



# Dartington C of E Primary School

## Attendance and Absence Policy

Reviewed	October 2019
Next Review Date	September 2020
Frequency	Annual

## **Aim**

Dartington C of E Primary and Nursery School is committed to providing a full and efficient educational experience to all children. Children attending every day, and on time is key to steady progress and enjoyment of learning, and for this reason the school is dedicated to ensuring maximum attendance for all children.

Dartington C of E Primary and Nursery School takes a whole-school approach to maintaining excellent attendance and it is the joint responsibility of parents, children, and all staff members to ensure that children are attending school as they should be. We endeavour to work with families to make sure that any problems or circumstances which may lead or be leading to poor attendance are given the right attention and appropriate support.

This policy is supported by our policies on **safeguarding, bullying, behaviour, and inclusive learning**.

## **Legal framework**

**The *Education Act 1996* states that:**

**The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him/her to receive efficient full-time education suitable —**

- (a) to his/her age, ability and aptitude, and
- (b) to any special educational needs he/she may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

**A person begins to be of compulsory school age —**

- (a) when he/she attains the age of five, if he/she attains that age on a prescribed day, and
- (b) otherwise at the beginning of the prescribed day next following his attaining that age.

*[Normally referred to as the start of the term following their 5<sup>th</sup> birthday]*

**Dartington C of E Primary School** is dedicated to complying with attendance laws set out by the legal framework and has set out this attendance policy accordingly.

## **Roles and Responsibilities Governing body**

As part of our whole-school approach to maintaining high attendance, the governing body will:

- ensure that the importance of attendance and information is made clear by promoting the relevant school policies and guidance directed at parents and staff through a variety of media: Twitter, newsletters and parents meetings
- annually review the school's attendance policy and ensure that all provisions are in place to allow school staff, parents, and children to implement the policy effectively
- nominate or identify a member of the governing body who will take the lead role in monitoring attendance and coordinating provision and policies for attendance
- ensure that all legislation regarding attendance is complied with and that up-to-date guidelines are communicated to parents, children, and staff
- work out appropriate and accurate annual attendance numbers and future attendance targets,
- take time at governor's meetings to review and discuss attendance issues that have arisen in order to stay on top of expected attendance targets for the year
- ensure that the school is implementing effective means of recording attendance and organising that data, including for children who are educated off-site
- ensure that they are clear on how to analyse attendance data, including for vulnerable groups, and how to communicate the findings effectively to parents and staff

- use any data gathered to devise solutions to problems, make the proper adjustments to attendance coordination and target set for the future
- ensure that data is used within the school to measure the impact of strategies used to improve attendance.

### **School leadership team**

As part of our whole-school approach to maintaining high attendance, the school leadership team will:

- be active in their approach to promoting good attendance to children and their parents, which includes forming positive relationships with families and communicate through a variety of media: Twitter, newsletters and parents meetings
- ensure that the school's teaching and learning experiences encourage regular attendance and that children are taught the value of high attendance for their own progression and achievement
- coordinate with the governing body to monitor the implementation of the attendance policy and its effectiveness, with an annual full policy review
- ensure that all staff are up to date with the school's attendance policy and government legislation, and that staff are fully trained to recognise and deal with attendance issues
- ensure that government legislation on attendance is complied with and that they (the leadership team) are up to date with any legislation changes and how to implement them
- nominate or appoint a senior manager to take the responsibility of overseeing and monitoring attendance provision and that this person has sufficient time and resources to give to this job
- report to the governing body at least *each term* and the lead governor for attendance at least *half-termly* on attendance records, data and provision
- ensure that systems to record and report attendance data are in place and working effectively
- develop multi-agency relationships to help with poor attendance and support families who are having difficulties getting their child to attend
- document any specific interventions or steps taken to work with families to improve their child's attendance in case of future legal proceedings
- ensure that the local authority is informed in a timely manner if children cease to attend.

### **Teachers and support staff**

- As part of our whole-school approach to maintaining high attendance, the school's teachers and support staff will:
- be active in their approach to promoting good attendance to children and their parents, which includes forming positive relationships with families
- ensure that the school's teaching and learning experiences encourage regular attendance and that children are taught the value of high attendance for their own personal progression and achievement
- ensure that they are fully aware and up to date with the school's attendance policy and government legislation and that they will speak to another member of staff or seek support if they are unsure how to deal with an attendance issue
- ensure that they are following the correct systems for recording attendance and that attendance is taken daily
- contribute to strategy meetings and interventions where they are needed
- work with external agencies to support children and their families who are struggling with regular attendance.

