

## **Introduction:**

This is a successful school and your child plays their part in making it so. We aim for an environment which enables and encourages all members of the community to reach out for excellence. For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and your child should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

It is very important therefore that you make sure that your child attends regularly and this Policy sets out how together we will achieve this in line with our mission statement:

*At Delph Side we aim to instil a passion for learning that empowers our pupils to be successful and exceed expectation so that they develop into confident, caring individuals that are well equipped to take the future in their stride.*

## **Why Regular Attendance is so important:**

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class.

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

## **Promoting Regular Attendance:**

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

### **To help us all to focus on this we will:**

Promote a culture across the school which identifies the importance of regular and punctual attendance;

Give you details on attendance via social media (website and Facebook).

Report to you termly on how your child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainments;

Celebrate good attendance by displaying individual and class achievements;

Reward good or improving attendance through class competitions, certificates and outings/events.

Carry out transition work with pupils moving between nursery and reception, and before leaving for high school;

Run promotional events when parents, pupils and staff can work together on raising attendance levels across the school.

Further develop positive and consistent communication between home and school

Make attendance and punctuality a priority for everyone associated with school, including parents, pupils, staff and governors.

Set targets to improve individual pupil and whole-school attendance.

## **Understanding types of absence:**

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This includes:

Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily  
truancy before or during the school day  
absences which have never been properly explained  
children who arrive at school too late to get a mark  
shopping, looking after other children or birthdays  
day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed  
days that exceed the amount of leave agreed by the Headteacher

Parents should be aware that the decision whether to authorise an absence or not rests with the school. Hence, if there is any ambiguity relating to an absence, school may request further evidence from parents before an absence may be authorised. This may be in the form of a prescription or appointment card or similar.

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. 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 make things worse.

## **Persistent Absenteeism (PA):**

From September 2015 a pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parents' fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

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

PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system and we also combine this with academic mentoring where absence affects attainment. All our PA pupils and their parents are subject to intervention by members of the school team. These may include working with our Family Wellbeing Co-ordinator, working with the school's Attendance Leader, the Lancashire Pupil Attendance Support Team and further agencies. All PA cases are also automatically made known to the Local Authority Attendance Team.

If opportunities to improve attendance are not accepted by parents, whilst attendance continues to decline, school will refer the case to PAST, who will assign a family support worker.

If the number of unauthorised sessions of absence reaches 10 sessions, school will begin proceedings towards the application for a fixed penalty PN1.

School will also consider requesting that the Local Authority consider PN2 if attendance declines further while school support and advice is not acted upon.

## **Absence Procedures:**

### **If your child is absent you must:**

Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence, either by phone or you can call into school and report to reception – **NOT through our Seesaw app or via email.**

Provide valid, reasonable evidence or justification for each absence.

Contact us in person or via telephone for every day of absence.

### **If your child is absent we will:**

Contact you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you (First Day Response)

At school's discretion, if a child's absence is unexplained, school will visit the home to ascertain why the child is not in school.

In the event of unexplained absence, we will conduct a home visit to establish the safety and wellbeing of the child and parents. If no contact is made, school will refer to Lancashire Police to action a welfare check.

Invite you in to discuss the situation with our Attendance Leader (Mr Morris) If persistent absence continues, then the Headteacher.

Refer the matter to the Local Authority Attendance Team (PAST) where appropriate.

Consider requesting that the Local Authority issue penalty notices in accordance with LCC's Code of Conduct, or use other legal sanctions, as appropriate in order to improve attendance.

## **Telephone numbers:**

There are times when we need to contact parents about lots of things, including absence, so we need to have your contact numbers at all times. So help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have an up to date number – if we don't then something important may be missed. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year.

Contact information will be requested 3 times per year to ensure that school maintain up to date record.

## **In-School Strategies to Improve Attendance/Punctuality:**

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. School may consider using the following strategies to help support parents in improving their child's attendance and/or punctuality. This includes:

Meetings in school between parents, pupils, pastoral staff and the Headteacher;

A staged letter approach to signal the severity of attendance – ranging from Ms Noon, to Mr Morris, then Mrs Ormerod.

Home visits;

Parenting contracts;

Use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) and/ or referral to outside agencies (including the Local Authority Attendance Officer);

Use of Penalty Notices

Referrals for Legal Action and PAST support.

## **The Local Authority School Attendance Service**

If difficulties cannot be sorted out using in-school strategies, the school may refer the child to the Pupil Attendance Support Team (PAST) PAST will also support school in trying

to resolve the situation by agreement and will work to support school and parents in achieving in approved levels of attendance.

