



Doncaster
Council

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Draft Attendance Policy

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Member of staff Reviewing Policy: Mrs Emma Cooke (**Headteacher**)

Approved by Governing Body: (Governor) Draft Policy to be approved at Inclusion task & finish subcommittee group May 2018

The Legal Framework

Under The Education Act 1999, parents are responsible for ensuring that children of compulsory school age receive full-time education at school or otherwise. Parents have a legal responsibility to ensure their child's regular attendance at the school where they are registered. If a child of compulsory school age who is registered at a school fails to attend regularly at the school, the parent is guilty of an offence under this Act.

The DFE advice on School Attendance November 2016 and School Attendance Parental Responsibility Measures January 2015 (updated January 2017) has been consulted before reviewing this policy. This school believes that good attendance is vital for all pupils if they are to gain the most from the education we provide. There are clearly documented links between regular attendance and attainment. The school attendance team will regularly check the attendance of pupils and where necessary the school will follow up with the child's parents. We hope that parents will assist us in our work of raising attendance levels throughout the school by:

- Ensuring the regular attendance of their child
- Informing the school when their child is absent from school
- Providing a reason for the absence
- Attending any meetings about their child's attendance, where necessary.

Aims

At Balby Central Primary Academy we firmly believe that all pupils benefit from regular school attendance. The aim of this guidance is to minimise the amount of time lost due to absence in order to maximise the educational potential of every pupil. This can be achieved with the support of parents by ensuring absence, including holidays, is not taken during term time unless there are 'exceptional circumstances'.

At Balby Central Primary Academy, in order for an attendance record to be deemed good, it must be 96% or above:

- 100% Excellent Attendance
- 98% Very Good Attendance
- 97% Good Attendance

Each year, a number of pupils from every year group achieve 100% attendance, emphasising that it is an achievable target. Some achieve this level of attendance year upon year. Absence during term time, for any reason, interrupts a pupil's education and risks disrupting their educational progress.

- Pupils should aim for 100% attendance,
- 90% attendance means a pupil is missing the equivalent of ½ day of education every week.
- Pupils with 90% and below are classified as Persistent Absentees
- A pupil with 80% attendance all the way through secondary school (5 academic years) is the equivalent of missing a whole year of education.

Although absence is not the only factor that has a link to a pupil's attainment. There are other complex relationships, such as the strong link from prior attainment and the link between different pupil characteristics and attainment, which should be taken into account. The research report February 2015 provided an overview of the link between pupil absence and attainment based on available evidence. (*The link between absence and attainment at KS2 and KS4 – Department for Education Research report – February 2015*)

Government figures show:

- At key stage 2, in general the higher percentage of sessions missed across a key stage, the lower the likely level of attainment at the end of key stage 2
- At the end of key stage 2, 92.3% of pupils are more likely to achieve the expected level of progress in reading and mathematics with full attendance, as opposed to 77.2% of pupils with attendance rates of 90 - 95% achieving this standard
- At key stage 4, pupils with full attendance are 1.5 times more likely to achieve 5+ good GCSEs or equivalent and 2.8 times more likely to achieve 5+ good GCSEs including English and mathematics than pupils with attendance between 80 - 85%
- At key stage 4 94% of pupils with no absence achieve 5 good GCSEs or equivalent as opposed to 84.4% who have attendance rates of 90 – 95%
- Pupils with no absence are 10.2 times more likely to achieve the English Baccalaureate than pupils with 80 – 85% attendance to key stage 4 lessons
- 90% attendance sounds quite good but 1 day off in 10 over 5 years equals 95 days which is 19 weeks and equates to half a school year

Only the Headteacher may authorise such absences. Absences without permission from school will be registered as unauthorised (equivalent to truancy).

* 'Exceptional Circumstances' for absence may include:

- illness of pupil
- representative event (for example sport, music or school)
- religious observance
- family bereavement (immediate family)
- employer/further education/school interview

Any other 'exceptional circumstances' will be at the discretion of the Headteacher and a pupil's attendance record will be taken into account when deciding whether or not to grant permission for absence.

'Exceptional Circumstances' DO NOT include:

- looking after siblings
- birthday or other celebrations
- shopping
- attendance at local events e.g. The Great Yorkshire Show

School Responsibilities

The school will:

- contact parents on the first day if there is unexplained absence.
- consult parents if it is felt that absence is affecting progress.
- encourage punctuality and good attendance as part of safeguarding practice.
- discuss with parents any problems with attendance and punctuality.
- liaise with the LA over specific attendance issues where necessary.
- Develop clear procedures to enable pupils to come to school.
- Support families to improve their child's attendance where necessary.
- Refer pupils with poor attendance to the Local Authority for additional support.

- Ensure that all pupils and parents understand the issues and procedures for attendance.
- Ensure that all staff including administrative, support and non-teaching staff as well as Governors understand the issues and procedures for registration and attendance.
- Determine the correct absence code following Department for Education guidelines.
- Closely monitor pupils on personalised timetables based on individual needs.

Attendance records are also used when writing references for future employers, colleges or universities.

The Headteacher and Senior Leadership Team

The Headteacher and Senior Leadership Team are responsible for the motivation and leadership of the whole staff by demonstrating a commitment to promoting good attendance by:

- Promoting a whole school approach to attendance with high expectations
- Ensuring there is a clear policy for attendance that is regularly reviewed and updated, reflecting the practice and procedures within the school
- Ensuring the monitoring and implementation of the agreed policy and procedures.
- Analysing attendance data to identify areas for development and issues related to vulnerable groups
- Providing regular reports to the Governing Body about attendance.
- Being available, if appropriate, for parents who may wish to discuss specific problems or in-school difficulties which their child is experiencing.
- Ensuring that appropriate training is provided as required on attendance.
- Ensuring the governors are provided with key information regarding whole school and pupil cohort's attendance by providing data, analysis and commentary.
- Ensure attendance information is provided as evidence when external bodies inspect the school.
- Ensuring regular celebrations of good attendance take place.

The Governors

The Governing Body of the school is actively engaged in promoting good attendance by supporting and encouraging pupils and teachers in their work. The Governing Body will ensure that a governor is available to support the school where appropriate.

The Governing body will be provided with attendance information as an indicator of overall school performance.

Representatives of the Governing body will access appropriate training to help them to understand the duty of the school to promote regular attendance.

The Governors will ratify the school attendance policy.

The Pastoral Leaders

Pastoral Leaders have a very important role to play in the school's framework for promoting good attendance within their respective year group[s] by:

- Meeting with parents of children, who are developing or have developed, a pattern of absences, and agreeing actions which may lead to the child beginning to attend more regularly.
- Ensuring that there are clearly understood attendance procedures, in place.
- Agreeing attendance action plans with the child's parents/carers and individual students where a pattern of absence is a cause for concern.
- Recognising and celebrating the good attendance of students in their year assemblies, tutor groups and through individual praise.

The Role of Class Teachers/Key Workers

Class Teachers/Key Workers are ideally placed because of their regular contact with pupils to assess whether the explanations received for a child's absence are reasonable, or if the child is at an early stage in developing a pattern of absence.

In our school we recognise that building a good relationship with pupils is vital in promoting good attendance by:

- Ensuring that an accurate and timely register is taken mornings and afternoon, using lesson monitor.
- Publicly praising those pupils who attend well, or make an effort to improve their attendance.
- Using the school registration system accurately to record absences with 'N' code for the Attendance Officer inputting the correct code when evidence is obtained that authorises the absence or is coded as unauthorised.
- Referring unexplained absences or patterns to absence to the Pupil Attendance Officer.
- Welcoming children back after they have been absent because of illness.
- Taking specific steps to assist children returning to school when they have been absent.
- Providing a positive role model through their own attendance and punctuality.

The Role of the Pupil Attendance Officer

- Contacting external providers, dual registered placements, and Alternative providers to obtain attendance information for pupils accessing this provision.
- Passing information received from some parents at the school to the class teachers/key workers regularly and consistently.
- Begin first day contact by 9:15am each day to establish where a pupil is if not in school as expected each day
- Producing the school's good attendance certificates.
- Keeping an accurate register on SIMS, chase missing marks/incomplete registers.
- Analysing attendance data for trends and to identify pupils at risk.
- Making routine phone calls to parents and sending out standard letters to parents about their child's attendance.

Parental Responsibilities

By law parents have a duty to educate their children by ensuring regular attendance at school or otherwise. In order to facilitate this process, parents with children at Example School are expected to:

- inform school by telephone on the first morning of any absence before 8.50am
- inform the school of the anticipated return date due to absence and continue to contact school if this changes
- provide a note to cover the absence on the child's return to school
- ensure that their child gets to school on time
- Ensure that their child catches up on missed work to avoid 'gaps' in their knowledge.
- not take family holidays during term time (see further guidance below)
- attend review meetings linked to personalised timetables and any changes as appropriate

This school believes that its pupils are able to achieve success when:

- School and family work in partnership.
- Parents take an active interest in their child's work.
- Parents ensure their child arrives in school for morning registration (8.50am)
- Parents ensure that their child attends school regularly and do not allow time off from school for trivial or unnecessary reasons.
- Parents contact the school on the first day of absence by 8.50am and provide the reason for absence and intended return date.
- Parents avoid taking leave of absence during term time.
- Parents ensure that, so far as possible, any work that has been missed because of absence is completed, checking with the staff at school if necessary.
- Parents attend any necessary meetings and respond as quickly as possible to any letters and information about their child's attendance.

What will happen if my child does not attend school regularly?

- The school will contact you if they are concerned about your child's attendance to offer any support that may be required. A referral could be made to the Attendance and Pupil Welfare Service if attendance continues to be a concern.
- Doncaster Council will use legislation to enforce attendance at school where parents do not fulfil their duty to ensure their children attend school regularly. This could mean a parent or carer enters into the Local Authority Enforcement Procedure which may lead to prosecution in the Magistrates Court.
- A parent or carer could receive a Parenting Order, a Community Order, a Curfew Order and/or a fine up to £2500.
- A parent or carer can also be issued with an Education Fixed Penalty Notice for any unauthorised absence including taking an unauthorised leave of absence in term time.
- Remember school gives your child a wide range of opportunities and experiences both academic and social allowing them to develop their interests and achieve their full potential. Failure to attend school regularly will limit a pupil's access to this.

The Role of Pupils

This school believes that all pupils should attend regularly if they are to succeed and reach their full potential.

Pupils should:

- Aim for 100% attendance, only being absent through genuine illness.
- Arrive in school in time for registration at 8.50am
- To attend for afternoon registration at 13.00pm
- If they arrive late after registers have closed, they will be awarded a late mark.
- Pupils on a personalised timetable that includes attendance to offsite and alternative providers must ensure they attend regularly in line with their timetable

Leave of absence in Term Time

In line with the Governments legislation no requests for holidays can be authorised except in exceptional circumstances. For the school to consider exceptional circumstances a leave of absence form must be submitted at least four weeks before the proposed start of the holiday and booking the holiday. Parents will be invited to a meeting with the school to discuss the request. For the School to consider exceptional circumstances the request must be put in writing together with any supporting evidence. A meeting or phone call will then take place to discuss the request. All holidays will be classed as unauthorised, unless you receive confirmation in writing from the School that the holiday has been authorised. There are no exceptions. All holidays that are unauthorised will be referred to the Local Authority to issue a Fixed Penalty Notice.

When a Fixed Penalty Notice is issued, the penalty is £60 per child, per parent/carer when the payment is made within 21 days, after 28 days it will increase to £120. Failure to pay within 28 days will result in a summons to appear before the Magistrates Court on the grounds that the parent/carer has failed to secure their child's regular attendance at the school. Please note that a separate Fixed Penalty Notice will be issued to each parent for each child and all monies are payable to the Local Authority.

Every school day counts towards your child's future. Days off school add up to lost learning. In total there are 175 non-school days a year. This gives families the opportunity to:

- spend time together, go on family visits
- go on holiday or on days out, attend routine appointments

The law says that parents do not have the right to take their child out of school during term time except in exceptional circumstances. If you do so without the schools authorisation this will be recorded as unauthorised absence and may result in legal action.

Why shouldn't I take my child on holiday during term time?

Many parents and carers think it is okay to go on holiday during term time; this has a negative effect on their children's learning and ability to achieve.

If your child goes on holiday during term time, they are absent:

- 10 days absence = 95% attendance
- 19 days absence = 90% attendance
- 29 days absence = 85% attendance
- 38 days absence = 80% attendance
- 47 days absence = 75% attendance

How do I request leave of absence for a family holiday?

All requests should be made on an Application for Leave of Absence form which is available from the school office. A meeting will be arranged to discuss the request for leave of absence. You should also submit any evidence to support your exceptional circumstances (see below). This should be submitted no later than 21 days before the start of the holiday.

Will the school authorise taking my child away during term-time?

The Legislation for authorising absence in term time states that holiday's will not be authorised 'except in exceptional circumstances. The headteacher will consider your request and respond to your request.

What happens if the head teacher does not agree my request?

Your child's absence will be marked as unauthorised absence and you will be informed of this. If you take your child on holiday your child's school may request the Local Authority issue a Fixed Penalty Notice.

The Penalty is £60 per parent per pupil and if not paid within 21 days this will increase to £120, failure to pay the full amount within 28 days will result in a summons to appear in the Magistrates Court on the grounds that you have failed to ensure your child's regular attendance at school.

Once the school has informed parents the leave of absence will be unauthorised, further unauthorised absence during the pupils time in school may count as an aggravated offence which could lead to a fine of up to £2,500 or imprisonment.

Contact:

Email: welfare.service@doncaster.gov.uk

Tel: 01302 736504