

# **Deneholm Primary School**

## **Attendance Policy**

Updated March 2021

Review March 2022

## **ATTENDANCE POLICY**

Deneholm Primary School expects every child to attend school every day. Good attendance is a priority and the school recognises that partnership working is the most effective way to ensure attendance is maximised. 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.

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. Deneholm Primary School fully 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.

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

This policy has been written to adhere to the relevant Children's Acts, Education Acts, Regulations and Guidance from the Department for Education in addition to guidance from the Local Authority.

### **Aims and Objectives**

This attendance policy ensures that all staff and governors 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.
- 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 Reception 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.
- 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 governors 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.

### **What does the law say?**

The parent/carer of a child of compulsory school age (between 5 years old and 16 years old) registered at a school and failing to attend regularly is guilty of an offence and punishable in law. In the event of regular unauthorised absences, a Penalty Notice may be issued by the Education Welfare Service. An offence is not, however, committed if it can be evidenced that:

- The pupil was absent with agreement of the school
- The pupil was ill or prevented from attending school by an unavoidable cause – this must be evidenced by a medical report or other suitable documentation
- The absence occurred on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong

Only the school, within the context of law, can approve the absence, not the parents. The fact that a parent has offered a note (or phone call/email/text) in explanation does not in itself oblige the school to accept it as a valid reason for absence. If, after investigation, doubt remains regarding the absences or no reason is provided for the absence it must be treated as unauthorised.

If a child's attendance falls below 90% they are deemed in law as a 'persistent absentee' and the child may be referred to the Education Welfare Service. If a child does not attend school regularly the Education Welfare Service will determine if it is necessary to take statutory action (under The Education Act 1996 – Section S7 444 (1) and 444 (1A)).

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 States:

“The parent/s of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full time education suitable:

- a) to his age ability and aptitude and
- b) to any special educational needs he may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.”

If found guilty of a child not attending school on a regular basis, the penalty can be a fine of up to £2,500.00 and/or a custodial sentence of up to three months. If a parent is being prosecuted under Section 444 (1A) defendants are required to attend court as a custodial sentence may be imposed, if they fail to do so a warrant may be issued.

### **Safeguarding**

Safeguarding the interests of each child is everyone's responsibility and within the context of our school, promoting the welfare and life opportunities of your child/ren includes attendance. Your child may be at risk of harm if they are frequently absent and so failing to attend school regularly will be considered as a safeguarding matter.

### **Definitions**

#### **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.

<b>The effect of absence on progress</b>					
A school year has 190 days. A whole year has 365 days. This leaves 175 days to spend on family time, holidays, shopping, appointments and other visits.					
No absence	10 days absence	12 days absence	19 days absence	29 days absence	38 days absence
190 days of education	180 days of education	178 days of education	171 days of education	161 days of education	152 days of education
100%	95%	94%	90%	85%	80%
Your child is off to a great start and has the best chance of making good progress and attaining well.		Makes it harder for your child to make good progress and attain well.		Your child will find it very difficult to make progress.	

## A few days a week/month can quickly build up

Percentage	Attendance out of a possible 190 days	Absence
100% attendance	190 days	0
95% attendance	180 days	2 weeks absence
90% attendance	171 days	4 weeks absence
85% attendance	161 days	6 weeks absence
80% attendance	152 days	Absence equal to the first school term-Sept to Oct.
75% attendance and below	143 days	9+ weeks absence

## 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, 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 Thurrock LA and the DfE where requested.
- All staff should be aware that they must raise any attendance or punctuality concerns to the Attendance Officer with responsibility for monitoring attendance.

## 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.

### **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 Attendance Lead where there are concerns.
- 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
- Discussing attendance issues at consultation evenings where necessary

The Head of School 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
- 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.

The Office Manager is responsible for:

- Collating and recording registration and attendance information.
- Taking and recording messages from parents regarding absence
- Contacting parents of absent children where no contact has been made.
- Recording details of children who arrive late or go home
- Sending out standard letters regarding attendance

### **Parents**

Parents/Carers are responsible for:

- Ensuring that their child attends school regularly and punctually.
- Contacting the school office on the first morning of absence as early as possible and by 9:15am at the latest.
- Informing the school in advance of any 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).
- Provide the school with medical evidence of any absence lasting more than 5 consecutive days (e.g. medical note).
- Making requests for authorised absence in term time, 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.

### **Registration**

Each class teacher has the responsibility for keeping an accurate record of attendance. 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 9.00 am and by 1.05 pm. All attendance records are documented using Sims software. Attendance registers are legal documents and these must be kept secure and preserved for a period of three years after the date they were last used.

## Lateness and Punctuality

It is important that children arrive at school on time as lateness is detrimental to their learning and the learning of others. The school is open from 8.30 am and all pupils must be in class by 8.45 am. It is important to note that persistent lateness constitutes irregular school attendance in law. Registers will be taken at 8.50am. Pupils arriving between 8:50-9:00am will be marked as 'L' (late before registers have closed). The register will close at 9am. Arrivals after 9.00 am or 1.20pm will lose their mark and will be marked as 'U' (unauthorised absence – late after registers have closed). Figures of lateness will appear on a pupil's attendance certificates. Below is a graph showing how arriving late to school every day over a school year adds up to lost learning time.



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.

## Absence Procedures:

### If your child is absent from school, you must:

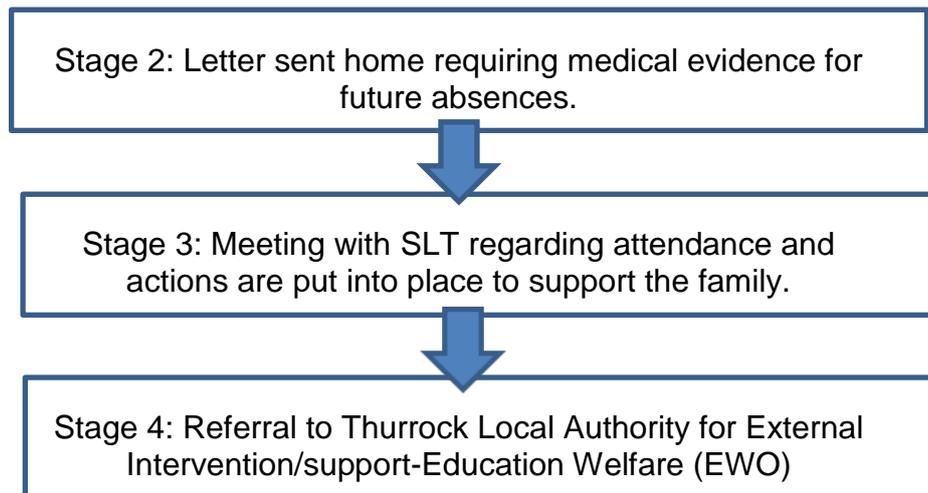
- Contact the school as soon as possible and by no later than 9:15am with the reason your child won't be attending and the expected date of return to school.
- Provide us with an appointment letter/medical card if you are taking your child out of school for a medical appointment. Your child should be out of school for the minimum amount of time.
- Provide the school with medical evidence for any absence lasting longer than 5 days.
- Provide the school with medical evidence if your child has received a letter from the school requesting all future absences be supported by medical evidence.

### If your child is absent from school, we will:

- Telephone you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you.
- Make contact via email if we cannot get through to you on the phone.
- Contact any emergency contacts you have listed.
- If we cannot make any contact we may visit you at home.
- Apply the attendance escalation stages once your child meets the criteria. Attendance is monitored on a daily basis and letters can be sent at any point during a term.

Stage 1: Letter sent home if attendance drops below 95%





All absences are recorded as either authorised or unauthorised absences on the Sims attendance module. It is important that the school receives accurate information from parents with reasons for the child's absence. This information is used to determine whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised. The head teacher has the ultimate responsibility to determine whether absences are authorised or unauthorised.

### **First Day Contact**

Where a child is absent from school and the school has not received any verbal or written communication from the parent, then the school will initiate a first day contact process. The office support manager will check all of the registers from 9.00am to 9.30am and again at 1.05pm 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, medical and dental appointments**

When children have an illness that means they will be away from school long-term. If a child is unable to attend school for a period of more than 15 school days, if supported by medical evidence the school can make a referral for the child to receive a period of medical home tuition.

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. The school may seek written permission from parents for the school to make their own enquiries.

If the school is satisfied that a pupil is absent as a result of illness, the absence will be treated as authorised. If a child is off for 5 days or more due to illness then medical evidence must be provided. Without medical evidence the absences will be unauthorised. A parent/carer must phone the school on the child's first day of absence to inform them of the reason or send a note in on the first day of absence with somebody.

Advance notice of medical/dental appointments should be given wherever possible, preferably in writing by the parents or by appointment letter from the medical practise. Pupils leaving/returning to the premises in session time must report to the school office where such movements are recorded for safety reasons. Where possible, medical appointments should be made out of school time.

If a child is absent due to vomiting and/or diarrhoea s/he must be absent for 48 hours following the last time they were sick.

## **Leave of absence during term time including Parental Requests for Absence from School for Holiday**

With effect from September 2013 the government abolished the right of head teachers to authorise absence specifically for holidays of up to 10 days per year if special circumstances exist. Instead, head teachers will only be allowed to grant leave of absence for any reason if they are satisfied exceptional circumstances exist.

The school takes a firm stance on any absence during term time. If a student is absent prior or does not return after a school holiday (half term, Christmas, Easter or Summer) the parent/carer will need to provide medical evidence to cover the absence. Failure to provide this evidence will result in the absence being marked as unauthorised. All absences are shown on school reports and copies are passed onto secondary schools.

There are rare occasions which may be deemed as 'exceptional circumstances', where such the leave would be authorised by the head teacher. These circumstances would usually be something which cannot be planned for in advance. Therefore weddings, family holidays, birthdays, parties and surprise trips, etc. will not be authorised. If you believe your circumstances fit this description you must put this in writing to the head teacher and/or arrange a meeting with them at your earliest convenience. The decision of whether the leave is deemed as 'exceptional' is the head teacher's.

If parents are planning to take leave during term time you must complete a 'leave of absence' request form, you can obtain this from the school office. If a request is refused and the parent/carer decides to take their child out of school the details will be passed onto the Education Welfare Service and a Penalty Notice may be issued. The Penalty Notice will be issued at £60 per child, per parent. This amount will increase to £120 per child, per parent if it is not paid within 21 day.

## **Family Bereavements**

The school will respond sensitively to requests of leave of absence for a funeral of close relatives. Only the head teacher has discretion to authorise such absences.

## **Traveller Absences**

If your child is unable to attend school due to your travelling you must provide the school with evidence of the fair or event which you will be attending in advance. If the details are not given to the school before the leave is taken it will be marked as unauthorised and your child may be considered as 'missing in education' and referred onto the relevant agencies. The school must know the whereabouts of all children, at all times, to ensure the safety and wellbeing of each individual child.

Travellers and Show People are granted, by law, up to 200 sessions (100 whole days) 'travelling' each academic year. During this time the child will be marked on the register as a 'T' (Travelling Absence), if evidence of the event where the family are working is given to the school in advance. Once a child reaches the 200 allowed sessions the parents will be notified and any further leave will be marked as unauthorised. If you are travelling with a registered tutor please notify the school of this and information of your child's current curriculum can be shared to ensure the correct work is completed.

## **Addressing Attendance Concerns**

The school expects attendance of at least 96%.

It is important for children to establish good attendance habits early on in their primary school career. It is the responsibility of the head teacher and the governors to support good attendance and to identify and address attendance concerns promptly. In Deneholm Primary School we rely upon parents to ensure their child attends school regularly and punctually and therefore where there are concerns regarding attendance, parents are always informed of our concerns. Initially concerns about attendance are raised with parents via letters which are sent home. There will be opportunities for the parent/carer to discuss reasons for absence and support to be given by the school with the aim to improve attendance. Parents may be invited into school to discuss their child's absences. Where a child's attendance record does not improve over a period of time then the school has a responsibility to make a referral to the Educational Welfare Service.

The Education Welfare Service (EWS) will determine if it is necessary to take statutory action if there has been a referral to EWS from the school as part of the school's processes to address poor attendance patterns including repeated unauthorised absences over a period of time.

### **Unavoidable Closures**

Unavoidable closures through bad weather, difficulties associated with the premises, elections, etc. should be indicated on the school registration system. Pupils will be marked as a 'Y' (unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances), this mark will not affect the child's attendance figure.

### **Incentives and Rewards for great attendance**

#### **Weekly Rewards**

The top three classes with the best attendance are announced in each weekly celebration assembly and awarded points.

#### **Half Termly Rewards**

The class from each key stage with the best overall attendance each half term earns a reward e.g. additional playtime or additional Golden Time.

#### **Termly Rewards**

100% in the Autumn term children get a certificate

100% in the Autumn and Spring term children get a coloured wristband and a certificate

100% in the Autumn, Spring and Summer term children receive a Lakeside voucher.

Children with 100% attendance are entered into a draw for a new bike or scooter.

