



# Durham Johnston

## ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY POLICY

1	<b>SUMMARY</b>	This policy aims to show our commitment to meeting our obligations with regards to school attendance.			
2	<b>RESPONSIBLE PERSON:</b>	Headteacher			
3	<b>APPLIES TO:</b>	Pupils, Parents and Staff			
4	<b>GROUPS/ INDIVIDUALS WHO HAVE OVERSEEN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THIS POLICY:</b>	Headteacher, Mrs J Bell, Mr M Horrocks, Mrs J Coady			
5	<b>RATIFYING COMMITTEE(S) &amp; DATE OF FINAL APPROVAL:</b>	Governors, Pupil and Staff Wellbeing 09/11/2023			
6	<b>VERSION:</b>	2			
7	<b>AVAILABLE ON:</b>	<b>Staff Shared Drive</b>	Yes	<b>Website</b>	Yes
8	<b>RELATED DOCUMENTS:</b>	-			
9	<b>DISSEMINATED TO:</b>	All staff			
10	<b>DATE OF IMPLEMENTATION:</b>	May 2019			
11	<b>DATE OF NEXT FORMAL REVIEW:</b>	November 2024			

## DOCUMENT CONTROL

<b>Date</b>	<b>Version</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Amendments</b>
May 2019	1.0	Policy first implemented	N/A
November 2023	2.0	Updates throughout policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sharing attendance</li><li>• Monitoring attendance</li><li>• Attendance support</li></ul>

## **Durham Johnston Comprehensive School: Ethos and values for attendance**

Every day in school matters. Excellent attendance is extremely important to us at Durham Johnston Comprehensive School. Keeping children in classrooms is in their best interests. There is a direct link between attendance in school and student achievement. Regular attendance and being punctual will help students in their adult lives and will prepare for the world of work. Regular attendance at school will also help students to develop social skills, make friends, and help them to communicate well with others. We expect every student to aim for 100% attendance and will support all to achieve this wherever possible. We use good practice and learn from innovative ideas to constantly develop and refine our attendance systems.

The foundation of securing good attendance is that school is a calm, orderly, safe, and supportive environment where all pupils are keen and ready to learn. Some pupils find it harder than others to attend school and therefore at all stages of improving attendance, we will work with key partners and collaboratively with students and their families to remove any barriers to attendance. Regular attendance is the business of all those involved in the life of a child. Securing good attendance cannot therefore be seen in isolation, and effective practices for improvement will involve close interaction with the schools' work on curriculum opportunities, behaviour, special educational needs support, mental health and wellbeing. It is also directly linked to effective use of resources, including pupil premium. The barriers that limit access to education are wide and complex, both within and beyond the school gates, and are often specific to individual students and families. Some students face greater barriers to attendance than their peers. Their right to an education is the same as any other student. We are mindful of the barriers these students face and put additional support in place where necessary to help them access their full-time education. We firmly believe in the importance of access for all, academic progress, the importance of knowledge and social justice. Strong attendance, therefore, is integral to the school's ethos and core values.

**Durham Johnston Comprehensive School will work with partners to:**

**EXPECT**

Aspire to high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents and build a culture where all can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across the school.



**MONITOR**

Rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.



**LISTEN AND UNDERSTAND**

When a pattern is spotted, discuss with pupils and parents. Learn about barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.



**FACILITATE SUPPORT**

Remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. This might include an early help or whole family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues.



**FORMALISE SUPPORT**

Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners should work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances this may include formalising support through a parenting contract or education supervision order.



**ENFORCE**

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, enforce attendance through statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.

## **What are our expectations for attendance?**

Durham Johnston Comprehensive School will promote the benefits of good attendance, set high expectations for every pupil and communicate those expectations clearly and consistently to pupils and parents. We systematically analyse data to identify patterns to target improvement efforts, and work effectively with the local authority and other local partners to overcome barriers to attendance. We have a clear school attendance policy which all staff, pupils and parents understand. We check this regularly. We recognise that improving attendance is a school leadership issue and have a designated senior leader with overall responsibility for championing and improving attendance in school. The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an effective, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education and where parents decide to have their child registered at our school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends our school regularly.

