

Dunkirk Primary School

Attendance Policy And Procedures

**MOMENTS
MATTER,
ATTENDANCE
COUNTS.**

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Statement of Intent

School attendance is everyone's responsibility, good attendance and punctuality are vital if pupils are to achieve their maximum potential.

Dunkirk Primary School believes that in order to facilitate teaching and learning, good attendance is essential. Dunkirk Primary School is committed to working with parents/carers and pupils to ensure that each pupil benefits from the academic, personal and social opportunities available to them during their years with us.

We understand that barriers to attendance are complex, and that some pupils find it harder than others to attend school; therefore, we will continue to prioritise cultivating a safe and supportive environment at school, as well as strong and trusting relationships with pupils and parents.

We take a whole-school approach to securing good attendance and recognise the impact that our efforts in other areas – such as the curriculum, behaviour standards, bullying, SEND support, pastoral support, and the effective use of resources such as pupil premium – can have on improving pupil attendance.

Aims of the Policy

- Promoting and modelling high attendance and its benefits
- Clear procedures encouraging pupils to achieve their maximum potential by maintaining good attendance and punctuality
- Ensuring this attendance policy is clear and easily understood by staff, pupils and parents
- Intervening early and working with other agencies to ensure the health and safety of our pupils
- Building strong relationships with families to overcome barriers to attendance
- Working collaboratively with other schools in the area, as well as other agencies
- Ensuring parents follow the framework set in section 7 of the Education Act 1996, which states that the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause them to receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude, and to any SEND they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.
- Regularly monitoring and analysing attendance and absence data to identify pupils or cohorts that require more support

Legal Framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Education Act 1996
- Equality Act 2010
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (As amended)
- The Children (Performances and Activities) (England) Regulations 2014
- Children and Young Persons Act 1963
- DfE (2024) 'Working together to improve school attendance'
- DfE (2023) 'Keeping children safe in education 2022'
- DfE (2016) 'Children missing education'

The Law relating to Attendance and Safeguarding.

Section 7 of 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 age, ability, and aptitude and
- (b) to any special educational needs, he/ she may have either at school or otherwise

Compulsory School Age: A child is compulsory school age from the beginning of the next term after their 5th birthday until the last Friday of June in the academic year of their 16th birthday.

Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 places a duty on local authorities and governing bodies to have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State with regard to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and students under the age of 18.

The issue of a penalty notice under section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act may be considered in cases where a student is absent from the school and the absence is unauthorised.

A penalty notice is an out of court settlement which is intended to change behaviour without the need for criminal prosecution.

If repeated penalty notices are being issued and they are not working to change behaviour they are unlikely to be most appropriate tool. Therefore, from autumn term 2024, only 2 penalty notices can be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within a 3-year rolling period and any second notice within that period is charged at a higher rate

• The first penalty notice issued to a parent in respect of a particular pupil will be charged at £160 if paid within 28 days.

This will be reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days.

- **A second penalty notice issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil is charged at a flat rate of £160 if paid within 28 days.**
- A third penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within 3 years of the date of issue of the first.

In a case where the national threshold is met for a third time (or subsequent times) within those 3 years, alternative action should be taken instead. This will often include considering prosecution, but may include other tools such as one of the other attendance legal interventions.

Attendance Target

Dunkirk Primary School intends to maintain high levels of attendance each year. **Our current target for 2024-2025 is 96%.**

The school has set a target to improve attendance and your child has an important part to play in meeting these targets.

Minimum attendance targets for the school and for classes are shared online and you should check Dojo and the school website for updated information.

We will keep you updated regularly about progress to this level and how your child's attendance compares.

Our target is to achieve better than this because we know that good attendance is the key to successful schooling, and we believe our pupils can be amongst the best in the country.

Throughout the school year we monitor absences and punctuality to show us where improvements need to be made. Information on any projects or initiatives that will focus on these areas will be provided on Dojo, the website and newsletters and we ask for your full support.

Working Together

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility - parents, pupils, and all members of school staff.

