



Dunston Hill

Community Primary School



Attendance Policy

September 2018

DUNSTON HILL COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Our School Target is 97%

Introduction

Regular and punctual school attendance is important. Pupils need to attend school regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them by law. Dunston Hill Community Primary School fully recognises its responsibilities to ensure pupils are in school and on time, therefore having access to learning for the maximum number of days and hours.

Our policy applies to all children registered at this school and this policy is made available to all parents/carers of pupils who are registered at our school on our school website or available from reception for those without access to the internet.

This policy has been written to adhere to the relevant Children Acts, Education Acts, Regulations and Guidance from the Department for Education in addition to guidance from the Local Authority.

Although parents/carers have the legal responsibility for ensuring their child's good attendance, the Head teacher and Governors at our school work together with other professionals and agencies to ensure that all pupils are encouraged and supported to develop good attendance habits. Procedures in this policy are followed to ensure this happens.

Children who are persistently late or absent soon fall behind with their learning. Children who are absent from school frequently develop large gaps in their learning which will impact on their progress and their ability to meet age related learning expectations. A child whose attendance drops to 90% each year will, over their time at primary school, have missed two whole terms of learning.

Aims and Objectives

This attendance policy ensures that all staff and governors in our school are fully aware of and clear about the actions necessary to promote good attendance.

Through this Policy we aim to:

- Improve pupils' achievement by ensuring high levels of attendance and punctuality.
- Achieve a minimum of 97% attendance for all children, apart from those with chronic health issues.
- Create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm and seen to be valued by the school.
- Raise awareness of parents, carers and pupils of the importance of uninterrupted attendance and punctuality at every stage of a child's education.
- Ensure that our policy applies to Nursery and Reception aged children in order to promote good habits at an early age.
- Work in partnership with pupils, parents, staff and the Attendance Service so that all pupils realise their potential, unhindered by unnecessary absence.
- Promote a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure, and valued, and encourage in pupils a sense of their own responsibility.
- Establish a pattern of monitoring attendance and ensure consistency in recognising achievement and dealing with difficulties.

- Recognise the key role of all staff in promoting good attendance.
- Recognise the role of class teachers as they will be able to identify where attendance is having an impact on attainment.

We maintain and promote good attendance and punctuality through:

- Raising awareness of attendance and punctuality issues among all staff, parents and pupils.
- Ensuring that parents have an understanding of the responsibility placed on them for making sure their child attends regularly and punctually.
- Equipping children with the life skills needed to take responsibility for good school attendance and punctuality appropriate to the child's age and development.
- Maintaining effective means of communication with parents, pupils, staff and governors on school attendance matters.
- Developing and implementing procedures for identifying, reporting and reviewing cases of poor attendance and persistent lateness.
- Supporting pupils who have been experiencing any difficulties at home or at school which are preventing good attendance.
- Developing and implementing procedures to follow up non-attendance at school.

Procedures

Our school will undertake to follow the following procedures to support good attendance:

- To maintain appropriate registration processes.
- To maintain appropriate attendance data.
- To communicate clearly the attendance procedures and expectations to all staff, governors, parents and pupils.
- To have consistent and systematic daily records which give detail of any absence and lateness.
- To follow up absences and persistent lateness if parents/carers have not communicated with the school – on the first day of absence.
- To inform parents/carers what constitutes authorised and unauthorised absence.
- To strongly discourage unnecessary absence through holidays taken during term time.
- To work with parents to improve individual pupils attendance and punctuality
- To refer to the Attendance Service or appropriate agencies of any child whose attendance causes concern and where parents/carers have not responded to school initiatives to improve.
- To report attendance statistics to the Local Authority and the DfE where requested.
- All staff should be aware that they must raise any attendance or punctuality concerns to the DHT or HT with responsibility for monitoring attendance.

Responsibilities

All members of school staff have a responsibility for identifying trends in attendance and punctuality. The following includes a more specific list of the kinds of responsibilities which individuals might have.

- Class teachers are responsible for:
- Maintaining class registers and completing them accurately in accordance with school policy, and forwarding completed registers to school office staff after registration closes.
- Informing the nominated person where there are concerns and acting upon them
- Where poor attendance re occurs ensuring appropriate school staff are informed.
- Emphasising with their class the importance of good attendance and promptness.
- Ensuring appropriate school staff are informed of additional information provided by the child so it can be recorded in line with school policy
- Discussing attendance issues at consultation evenings where necessary

The Head teacher is responsible for:

- Overall monitoring of school attendance
- Trends in authorised and unauthorised absence
- Contacting families where concerns are raised about absence including arranging meetings to discuss attendance issues
- Monitoring individual attendance where concerns have been raised
- Making referrals to the Attendance Service
- Providing reports and background information to inform discussion with the school's LA Attendance Officer
- Liaising with other professionals to determine potential sources of difficulties and reasons for absence.