## **Use of Legal Measures**

Delph Side Community Primary School defines irregular attendance in line with the thresholds set out for the use of penalty notices within the local authority's code of conduct. If other ways of trying to improve the attendance of an individual pupil and we consider attendance to be irregular, where absences are unauthorised the case may be referred to the Lancashire Pupil Attendance Support Team, who can use sanctions such as penalty notices or prosecutions in the magistrates' court. Full details of the options open to enforce attendance at school are available.

If attendance falls below 90% due to unauthorised absences, school will refer the child's attendance to PAST for support from a family support worker – with the view of improving attendance. If attendance does not improve, or it declines further, or reasonable requests for co-operation and improvement are not sustained, school reserve the right to apply for a PN1 fixed penalty of £60 per child, per parent.

10 unauthorised sessions will trigger a review of a child's attendance, and will be used as evidence towards a fixed penalty. This will occur in every term where 10 unauthorised sessions occur.

This may escalate to PN2, and even further to court action.

We will contact parents at every stage of the process to offer support, provide updates and arrange meetings to improve attendance.

## **Lateness:**

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your child misses the start of the day they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons, which can be embarrassing for the child and can in turn, encourage absence. Being 10 minutes late every day throughout the academic year is the same as missing two weeks of school.

## **How we manage lateness:**

The school day starts at 8:45am, class doors are open and children go into their class and start learning activities. It is the school's expectation that all children arrive promptly at 8.45am to maximise their learning.

Legally, the children must be in school by 8.55am.

Registers are completed at 9.05am. Any child coming in after this time will be marked as late. In accordance with the Regulations, if a child arrives after 9.25am they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will **not** count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. This may mean that you could face the possibility of a penalty notice if the problem persists.

If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with the Headteacher and/or a member of the Attendance Team to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

## **Leave in Term Time:**

Taking a child out of school in term time will affect their 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 savings you think you may make by taking a

holiday in school time are offset by the cost to your child's education. There is **no** automatic entitlement in law to take leave during school time. As decided by school governors, we may use fixed penalty notices for any unauthorised absences and £60 penalties per child, per week for unauthorised holidays taken during term time.

All applications for leave must be made, in advance, by the parent of residence using the 'Request for leave of absence' form from the school office.

It is important that you understand that leave in term time will **not** be agreed by us at any time unless circumstances surrounding the request can be evidenced, by parents, to be exceptional. Information provided after a decision has been made may not be considered.

In considering the request, we will also look at various factors such as:

The timing of the request:

When a pupil is just starting the school, absences should be avoided as this is a very important transition period as your child needs to settle into their new environment as quickly as possible.

Pupils should not be absent where possible both immediately before and during assessment periods e.g. SATs.

Children and parents in Year 6 will be informed at regular intervals regarding the importance of attendance throughout the year, especially during SATs week. A parental meeting will be held to discuss attendance in relation to achievement at the end of Key Stage Two by Mr Morris.

When a pupil's attendance record already includes any level of unauthorised absence. Where a pupil's attendance rate is already below 96% or falls to or below that level as a result of taking leave.

Other periods of leave which the pupil may have had, either during the current or previous academic year

Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school, or in excess of that agreed, will be classed as unauthorised and may attract sanctions such as a Penalty Notice.

Parents should be advised that if a pupil does not return to school on the agreed date enquiries will be initiated that may include a referral to the Children Missing Education

Officer. If there is continued absence of more than 10 school days without good reason, and the school **and** the Local Authority have failed to identify the child's whereabouts then, in accordance with Regulation, the child's name may be removed from roll with no guarantee of re-admission.

The specific circumstances which outline when a pupil can be removed from roll are laid out in Regulation 8 (1) (f) (i-iii) of The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (Amended 2010 and 2013).

## **Holiday Leave:**

In specific circumstances, holidays may be granted by school, without incurring a fixed penalty notice, based on a number of factors which must be met by parents:

1. The child's/ children's attendance must already be above 96% at the time of an application for authorised holiday leave.
2. The child's/ children's attendance must not fall below 90% as a result of the proposed authorised holiday leave.
3. Parents must complete a Request for Leave of Absence form, at least 2 weeks before the proposed holiday dates, and submit to Senior Leaders for consideration.
4. Request for Leave of Absence must be agreed and signed by Senior Leaders for the proposed dates.
5. No more than 7 holiday days may be granted in a term, but can be attached to the beginning of a term to coincide with half term. 7 holiday days cannot be taken as separate periods, but as ONE period of up to 7 consecutive days.
6. Holiday days cannot be authorised in September in order to facilitate the transition into the child's new class setting.

## **Religious Absence:**

The school will authorise one day 'leave' per religious festival, e.g. Eid, but no more than 3 days in any one academic year. Parents must request this leave in advance. Parents must request any additional leave in advance and this can only be authorised if it is felt that exceptional circumstances apply.

