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# Attendance and Punctuality Policy

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## 1. Aims

We are committed to meeting our obligation with regards to school attendance through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- › Promoting good attendance so that it is at least in line with national averages. (N.B. our school expects all children to have an attendance greater than 96%).
- › Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence. (An attendance of less than 90% will be considered a persistent absence and 50% or more will be considered a severe absence).
- › Ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled.
- › Acting early to address patterns of absence.
- › Building strong relationships with families to ensure pupils have the support in place to attend school.

We will also promote and support good punctuality in attending lessons.

## 2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the [working together to improve school attendance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's [statutory guidance on school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- › Part 6 of [The Education Act 1996](#)
- › Part 3 of [The Education Act 2002](#)
- › Part 7 of [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- › [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006 \(and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments\)](#)
- › [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.

## **3. Roles and responsibilities**

### **3.1 The governing board**

The governing board is responsible for:

- › Promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos
- › Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- › Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data
- › Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school
- › Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance
- › Holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy

Our vulnerable groups governor, Linda Guest, monitors attendance and meets at least twice a year with the school's attendance officer and designated senior leader responsible for attendance to monitor pupil attendance.

### **3.2 The headteacher**

The headteacher is responsible for:

- › Implementation of this policy at the school
- › Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- › Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- › Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- › Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary

### **3.3 The designated senior leader responsible for attendance**

The designated senior leader is responsible for:

- › Leading attendance across the school
- › Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
- › Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- › Having an oversight of data analysis
- › Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data
- › Arranging calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- › Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance is Laura Jones, the school's Deputy Headteacher.

### **3.4 The attendance officer**

The school attendance officer is responsible for:

- › Monitoring and analysing attendance data (see section 7)
- › Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
- › Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance and the headteacher
- › Working with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence

- › Advising the headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices

The attendance officer is Anita Doughty.

### **3.5 Class teachers**

On a daily basis class teachers are responsible for recording attendance at the start of the morning and afternoon session. They will:

- open doors to their classrooms at 8:45am to receive pupils into their classrooms.
- close doors for pupils at 8:55am and take the register.
- Use the correct codes when marking the register - present or absent. (Absences that are marked 'N' will be completed by the attendance officer.)
- submit the register to the school office by 9am for the morning session and 1:35pm for the afternoon session.

### **3.6 School office staff**

School office staff will:

- › Take calls from parents about absence on a day-to-day basis and record these to inform the Attendance Office
- › Transfer calls from parents to the attendance officer, Mrs Anita Doughty, in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance

### **3.7 Parents/carers**

It is the parents/carers responsibility to inform school of absence and, subsequently, reasons for absence.

Parents/carers are expected to:

- › Make sure their child attends every day on time
- › Call the school to report their child's absence and reason for absence by 9am on the day of the absence, and each subsequent day of absence, and advise when they are expected to return. Parents/ carers are able to report absence to school from 8:00am onwards.
- › Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child
- › Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day

NOTE: Parents and carers who regularly fail to contact the school will have all absences unauthorised and may be contacted by the Education Welfare Service.

### **3.8 Pupils**

Pupils are expected to:

- › Attend school every day on time

## **4. Recording attendance**

### **4.1 Attendance register**

The school will keep an attendance register and place all pupils onto this register.

We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and at the start of the afternoon session. It will mark whether every pupil is:

- › Present
- › Attending an approved off-site educational activity

- › Absent
- › Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- › The original entry
- › The amended entry
- › The reason for the amendment
- › The date on which the amendment was made
- › The name and position of the person who made the amendment

See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

We will also record:

- › Whether the absence is authorised or not
- › The nature of the activity if a pupil is attending an approved educational activity
- › The nature of circumstances where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Pupils must arrive in school by 8:55am on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at 8:55am and will be kept open until 9am. The register for the afternoon session will be taken at 1:30pm and will be kept open until 1:35pm.

## 4.2 Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 9am or as soon as practically possible. Parents can contact us in person, telephone the school office on 01902 558284, email on [dovecotesprimaryschool@wolverhampton.gov.uk](mailto:dovecotesprimaryschool@wolverhampton.gov.uk) or send a text or Whatsapp message to 07979922937. (see also section 7).

We will mark absence due to illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask the pupil's parent/carer to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/carers will be notified of this in advance.

Re-occurring problems will lead to parents being invited into school to address the concern with the leadership team.

## 4.3 Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment.

However, we encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

Children attending appointments during the school day will need to be signed out at the school office using our electronic system and signed back in on return.

The school follows the local authority procedures when parents and carers apply for leave of absence.

How to Apply for a Leave of Absence

- The Parent/ carer collects leave of absence form from school reception.

- The Parent/ carer returns completed application form at least four weeks before the date of absence.
- The Attendance Officer forwards the application form to the Headteacher.
- The Headteacher applies approval criteria.
- The Application is forwarded to the Attendance Officer who informs parent/ carer of the outcome by appropriate letter.
- Applications are processed within seven working days.
- Leave of absence requests for children under 5 years of age will be approved as children are of non-statutory age.