Staff in the School Office are responsible for:

- Collating and recording registration and attendance information.
- Taking and recording messages from parents regarding absence
- Ensuring the Absence/is recorded on pupil database.
- Contacting parents of absent children where no contact has been made.
- Recording details of children who arrive late or go home early
- Keeping an overview of class and individual attendance looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/ or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/ carers and reporting concerns to the Head teacher
- Sending out standard letters regarding attendance
- First Day Response: Contacting home if no reason for absence is received (phone call or text message)

Parents/Carers are responsible for:

- Ensuring that their child attends school regularly and punctually unless prevented from doing so by illness or attendance at a medical appointment.
- Contacting the school office on the first morning of absence.
- Informing the school in advance of any medical appointments in school time. For the absence to be recorded as a medical absence we do require evidence from the doctor or dentist. (Appointment card/letter)
- Making requests for authorised absence in term time, only if absolutely necessary as these are not automatically authorised.
- Talking to the school as soon as possible about any child's reluctance to come to school so that problems can be quickly identified and dealt with.

Dropping Off & Collecting Children:

It is the parent/carer's responsibility to ensure that your child is dropped off and collected by a responsible person. That person should be the person who normally collects the child and who is recognised by the class teacher. If another person is required to collect your child, it is important to let the child's teacher know, at the start of the day perhaps, or the School Office. Whilst there is no clear minimum age set in law when a young person is allowed to collect or drop off a child at school, Dunston Hill Community Primary School is following the guidance given by The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents and the NSPCC who recommend that no one under 16 should be left to care for a younger child. If you wish for a person of 16 years old or above to collect or drop off your child on your behalf on a particular day, you would need to inform the class teacher or the School Office, as detailed above.

Please note that staff have been instructed not to release a child to an individual that they do not recognise or that we have not been informed will be picking up the child in the absence of the usual parent or carer. This is to ensure the safeguarding of all the children in our school.

Registration

All the school doors open at 8.50am until 9.00 am. This time is sufficient for all pupils to come calmly into their classroom.

Each class teacher has the responsibility for keeping an accurate record of attendance. Any pupil who is absent must be recorded at the beginning of the morning and afternoon session. The attendance register must be completed by the class teacher by 9.10am and by 12.55pm (KS1) and 1.25pm (KS2).

All attendance records are documented using SIMs software, which is supported by the Local Authority. Attendance registers are legal documents and these must be kept secure and preserved for a period of three years after the date they were last used.

Lateness

Repeated absence at the beginning of a school session can amount to failure to attend regularly for the purpose of 1996 Education Act. The school seeks to improve general punctuality and to improve attitude of persistent offenders by:-

1. Informing parents of our expectations and offer ways of helping combat lateness.
2. Parents of persistent offenders must be contacted, and reported to the Attendance Officer if no improvement.
3. Praise and acknowledge latecomers who improve.
4. Ensure that staff set a good example by arriving punctually for lessons.
5. All children and parents must understand that lateness is actively discouraged, although sensitivity may be appropriate in some cases.
6. Schools may use other incentives to improve levels of punctuality.

Once the doors are closed at 9.00am the only way to get into school is via the school office. Any pupil who comes into school this way from 9.00am will be marked as late in the attendance record. Records are kept of those pupils who are late, this is documented on the electronic register for each pupil (Attendance code L). Any child who arrives for school later than 9.30am will be marked as having an unauthorised absence for the morning. (Attendance code U).

Children who have attended a dentist or doctor's appointment and subsequently come to school later than 9.05am will have the absence recorded as a medical absence (Attendance code M).

Children who are persistently late miss a significant amount of learning, often the most important aspect, as the beginning of the day is where the teacher explains the learning and what each child is expected to achieve.

Where there have been persistent incidents of lateness parents/carers will receive a letter advising them of the concerns and the school will provide opportunities for parents/carers to seek support and advice to address these issues.

Absences

Parents/carers should contact the school on the first day of their child's absence. When parents/carers notify us of their child's absence it is important that they provide us with full and accurate details of the reason for their absence and expected date of return. This information is used to determine whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised. The Head teacher has the responsibility to determine whether absences are authorised or unauthorised

Where we have not received reasons for a child's absence then we send a letter requesting these details to parents/carers to complete. If this letter is not completed and returned by the specified date then the absence will be recorded as an unauthorised absence (Attendance Code O)

First Day Response

Where a child is absent from school and we have not received any verbal or written communication from the parent, then we initiate a first day contact process. Office staff check all of the registers from 9.10am to 9.30am on a daily basis, to identify those pupils who are absent. There are occasions when we are unaware why the child is absent and we will attempt to contact the parent to check the reasons for the child's absence. If not contact is made by day 2 of an absence, the school will make a home visit.