This means a child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school. This is essential for pupils to get the most out of their school experience, including their attainment, wellbeing, and wider life chances. Parents and carers are responsible for ensuring that children attend school both regularly and on time. The pupils with the highest attainment at the end of key stage 2 and key stage 4 have higher rates of attendance over the key stage compared to those with the lowest attainment. Nationally, at KS4, pupils not achieving grade 9 to 4 in English and maths had an overall absence rate of 8.8%, compared to 5.2% among those achieving grade 4. The overall absence rate of pupils not achieving grade 9 to 4 was over twice as high as those achieving grade 9 to 5 (8.8% compared to 3.7%).

## **How do we monitor attendance?**

Absence from school affects a child's attainment, wellbeing and wider outcomes. Absences can lead to gaps in knowledge and understanding and will eventually have an impact on exam grades. For this reason, we will monitor attendance carefully to promote early intervention, including raising concerns with external agencies where appropriate. We use A Star Attendance to monitor attendance daily and communicate with parents/carers if attendance drops below 95%. We want to work in partnership with pupils and their families to promote excellent attendance. We accurately complete admission and attendance registers and have effective day to day processes in place to follow-up absence.

We regularly monitor and analyse attendance and absence data to identify pupils or cohorts that require support with their attendance. This allows us to put effective intervention strategies in place.

We will take the attendance register at the start of each morning session of each school day and once during each afternoon session during period 5, 1.45pm. On each occasion we record whether every pupil is present, attending an approved educational activity, absent, or unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances. Only exceptional circumstances warrant a leave of absence. We will consider each application individually, taking into account the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind the request.

Where absence is recorded as unexplained in the attendance register, the correct code will be inputted as soon as the reason is ascertained, but no later than 5 working days after the session. We make the necessary statutory data returns to the local authority; we are legally responsible for reporting poor attendance to them. Our admission register (sometimes referred to as the school roll) contains specific personal details of every pupil in the school along with the date of admission or re-admission to the school, information regarding parents and carers, and details of the school last attended. Parents/carers should ensure that school is updated with new contact details for themselves and their children including addresses, phone numbers (particularly mobile numbers) and email address changes. We hold more than one emergency contact number for each pupil. This is good practice to give us additional options to contact a responsible adult.

We provide regular attendance reports to class teachers or tutors to facilitate discussions with pupils and to leaders (including our special educational needs coordinator, designated safeguarding lead). We conduct thorough analysis of half-termly, termly, and full year data to identify patterns and trends. This includes analysis of pupils and cohorts and identifying patterns in uses of certain codes, days of poor attendance and where appropriate, subjects which have low lesson attendance. We regularly compare our own attendance data (at whole school, year group and cohort level) against local, regional, and national levels to identify areas of focus for improvement. We share information with form tutors to celebrate attendance recognising both excellent attendance and improved attendance.

### **How do we seek to understand and remove barriers to good attendance?**

We strive to build strong relationships with families, listen to and understand barriers to attendance and work with families to remove them. We regularly inform parents about children's attendance and absence levels in an understandable way, and we will host regular meetings with the parents of pupils who we (and the Local Authority) consider to be vulnerable or are persistently or severely absent to discuss attendance and engagement at school. When we communicate with parents, we discuss the link between attendance and attainment and wider wellbeing, and challenge parents' views where they have misconceptions about what 'good' attendance looks like.

We devise specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data. We monitor the impact of school wide attendance efforts, including any specific strategies implemented. The findings are then used to evaluate approaches or inform future strategies. For the most vulnerable pupils, regular attendance is also an important protective factor and the best opportunity for needs to be identified and support provided. Research has shown associations between regular absence from school and a number of extra-familial harms. This includes crime (90% of young offenders had been persistently absent) and serious violence (83% of knife possession offenders had been persistently absent in at least 1 of the 5 years of study).

We share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities, and other partners when absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe.

**Please note that these are national figures. They are not school figures.**

## **How do we intervene and offer support?**

We employ and regularly review a range of evidence-based interventions addressing barriers to attendance. This includes careful monitoring and analysis of data in a bi-weekly meeting between the school's Attendance Manager and members of our pastoral team, they may have a particular focus on students with key characteristics such as:

- Children who are vulnerable or have a social worker, including those children looked-after by the Local Authority, and those who are young carers or who are eligible for Free School Meals.
- Children who have special educational needs or a disability.
- Those who have less than 90% attendance and have become persistently absent.