Leave of absence that is approved = authorised absence.

Leave of absence that is not approved = unauthorised absence.

The pupil's parent/carer must apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Go to section 5 to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

#### **4.4 Lateness and punctuality**

A pupil who arrives after the school bell to mark the start of the school day at 8.55am:

- will need to enter school via our main reception.
- must sign in on the door with our attendance officer.
- will enter class and be marked present using the appropriate code

The class register will be closed at 9 am.

A pupil who arrives after 9am

- will need to sign in using our electronic system which will record how many minutes late.
- a reason for the lateness must be given.
- will be recorded on the school's data tracking system (SIMS) as late.

Monitoring of lateness will be undertaken by the Attendance Officer and designated senior leader responsible for attendance. Recurring problems will lead to parents being invited into school to address the concern with the headteacher also present.

#### **4.5 Following up unexplained absence**

Where any pupil we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the attendance officer will:

- Call the pupil's parent/carer on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. The school will commence absence queries by telephone at 9:30am.
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not.
- Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session.
- (If we do not receive a response to the phone call) send a text message; if there is still no response a home visit may be carried out.
- Call the parent/carer on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary.
- After 2/3 days of absence for illness, proof of medication is required to authorise the absence. This can be medication from a pharmacy or GP.
- If absence continues, the school will consider involving the education welfare officer

## 4.6 Reporting to parents/carers

The school will regularly inform parents about their child's attendance and absence levels via an end of term report.

## 5. Authorised and unauthorised absence

### 5.1 Approval for term-time absence

A leave of absence is authorised at the headteacher's discretion.

The headteacher will only authorise a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional' circumstances.

We define 'exceptional' circumstances and so valid reasons for **authorised absence** to be:

- Bereavement
- Serious illness and medical/dental appointments
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travellers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and new travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision
- Significant events such as a family wedding.

The government and schools realise that it is more expensive to go on holiday during the school holiday period than at other times of the year. However, it is the view of the DfE that a child should be in school for the 39 weeks of the academic year and that holidays in term time, in whatever form, are not considered to be 'exceptional' circumstances.

**Holidays are not a good enough reason for taking a child or young person out of school and are not deemed as 'exceptional' circumstances. As such a fixed penalty notice will be issued for any holiday taken in term time of 5 days or more.**

As decided by the governors of the school, the Headteacher, apart from highly exceptional cases, can only authorise up to 5 days leave of absence in an academic year. Any further leave of absence in that academic year will not be authorised.

If any further leave of absence exceeds 5 days in succession the school will contact the Education Welfare Service who may serve a penalty notice.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least 2 weeks before the absence, and in accordance with any leave of absence request form, accessible via the school office. The headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

### 5.2 Non- Return from Leave of Absence

It may occur that a child does not return within the stated period of leave of absence. Initially, normal school absence procedure are followed.

If the child has not returned within five days, after the stated period of leave of absence, the following procedure is followed:

- Case referred to the EWO by the Education Welfare Officer.
- Home visit is carried out by the Attendance Officer and/ or the Headteacher.
- Letter is sent by post to parents/ carers by the Attendance Officer on behalf of the Headteacher.

If the child does not return to school for ten days after an authorised absence, the matter will be referred to the Local Authority who will follow the procedures for 'missing pupils'. The pupil will not be removed from roll until the Local Authority has ascertained the pupil's whereabouts and safety or has made reasonable enquiries to this end.

### **5.3 Children Missing from Education (CME)**

Guidance has been issued by the Department of Education (DfE) for Children Missing from Education (Sept 2016)

If a child fails to attend school regularly or has missed ten school days without permission and no contact has been made by the parents/carers to inform of the child's whereabouts and reason for absence, the school will complete a referral to the Local Authority following procedures for 'missing pupils'. The pupil will not be removed from roll until the Local Authority has ascertained the pupil's whereabouts and safety and has confirmed that the pupil is registered at another school, is being educated otherwise or at the very minimum has made reasonable enquiries as to the missing child's whereabouts.

Other reasons for when a CME form will be completed by the School:

- If the school has been informed that a child is moving out of area but the details of the new school are not provided.
- The school has been informed that the child is moving out of area, details of the new school are provided but after 15 days, no confirmation has been received.

If at any point there is reason to believe a child is in immediate danger or at risk of harm, a referral should be made to children's social care (and the police if appropriate).

Where a parent notifies our school that a pupil will live at another address, our school will record in the admission register:

- the full name of the parent with whom the pupil will live;
- the new address; and
- the date from when it is expected the pupil will live at this address.

Where a parent of a pupil notifies our school that the pupil is registered at another school or will be attending a different school in future, our school will record in the admission register:

- the name of the new school; and
- the date on which the pupil first attended or is due to start attending that school.

Our school will notify the local authority within five days when a pupil's name is added to the admission register. We will provide the local authority with all the information held within the admission register about the pupil.