### **Parents and carers**

Parents/Carers have a legal responsibility to ensure that their child regularly attends the school at which they are registered. Failure to fulfill this duty may result in the Local Authority taking action in

accordance with s444 Education Act 1996.

Parents/Carers will:

- engage with their children's education and support their learning
- promote the value of good education and the importance of regular school attendance at home
- encourage and support their children's aspirations
- follow the set school procedure for reporting the absence of their child from school, and include an expected date for return
- do everything they can to prevent unnecessary school absences, such as by making medical and dental appointments outside of school hours
- use the school as a support when they or their child are having difficulties, and work to form a positive relationship with the school so that there is easy communication when a problem arises
- keep the school informed of any circumstances which may affect their child's attendance
- enforce a regular routine at home in terms of homework, bedtime, etc. so that the child is used to consistency and the school day becomes part of that routine. It is vital that the child receives the same message at home as they do at school about the importance of attendance
- do not take their children out of school for holidays during term time. If parents would like to make a special request for this, they may do so to the Headteacher

#### **Procedure for following up absence and lateness**

- All Absences must be explained by a parent/carer. The school will then decide whether or not it will authorise the absence.
- All staff will understand the registration process in the school.
- All registers will be completed accurately at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session.

***NB: Incomplete or inaccurate registers are unacceptable; they provide a daily record of attendance which may be required in a Court of Law.***

- Parents must inform the school on the first day of absence and on every subsequent day of absence. Every day contact is part of safeguarding approaches.
- Between 9.15am and 10.30am attendance/administrative staff will phone the parents/carers of any children whose absence is unexplained.

If any member of staff is concerned about an absence they will liaise with the administration staff to clarify any reasons or knowledge for the absence. If still concerned they should relay their concerns to the Head Teacher or Family Support Team. If there is no reply from the parents/carers a text message will be sent and if there is no response to this text message a letter will be sent at the end of the first day of absence.

The school will call any other contacts that have been provided, including grandparents and work.

If there is no contact on the second day the attendance/administrative staff will phone all contacts and send a further letter, a member of staff will visit the home address or sooner if necessary.

If there is no contact a further letter will be sent on day three advising that medical evidence will be required for further absences, or the absence will not be authorised. If a child remains absent for three days without any notification, a member of staff will visit the home address or sooner if necessary.

It remains the school's responsibility to try to contact the parent and visit the home if necessary.

If a child is absent from school for 5 days, but the school knows where the child is, the school should make a referral to the LA for legal action. If the child is missing for 20 consecutive days, and after making reasonable enquiries, the school cannot locate the child/parents, CME form should be submitted.

***\*\* If the child is subject to a Child Protection Plan or if the School has particular safeguarding concerns and feels the child is at risk of immediate harm, the School will immediately notify the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) and the Attendance Improvement Officer.***

***A child may be referred to the MASH if it is considered that they have totally disengaged from learning and/or the parent is subject to statutory intervention.***

### **Attendance letters**

All children with attendance below 98% will be analysed on a fortnightly basis by the Senior Leaders and administration team, in order to identify persistent absentees and those children at risk of becoming persistent absentees. (Persistent absentees are children who have missed 19 days which equates to 38 sessions during the course of the academic year).

Absences may be unauthorised by the school where no reason has been provided by the parent/carer for an absence or if the School feels the reason for the absence is untrue. A member of the Family Support Team may telephone for clarification.

Where a child's attendance is below 96%, the following actions should be taken:

**Attendance letter 1** will be sent advising the parent that their child's attendance has dropped below 96%.

**Attendance letter 2** will be sent 2 weeks after letter 1 or later in the same academic year if attendance has not improved, inviting parents/carers into a meeting with the class teacher/Head Teacher/Family Support Team as considered appropriate by the school.

**Attendance letter 3** will be sent if parents/carers do not attend the meeting and/or there is still no improvement following letters 1 and 2, inviting parents/carers into a meeting with the Headteacher/Family Support Team.

### **Education Welfare Officer**

The school will work very closely with the Education Welfare Service to ensure all approaches to school attendance are rigorously applied and in line with the most up to date guidance, as well as to carry out any procedures or multi agency support.