What parents can expect from the governing body:

- Monitoring the implementation of this policy and all relevant procedures across the school.
- Promoting the importance of good attendance through the school's ethos and policies.
- Working with the SLT to set goals for attendance and providing support and challenge around delivery against those goals.
- Regularly reviewing attendance data.
- Sharing effective practice on attendance management and improvement across schools.
- Ensuring that this policy, as written, does not discriminate on any grounds, including, but not limited to, ethnicity/national origin, culture, religion, gender, disability or sexual orientation.
- Handling complaints regarding this policy as outlined in the school's Complaints Procedures Policy.
- Having regard to 'Keeping children safe in education' when making arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children

What parents/carers and pupils can expect from the school:

- broad, balanced education that is dependent on regular attendance at school
- Promotion of good attendance and punctuality at school, and regular encouragement and rewards
- Efficient and accurate recording and monitoring of attendance
- First day contact with parents/carers when absence is unexplained
- Regular attendance information is given to parents/carers e.g., by newsletter, individual letter, parent evenings.
- Parents/carers are encouraged to make contact with school to discuss any issues impacting on their child's attendance or punctuality.
- Any concerns or problems raised by parents/carers will be responded to quickly and sensitively by the school.
- Parents/carers are invited into attendance assemblies to share the success of their child and the school
- Prompt action when a problem has been identified
- Liaison with officers from the Local Authority to assist and support families where needed

What the school expects of our pupils:

- pupils attend regularly on time and ready to learn
- pupils are prepared for the day with appropriate equipment e.g. P.E. kit
- To report to the office should they arrive after registration time
- To tell a member of staff if there is any problem which may prevent them from attending school

What the school expects of parents/carers:

- fulfil their legal responsibility to ensure that their child attends school regularly, on time and prepared for the day
- To contact school on the first day their child is absent for any reason
- To arrange medical and dental appointments out of school times wherever possible, and to obtain an Authorised Absence Pass from the school if unavoidable, by completing an Absence Safeguarding Form and providing school with written/electronic evidence of the appointment.
- To arrange holidays out of school time.
Further guidance is offered under the section **Requests for Term Time Exceptional Leave** later in this policy
- To speak to relevant members of staff if they know of any problem which may prevent their child from attending school
- To provide the necessary evidence when the child returns to school explaining the reason for absence. This will be filed and may be produced if requested by the Local Authority
- To provide the school with more than one emergency contact number and update the school if contact details change.

Attendance Procedures

Registers are a legal document; care must be taken to ensure registers are marked accurately. Attendance of all pupils is monitored and evaluated regularly using the following procedures:

Registration

Abbey Campus

The school day starts at **8.30am**, and pupils will be in their classroom, ready to begin lessons at this time; therefore, pupils will be expected to be at the school gate by **8.25am**.

Registers will be taken as follows throughout the school day:

- The morning register will be marked by **8.45am**. Class teachers will enter a **present mark (/)** in the register for each pupil present and an **absent mark (N code)** for any pupil that is absent.
- The afternoon register will be taken between **12.30-12.40pm**.
- Staff are required to close registers promptly.

Responding to Lateness

- Pupils attending after this time will receive a mark (**L code**) to show that they were on site, but this will count as a late mark.
- After 8.40am, gates are closed and parents/carers should take their children to the main office to explain and log their lateness and child's lunchtime meal choice.
- The morning register will close at 9.15am. Pupils will receive a '**late after register closes**' mark (**U code**) which denotes as ***an unauthorised absence***.
- The U code means in case of emergency the register shows the pupil is on the premises, but they will not receive a present mark toward their overall attendance.
- Parents will have to sign the late book giving the arrival time and reason why.
- **Lunchtime orders will be closed at 8.45am and only a sandwich or jacket potato and a yogurt will be offered (unless proof of a medical appointment is provided)**
- **Parents/carers will be contacted by school if their child is persistently late.**

Highfields Campus

Registers will be taken as follows throughout the school day:

- The morning register will be marked by **8.55am**. Class teachers will enter a **present mark (/)** in the register for each pupil present and an **absent mark (N code)** for any pupil that is absent.
- The afternoon register will be taken between **12.45-12.55pm**.
- Staff are required to close registers promptly.

