



Dowson Primary Academy

ATTENDANCE POLICY

July 2022

Review Cycle – annually



Michelle Ashley, Mel Bradley and Kat Thornburn



Attendance and Punctuality Policy

Introductory Statement

At Dowson Primary Academy we believe that every child should be supported and challenged to reach their full potential, both academically and socially. In order for this to happen, all children need to attend school regularly. Achieving good school attendance and punctuality needs school and parents to work together to ensure that every child has the very best start in life.

Good attendance and punctuality helps children achieve academically, gain self-confidence, develop a sense of belonging and maintain friendships. Good attendance now, means developing an understanding of responsibility and reliability which will help children through their teenage years and into adulthood, particularly in their working lives. We firmly believe we are starting the formation of habits for life when setting attendance and punctuality patterns for children from the earliest point of their education.

Roles and responsibilities

Every child has the right to a good education. The legal position (Education Acts 1944 and 1956):

- The **LA** (Local Authority) has the responsibility of offering educational provision for all school aged children in Tameside through its schools and the Education Welfare Service.
- **School** has a responsibility to ensure that all children in their care receive an education appropriate to their level and need. At Dowson, we strive to provide this in a pleasant, safe and happy environment. School must keep an attendance register at the beginning of the morning and afternoon sessions and report all pupils who fail to attend regularly or for extended periods of time.
- **Parents** have a legal responsibility to ensure that their children receive their right to an education by ensuring they attend school regularly. Failure to do so may lead to prosecution.
- **The Education Welfare Service (EWS)** has the role of helping parents, school and the LA meet statutory obligations on school attendance.

School **MUST** account for all children between 8:50am- 3.15pm. Phone calls, visits and signing in and out systems are necessary in order to ensure all children are safeguarded. Parents **MUST** follow procedures to avoid confusion or concern.

Procedures for Attendance (including for *Nursery children):

- If a child is absent from school for any reason, it is the parent's responsibility to inform school by 8:50am by telephone, in person or letter. Do not email or use class dojo.
- If the reason for absence is known in advance, the parent must inform the school in writing before the first day of absence.



- If a parent has not contacted school, it is the school's responsibility to contact home to confirm the reason for absence.
- In the event of a child being absent without explanation from the parents/carers, school will make rigorous checks to ensure the child is safe. In the first instance, school will contact the primary contact on the child's data collection sheet. School will then continue through the list of contacts until confirmation of the child's safety and reason for absence is established. If school exhausts the contacts, school will visit the home and may consult with other known contacts such as neighbours. If school are concerned further, the Education Welfare Service, Children's Social Care and/or the Police may be informed.
- If school are still unable to contact home, a letter will be sent.
- In line with Tameside Educational Welfare Service's Children Missing Education Policy, if a child is missing school for 10 consecutive days without explanation, they will be treated as a child missing education; this is investigated by Tameside EWS. N.B. This does not include nursery children. However, poor attendance may result in your child's place being offered to another child.
- If a child continues to be absent without contact, school will continue to pursue contact and will try to confirm where the child is through all links known to the family: this may also involve reporting to EWS, Children's Service Hub or the police.
- If the child is subject to a Child Protection Plan, the Social Worker will be informed of absence.

*Nursery children's attendance is non-statutory and therefore referrals would not be made to the Education Welfare Service. However, for safeguarding reasons, they must still be accounted for if absent. Therefore, the above procedure still applies. In addition to this if the period of absence is in excess of 10 consecutive days, consideration may be given to withdraw the place and offer it to another child.

Procedures for Lateness (including for Nursery children):

- School doors open at 8.45am and registration is at 8:50am.
- If a child arrives after 8:50am but before 9.20am, they will receive a "late mark".
- If they arrive after 9.20am, they will receive an unauthorised absence for that session.
- In all circumstances of lateness, the parent must sign the child into the building they are usually in using the Entry Sign System. Parents must record the name of the child and their own name in full and give an accurate reason for the lateness.
- If a medical appointment card/letter is presented when a child is being signed in, the child will receive a late mark if they arrive before 10:45am. This will not affect their attendance record.
- If a child arrives after 10:45am after attending a medical or dental appointment, they will receive an m code which reflects this.

Definition - Authorised absence

An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been absent from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or guardian. For example, if a child has been unwell and the parent writes a note or telephones the school to explain the absence.



Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents do not have this authority. Consequently, not all absences supported by parents will be classified as authorised by the school.

Definition - Unauthorised absence

An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is absent from school without the permission of BOTH the school and a parent.

The absence is unauthorised if a child is absent from school without good reason, even with the permission of a parent.

Medical appointments

- We ask that wherever possible medical appointments are made outside of school hours. It is most important that you inform the school office, prior to the appointment, if your child is to be absent from school. Appointment letters can be copied at the office in advance of the appointment.
- To ensure your child's attendance is not adversely affected please ensure your child attends school before and after the appointment wherever possible.
- If a medical appointment card/letter is presented when a child is being signed in or out during a morning session (and the child arrives at school before 10:45am) or after 1.20pm, the child will receive a mark which will not affect their attendance record.

Sickness

If your child is sick once and you do not suspect it to be viral as your child is otherwise well, you may send your child in to school; for example over eating, being over excited or any condition that is not contagious.

If your child is suffering from a virus/illness that includes vomiting or diarrhoea, they must remain at home for 48 hours after the last episode of either one of these. Once 48 hours clear, they can return to school at the start of the following day.

