

Darwen St James'
C of E Primary Academy



ATTENDANCE POLICY

2024/2025

(reviewed Sept 2024)

DARWEN ST JAMES' CE PRIMARY ACADEMY

Attendance and Punctuality Policy

Mission: Nurture ambition through a living faith.

Vision: Our academy delivers a purposeful curriculum through its living Christian faith. We nurture ambition through all of our learners in order for them to become positive citizens of tomorrow.

Bible: Let us not love with words and speech alone but with actions and truth. John 3:18

INTRODUCTION:

This policy represents our whole school commitment to aiming for 100% attendance, as we know that regular and punctual attendance is an essential prerequisite for effective learning. There is a strong link between absence and attainment. Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and frequently missing lessons will negatively impact on a child's learning – whereas good attendance and punctuality will increase the chances of a child achieving their full potential in school and in life.

The Education Act 1996 states, "if any child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school fails to attend regularly at the school, his/her parent is guilty of an offence."

PRINCIPLES:

- Receiving a full-time, suitable education is a child's legal entitlement
- It is a parents'/carers' legal responsibility to ensure this happens
- Attending school regularly aids intellectual, social and emotional development
- Attending school regularly safeguards the welfare of children, whilst they are not in the care of their parents

AIMS - Improving school attendance is a key priority at Darwen St James' CE Primary Academy.

We aim

- To ensure that all children attend as near to full-time as is possible, in order to maximise their educational achievements and social development.
- To safeguard all children to the very best of our ability.
- To minimise absence from school, particularly reducing levels of persistent absence
- To improve the life chances of our pupils, preparing them to be fully contributing citizens when they reach adulthood.

ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES:

Achieving good attendance and punctuality is everyone's responsibility – children, parents and staff.

Pupils -

- **To attend school regularly**
- **To arrive on time and be in appropriate uniform**
- **Tell a member of staff if there are any barriers to them attending school so that we can offer help and support**

PARENTS - have a responsibility to:

- **Ensure that their child is educated**
- **Ensure that their child attends school every day that school is open – and on time**
- **Tell school immediately if their child is unwell and/or unable to attend school**

All children should be at school in good time for the start of the day, unless they are genuinely ill. If you, as an adult, decide that your child is well enough to be in school, then we expect them to take part in all activities.

Some children are reluctant to go to school and say they do not feel well. It is for you, as the adult, to judge whether they are genuinely unwell, or just unwilling. It will be better for them in the long run to go to school, rather than avoid it, as days off mean they will fall further behind and could make them even more reluctant. As a parent, please encourage your child to attend.

Ensuring your child's regular attendance is YOUR legal responsibility and permitting absence without good reason is an offence in law and may result in legal action being taken, or a Penalty Notice being issued.

LEARNING – any absence affects the child's learning and the more they miss, the harder it is to catch up. Research shows that for every percentage point of absence, attainment is significantly lower.

SAFEGUARDING – there is also research to link poor school attendance and exclusion with crime and anti-social behaviour, and the risk of exploitation by adults. Therefore, failure to attend school regularly is seen as a safeguarding issue. (see Safeguarding Policy)

ABSENCE PERCENTAGES:

You may be wondering why we are concerned when your child's attendance is at 95%, but here's why

95% equates to ½ day off every 2 weeks
90% equates to 1 day off every 2 weeks
85% equates to 1½ days off every 2 weeks
80% equates to 1 day off every week

**A SECONDARY AGE CHILD WHOSE ATTENDANCE IS 80% WILL HAVE MISSED
ONE WHOLE YEAR OF SCHOOL BY THE TIME THEY LEAVE SCHOOL.**

UNDERSTANDING TYPES OF ABSENCE CODING:

Every half day absence from school has to be classified by school as AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED, which is why we need a reason for every absence.

