



Discovery Schools
Academy Trust



Asfordby Captain's Close

Primary School

Attendance policy

Approved by: Sarah Sadler

Date: 10.09.22

Last reviewed on: 10.09.20

Advisory Board Approval:

Next review due by: September 2024

Introduction

This is a successful school and your child plays their part in making it so.

Regular and punctual school attendance is important. Pupils need to attend school regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them by law. Woolden Hill School recognises its responsibilities to ensure pupils are in school and on time, therefore having access to learning for the maximum number of days and hours. This school attendance policy is written to reflect the law and the guidance produced by the Department for Education.

Children who are persistently late or absent soon fall behind with their learning. Children who are absent from school frequently develop large gaps in their learning which will impact on their progress and their ability to meet age related learning expectations. A child whose attendance drops to 90% each year will, over their time at primary school, have missed two whole terms of learning.

It is very important that you make sure that your child attends school and ensuring your child has regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility. Permitting an absence from school without a good reason is an offence by law and may result in a Fixed Penalty Notice (for each parent/carer) and/or prosecution. The Senior Leadership Team and Advisory Board at our school work together with parents, other professionals and agencies to ensure that all pupils are encouraged and supported to develop good attendance habits and this Policy sets out how we will achieve this together.

Our policy applies to all children registered at this school and this policy is made available to all parents/carers of pupils on our school website.

Aims and Objectives

This attendance policy ensures that all staff and the Advisory Board in our school are fully aware of and clear about the actions necessary to promote good attendance.

Through this Policy we aim to:

- Improve pupils' achievement by ensuring high levels of attendance and punctuality.
- Achieve a minimum of 96% attendance for all children, apart from those with chronic health issues.
- Create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm and seen to be valued by the school.
- Raise awareness of parents, carers and pupils of the importance of uninterrupted attendance and punctuality at every stage of a child's education.
- Ensure that our policy applies to Early Years aged children in order to promote good habits at an early age.
- Work in partnership with pupils, parents, staff and the Education Welfare Service so that all pupils realise their potential, unhindered by unnecessary absence.
- Promote a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure, and valued, and encourage in pupils a sense of their own responsibility.
- Establish a pattern of monitoring attendance and ensure consistency in recognising achievement and dealing with difficulties.
- Recognise the key role of all staff, but especially class teachers, in promoting good attendance.
- We maintain and promote good attendance and punctuality through:
- Raising awareness of attendance and punctuality issues among all staff, parents and pupils.

- Ensuring that parents have an understanding of the responsibility placed on them for making sure their child attends regularly and punctually.
- Equipping children with the life skills needed to take responsibility for good school attendance and punctuality appropriate to the child's age and development.
- Maintaining effective means of communication with parents, pupils, staff and Advisory Board on school attendance matters.
- Developing and implementing procedures for identifying, reporting and reviewing cases of poor attendance and persistent lateness.
- Supporting pupils who have been experiencing any difficulties at home or at school which are preventing good attendance.
- Developing and implementing procedures to follow up non-attendance at school.

Definitions

By law, every half-day absence from school is classified by the school (not by the parents/carers), as either **authorised or unauthorised**. This is why information about the reason for any absence is always required, preferably in writing.

Authorised absence

- An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or carer. For example, if a child has been unwell and the parent 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.

Unauthorised absence

- An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school **without the permission** of the school. Therefore the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent.
- This type of absence can lead to the Local Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings.

Persistent Absenteeism

- A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more of their sessions over the school year **for whatever reason**. Absence at this level causes considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parents'/carers' full support and co-operation to tackle this.
- PA pupils are identified and monitored carefully through our pastoral system. All our PA pupils are subject to an action plan. All children who fall into the PA category are also automatically made known to the Education Welfare Officer (EWO).

Procedures

Our school will undertake to follow the following procedures to support good attendance:

- To maintain appropriate registration processes.
- To maintain appropriate attendance data.
- To communicate clearly the attendance procedures and expectations to all staff, Advisory Board, parents and pupils.
- To have consistent and systematic daily records which give detail of any absence and lateness.

- To follow up absences and persistent lateness if parents/carers have not communicated with the school.
- To inform parents/carers what constitutes authorised and unauthorised absence.
- To strongly discourage unnecessary absence through holidays taken during term time.
- To work with parents to improve individual pupils attendance and punctuality
- To refer to the Educational Welfare Service any child whose attendance causes concern and where parents/carers have not responded to school initiatives to improve.
- To report attendance statistics to Leicestershire LA and the DfE where requested.
- All staff should be aware that they must raise any attendance or punctuality concerns to the Senior Leadership Team with responsibility for monitoring attendance.

Working with our EWO

Parents/carers 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.

If difficulties cannot be resolved in this way, the school may refer the child to the EWO from the Local Authority. They will also try to resolve the situation by agreement with parents/carers. However, if attempts to improve the child's attendance have failed and unauthorised absences persist, these Officers can use sanctions such as Fixed Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates' Court.

Full details of the options to enforce attendance at school are available from the school or the Local Authority. (Please note that Penalty Notices may be issued by the Local Authority immediately following a period of holiday-related leave that has not been authorised by the school.)

Parents/carers or children may wish to contact the EWO themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is available from the school office or by contacting the Local Authority on 0116 454 5510. They can also be reached by e-mailing education.welfare@leicester.gov.uk

The Local Authority will issue penalty notices to parents where there has been a referral to EWO from the school as part of the school's processes to address poor attendance patterns.

In addition, education-related parenting orders may occur by direct application by a school or LA to the Magistrates' Court as an ancillary order following a successful prosecution by the LA for irregular attendance or breach of a school attendance order.

The Education Welfare Officer visits once a month to check and monitor attendance. She carries out regular register checks to identify children with low attendance (usually below 85%).

Responsibilities

All members of school staff have a responsibility for identifying trends in attendance and punctuality. The following includes a more specific list of the kinds of responsibilities which individuals might have.

Parents

Parents/Carers are responsible for:

- Ensuring that their child attends school regularly and punctually unless prevented from doing so by significant illness or attendance at an unavoidable medical appointment.

- Contacting the school office on the **first morning (by 9:00am) and every consecutive morning** of absence. Leaving a message on the school answerphone or emailing the school office are acceptable methods of contacting the school.
- Informing the school in advance of any unavoidable medical appointments in school time. For the absence to be recorded as a medical absence we do require evidence from the doctor or dentist. (Appointment card/letter)
- Making requests for authorised absence in term time on the school request form, only if absolutely necessary as these are not automatically authorised.
- Talking to the school as soon as possible about any child's reluctance to come to school so that problems can be quickly identified and dealt with.

Class teacher

Class teachers are responsible for:

- Keeping an overview of class and individual attendance looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/ or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/ carers
- Informing the Senior Leadership Team where there are concerns and acting upon them
- Providing background information to support referrals
- Monitoring follow-up once actions have been taken to correct attendance concerns
- Emphasising with their class the importance of good attendance and promptness
- Following up absences with immediate requests for explanation which should be noted inside the register
- Discussing attendance issues at consultation evenings where necessary

Senior Leadership Team

The Senior Leadership is responsible for:

- Overall monitoring of school attendance
- Trends in authorised and unauthorised absence
- Contacting families where concerns are raised about absence including arranging meetings to discuss attendance issues
- Monitoring individual attendance where concerns have been raised (at below 95% attendance, weekly monitoring for a 6 week period)
- Making referrals to the EWO service
- Providing reports and background information to inform discussion with the school's EWO
- Liaising with other professionals to determine potential sources of difficulties and reasons for absence.
- Keeping an overview of class and individual attendance looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/ or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/ carers and reporting concerns to the Headteacher

Administration staff

Staff in the School Office are responsible for:

- Collating and recording registration and attendance information.
- Taking and recording messages from parents regarding absence
- Ensuring the school Information Management System (ScholarPack) is updated with Absence/Lates
- Telephone or text you on the first day of absence (*and on subsequent days*) if we have not heard from you
- Recording details of children who go home early from school

- Sending out standard letters regarding attendance

Education Welfare officer:

- Invite you in to discuss the situation with our Attendance Officer and members of the Senior Leadership Team if absences persist;
- Complete home visits if there is non-attendance from parents at an attendance panel meeting
- Give advice and seek support from other agencies that may be able to help improve attendance
- Liaise with the Local Authority if penalty notices need to be issued
- Meet monthly with the Senior Leadership Team to monitor attendance and identify those that need additional action

Registration

All the school gate open at 8.30am until 8.45 am. This time is sufficient for all pupils to come into their classroom.

Any pupil who is absent must be recorded at the beginning of the morning and afternoon session. The attendance register must be completed by the class teacher by 9.00am and by 1.20pm (Attendance code / and \ for pupils who are present).

All attendance records are documented using Scholar Pack software, which is supported by the Local Authority.

Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your child misses the start of the day they can miss work and they do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Pupils arriving late disrupt lessons, it can be embarrassing for the child and this in itself can also encourage absence.

Once the doors are closed at **9:00am** the only way to get into school is via the school office. Any pupil who comes into school this way will be marked as late in the attendance record. Records are kept of those pupils who are late, this is documented on the electronic register for each pupil (Attendance code L). Any child who arrives for school later than **9.20am** will be marked as having an unauthorised absence for the morning. (Attendance code U).

Children who have attended a dentist or doctor's appointment and subsequently come to school will have the absence recorded as a medical absence (Attendance code M), providing that medical evidence is supplied.

Where there have been persistent incidents of lateness parents/carers will receive a letter advising them of the concerns and the school will provide opportunities for parents/carers to seek support and advice to address these issues.

First Day Contact

Where a child is absent from school and we have not received any verbal or written communication from the parent, then we initiate a first day contact process. Office staff check all of the registers

from 9.00am to 9.30am on a daily basis, to identify those pupils who are absent. There are occasions when we are unaware why the child is absent and we will contact the parent to check the reasons for the child's absence.

Illness

When children have a long-term illness that means they will be away from school for significant periods of time, the school will do all it can to send material home, so that they can keep up with their school work.

If the absence is likely to continue for an extended period, or be a repetitive absence, the school will contact the support services to see if arrangements can be made for the child to be given some home tuition outside school.

Where over the course of an academic year, a child has repeated periods of illness, the school will write to parents to ask them to provide medical evidence for each future period of illness related absence. This evidence could be a Doctor's note, appointment card or copy of a prescription. This must contain the child's name and date of birth. We may seek written permission from you for the school to make their own enquiries.

Parental Request for Absence from School for Holiday

With effect from September 2013 the government abolished the right of headteachers to authorise absence specifically for holidays of up to 10 days per year if special circumstances exist. Instead, headteachers will only be allowed to grant leave of absence for any reason if they are satisfied **exceptional circumstances** exist and evidence can be provided. Therefore, all holidays will be fined if exceptional evidence cannot be granted.

Fines are issued by the Local Authority and currently stand at the agreed rate of £120 per pupil per parent. However, if paid within 21 days, the fine will reduce to £60 per pupil per parent. If the fine is not paid within this time scale, court proceedings will be initiated and fines in excess of £1000 may be issued.

Woolden Hill does not receive any financial gain for fining. The Local Authority receive the payment to support them with their work to reduce school absence.