For guidance for specific illnesses/conditions, please refer to:

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/is-my-child-too-ill-for-school>

Long term absence

When children have an illness that means they will be absent from school for over five days, the school will do all it can to send work home so that the child can keep up with their education if they are well enough to do so. If appropriate, the school will liaise with other services in order to provide appropriate support.

Requests for leave of absence

Following a change in the law from 1st September 2013, **Head Teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time** unless there are exceptional circumstances. Parents must inform the Head Teacher in writing of their intention to keep their child off school and give a detailed reason for this.

There is no predefined criteria for exceptional circumstances. Instead, these are considered on an individual basis. After consideration of the circumstances, the Head Teacher will inform the parent of how the absence



will be recorded. Head Teachers should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.

Whatever the circumstances, leave will not be granted in the following cases:

- If the child's attendance is already below 97%
- If leave is not requested in advance
- During any test/assessment periods
- At the start of any academic year
- If holidays have been taken during the past 12 months during term time (either authorised or not)
- During Year 6

Any absences taken without the agreement of the school, or in excess of that agreed, will be classed as unauthorised and may attract a penalty notice.

Penalty Notices

Section 444(A) of the Education Act 1996 empowers the Local Authority to issue Penalty Notices in cases of unauthorised absence from school. This means that parents/carers may receive a fine for absences of 10 unauthorised sessions or more. There are 2 sessions in each school day – morning and afternoon.

Amendments to 2007 regulations will reduce the timescales for paying a penalty notice. Each parent who resides with the child must, from 1 September 2013, pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. In cases where poor attendance continues, this may result in Court Proceedings.

The issuing of a Penalty Notice is an alternative to prosecuting a parent under Section 4441 of the Education Act 1996. If a family has previously been issued with two Penalty Notices for term time holidays during their child's time at Dowson, it is unlikely they would get an opportunity to discharge their liability again by paying a Penalty Notice. Any further unauthorised leave of absence during term time may lead to school seeking a prosecution for failing to ensure regular school attendance.

Understanding the importance and impact of attendance and punctuality on education

It is important to remember that 5% absence each year can equate to a full GCSE grade at the end of Year 11; persistent absence must be monitored and promptly addressed.

98-100% attendance enables children to maximise their potential academically and socially.

95-97% attendance is the minimum expectation for all children to be able to achieve good academic progress.

92-94% attendance is a cause for concern. School will closely monitor attendance and inform parents if their child falls below 95% on a half termly basis. Steps should be taken to reduce further absence to minimise the detrimental impact on learning. Parents may receive a Penalty Notice if 10 or more sessions are unauthorised. If absence is impacted on by medical conditions, a Health Care Plan must be in place.



Below 92% attendance is very concerning and equates to several weeks of lost learning time. At primary level, this can have a huge impact on the building blocks for future learning and educational outcomes. An attendance agreement must be completed between home and school to help address this level of attendance. If absence is affected by medical conditions, a Health Care Plan must also be in place. Parents could be issued with a Penalty Notice or face legal action (prosecution with a fine of up to £2500 and/or 3 months imprisonment)

Where a child has persistent lateness or absence, the Inclusion Co-ordinator and Pastoral Manager are responsible for pursuing with parents the reasons for this, agreeing an action plan and completing an attendance agreement and, if necessary, involving other agencies where appropriate.

Frequent lateness can have the same impact on learning as poor attendance. It also impacts on confidence, behaviour and disrupts other children's learning. Lateness will always be challenged. In the event of more than 3 late marks in a half term, a letter will be sent home. If the lateness continues parents will be required to discuss and resolve issues directly with the Principal.

Monitoring and Evaluation

- The official registers are maintained.
- The registers are checked and procedures followed on a daily basis.
- Attendance is given a high profile in school and children are rewarded for good attendance.
- Weekly and termly class attendance awards are given.
- Parents will be informed by school when attendance falls below 95% on a half termly basis
- The Governors will monitor attendance via the Principal's termly Academy Profile Report.
- The Governors and Principal are pro-active in attendance target setting, and will provide panel members should an Attendance Panel need to be convened.

Children missing from education

A child missing from school is a potential indicator of abuse and neglect. Staff will monitor children that go missing from school, particularly on repeat occasions, and report them to the designated safeguarding lead, following normal safeguarding procedures.

In order to ensure accurate data is collected to allow effective safeguarding, the school will inform the LA of any pupil who is going to be deleted from the admission register where they:

- Have been taken out of school by their parents and are being educated outside the school system e.g. home education.
- Have ceased to attend school and no longer live within a reasonable distance of the school.
- Have been certified by the school medical officer as unlikely to be in a fit state of health to attend school before ceasing to be of compulsory school age, and neither he/she nor his/her parent has indicated the intention to continue to attend the school after ceasing to be of compulsory school age.
- Are in custody for a period of more than four months due to a final court order and we do not reasonably believe they will be returning to the school at the end of that period.
- Have been permanently excluded.



The Local Authority must be notified when a school is to delete a pupil from its register under the above circumstances. This should be done as soon as the grounds for deletion are met and always before deleting the pupil's name from the register. It is essential that schools comply with this duty, so that local authorities can, as part of their duty to identify children of compulsory school age who are missing education, follow up with any child who might be in danger of not receiving an education and who might be at risk of abuse or neglect.

This policy will be reviewed annually and may be amended in accordance with LA, Enquire Learning Trust or National policy/legislation changes.