### **Late arrival**

*There are two negative results caused by children who are constantly arrive late. These are:*

1. The loss of education suffered by the child which over a year can add up to a significant proportion of their time at school
  2. The disruption to other children in their class as the teacher's attention is taken from the task at hand.
- School starts at 8.50am.
  - Registration is between 8.50 - 9.00am.
  - Children who arrive after 9.00am will be recorded as late. An appropriate mark is

- recorded on the register.
- Any children arriving after 9.10am will receive a U code, which is an unauthorised absence.
  - Children who arrive late must be signed in at the school office and record the reason for their late arrival.
  - It is vital that children are signed in at the office to ensure that appropriate health and safety regulations are followed and that all children are accounted for.

\*\* 10 or more 'late after registers close' (U) codes could result in the School making a referral to the Local Authority for legal action to be taken \*\* A child is late after registers close when they arrive after 9.10am.

### **Illness**

For some children, where attendance is below 98% or where there have been frequent illness absences, medical evidence must be provided. If medical evidence is not provided, illness absences will not be authorised by the school.

Medical evidence helps build a picture over time and might be in the form of an appointment card, print out of a call log to a surgery, a prescription paper or photograph of prescribed medicine.

Parents will be informed where medical evidence must be provided, for what period of time and if any absences are subsequently unauthorised.

If a child is diagnosed with a medical condition, evidence should be provided. Referral to School Nurse/Family Support may be made to offer advice and support to the family.

### **Medical or dental appointments**

Parents should make every effort to ensure all routine (non emergency) appointments are made outside of school hours. Should a child need to have an appointment during school hours, evidence of this appointment will need to be provided. Failure to provide evidence may result in the school unauthorised absence. All non-emergency appointments will not be authorised.

### **Acceptable Authorised absences**

- Illness
- Exceptional family circumstances such as bereavement
- Days of religious observance
- Unavoidable medical/dental appointments
- Travellers

There may be some instances where the school will authorise unavoidable and exceptional absence such as a family bereavement.

### **Exclusion**

External exclusion is treated as an authorised absence.

### **Holidays in term time/ Leave of absence**

Legislation - from the 1st September 2013 amendments to the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006\* came into force.

<http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/pupilsupport/behaviour/attendance/a00223868/regulations-amendments>

These amendments remove references to family holiday and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days.

The amendments make clear that head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Head teachers should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.

### **Requesting the absence**

All requests for a child to be absent from School during term time must be made in writing at least half a term in advance of the proposed absence by completing the absence request form obtainable from the school office.

The Head or person with delegated responsibility will decide whether or not to authorise the absence, on a case by case basis, and will only do so where there are exceptional circumstances.

Where a decision is made not to authorise a request for a leave of absence, the school will write to the parent(s)/carer(s), notifying them of that decision.

If the absence is unauthorised and still taken, the school may request the Local Authority (through the Education Welfare Service) to instigate parental responsibility measures. Consider issuing a Penalty Notice to the parent(s)/carer(s) for the unauthorised absence. Only one PN will be issued per parent/carer per child within a two year period. This means that if you paid a PN and then committed a further offence contrary to s444(1) Education Act 1996 within the next two years, you are likely to be summoned to Court for the most recent offence. If convicted, you could receive a fine of up to £1000. If you are convicted of an offence under s444(1) Education Act 1996, and you commit a further offence within the next 5 years, you will be summoned for the more serious offence contrary to s444(1A) Education Act 1996. If convicted, you could receive a fine of up to £2500 or up to 3 months imprisonment.

### **If no absence request is made**

If a child is absent from school during term time and no prior absence request has been made, the school will write to the parent(s)/carer(s) to inform them that the absence has not been authorised and that a Penalty Notice may be issued.

If the parent(s)/carer(s) can demonstrate that the child's absence during this time was due to an **exceptional circumstance** and that an absence request could not have been made in advance of the said absence, then a referral for legal action will not be made to the Local Authority.

### **Please be aware:**

Parent(s)/carer(s) who take their child out of school without prior written authorisation from the school may be subject to a £60 penalty notice per child, per parent from the Local Authority.

Parent(s)/carer(s) must, from 1 September 2013, pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days.

Non-payment of the penalty within those timescales may result in a prosecution in the Magistrates Court under s444 (1) of the Education Act 1996.

Penalty notices are issued per parent, per child. A 'parent' can be any person who has parental responsibility.

**Please note:** Only one Penalty Notice will be issued within any two year period under the Local Authority's Code of Conduct. If a second offence is committed within a two year period, this is likely to result in the parent(s)/carer(s) being summoned to Court for an offence contrary to s444 Education Act 1996. If convicted, you could receive a fine of up to £2500 or a maximum 3 months imprisonment.