Illness

When children have an illness that means they will be away from school long term, the school will do all it can to send material home, so that they can keep up with their school work.

Where over the course of an academic year, a child has repeated periods of illness, the school will write to parents to ask them to provide medical evidence for each future period of illness related absence. This evidence could be a Doctor's note, appointment card/letter or copy of a prescription. We may seek written permission from you for the school to make their own enquiries. Alternatively, we may make a referral to the School Health Advisor to offer support.

Parental Request for Absence from School for Holiday

With effect from September 2013 the government abolished the right of Head teachers to authorise absence specifically for holidays of up to 10 days per year if special circumstances exist. Instead, Head teachers will only be allowed to grant leave of absence for any reason if they are satisfied exceptional circumstances exist. Parents are encouraged to keep open lines of communication with school over absence as persistent absence can be considered a safeguarding matter.

Addressing Attendance Concerns

The school expects attendance of at least 97%.

It is important for children to establish good attendance habits early on in their primary school career. It is the responsibility of the Head teacher and the governors to support good attendance and to identify and address attendance concerns promptly. In our school parents are to ensure their child attends school regularly and punctually and therefore when become concerned about attendance we will inform parents/carers of our concerns. Initially concerns about attendance are raised with parents via letters which are sent home, parents may be offered a parent contract. A parent contract is an agreement / action plan which looks at ways to work together to improve attendance. (See Appendix A) There will be opportunities for the parent/carer to discuss reasons for absence and support to be given by the school with the aim to improve attendance. Where a child's attendance record does not improve over a period of time then the school has a responsibility to make a referral to the LA Attendance Officer.

The Attendance Service will look at each case and may issue fixed penalty notices to parents where there is poor attendance.

The LA Attendance Service working jointly with Legal Services may also consider:

- Applying for a parenting order
- Applying for an education supervision order
- School Attendance Order (If parent has not registered their child in a school)
- Community Order

The LA Attendance Officer can remotely check and monitor attendance levels. The LA Attendance Officer regularly carries out register checks to identify children with low attendance.

Rewards & Recognition

Although good attendance is an expectation the school seeks to improve whole school attendance by offering incentives, this may include:

- 100% Certificates
- Whole School Display
- 100% Attendance - treat for individual children at the end of the year – cinema visit or lunch at local restaurant
- School / Class Events – rewards at the end of the school year for EYFS/KS1 and KS2 i.e. bowling, pool party, GPJ and pizza party
- “Class of the Week Awards” for EYFS, KS1 and KS2
- Updates in the newsletter

Staged Response to Poor Attendance

- Classroom doors - open at 8.50am until 9am
- Registers – Registers taken in class at 9am
- School Office – phone calls made to the school office regarding attendance by 9am, reasons given by parent / carer recorded on SIMs

First Day Response

- School Office Manager calls parents / carers of children who are absent but have not contacted school before 9am
- If no response is received it is recorded in SIMs as a (N)
- If no contact is made on the second day of absence, a home visit will be undertaken

Attendance Monitoring

DHT and School Office Manager monitor whole school attendance each half term. A report is created showing which children have had a letter to parents, attendance review, LIT (Legal Intervention Team) referral, Early Help referral or CAF.

Letter to Parents / Carers

- Children whose attendance is below 93% will receive a letter of concern. This is monitored half termly.
- Where necessary hospital visits and genuine illnesses are taken into account
- Patterns of attendance are monitored

Informal Attendance Review

The DHT or class teacher meet with parents to discuss school's concerns regarding attendance.

Formal Attendance Reviews

- If a child's attendance is still below 93% the following half term this is monitored carefully. Where a clear improvement can be seen No Further Action is taken at this point
- Where a child's attendance has deteriorated further, parents are requested to attend an Attendance Review meeting with the Deputy Headteacher and School Office Manager
- Patterns of attendance are discussed and school share their concerns with parent / carer.

Request for Medical Evidence

- For children whose absence persists; parents are advised by letter that non-attendance at school will now require medical information to show advice had been sought
- Without this inform absence will be recorded as unauthorised

Referral to LIT

If children have ten unauthorised sessions in a 12-week period, a referral is made to the local authority Legal Intervention Team (LIT).

Warning Letter and Home Visit Appointment

The Local Authority will make an appointment to meet with the parent / carer at their home.

6 Week Monitoring Period

The Monday following this visit will mark the first day of the 6 week monitoring period, during which a PACE interview will be offered to the parent.

PACE Interview

During the 6-week period the parent is formally requested to provide additional information to the Local Authority about their child's poor school attendance. This takes the form of either a recorded interview or a written response to set questions. In either case, the responses are made under caution, in line The Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE).

Outcome Meeting

At the end of the 6 week period the Local Authority will convene a multi-agency decision making group who will undertake a final review of the case with one of the following outcomes:-

- No further action, • Penalty Notice, • Prosecution in Magistrates Court