

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, Seesaw 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, as well as weekly raffle draws for 100% attendance, weekly class rewards and half-termly class rewards for highest attenders.

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.

Work collaboratively with local high schools and work within a cluster of FORWARD primary schools to share best practice.

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 appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause. Dental and Optical appointments may not be authorised when scheduled within the school day – and this remains at the discretion of the Attendance Team.

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.

In line with NHS and UK Health Security Agency guidance, children who have experienced vomiting or diarrhoea should remain off school for 48 hours after their last episode to help prevent the spread of infection. However, we understand that not all cases of sickness are due to contagious illness. Therefore, the school will consider each case on its own merit. If it is suspected that the child's sickness is due to a non-infectious cause (e.g., anxiety, travel sickness, or other non-contagious factors), parents are encouraged to contact the school to discuss the circumstances, and a decision will be made accordingly.

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):

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. In most cases parents/ carers will be invited to an attendance panel meeting along with the Attendance Team, SAST and Attendance Governor.

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 your child is persistently absent, a member of staff/attendance team may home visit to discuss absence and offer support.

If opportunities to improve attendance are not accepted by parents, whilst attendance continues to decline, school will refer the case to SAST, 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 P11 – notifying parents verbally, in panel meetings and in letter form.

Absence Procedures:

If your child is absent you must:

Contact us by 9am 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.**

Absences that are reported after 9am or are unreported will be marked as unauthorised and will contribute as evidence towards a fixed penalty notice.

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)

Challenge you on the reason for absence and request a call back for an update on the child's welfare and likelihood of returning to school for the afternoon session.

At school's discretion, school will visit the home to ascertain why the child is not in school and will deliver registration certificate to highlight the absences and/ or any identifiable patterns.

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 Senior Attendance Champion (Mr Morris) If persistent absence continues, then the Headteacher.

Refer the matter to the Local Authority Attendance Team (SAST) 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.

We will talk with your child to enquire about their recent absence(s) and their wellbeing to enable us to offer our advice and emotional support in helping them to transition back into learning and into school life. This forms part of our holistic approach to supporting, safeguarding and nurturing our Delph Side pupils.

Telephone numbers and Seesaw usage

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.

We will also request the parents utilise the free Seesaw parent app in order to send and receive communications with school. **Seesaw is NOT to be used to report absences**, but direct communication between parents and staff can be achieved (even during out of hours times at staff discretion) to inform parents of attendance updates and home visits.

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 Miss Couch to Mr Morris, then Mrs Ormerod:

- Unannounced home visits
- Attendance Panel Meetings
- Use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) and/ or referral to outside agencies (including the Local Authority Attendance Officer);
- Early Help Assessments
- Referrals for Legal Action and SAST support.
- Use of Penalty Notices

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 (SAST) SAST 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 SAST for support from our School Attendance 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 P11 fixed penalty.

Persistent absence and fixed penalties

The following changes came into effect from **19th August 2024**, and must be enforced by education providers nationally.

- Penalty notices issued for offences that take place after **19th August 2024** will be charged at a **new rate of £160 per parent per child**. This can be paid at £80 if paid within 21 days.
- Any second penalty notice issued to the same parent for the same child within a rolling 3-year period will be issued at the rate of £160 to be paid within 28 days with no option for a discounted rate.
- The threshold at which a penalty notice **must be considered** is set at 10 sessions **(equivalent to 5 days) of unauthorised absence** within a 10-school week period. This may include absences as a result of arriving late after the register closes. **The 10 school weeks may span different terms or school years.**
- A maximum of 2 penalty notices may be issued to a parent for the same child within a rolling 3-year period, so at the 3rd (or subsequent) offence(s) another course of action will need to be considered (such as prosecution or one of the other attendance legal interventions).
- Only penalty notices issued for absences taking place **after 19th August 2024** will count towards the above thresholds.

We will monitor attendance on a daily basis, and review for any causes for concern – before 10 unauthorised sessions have occurred. We will use this evidence to inform supportive next steps for parents, including support outlined above. This also forms evidence towards a fixed penalty. This will occur in every term where 10 unauthorised sessions occur within a 10-week monitoring period.

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.

Being late after 9.30am will be classed as an unauthorised absence and will contribute towards potential legal action for persistent absence.

How we manage lateness:

The school day starts at 8:40am, 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 8.40am to maximise their learning.

Registers are completed at 9.05am, but the expectation is for children to be in school and engaging with learning by 8.50am. Any child coming in after this time will be marked as late. In accordance with the Regulations, if a child arrives after 9.30am 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 the appropriate fixed penalty notices (above) will be triggered.

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.
- 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.

We must advise you that if your child is absent either side of your holiday date, we may request evidence of flight date and times.

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).

Religious Absence:

The school will authorise one day 'leave' per religious festival, e.g. Eid, but no more than 1 day 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.

Exclusions and off-site provision

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
- 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.

Pupils who are unable to attend school for medical reasons:

The introduction of new statutory guidance on 1st 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.

Roles and responsibilities for attendance matters in this school:

Parents:

- Ensure children attend regularly and punctually Contact school on 1st 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 Early Help Assessments – cooperate with support and interventions offered by school or other agencies
- Actively support school's mission to improve attendance and punctuality.

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
- An attendance governor oversees action planning and best practice
- 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 a range of forms: Seesaw school app, telephone, letter, face-to-face and home visits - which will house key features essential to parents understanding of their children's attendance.

School staff will expect that parents check Seesaw to familiarise themselves with attendance updates and celebrations.

Parents will also be able to message teaching staff as an extra form of communication relating to general enquiries.

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%.

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 2024-2025, we will promote initiatives such as:

- Weekly celebrations for attendance as part of Gathering
- Celebrate the best attending classes in KS1 and KS2
- Weekly social media celebrations and updates
- 100% raffle draw each week

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.