation for all students in their future careers, and excellent attendance will offer the best opportunity to ensure academic success.

We encourage good attendance through our termly Achievement assemblies in which we recognise students who achieve high attendance rates, as well as students with the most improved attendance.

Fitzharrys School has high aspirations for all students, and we know that the key to attainment is ensuring they maintain excellent levels of attendance.

Ensuring Attendance

As a statutory requirement, parents/carers are required by law to ensure students attend school regularly.

'The law states that parent/carer(s) must ensure that their child regularly attends the school where they are registered. Should your child fail to attend school regularly legal action may be taken against you.

Once a child is registered in school, attendance is compulsory until the last Friday in June of the academic year in which the child turns 16 (Year 11). It is a parent's legal responsibility to ensure that their child, when of statutory school age, accesses education appropriate to age, needs and ability.'

From [Oxfordshire County Council's Attendance webpage](#)

At Fitzharrys, we do all we can to support students and their families as soon as any barriers to attendance are identified, aiming to minimise the likelihood of serious interventions. To enable this, we conduct an **absence monitoring process**, designed to address any concerns early on. This attentive approach means students and their families are supported right from the start of any difficulties. It enables students to get back to school as swiftly as possible, ready to engage in and take advantage of every learning opportunity.

Our Absence Monitoring Process

Absence is monitored by recording students' attendance at 2 '**sessions**' per day: AM and PM registration. These records are used to identify students who may be at risk of 'Persistent Absence'.

Persistent Absence is defined as being when a student's attendance is 90% or less across a school year. This is considered to have a detrimental effect on the student's ability to reach their full academic potential. Persistent Absence equates to 19+ days absence per year.

To try and protect all students from becoming at risk of Persistent Absence, our monitoring process covers all types of absence; however, we understand every case is different and each student's circumstances are always carefully reviewed where actions are considered. Our process will flag students with 4 days absence as an Attendance Concern, escalating as student absence increases as set out in our **Absence Monitoring Process Map** (see page 2) unless there are exceptional circumstances (see page 3).

Absence Monitoring Process Map

Supporting students' attendance

Our Absence Monitoring map illustrates all the steps we put in place to support students' attendance, ensuring they can return to school as swiftly as possible to achieve and develop academically, personally and socially.

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DAYS OF
ABSENCE

CONCERNING LEVELS OF STUDENT ABSENCE

- **Internal Monitoring begins.**
- **Stage 1 information letter is sent to parents/carers.**
- Tutor Support Discussion with student.
- Consideration for EBSA (Emotional Based School Avoidance) support.



7

DAYS OF
ABSENCE

SERIOUS CONCERNS REGARDING ATTENDANCE

- **Stage 2 information letter is sent to parents/carers.**
- Head of Year (HoY), Deputy Head of Year (DHoY), and Student Wellbeing Manager (SWM) meeting to discuss appropriate next steps.
- Explore barriers to attendance and implement a programme to remove these.
- Early support reviewed or offered.



10

DAYS OF
ABSENCE

STUDENT IS AT RISK OF PERSISTENT ABSENCE

- **Stage 3 information letter is sent to parents/carers.**
- Senior Leadership Team (SLT) contact/meeting with parents/carers.
- Involvement of Home School Link Worker (HSLW).
- Review of early help and intervention programme.
- Consider the support of external services.



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DAYS OF
ABSENCE

STUDENT IS AT SERIOUS RISK OF PERSISTENT ABSENCE

- **Formal warning notice sent to parents/carers.**
- Continued internal and external programmes of support.
- Parenting contract considered at this stage, overseen by HSLW.
- A multi-disciplinary approach to be considered and offered.



16

DAYS OF
ABSENCE

SCHOOL WORKS CLOSELY WITH THE LOCAL EDUCATION AUTHORITY (LEA)

- **County Attendance Team (CAT) referral.**
- If all avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, the school may now enforce attendance through statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the student's right to an education.
- All support, and offers of support, to be reviewed.
- Continued support of the child and family.



19+

DAYS OF
ABSENCE

STUDENT IS CONSIDERED 'PERSISTENTLY ABSENT' FOR THE ACADEMIC YEAR (UNDER 90% ATTENDANCE)

- 'Persistent Absence' is when a student's absence equates to 10% or more of their possible sessions. Over an academic year, this equates to 19 days.
- At this stage, the child will be recorded as Persistently Absent for the remainder of the school year.
- **Safeguarding referrals may be made.**
- The child and family will continue to be supported.