AUTHORISED ABSENCE is where school has either given approval in advance for your child to be absent or where an explanation offered afterwards is accepted as a reason for absence. Medical evidence may be required in the form of an appointment card or hospital letter. Absence may generally be authorised for:

- Illness – medical or dental appointments
- Days of religious observance
- Exclusion
- Traveller child, travelling for the purposes of parents' employment
- Family bereavement
- Involvement in a public performance
- "Exceptional" occasions, which will be determined by school on a case by case basis

UNAUTHORISED absence is where no explanation is given for the absence or where the reason given is unacceptable. It includes:

- Going shopping with parents
- Birthdays
- Day trips and holidays in term time
- Truancy
- Arriving too late to get a present mark

PERSISTENT ABSENCE: this is an absence of 10% or more. An individual child is deemed to be a persistent absentee if their attendance drops below 90%.

SCHOOL REFUSAL/RELUCTANT TO COME:

Please do everything you can to encourage your child to attend school. However, if the reason for their reluctance appears to be school-based, such as difficulty with work, or with bullying behaviour, please come and talk to us, so that we can try our very best to sort things out. Keeping your child at home will very likely make things worse for them.

SCHOOL – has a responsibility to:

- Keep a register at the start of morning and afternoon sessions
- Inform the Local Authority of children who are persistently absent, have a high level of unauthorised absences or who have been absent without reason for longer than 2 weeks
- Work with parents, governors, children and other agencies to promote good attendance and punctuality.

Our Attendance Well Being Officer Ms Evans:

- Works with children to encourage children with poor attendance to attend school.
- Refers children and parents to Mrs Gonzalez when attendance becomes persistent.

Our Attendance Officer Miss Peckson:

- Responsible for monitoring attendance and punctuality at school
- Will work with children, families and other agencies to improve attendance and punctuality
- Make referrals to other agencies, where appropriate

Our Headteacher, Miss Peckson, has:

- Responsibility for monitoring attendance and punctuality at school
- Will consider and authorise advance holiday requests
- Decide whether any absences for reasons other than illness can be authorised

It is the responsibility of the Attendance Officer and the Head Teacher to monitor attendance and punctuality regularly.

SCHOOL PROCEDURES

- Registration and punctuality procedures – registers are taken twice a day – once at the start of morning and afternoon sessions. Pupils arriving before the end of registration will be coded L (late before the registers close), which is a present mark. Pupils arriving after the registers have closed will be coded O (late after registers close), which counts as an unauthorised absence.

Morning Registration for Nursery begins at 8.30am and ends at 9am.
 For KS1 and KS2, morning registration begins at 8.55am and ends at 10.30am
 For Nursery, the afternoon registration starts at 12 noon and ends at 12.30pm.
 For KS1, afternoon registration begins at 12.45 pm and ends at 1.05pm
 For KS2, afternoon registration begins at 1.00pm and ends at 1.05pm

Registers are legal documents. Should the parents/carers of a persistent non-attender be prosecuted by the Local Authority under Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act, then the information which the register contains will be the main source of evidence presented to the court. The regulatory requirements placed on schools with regard to the keeping of registers are to be found in the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006.

Only the Headteacher or designated members of staff acting on their behalf can authorise absence. If there is no known reason for the absence at registration, then the absence will be recorded as unauthorised, until a satisfactory reason is given. The absence will be coded as O (unauthorised absence). Absence notes will be kept for a year, or longer if there are concerns that require further investigation or legal action.

Parents are expected to notify school if their child is unable to attend for any unavoidable reason, such as illness. Parents need to do this every day of the absence. School will send out TruancyCall as early as possible on the first day of absence, and by 10.30am at the latest.

Regular monitoring of the registers will be made to identify pupils with a pattern of absences that may lead to persistent absence. Parents will be invited into school for meetings with staff and the Pupil Wellbeing Lead, so that school can offer support. Medical referral can be made to the School Nurse and other agencies involved, if felt appropriate.

The data which is extracted from accurate and up to date attendance registers will be used to support the more effective management of whole-school attendance matters. Such data can be used to:

- Support and underpin the target-setting process (for pupils, year groups, identified cohorts, whole school) in relation to overall attendance and unauthorised absence on a half termly/termly and yearly basis
- Identify individual children and particular groups of children who are or may be at risk of becoming persistent absentees
- Facilitate and encourage early intervention
- Identify particular types or patterns of absenteeism (eg: time lost to term time holidays, regular absences on Mondays and/or Fridays etc), match attendance trends with attainment trends
- Identify possible inconsistencies in the implementation of school policy
- Report attendance matters to parents/carers.