Responding to Lateness

- Pupils attending after this time will receive a mark (**L code**) to show that they were on site, but this will count as a late mark.
- After 8.55am, gates are closed and parents/carers should take their children to the main office to explain and log their lateness and child's lunchtime meal choice.
- The morning register will close at **9.25am**. Pupils will receive a '**late after register closes**' mark (**U code**) which denotes as **an unauthorised absence**. Parents/pupils will have to sign the late book giving the arrival time and reason why.
- The U code means that in case of emergency, the register shows the pupil is on the premises, but they will not receive a present mark toward their overall attendance.
- Lunchtime orders will be closed at 8.55am and only a sandwich or jacket potato and a yogurt will be offered (unless proof of a medical appointment is provided)
- Parents/carers will be contacted by school if their child is persistently late.

Responding to Absence

Criteria for requesting support from the Multi Agency Support Team (MAST)

- Home/school contact has not prompted an improvement in attendance
- Poor overall attendance (e.g. below 90%) and no mitigating circumstances or acceptable reasons for absence provided to school.
- If attendance continues to give cause for concern strategies will be considered and steps taken in an attempt to improve attendance and punctuality. This could include home visits from school staff, meetings in school with other professionals if deemed appropriate.
- When a pupil has not attended for 10 school days the school has a statutory responsibility to inform the Local Authority.

Awards and Rewards

- Attendance assemblies are held regularly at both campuses to celebrate individual pupil's attendance, class attendance and whole school attendance.
- Improved attendance is recognised and rewarded.
- Termly certificates will be awarded to pupils with 100% attendance.
- Extra play time is awarded for the class with the highest attendance at each campus, each week.

Absence

Definitions

The following definitions apply for the purposes of this policy:

Absence:

- Arrival at school after the register has closed
- Not attending school for any reason

Only the Head Teacher may authorise absence.

- Even when a parent/carer provides an explanation of absence, the Head teacher will decide whether to accept the explanation and authorise the absence.
- The school will clearly set out, in its Parent Policy, obligations for parents/carers regarding attendance and punctuality

Authorised Absence

An authorised absence is where the school has either given permission in advance for the child to be absent or where an explanation offered is accepted as satisfactory justification for absence.

Absence may generally be authorised for the following reasons:

- Illness, medical appointments - appointments should always be made outside school times where possible.
- Unavoidable cause (which is expected to be an emergency and unavoidable)
- Days of religious or cultural observance for which the school has granted leave.
- Traveller child travelling for the purposes of parents' employment.
- An absence due to a family emergency (Evidence will be required – see Requests for Term Time Exceptional Leave)

Unauthorised Absence

An unauthorised absence is where either no explanation has been given for the child's absence or where the explanation offered is not considered acceptable by the school.

This includes:

- Parents / Carers keeping children off school to assist with translation.
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Children who arrive at school too late to get a late mark – See lateness section.
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays.
- Day trips and holidays in term time.
- Leaving school for no reason during the day

If an absence is recorded as unauthorised the school may refer this to the Local Authority's Education Welfare & EOTAS Service. The Local Authority can use various sanctions to promote regular attendance such as issuing a penalty notice fine or initiate court proceedings. (Further information below)

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, it can sometimes be that they are reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents/carers, and the child wherever possible. If your child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually makes things worse.

Absence Procedures

If your child is absent, **parents/carers must:**

- Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence (call 0115 9153273, option 1 or email attendance@dunkirk.nottingham.sch.uk and give an expected return date. You need to contact us every day thereafter to advise school of your child's progress.
- Send any available evidence to explain the absence.

If your child is absent, **school will:**

- Telephone, text or email you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you.
- If absences persist, invite you in to discuss the situation with our Attendance Officer and/or Deputy Headteachers.

The Head Teacher will decide in all cases whether to authorise an absence on the basis of the evidence available.

Persistent and Severely Absentees (PA and SA)

A pupil is a 'persistent absentee' if they miss 10% (19days) or more of their schooling across the school year for whatever reason.

A pupil is "severely absent" if they miss 50% (95days) or more of their schooling across the school year for whatever reason.

Absence at both these levels is causing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parent's fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA or SA thresholds or is at risk of moving towards that level, is given priority and you will be informed of this immediately.

PA and SA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our attendance support system, and evaluated alongside academic progress

All our PA and SA pupils and their parents/carers are subject to an Action Plan and the plan may include allocation of additional support through a Mentor, individual incentive programmes and participation in group activities around raising attendance.