Children being absent from education for prolonged periods and/or on repeat occasions can act as a vital warning sign to a range of safeguarding issues including neglect, child sexual and child criminal exploitation - particularly county lines. It is important that our response to persistently absent pupils and children missing education supports identifying such abuse, and in the case of absent pupils, helps prevent the risk of them becoming a child missing education in the future. Please see our safeguarding policy for further detail on early intervention.

This includes when problems are first emerging but also where children are already known to Local Authority children's social care and need a social worker (such as a child who is a child in need or who has a child protection plan, or is a looked after child), where being absent from education may increase known safeguarding risks within the family or in the community.

The attendance officer works closely with a network of voluntary organisations and charities to support vulnerable students including those with persistent absence. They engage in attendance reviews in line with nationally recognised escalation procedures.

Where absence escalates and a student misses 10% or more of school (equivalent to 1 day or more a fortnight across a full school year), we can work with Durham Local Authority to put additional targeted support in place to remove any barriers to attendance and reengage students and their families.

In doing so, we will sensitively consider possible reasons for absence and understand the importance of school as a place of safety and support for children who might be facing difficulties. Particular focus is given to students who are absent from school more than they are present (those missing 50% or more of school). These severely absent students may find it more difficult to be in school or face more significant barriers to their regular attendance and as such are likely to need more intensive support across a range of partners. We regard students in this category as a needing urgent support and as a strategic priority.

In all cases, we, along with the Local Authority make patterns of both persistent and severe absence a focus of our regular data monitoring and identify students and cohorts who need targeted attendance support as quickly as possible. When we identify students who need support from external partners, we make the necessary referrals as quickly as possible.

We will support students who return to school following a lengthy or unavoidable period of absence and provide support to build confidence and bridge gaps.

## **How do we formalise support as a school?**

Where engagement in support proves to be challenging, we will host more formal conversations with parents/carers and students. These meetings will clearly explain the consequences of persistent and severe absence to the student and family and the potential need for legal intervention in future but are also an opportunity to continue to listen to and understand the barriers to attendance and explain the help that is available to avoid those consequences.

Examples of formalised support:

- Phone calls/Absence message: we contact parents/carers to discuss absences and attendance levels.
- Letters: we contact parents/carers via letter to raise awareness that child's attendance is a cause for concern.
- Requests for medical Evidence: we may contact parents/carers via letter/or telephone call to request medical evidence where absence is a cause for concern.
- Attendance Planning Meetings: we hold face to face meetings or telephone meeting with parents to discuss what support they need to improve attendance. A Support Plan will be provided with actions and targets.
- Enforcement Letters: we contact parents/carers with a letter informing them of the gravity of current percentage attendance and possible consequences.
- Referral to the Local Authority: we contact parents/carers informing them of a formal warning and invite to a formal interview if interventions have failed to improve attendance.

The Local Authority has a duty to make sure that all parents/carers fulfil their responsibilities. Where voluntary support has not been effective and/or has not been engaged with, we will work with the local authority to put formal support in place. We work together with the Local Authority to make use of the full range of legal interventions rather than relying solely on fixed penalty notices or prosecution. We determine interventions by considering particular circumstances of a family. We apply this policy in a fair and consistent way, but always consider the individual needs of pupils and their families who have specific barriers to attendance. We consider our obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

## **How does the Local Authority enforce good attendance?**

The Local Authority used its statutory powers to enforce good attendance in a number of ways. Their attendance interventions include:

- Parental contracts
- Education supervision orders
- Attendance prosecution
- Parenting orders
- Fixed penalty notices

Where interventions are used, they are intended to change parental behaviour and in making the decision to use an intervention, our leadership group, along with local authority officers have regard to their safeguarding duty of care. Parents/carers are committing an offence if they fail to make sure that their children attend school regularly, even if they are missing school without their knowledge.

Parents/carers can be fined up to £2,500 or imprisoned for failing to ensure that children attend school regularly. Magistrates can also impose a Parenting Order, which means the parent has to attend a parenting class.

### What systems

- If a child is unable to attend school, parents/carers must call to record absence. the school telephone number (0191 3843887) before 8.00am on **each day** of absence.
- Our attendance team will contact parents/carers by telephone or email if a child is absent to find out their reason for absence.
- The only legally acceptable reasons for not being in school are illness and medical appointments. Other absences may be authorised by the school, such as dates of religious observance.
- Wherever possible, medical or other appointments should be made for times outside of the school day. Pupils must be on our site at 8.20am. The school day ends at 2.45pm.
- Registers close at 9:30 am. We have facility to code a pupil as a U, late after registers close – this is an unauthorised absence and could lead to a formal warning or fixed penalty notice (FPN).
- The afternoon register reads from period 5 which is 1.45pm.
- The school will not authorise any leave of absence due to family holidays unless there are exceptional circumstances. Any parents/carers taking children out of school during term-time without authorisation by the Headteacher may be issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice. Application for leave of absence should be emailed the school's Attendance Officer. ([school@durhamjohnston.org.uk](mailto:school@durhamjohnston.org.uk)) and your child's Form Tutor, who will log the request on our information management system.
- Each week students will discuss attendance with their Form Tutor and may record details of discussion in their planners. This will also help pastoral staff to monitor attendance and implement support and intervention where necessary.
- Letters may be issued to parents/carers to make them aware of specific attendance totals and in future, information will also be available on the school's Parent App.
- Please note that the processes outlined here do not apply to those students with long-term health conditions; support for those students is managed differently.
- For students with a long-term condition, our attendance and pastoral team may have sensitive conversations and need to develop good support for students with physical or mental health conditions. For example, making reasonable adjustments if a student has a disability or putting in place an individual healthcare plan if needed.
- For students with a long-term condition, considering whether additional support from external partners (including the Local Authority or NHS) would be appropriate, making referrals in a timely manner and working together with those services to deliver any subsequent support. We will work with parents to develop specific support for attendance for students with special educational needs and disabilities, including, where applicable, ensuring the provision outlined in the student's education, health and care plan (EHCP) is accessed.
- In addition, we will work with families to help support routines where school transport is regularly being missed and work with other partners to encourage the scheduling of additional support interventions or medical appointments outside of the main school day. We will collaboratively establish strategies for removing the in-school barriers these students face, including considering support or reasonable adjustments for uniform, transport, routines, access to support in school and lunchtime arrangements.

- We are legally required to share information from our registers with the Local Authority. We are asked to share the name and address of any student who fails to attend school regularly or has missed school for 10 days or more without the absence being recorded as authorised.

The Governing Body at Durham Johnston Comprehensive School have a duty to recognise the importance of attendance and its integral role within our ethos and policies. Governors will:

- ensure that school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties. They work with our leadership team to set goals or areas of focus for attendance and providing support and challenge around delivery against those focus areas.
- Governors will ensure that school staff receive adequate training on attendance.
- Governors will review attendance data, discuss trends, and help school leaders focus improvement efforts on the individual pupils or cohorts who need it most. Governors will pay particular attention to attendance of student cohorts within our school that have historically had poor attendance or that face entrenched barriers to attendance. This includes students who have a social worker, are from a background where attendance has historically been low, have a long-term medical condition, special educational needs or a disability, or are eligible for free school meals. There is repeated evaluation of the effectiveness of processes and improvement efforts to ensure we meet the needs of pupils as experiences and barriers to attendance evolve.
- It is important that Governors recognise that attendance improvement does not happen in isolation and therefore we collaboratively ensure it is prioritised in wider improvement strategies, such as raising attainment, behaviour, special educational needs and disabilities, wellbeing, and safeguarding. At Durham Johnston Comprehensive School we have a link governor who focusses on attendance. Governors ensure Durham Johnston's attendance management processes are delivered effectively, and that consistent attendance support is provided for pupils who require it most by prioritising the staff and resources needed. This includes ensuring schools engage and work effectively with the local authority School Attendance Support Team.

Durham County Council will provide communication and advice regarding attendance. They share best practice between schools in Durham.

They will:

- host Targeting Support Meetings and hold termly conversations with us to support our use of attendance data and provide access to services for specific pupils.
- Durham County Council will provide multi-disciplinary support for families: provide access to early help support workers to work intensively with families to provide practical whole-family support where needed to tackle the causes of absenteeism and unblock the barriers to attendance. DCC also provide and progress, using the full range of parental responsibility measures. They monitor and improve the attendance of children with a social worker through Durham Virtual School.

### **What does the phrase exceptional circumstances mean?**

All students of compulsory school age are entitled to a full-time education. In very exceptional circumstances, where it is in a student's best interests, there may be a need for a temporary part-time timetable to meet their individual needs. For example, where a medical condition prevents a student from attending full-time education and a part-time timetable is considered as part of a re-integration package. A part-time timetable will not be used to manage a student's behaviour and would only be in place for the shortest time necessary. Any pastoral support programme or other agreement will have a time limit by which point the student is expected to attend full time, either at school or alternative provision. There should also be formal arrangements in place for regularly reviewing any such plan with the student and their parents. We will ensure comprehensive pastoral care is in place where needed and consider whether a time-limited phased return to school would be appropriate, for example for those affected by anxiety about school attendance. We regularly monitor attendance data for any students as outlined above. This facilitates swift additional support from external partners, where necessary. The Local Authority is responsible for arranging suitable education for children of compulsory school age who, because of health reasons, would otherwise not receive suitable education.

### **What does the phrase Children Missing from Education mean?**

Children missing education (CME) is the term used to describe children of compulsory school age children who:

- are not on a school roll and are not being educated in another way (for example at home, privately, or in alternative provision)
- have been out of any educational provision for a substantial period of time and we do not know their whereabouts.

Children missing education are at significant risk of underachieving, being victims of harm, exploitation or radicalisation, and becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training) later in life. If a student and their family move from Durham and their whereabouts are unknown, we can legally remove that student from our roll after 20 school days of unauthorised absence. It is vital that parents/carers keep school informed of any change of details and regularly update us if details change. It is also important that emergency contact information is kept up to date and if a family leave Durham they provide details of where and how they can be contacted. If we are unable to trace one of our students, this would be treated as a safeguarding matter.

### **Why do we emphasise the importance of good punctuality too?**

Every minute in school matters. A child arriving late to school will lose valuable learning time. Students are expected to arrive on the school site by 8.20am each day, in order to attend form period and start learning at 8.25am. If they arrive late for school, they must sign in at student reception. The student access gate onto the school premises is locked by a member of our safeguarding team at 8.20am every morning. Students arriving after the gate is locked will be recorded as late to school. Student names are taken and a reason for being late is requested. A Senior Teacher will record the names of students arriving late until 8.35am. Students who arrive after 8.35 must sign in at reception. Names are recorded as a behaviour event with no points attached. Every Friday afternoon a report is created. This produces a list of students who have been late that week.

These names are added to the late spreadsheet, where further analysis allows those who have accumulated 3 lates (or multiples of 3) to be identified.

Year Leaders are consulted throughout this process to identify any pastoral factors which should be considered for each individual case. Regular communication with Form Tutors ensures that tutees are fully aware of our concerns and also any sanctions.

### **What sanctions are in place for persistent lateness?**

- A student who is late to school 3 times receives a letter home signed by the Headteacher.
- Late 6 times – letter home and 15-minute detention on Friday after school.
- Late 9 times – letter home and 30-minute detention on Friday after school.
- Late 12 times – letter home and 45-minute detention on Friday after school.
- Late 15 times, or multiples of 3 thereafter – letter home and 1 hour detention on Friday after school.

A Senior Teacher will call home for any student who fails to attend detention. Sanctions will be escalated appropriately. Deliberate failure to attend will result in losing social times during the following week.

### **Who should I contact if I have a query regarding attendance or punctuality?**

Please find a list of contact details in relation to attendance and punctuality queries.

Role	Contact details
Head Teacher	school@durhamjohnston.org.uk
Deputy Head Teacher - DSL	j.bell@durhamjohnston.org.uk
Attendance officer	j.coady@durhamjohnston.org.uk
Attendance Champion	m.horrocks@durhamjohnston.org.uk
KS3 Lead	m.simpson@durhamjohnston.org.uk
KS4 Lead	s.bowman@durhamjohnston.org.uk
Director of Sixth Form	j.wilbraham@durhamjohnston.org.uk
School intervention Lead	m.horrocks@durhamjohnston.org.uk