



Pupil Attendance Policy

Policy reviewed by: Helen Ryan & Louise Dunn

Policy reviewed: October 2021

Next review due: February 2023

1. Aim

The aim of this policy is to enable the school to provide a consistent practice that encourages and facilitates the regular attendance of all pupils. Attendance is a priority for Duncombe School. Good attendance is essential for steady pupil progress and enjoyment of learning, and sets up good habits for their future. Absence disrupts the education of the individual pupil and the whole class.

Duncombe takes a whole school approach to maintaining excellent attendance and it is the joint responsibility of parents/carers 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. We seek to ensure that all our pupils receive a full-time education which maximises opportunities for each pupil to realise his/her true potential as clearly stated in the following Articles:

- Article 28: Children have a right to a primary education.
- Article 29: Education should develop each child's personality and talents to the full.

Research, both locally and nationally, also demonstrates a clear link between good attainment and good attendance.

The school will strive to provide a welcoming, caring environment, whereby each member of the school community feels wanted and secure.

All school staff will work with pupils and their families to ensure each pupil attends school regularly and punctually.

The school will establish an effective system of incentives and rewards which acknowledges the efforts of pupils to improve their attendance and timekeeping and will challenge the behaviour of those pupils and parents who give low priority to attendance and punctuality.

To meet these objectives the school will establish an effective and efficient system of communication with pupils, parents and appropriate agencies to provide mutual information, advice and support.

This policy is supported by our safeguarding policy.

2. Legal Framework

It is a legal requirement that students of compulsory school age receive full-time education and this means regular attendance at school. The Education Act 1996 states that:

The parent/carer of every child of compulsory school age shall cause them to receive efficient full-time education suitable-

- a) To their age, ability and aptitude, and

- b) To any special educational needs, they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

A person begins to be of compulsory school age;

- a) When they attain the age of five, if they attain that age on a prescribed day, and
- b) Otherwise at the beginning of the prescribed day next following their attaining that age.

Duncombe School is dedicated to complying with attendance laws set out by the legal framework and has set out this attendance policy accordingly.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

The Governing Body will:

- Review this attendance policy at least every 3 years
- Ensure that all legislation regarding attendance is complied with and up to date guidelines are communicated with stakeholders
- Oversee attendance targets for the year
- Monitor attendance figures for the school
- Ensure that the school is implementing effective means of recording attendance (including children who are educated off-site)

The School Leadership Team will:

- Actively promote good attendance to pupils and their parents/carers
- Ensure that the school's teaching and learning experiences encourage regular attendance and that pupils 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
- Ensure that all staff are up to date with the school's attendance policy and government legislation
- Ensure that staff are trained to recognise and deal with attendance issues
- Ensure that government legislation changes and how to implement them
- Nominate a member of staff to take 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 each term on attendance 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 difficulty 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

Teachers and Support Staff will:

- Be active in their approach to promoting good attendance to pupils and their parents/carers (which includes forming positive relationships with families)
- Ensure the school's teaching and learning experiences encourage regular attendance and that pupils are taught the value of high attendance for their own progression and achievement

- Ensure that they are fully aware of the school's attendance policy and government legislation
- 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 daily
- Contribute to strategy meetings and interventions where necessary
- Work with external agencies to support pupils and their families who are struggling with regular attendance

Parents and carers will:

- Promote the value of good education and the importance of regular school attendance
- Follow the set school procedure for reporting the absence of their child from school and include an expected date of return
- Do everything they can to prevent unnecessary school absences (e.g. making all appointments outside of school hours)
- Use the school as a support when they or their child are having difficulties with attendance
- Keep the school informed of any circumstances which may affect their child's attendance
- Not take their child out of school during term time

Pupils will:

- Speak to their class teacher or another member of staff if they are experiencing difficulties at school or at home which may impact on their attendance
- Follow the correct school procedure if they arrive late

4. Categories of absence and procedure for reporting absences

Absences will be treated as unauthorised unless a satisfactory explanation is given to the school. Parents/carers cannot authorise absences. Administrative staff should make it clear on the school register whether a child's absence is authorised or unauthorised.

When a child is to be absent from school without prior permission, parents/carers should inform the school by telephone on every day of absence and let them know when they expect the child to return. For prolonged absence, written evidence should be provided for the school.

4.1 Illness

Most cases of absence due to illness are short term and parents/carers need to call the school on each day of the child's absence. For prolonged absence due to illness, parents/carers may be asked to provide the school with medical validation such as a note from the child's doctor, an appointment card or a prescription paper.

4.2 Medical or dental appointments

Parents/carers should make every effort to ensure these appointments are made outside of school hours. Where it cannot be avoided, children should attend school for as much of that day as possible.

4.3 Authorised Absences

There may be some instances where the school will authorise absence. Only the Headteacher can authorise absences. The Department for Education has issued guidelines to all schools detailing valid reasons for authorised or justified absences:

- (i) A child is ill or receiving medical attention;
- (ii) Days of religious observance, notified in advance, always limited to one day at a time;
- (iii) Absence due to family circumstances (e.g. bereavement, serious illness).