There are a range of reasons why pupils might be required to access educational provision at a venue other than their main school. The main reasons are listed below:

Pupils who have been excluded, either for a fixed period of more than 5 days or permanently,

When a pupil is unable to access provision at their main school for medical reasons

## **Pupils who are unable to attend school for medical reasons:**

The introduction of new statutory guidance on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2014 places much more emphasis on the role of governing bodies in ensuring that pupils with medical conditions are able to fully access education in the same way as other pupils. A key element of this responsibility is reducing the amount of time missed by these pupils; whether their condition is short or long term. The school will work with parents and other relevant professionals to minimise absence for reasons of ill health. This may be as a result of specific practices or resources used within school or by sourcing more appropriate

provision at another establishment. When education is to be provided at an alternative location, this should always be done via the use of a direction.

When a pupil is required to attend another venue for the purpose of improving behaviour; either on a temporary basis or with a view to making a permanent move to the alternative provision (managed move)

When a pupil is required to attend alternative provision for the purposes of improving behaviour, the governors of the main school must issue a written 'direction' informing all parents of the alternative provision which their child is required to attend. Where a pupil is required to attend alternative provision for all other reasons, the issuing of a written direction is considered best practice.

## **Roles and responsibilities for attendance matters in this school:**

### **Parents:**

Ensure children attend regularly and punctually  
Contact school on 1<sup>st</sup> day of absence  
Avoid any leave in term time and apply in advance using form if the reason for leave is unavoidable/exceptional  
Attendance at meetings in school

Participation in Parenting Contracts and Common Assessment Framework, and cooperate in support and interventions offered by school or other agencies

### **Pupils:**

Acknowledge behaviour needed out of school, e.g. early bedtime  
Attend school/registration punctually  
Speak to parents/teacher if issues arise that may have an effect on school attendance  
Cooperate and participate in interventions and support offered by school or other agencies

### **Headteacher / School Attendance Lead:**

Take the lead in ensuring attendance has a high profile within the school  
Ensure there are designated staff with day-to-day responsibility for

attendance matters

Ensure adequate, protected time is allocated to discharge these responsibilities  
Take overall responsibility for ensuring the school conforms to all statutory requirements in respect of attendance

Consider each request for leave against the school's criteria, decide whether some or all of the leave will be authorised and notify parents of this decision  
Where there may be ambiguity regarding an absence, make the decision whether or not to authorise an absence or to request further evidence to support the decision-making process



## **Designated Staff:**

First day response: Contact parents if a reason for absence has not been provided

Input and update the attendance registers

Regularly identify and monitor pupil, class and whole school attendance and punctuality levels, particularly that of vulnerable groups

Regularly communicate pupil attendance and punctuality levels to parents Work with children and parents to remove barriers to regular and punctual attendance and use Parenting Contracts where appropriate

## **All School Staff:**

Provide a welcoming atmosphere for children and provide a safe learning environment

Ensure an appropriate and responsive curriculum

Provide a sympathetic response to any pupils' concerns

To be aware of factors that can contribute to non-attendance to see pupils' attendance as the responsibility of **all** school staff Participate in training regarding school systems and procedures

## **Governors**

Adopt the whole-school policy and review regularly

Monitor the consistent implementation of the attendance policy

Set aspirational targets for improving the school's attendance figures

Work with the Headteacher in establishing criteria against which leave requests will be considered. This is important to ensure the process is equitable and consistent.

## **Communication with parents**

We will communicate with parents through our new WEDUC school app, which will house key features essential to parents understanding of their children's attendance.

School staff will expect that parents check our WEDUC app to familiarise themselves with their child's 'live' attendance, which is streamed from our use of SIMS, and use the app to upload the expected medical evidence – should their child be absent from school.

Parents will also be able to message teaching staff as an extra form of communication relating to general enquiries and attendance concerns. Parents will also have the option to track their child's attendance and see reasons for logged absence – enabling them to see a detailed overview of attendance.

## **School targets, projects and special initiatives:**

The school has targets to improve attendance and your child has an important part to play in meeting these targets. Our target for each of our children is 96% to exceed both the national and Lancashire averages.

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

Through 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 in newsletter and we ask for your full support.

In 2021-2022, we will (in line with our current COVID-19 Risk Assessment, local and national restrictions) promote initiatives such as:

- weekly prizes for attendance as part of Gathering (from Autumn 2 2021)
- random Hot Spot days to reward children for their regular attendance and punctuality half termly 100% and 96% events and rewards for KS1
- KS2 annual 100% event and reward for KS1 and KS2
- half termly 'most-improved' rewards for children and families whose attendance has significantly improved (regardless of current percentage attendance).

Delph Side will also utilise local amenities and partnerships to arrange attendance rewards afternoons through collaborations with local high schools and colleges.

## **Summary:**

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend.

All school staff are committed to working with parents and pupils, as this is the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

**Date to Review:** Autumn 2022

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