Authorised / Unauthorised Absence

Any student absences are designated as either **authorised** or **unauthorised** by the Headteacher.

An unauthorised absence is when the school is unable to approve the reason the student is absent.

An authorised absence is when the school has agreed to approve the reason the student is absent. If an absence is authorised, further action is only taken if other concerns have been identified.

The table below lists typical examples of authorised and unauthorised absences:

UNAUTHORISED ABSENCES	AUTHORISED ABSENCES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Holidays • Attending a party, concert or sporting event. • Being tired after an event or not sleeping well the night before. • Moving house • Having to look after siblings or pets. • Truancing • Pupils leaving school during the day without authorisation, or independently arranging to be collected from school. <p><i>Please note: it is of the utmost importance that any arrangements made for students to leave school during the school day are liaised through the school office, to confirm the pupil is in the care of a responsible adult at all times and to ensure safeguarding.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the school is generally concerned about the level of absence for minor illnesses and there is no evidence to support the time away from school. You will have been informed of this decision in advance and we will be working with you to support improved attendance. • If the school is not satisfied with the reasons given for absence and there is no supporting evidence. • When there has been no contact from parents/carers following the school trying to make contact regarding unexplained absences. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being too ill to attend school. <i>Please note: the school may ask for a medical note from your doctor if this is a frequent occurrence.</i> • Medical and dental appointments <i>Please note: usually only ½ day can be authorised in this circumstance.</i> • Taking part in licensed performances or sporting activities approved by the school. • Official appointments not under your control. <i>Examples could include: external exam days or legal appointments.</i> • An exceptional circumstance, such as an family bereavement, family funeral. • A planned, authorised absence in exceptional circumstances where permission has been sought from the Headteacher 2 weeks in advance. <p><i>For further information on requesting exceptional leave of absence, please visit the Absence and Illness page on the school website:</i></p> <p>https://www.fitzharrys.oxon.sch.uk/parents/absence-and-illness/</p>

Pastoral Support

If there has been an incident that may affect your child’s attendance, behaviour or concentration, please contact the school so we can alert your child’s teachers and the pastoral team to ensure they offer the right support. Please be assured the details can remain confidential.

Illness

Fitzharrys School considers its duty of care to students of utmost importance. Whilst attendance is always very strongly encouraged to support your child's progress, children should not attend school if they are clearly too unwell, have a temperature, or have experienced vomiting or diarrhoea in the last 48 hours. Children attending school are expected to take part in all activities. If your child has an injury which affects their participation in P.E. or similar activity, please send them in with a note.

Please contact Student Services via the school's main contact details (see page 8) if you're unsure about return dates following infectious illness.

Reporting Absence

Student Absence Line: 01235 538243

We do understand that on rare occasions, absence will be unavoidable.

If your child is too ill to attend or cannot attend school due to an urgent appointment or exceptional circumstance, please contact us on the student absence line above and leave a message.

In the case of prolonged absence, please also contact your child's tutor.

- Please leave us a message on the number above as soon as possible and **before 10am**, if your child is absent for any reason.
- Please give a **brief outline** of any illness, rather than just saying they are 'unwell'.
- If you've already informed your child's Tutor/Head of Year etc, please also call the Absence Line to ensure the reason for absence is communicated to our Attendance Co-ordinator.
- If there are unexplained student absences, school will contact parents/carers by text and email.
- Planned absences should be requested at least 2 weeks in advance.
- A digital copy of the form for requesting an '*Exceptional Leave of Absence*' can be found on the school's website (see: <https://www.fitzharrys.oxon.sch.uk/parents/absence-and-illness/>). Alternatively, a hard copy can be obtained from Student Services.

Attendance FAQs

Will any type of absence trigger the monitoring process?

Yes, any type of absence will be monitored including general illness. We will, of course, take into consideration any specific circumstances that we are made aware of, such as underlying health conditions, hospital stays etc. before taking further action. The monitoring process allows us to maintain a dialogue with parents/carers. Good communication will help us to help you in maximising your child's attendance and therefore, attainment.

What happens if my child has a medical appointment during the school day?

We urge parents and carers to plan all non-urgent medical/dental appointments outside of school hours. Where this is unavoidable, please ensure your child comes into school for the time before and/or after the appointment, so the impact on their attendance and learning is reduced.

Please note: only a half-day's absence (or one 'session') can be authorised for medical appointments.

What if my child feels unwell at school?

If a child feels unwell during the school day, they should tell a member of staff, who will send them to a first aider to be assessed. The school will contact parents/carers if concerned for the student's wellbeing. If they remain unwell, students may be given permission to go home once parents have been contacted.

Students should not circumvent the process by phoning home themselves to ask a parent to collect them because they feel unwell; this could create a safeguarding concern. The school needs to speak and liaise directly with parents/carers to ensure students are released to an adult with parental responsibility. We politely request parents do not contact students via their mobile phones during school hours, but instead always use the main school office to make contact, so that staff are kept informed.

For more information on illness including the administering of medications, please see our school website:

- General information: <https://www.fitzharrys.oxon.sch.uk/parents/absence-and-illness/>
- Policy: <https://www.fitzharrys.oxon.sch.uk/our-school/policies/>

In the case of accidental injury, parents and carers will be notified as soon as possible.

Emergency Contact Details

Please ensure that your contact and medical details are always kept up-to-date so that we can easily contact parents/carers in an emergency. Register updates with our Student Services office.

What if there is an important event or holiday planned during term time?

In 2013, the Department for Education changed the regulations about term time holidays. In compliance with these regulations, requests for holidays during term time will no longer be authorised, and if a child is absent during term time for a holiday, the school may have to refer the case to Oxfordshire County Council who will consider issuing a fine.

A student may be authorised for absence only in exceptional circumstances, for example an approved

sporting event or performance, or an exam. This must be authorised by the Headteacher in advance.

For full information, please view the 'Requests for Exceptional Leave of Absence during Term-Time' letter on our school website: <https://www.fitzharrys.oxon.sch.uk/parents/absence-and-illness/>

If my child arrives late at school, is it recorded as an absence?

The majority of our students take pride in good timekeeping, and they are encouraged towards this as a quality valued by future employers, with consequences for lateness as outlined below.

Students should **arrive at school in time for the first bell at 8.37am** and be present in class at the start of AM registration, which runs from 8.40–8.50am.

LATE ARRIVAL TIME	PROCEDURE	CONSEQUENCE
8.40–8.50am (AM registration)	Student will be issued a late card by a member of staff on the gate which they should give to their form tutor.	Student may automatically receive a B2 (10min lunchtime detention) unless their parent/carer has provided a reasonable explanation for lateness.
8.50–9.10am (First 20mins of Period/lesson 1)	Student must sign in at Student Services to register before heading to class. Student Services will issue the student with a Late Registration card to present to their teacher.	Student may automatically receive a B2 (10min lunchtime detention) unless their parent/carer has provided a reasonable explanation for lateness.
9.10am onwards (Registers close at 9.10am)	Student must sign in at Student Services to register before heading to class. Student Services will issue the student with a Late Registration card to present to their teacher.	Any student arriving after 9.10am will be issued with a B3 (45min after-school detention) and the absence will be recorded as unauthorised for the AM session unless their parent/carer has provided a reasonable explanation for lateness.

Any student arriving after 8.50am who does not sign in at Student Services will automatically receive a detention.

Will I get fined if my child has poor attendance?

We want to work with parents/carers to help encourage children into school where they will have the best chance of achieving their full potential. It will therefore only be after we have exhausted all possible means of support that we may have to involve the County Attendance Team (CAT) in issuing penalty notices for poor attendance, as per our statutory requirement to ensure all students attend school.

For further information on attendance referrals, please read the Attendance policy on our school website, which can be found here: <https://www.fitzharrys.oxon.sch.uk/our-school/policies/>

Who oversees attendance at Fitzharrys?

When a student is identified as an Absence Concern, Fitzharrys' Attendance Co-ordinator will contact parents/carers to gauge if any support is needed to get them back into school. They will liaise with key staff including form tutors (your first point of contact for any issues), our pastoral team, and the Assistant Headteacher: Pastoral Development, to ensure all is being done to support the student and their families.



Student Absence Line – Tel: (01235) 538243

Fitzharrys School

Northcourt Road, Abingdon, OX14 1NP

Tel: (01235) 520698

Email: office.4127@fitzharrys.school

School website: <https://www.fitzharrys.oxon.sch.uk/>