4.4 Exclusion

Exclusion is treated as an authorised absence. The school will arrange for work to be sent home.

4.5 Family holidays and extended leave

Parents/carers should ensure that family holidays and extended leave are arranged outside of school time. Parents/carers do not have the automatic right to remove their child from school during term time. Requests for leave from school must be made in writing to the Headteacher at least **28 days** in advance of the leave being taken.

In the case of unforeseen circumstances, this will be taken into consideration. Retrospective applications will not be considered and this time will be processed as unauthorised absence. All requests for authorised absence will be responded to in writing and will outline when the child is expected to return to school. Parents/carers should contact the school immediately if there will be a cause for delay from the stated day of return. If permission is not granted, but the child is still absent, the absence is classed as unauthorised and parents/carers may be issued with a penalty notice.

4.6 Religious observance

Duncombe School recognises that there may be times where children of different faiths observe religious festivals that fall outside of school holidays and weekends, and will allow absence for these times. Parents/carers will be aware of these dates and should give the school written notification in advance.

4.7 Late arrival

Pupils who arrive after school has begun but within the registration period, will be marked as late. The registration period ends at 8.50am. Pupils who arrive after the registration period has ended should go straight to the school office to be signed in and give a reason for their lateness. Arrival after the registration period has ended may be marked as absent for that period of the day. Persistent lateness may result in a penalty notice. The school keeps records of all lateness as well as absence. These records are used to address concerns.

5. Duncombe's procedures to promote good attendance and address poor attendance

5.1 Promoting good attendance

Attendance is celebrated in our weekly Attendance and Celebration assembly:

- Class points and a certificate are awarded to the three classes with the highest attendance each week
- Every class earns class points for each child with 100% attendance and punctuality for the week
- The three class' with the highest weekly attendance gets to look after the attendance trophies for the week and pick a board game of their choice.

- Every child who meets attendance of the annual school target in the Autumn/ Spring and Summer terms gets a raffle ticket. The end of term Attendance assembly will hold a raffle with prizes that those children can win.
- Parents whose child's attendance has significantly improved are written to, to congratulate them and encourage continued improvement.

5.2 Addressing poor attendance

The Headteacher gives every child an attendance target in their annual report and refers to it the following year. No attendance below 96% (current at time of writing the policy) is acceptable.

Attendance is a priority. Routine actions are taken by Duncombe Primary School office staff and the Pastoral Manager to reduce pupil absenteeism, unauthorised absences and persistent absence. The following procedures have been put in place and are followed

- Daily calls to the parents of children who are absent are made before 10.30am
- Unauthorised absence is followed up by weekly letters to parents every Friday – generated automatically from SIMS data. Verifications are updated the following Monday.
- Appointments are arranged involving the Pastoral Manager/ Attendance Officer and the parents of children who have been identified in EWO scheduled review meetings.
- Special arrangements are made for children in care or with CP issues if necessary.
- Scheduled meetings between Pastoral Manager and the Attendance Officer take place focusing on the following:
 - a. A case by case insight is arrived at on individual children identified from the attendance figures print out.
 - b. The Attendance and persistent absence file is updated with notes taken at the meeting.
 - c. Any actions recommended by the Pastoral Manger are agreed and followed up with appropriate standard letters or referrals by the Attendance Officer.
 - d. Any patterns in absence data are investigated so that children with authorised or medical related absence are referred to either the school nurse or their GP if applicable.
 - e. Information with regard to any mitigating circumstances, CP issues and LAC is shared with Pastoral Manger and Designated Safeguarding Officer.
 - f. The percentage attendance figures for the whole school, unauthorised and persistent absence rates are routinely reported to the Full Governing Body every term.
 - g. Any holiday requests in term time are dealt with by ensuring that the approved procedure is adhered to i.e. completion of Request for Leave of Absence During the School Term form, authorised or declined by the Headteacher, communicated to parents with reasons, referred to the Local Authority for penalty notices if applicable, or logged as code G, Other authorised absence is recorded as code H, Holiday Agreed.
 - h. Medical evidence is requested upon the return of pupil whose absence was deemed due to sickness or medical appointments
 - i. Admin staff now use code U for lateness after 9.15am.

We will continue to improve parent communication by:

- Sending parents a letter at the beginning and end of each term which reminds them of the attendance rate target and the procedures for providing medical evidence and notifying absence

- Parents can report absences by leaving a calling the school, leaving a voice message and emailing
- Each parent Newsletter incorporates information on our attendance rate by class.
- A weekly Attendance assembly announcing the previous week's figures and presenting the trophies to the class with the best attendance and punctuality. Attendance certificates are presented each term for 100% attendance and prizes for 100% attendance for the year.
- Admin staff will generate weekly reports on absence and punctuality for each class and year group (communicated in the attendance assembly above)