Our school will also notify the local authority when a pupil's name is to be deleted from the admission register under any of the fifteen grounds set out in the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 as amended as soon as the ground for deletion is met and no later than the time at which the pupil's name is deleted from the register.

Our school will only delete a pupil's name from the admission if our school and the local authority have failed to establish the pupil's whereabouts after jointly making reasonable enquiries.

When our school notifies the local authority that a pupil's name is to be deleted from the admission register, our school will provide the local authority with:

- the full name of the pupil;
- the full name and address of any parent with whom the pupil lives;



- at least one telephone number of the parent with whom the pupil lives;
- the full name and address of the parent with whom the pupil is going to live, and the date the pupil is expected to start living there, if applicable;
- the name of pupil's destination school and the pupil's expected start date there, if applicable; and
- the ground in regulation 8 under which the pupil's name is to be deleted from the admission register.

Our school will work with the local authority to agree on methods of making returns. When making returns, we will highlight to the local authority where we have been unable to obtain the necessary information from the parent, for example in cases where the child's destination school or address is unknown. We will also consider whether it is appropriate to highlight any contextual information of a vulnerable child who is missing education, such as any safeguarding concerns.

It is essential that schools comply with these duties, so that local authorities can, as part of their duty to identify children of compulsory school age who are missing education, follow up with any child who might be at risk of not receiving an education and who might be at risk of being harmed, exploited or radicalised.

## 5.4 Legal sanctions

The school or local authority can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

If issued with a fine, or penalty notice, each parent must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

Penalty notices can be issued by a headteacher, local authority officer or the police.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice may take into account:

- › The number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- › One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- › Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

## 6. Strategies for promoting attendance

Attendance is tracked by the Attendance Officer daily on the school's SIMS data tracking system and rewards are given as follows:

- The children who have 100% attendance each term will receive a certificate and a badge: Bronze for the Autumn term, Silver for maintaining 100% attendance throughout the Spring Term and Gold for maintaining 100% attendance throughout the Summer Term.
- The class that wins the overall class attendance at the end of each term will be given the opportunity to have a non-uniform day.
- The class that wins the overall class attendance at the end of the year will be given a treat afternoon with snacks along with a non-uniform day.
- Pupils who have achieved 100% at the end of each term will receive a certificate and a pencil.
- Pupils who have achieved 100% at the end of July will receive a £5 note gift card and a pencil.
- Parents/ carers are kept informed about attendance through the school's website, pupil reports, parents' evening and the weekly attendance noticeboard which is kept in the school entrance area.

## 7. Attendance monitoring

The Headteacher will regularly update the governors with an overview of attendance and formally report to the governing body termly.

For parents/ carers of children whose attendance is identified as a cause for concern. Attendance will be monitored and targets for attendance will be set. Parents/ carers of pupils must provide medical evidence when their child returns to school.

Where pupil attendance is:

**Below 96% and falling**, parents/carers will receive a letter stating current attendance and next required steps. This letter is posted and will be monitored by the Attendance Officer and EWO.

### 7.1 Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school.

For **persistent Absence (90% or below)**, the school will:

- › Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- › Discuss school action to be taken in the weekly meeting involving the Attendance Officer and Education Welfare Officer (EWO).
- › Liaise with the School Nurse if absences are due to medical reasons.
- › Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school with the Educational Welfare Officer present. (A letter of invite will be sent on behalf of the Headteacher by the Attendance Officer to arrange a meeting in school with EWO and parents/ carers).

If there is no further improvement in attendance, an Early Help Assessment will be offered to provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance. If the Early Help Assessment is refused, or has no response, a DNA letter (did not attend) is sent to parents/ carers and if unauthorised absences continue; legal proceedings may take place.

### 7.2 Monitoring attendance

The school will:

- › Monitor attendance and absence data half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil level
- › Identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern

Pupil-level absence data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. The school will compare attendance data to the national average, and share this with the governing board.

### 7.3 Analysing attendance

The school will:

- › Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these pupils and their families
- › Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns

## 7.4 Using data to improve attendance

The school will:

- Provide regular attendance reports to class teachers, and other school leaders, to facilitate discussions with pupils and families
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies

## 8. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum annually by the headteacher. At every review, the policy will be approved by the full governing board.

## 9. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Behaviour policy

### Appendix 1: attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Pupil is on a work experience placement

Code	Definition	Scenario
<b>Authorised absence</b>		
<b>C</b>	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
<b>E</b>	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
<b>H</b>	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
<b>I</b>	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness
<b>M</b>	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
<b>R</b>	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
<b>S</b>	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
<b>T</b>	Gypsy, Roma and traveller absence	Pupil from a traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
<b>Unauthorised absence</b>		
<b>G</b>	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
<b>N</b>	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
<b>O</b>	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
<b>U</b>	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed

<b>Code</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Scenario</b>
<b>X</b>	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
<b>Y</b>	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody
<b>Z</b>	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
<b>#</b>	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day