If your child has or is at risk of reaching the threshold for Persistent Absence or Severely Absent you will be asked to provide evidence for any future absence. This may be medical evidence for illness which can be in the form of prescription, appointment cards, medicine packaging, hospital letter or a screen-print from the My GP app. Where we have concerns about your child's health, we may ask you to talk to the school nurse or for permission to contact their GP or other medical professionals for advice.

We will use our attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance at both individual and for different groups within the school population. Once concerns have been identified we will work together with pupils, parents, and other services where appropriate to resolve the issue, understand and remove any barriers to attendance and work to resolve them before they become a more serious issue.

Requests For Term Time Exceptional Leave

Working together to improve school attendance states “the DfE does not consider a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation to be an exceptional circumstance.”

Parents should plan their holidays around school breaks and avoid requesting leave of absence for holidays unless it is unavoidable. There is no entitlement in law for any leave of absence from school in term time. Taking leave in term time will affect your child’s schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking children away in school time.

Remember that any monetary savings you may make by taking a holiday in school time are offset by the cost to your child’s education.

All applications for a leave of absence must be made at least 4 weeks in advance, by completing an Absence Safeguarding Form. **Leave will only be considered if there are exceptional circumstances.** In deciding, the school will consider the circumstances of each application individually, including any previous pattern of leave in term time. The Headteacher will be the final arbiter as to the authorisation of any leave.

Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school, or more than that agreed, will be classed as unauthorised and may attract sanctions such as a Penalty Notice. Your child’s school place may also be at risk. Previous good attendance or your child’s education ability are not considered when the school make the decision. If you have siblings at other schools, you must seek permission from all the schools, and it is possible that one school may grant it, and another may not.

If exceptional leave is agreed, you will receive a letter from the school. If you do not get a letter **DO NOT**, assume that permission has been granted. Only the Head Teacher can decide if they will grant exceptional leave – **no one else in school has permission to do so** and leaving an application form is not permission to take leave.

If leave has been granted and a child returns late outside of the agreed dates either before or after, the school will reserve the right to unauthorise the entire period of leave taken.

Parents/carers wishing to take a pupil out of school for a holiday should be actively discouraged. Any leave during term time can only be authorised by the Head Teacher under *exceptional circumstances*. If parents/carers wish to apply for term time leave under exceptional circumstances an **Absence Safeguarding Form** must be completed by the parent/carer, clearly stating what the exceptional circumstances are, and given to the Head Teacher for consideration no less than 20 days prior to the requested leave begins. The school will inform parent/carers in writing, within 10 days, whether the leave has been authorised (it should be made clear why a decision has been made and the criteria used should be re-iterated).

If an unauthorised holiday is taken consideration may be given to issuing a Penalty Notice (see guidance). At the Head Teacher's request, the Local Authority may issue the Penalty Notice and inform the school of the outcome.

It is essential that both the Local Authority and the school be consistent so that there can be no allegations of bias or favouritism. If it is seen that the policy is not being applied consistently the Local Authority will not be able to apply a Penalty Notice.

Children Missing from Education (CME)

Any child absent from school for more than 20 days will be referred to the Children Missing Education(CME) team after all relevant checks have been made by the school.

If you move from the area and your whereabouts are unknown, the school can legally remove your child from the roll after 20 school days of unauthorised absence. It is **vital that if you keep school informed of any change of details** and regularly update them if details change. Your child may be at risk of losing their school place if your whereabouts are not known.

It is also important that emergency contact information is kept up to date and that if you are leaving the area, you provide details of where and how you can be contacted. If you do not do this and the school is unable to trace your child, this would be treated as a **safeguarding matter**.

Children in Public Care

Dunkirk Primary School is the co-ordinator who liaises with the Local Authority's Children Looked After (CLA) team. CLA pupils will be set up as an Attendance Group on Arbor and their individual attendance will be checked each half term.

