



Joy Lane Primary School, Oyster Bay Nursery
& Oysters SRP (Autism)

A Love of Learning - for Life, for All

SCHOOL *counts!*

9th September 2026

Dear Parents/Carers

Happy New Year and Important Attendance Information

Happy New Year to all parents and carers! As we begin 2026, I am writing to you to emphasise the continuing importance of pupil attendance at school. The start of a new year is a critical moment for attendance, and I thought it appropriate to remind you of the school's statutory responsibility as well as parent/carer responsibility regarding regular and consistent pupil attendance.

Attached within this [link](#) is a 'Positive attendance for all leaflet - A Guide for Parents and Carers'

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. Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school.

At Joy Lane, we recognise that parents and carers will be doing everything they can to support children on their return to school, and we understand that there are many factors that must be considered when measuring pupil attendance rates. At school, we recognise that parents and carers will be managing poor mental health, sickness bugs, wellbeing support, special educational needs or chronic illnesses that may make it hard for some children to be in school all of the time.

In contrast to the above, reasons for not being in school do not include birthday treats, cheaper holidays or minor illnesses, such as a runny nose. For many years, research has informed us that days of lost learning does serious harm to children's progress and achievement; for example, children who attend school regularly and are not persistently absent achieve better results in their GCSEs



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Head of School: Mr M Ashley-Jones



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Persistent absence doesn't just harm the child not in school but affects the dynamics of the classroom. Children thrive on stability, and inconsistent attendance affects every child, especially when the teacher is trying to cultivate a sense of belonging and community with a class of children.

The importance of consistent school attendance was emphasised by the class teacher at the 'Meet the Teacher' sessions back in September, and I am sure you will have seen on the news or read on social media that the authorities continue to work very closely with schools in tackling this 'absence epidemic' to **improve school attendance and reduce persistent absenteeism and persistent late arrivals throughout the country. Joy Lane Primary School is no different!**

Consistent attendance at school is so important for pupils to thrive and vice versa: poor attendance may mean that children will struggle with their learning, behaviour and ability to make or renew friendships. There is also a growing amount of research that suggests poor attendance can have a detrimental impact on wellbeing and mental health. Please also consider the unspoken message you are giving your child by letting them think it is acceptable to miss school or go on holiday when everyone else is at school.

Our attendance officer, Mrs Allen, works hard to monitor Joy Lane's attendance figures, patterns and trends, as well as working closely with our wellbeing and safeguarding team to support pupils and their families when needed. In fact, the government and local authority have recognised that 'a consistency of support' may be needed with some families to secure more regular attendance for pupils. Joy Lane is no different and I would like to re-assure you that our staff are very experienced and adept at working with different agencies to support families and children in many ways. Moving forward, Joy Lane staff will continue to challenge and support our families if unauthorised absence or persistent lates becomes an issue for your child's wellbeing and learning. Please remember that children have a legal right to a full-time education.

Please may I also remind you that 'unwell' is not a specific enough reason for an absence from school, so please be specific when communicating the reasons for non-attendance at school. May I also politely remind parents and carers that the school day begins at 8.40am and ends at 3.20pm and that the children should be in school between these times. If an early pick up is necessary, then please communicate with the school office with the medical or emergency reason for this. It may be necessary to ask for evidence for this disruption to the school day and the children's learning for the purpose of our attendance records.

All schools have very specific guidelines that they work from with regards to the authorisation of a pupil's absence. In most cases, absence is as a result of a short illness, which would be authorised in the majority of cases on the basis of a parent/carer communication. Please be aware that the only acceptable reasons for absence are:



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- **The school and Chair of Governors/Executive Headteacher gives permission for leave due to exceptional circumstances**
- **Sickness or an unavoidable reason related to the child**
- **Religious observance**
- **Failure by the Local Authority to provide transport**

With regards to unauthorised absence and term time holidays, guidance continues to raise expectations that schools/Joy Lane enforce the rules around unauthorised absence and the requesting of penalty notices. This is the clear message coming through from the local authority attendance team.

The recommendations from the DFE and the School Liaison Officer mean that any unauthorised absence that reaches the threshold set out in the Kent County Council Penalty Notice Code of Conduct will result in a referral to the Inclusion and Attendance service and a Penalty Notice may be issued. This will cover both poor attendance (including term time holidays) and persistent lateness. Where exceptional circumstances for absence are requested, these will be considered; however, the fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are rare, significant, unavoidable and short. 'Unavoidable' also implies that an event cannot be reasonably scheduled at another time. For example, where an event such as a close family wedding is part of a longer holiday, it is likely that not all the absence would be authorised. Likewise, where the reason for an absence is given as illness, but it is likely that this is not the case, authorisation will not be given unless further evidence is received. The final decision on whether to authorise absence is with the school. Please see the links below with information for parents and carers:

[Fines for parents for taking children out of school: What you need to know – The Education Hub \(blog.gov.uk\)](#)

[KCC Penalty Notice Code of Conduct \(kelsi.org.uk\)](#)

Moving forward, please do not hesitate to contact Mrs Allen, myself or the adults that work with your child/children if you have any questions around attendance or the statutory responsibilities of the school.

Yours Sincerely

Mr M Ashley Jones

Head of School



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