Daily Procedures

If your child does not arrive at school and you have not informed the office the following actions will be taken:

9am - Dojos to parents of absent children

9.30 - 10.30 Truancy Call

10.30am phone calls to parents who have not responded

12.30pm - follow up on unresponsive parents with a home visit.

CONSEQUENCES OF POOR ATTENDANCE/PUNCTUALITY:

For pupils whose attendance and/or punctuality fails to improve, after a range of interventions and support measures have been tried by school, the ultimate consequences may be:

- Referral to the Local Authority Attendance Officer which may result in a fine.

Parents are reminded that an education penalty notice can be issued for any unauthorised holidays taken without school permission – and this includes children from Gypsy/Roma families, who go travelling for anything other than occupational purposes and fail to dual register in a school elsewhere.

CHILDREN WHO CEASE TO ATTEND WITHOUT PRIOR NOTIFICATION – CHILDREN MISSING EDUCATION:

Procedures for trying to trace children who cease to attend without prior notification are in place. If after 10 days continuous absence, school has been unable to ascertain the whereabouts of a pupil, they will refer the child's details to the Local Authority for it to perform further checks that are not available to school. If after 20 days continuous unauthorised absence, their whereabouts cannot be traced, they will be removed from school roll.

APPROVED EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITY:

Children who are educated off site, dual registered, or who are engaged in supervised educational activities away from school premises, need not be marked as authorised absent, and will be recorded as on an approved educational activity. This means that for statistical purposes, such as educational visits, or approved sporting activities, can be counted as statistically present. The nature of the activity must, however, be recorded by use of appropriate code. This is important in order to ensure that an accurate record of those children physically present on site at any given time is instantly available.

REQUESTS FOR LEAVE OF ABSENCE DURING TERM TIME:

There is no entitlement in law for any leave of absence from school in term time.

Any applications should be made on the school form, available from the office, and can only be authorised where school accepts that there are exceptional circumstances.

School will continue to take into account the circumstances surrounding every individual application before making a decision concerning leave of absence during term time.

Headteachers must now:

- Be satisfied that the individual circumstances warrant giving leave;
- Take into account the frequency of any such requests, the pupil's attainment, overall attendance and ability to catch up on missed lessons; and then
- Determine the number of days, if any, a child can be away from school.

Examples of exceptional circumstances which could justify approval include;

- Members of the Armed Forces who are returning home from active duties
- Emergency services personnel (police, fire, ambulance) who are unable to take leave at certain times of the year
- Other employees who are prevented from taking family holidays outside of term time EG: a parent working abroad on a fixed-time-period contract
- An extended family that wishes to spend time together for support during a time of acute crisis
- A child or parent/carer receiving medical treatment abroad
- Families who can evidence that they have experienced genuine disruption to their originally agreed return travel plans eg: severe weather conditions or civil unrest.
- Death of an immediate family member – parent, sibling, grandparent

LEAVE OF ABSENCE WILL NEVER BE AUTHORISED:

- During the first term, when a pupil is just starting school, as it is very important for the children to settle into school
- During an assessment period – Key Stage 2 SATS
- When a pupil's attendance record already includes any level of unauthorised absence.

RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE:

School will authorise one day of absence per religious festival, up to a maximum of 2 days in any one academic year, on the day specifically set aside by the Religious Body of which the parent/carer is a member and this will be marked as R in the register.

COLLECTION AT THE END OF THE SCHOOL DAY:

School ends at 3.20pm and children should be collected promptly at this time. Parents have a duty to inform school if they are running late or if someone else is collecting their child. Children will remain with their teacher until 3.25pm, after which time they will be taken to the school office.

It is important that school know if pupils are to be collected by a parent, another responsible adult or are to make their own way home. If these circumstances change, it is important that school know.

IT IS VITAL THAT SCHOOL HAVE UP TO DATE PHONE NUMBERS FOR PARENTS AND THAT MOBILE PHONES ARE SWITCHED ON DURING SCHOOL HOURS.

If a child is not collected at the end of the school day or activity and parents/carers cannot be contacted, arrangements will be made to take the child to a place of safety, eg: the Children's Centre. Children's Social Care will also be contacted.

PUNCTUALITY:

School has:

- Clear procedures

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- It balances any sanctions with positive encouragement
- Praise and acknowledgement are given in celebration assembly, through stickers, raffles and class rewards. As well as being published on our Attendance Newsletter.
- Ensures that teachers set a good example by arriving punctually for registration and for lessons
- Follows up the reasons for lateness and is alert to any emerging patterns or problems.



Early Help and Safeguarding

We understand that lateness and poor attendance can be an indicator of vulnerability, abuse, neglect or exploitation and therefore, we refer to our school’s safeguarding policy when dealing with poor attendance and punctuality. Children with an attendance below 90% will be monitored via the school Pupil Wellbeing Co-Ordinator and Headteacher. We therefore will offer Early Help to children and families where attendance is a concern. This may include referrals to other agencies such as the school nurse, Children’s Social Care, Transforming Lives Panel amongst others.

Reintegration of long-term absentees

Absence can significantly interrupt the continuity of students’ learning, and positive strategies should be employed to minimise such effects. Key principles We should always keep in touch with a student and his/her family during a long absence. We should always make sure he/she is welcomed back.

The Headteacher, Pupil Wellbeing Co-Ordinator and SENDCo should consider a phased return where appropriate. This needs to be considered in line with due process and procedure, which includes seeking expert advice from relevant professionals and coordinating a multi-agency meeting. Any special needs the pupil may have should be considered, and appropriate support identified.

Consideration must be given to providing a package of support, which may include a mentor (staff member/student).

Class teachers should ensure that the pupil feels welcomed back to school in an appropriate way and take any necessary steps to support their re-integration.

Alternative education providers

On rare occasions, a small number of pupils may be accessing an alternative education provider agreed by the school for all or part of their timetable. In this instance, the pupil remains on roll at Darwen St James CEP Academy. Attendance to approved alternative providers is monitored and reflected on school registers. The responsibility of ensuring pupils are safeguarded and receiving appropriate education remains with Darwen St James’ CEP Academy.

Use of attendance data

All schools must provide their attendance data to the Department for Education. School also share attendance data with FFT Aspire. Most schools use their management information systems to send

their data via school census. The figures returned are then published by the Department for Education as part of the annual publication of school statistics.

We collect, use and store attendance information about our pupils and may receive information about you from your previous school. The information we keep regarding attendance includes name, contact details, attendance records, late records and any relevant medical information.

Where there is cause for concern, this information is shared with BwD during regular attendance meetings held at school. BwD may then follow up attendance concerns with parents and carers on school's behalf.

In order to avoid the involvement of BwD Inclusion Services, the school has put the following procedures in place.

Stage 1- Where a child is absent from school and no reason is given, school will phone parents. If that call is not answered, a message will be sent via dojo. Where there are concerns about a child/family's wellbeing, a home visit may be undertaken.

Stage 2- Where a child's level of absence is below 95% and/or they have 4 unauthorised absences (equivalent to two days), a letter will be sent to highlight this to families and offer support.

Stage 3- Where a child's level of absence is below 90% and/or they have 8 unauthorised absences (equivalent to four days), a further letter will be sent to parents detailing the levels of absence and the expectation for attendance to improve significantly in the next fortnight. Support will be offered and barriers to attendance may be explored.

Stage 4- Attendance has not improved following a letter so a meeting is arranged to discuss ways that school can support the family in improving the child's attendance. Further support with a range of concerns may also be put in place where appropriate, this may include a CAF.

Stage 5- Referral to Inclusion Service. Inclusion Service will consider support school has put in place and the impact this has had. They will assess the case and decide on the most appropriate course of action, this may be a phone call, letter or meeting.

Stage 6- Where the Inclusion Service have been involved but agreed actions have not been carried out, the Inclusion Service may consider more formal, legal proceedings.