Roles & Responsibilities of School Staff Who Support Attendance:

School Governor with responsibility for attendance

- responsibility for monitoring attendance and for school attendance policies and issues.
- to be aware of general attendance issues and along with the whole Governing Board, inform and oversee school attendance performance initiatives.
- shares and consults on reports and statistics and initiatives to improve school attendance with the Governing Body and ensures these are documented in Governor's meeting minutes (made available to all parents) and the Governors Annual Report.
- recognises the importance of school attendance and promotes it across the school's ethos and policies.
- ensures school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties.
- regularly reviews attendance data, discussing challenging trends, and helping school leaders focus efforts on the individual pupils or cohorts who need it most.
- ensures school staff receive adequate training on attendance.
- holds the Head Teacher to account for the implementation of this policy.
- attends Targeted Support Meetings where appropriate.

Head Teacher

- considers every request for leave on its individual merits ultimately, being the final arbiter of the authorisation of any leave.
- oversees the collection and reporting of attendance data and the publication of statistics and reports on attendance to parents, pupils, governors and to Nottingham City Council.
- Uses data to target attendance improvement efforts to the pupils or pupil cohort who need it most and to inform the annual review of school's attendance policy and practice.

Deputy Head Teachers/Attendance Champions

- The Deputy Head Teachers will work with the Head Teacher and Attendance Officer to devise a working attendance policy, reviewed at regular intervals, and based on school attendance data.
- They will monitor weekly attendance patterns and trends and identify whole school strategies and support for children who missed school. Evaluate effectiveness of interventions and their impact on attendance levels.

- are aware of those pupils the school is most concerned about for example looked after children, children subject to safeguarding procedures, Children with EHCPs or other vulnerable children.
- ensure Cover Staff are aware “what we do” for attendance
- consult with Class Teachers & support staff, Attendance Officer and other services as appropriate.
- attend Targeting Support Meeting where appropriate.
- where there is a lack of engagement, holding more formal conversations with parents and raising the issue of the potential need for legal intervention.

Attendance Officer

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data
- Ensure attendance data is accurate and up to date
- 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 Head Teacher
- Collaborating with school staff (e.g. class teachers & teaching assistants, SENCo) to tackle persistent absence and to follow up absences
- Advising the Head Teacher (*or other member of staff authorised by the Head Teacher*) when to issue fixed penalty notices
- Is aware of those pupils the school is most concerned about for example looked after children, children subject to safeguarding procedures, Children with EHCPs or other vulnerable children

Class Teachers

- responsible for keeping an attendance register. This is a legal document and must be completed accurately. It is a legal requirement that the attendance register must be marked at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session. Absences are coded according to the information received from the parent of the child.
- **Morning register should be completed by 8.45am (ABC) & 8.55am (HFC)
Afternoon register should be completed by 12.40pm (ABC) & 12.55pm (HFC)**
- where it is not possible to access the attendance management system manual registers should be returned to the school office by the above times.
- monitors the register daily and encouraged to highlight any emerging patterns of absence and lateness or any alarming changes in this area.

- encourages patterns of punctuality and good attendance by praising those children who came to school each day and arrive on time.
- reports any concerns about a child's attendance or punctuality to the Attendance Officer via the Deputy Head Teachers. This can sometimes then be referred to the LA if a Penalty Notice or legal action is being sought.
- ensures that information about absences is passed on to the appropriate person.
- welcomes back pupils after an absence using positive language.

Role of other pastoral support staff

- to be aware of those pupils the school is most concerned about, for example looked after children, children subject to safeguarding procedures, children with EHCPs or other vulnerable children.
- to follow up non-school attendance issues in line with attendance policy

Help & Support

If you need help with attendance, it is important that you contact school about the issues as soon as possible. The quicker we know what the problem is, the quicker that we can work together to solve it and put a plan together which will meet your child's needs and ensure your child can benefit from all that school has to offer. Where needed we can also involve other services to make sure that your child and your family gets the right support, at the right time from the right people.

If parents have any comments, concerns, or complaints regarding the school attendance policy these can be addressed in writing to the Headteacher, or an appointment can be arranged for discussion with the Headteacher. Parents who wish to work with the school in partnership to promote and implement good school attendance practice are encouraged and applauded. If a parent believes the school can support or assist them in their child's school attendance, we would be happy to accommodate this.

Summary

All school staff are committed to working with parents and pupils as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible and that every child's welfare and life opportunities are promoted.

Date of Policy:
Date Approved by Governors:
Date of review: