

DURHAM LANE PRIMARY SCHOOL
Attendance Policy and Procedures

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Staff Member Responsible: Ms. E.M.P. Barrett
Head Teacher: Mrs. H Gregory

Statement of Intent

At Durham Lane Primary School we believe that regular school attendance cannot be overestimated. Regular attendance is vital to a good education. Securing it must therefore be a high priority of the school, governors, L.A., parents and the pupils themselves. By failing to attend school regularly, pupils lessen the impact of the education provided for them; pupil absence may seriously disrupt the continuity of teaching for themselves and others.

The aim of the Durham Lane Primary school is to facilitate our pupils' regular and sustained attendance at school by providing a full and efficient educational experience for all our students.

Parents have a vital role to play and there is a need to establish strong home-school links and communication systems that can be utilised whenever there is concern about attendance.

School Attendance - the Statutory Framework

- Education Act 1944 - Establishes the duty of parents to ensure regular attendance of pupils.
- Pupil's Registration Regulations 1986 - Establishes the criteria for the maintenance of Attendance Registers.
- Education Act 1996 places a legal obligation on the Local Authority to provide education suitable to a child's age, aptitude and ability and to any special educational needs they may have. In addition, Section 444 states that, "The parent of a child of compulsory school age registered at school and failing to attend regularly is guilty of an offence punishable by law".
- The Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 1997 (amended) provides the new registration categories of Approved Educational Activity. (Amending Regulation 3(2), (3), (5) of the Education Regulations 1995).
- Pupil Registration Regulations 1995 (amended) gives schools discretionary powers to grant leave for the purpose of a family holiday in term-time.
- Education Act 2002 (Section 53) enables an overall absence target to be set, covering authorised and unauthorised absence, supporting school improvement and raising community awareness of the issue (September 2003).
- Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013.
- Education (Penalty Notice) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

Registration

There is a legal requirement upon schools to keep an attendance register on which, at the beginning of each morning and afternoon sessions, pupils are marked present or absent. The Education (Pupils' Attendance Record) Regulations 1991 introduced a further requirement that attendance registers must show whether an absence of a pupil of compulsory school age is authorised or unauthorised. This is shown on our paper and computer records.

Both staff and pupils see the taking of registers as an integral part of the school day, as was indeed intended in law. Particular attention is paid to accurate registration and to the preservation and security of registers.

Monitoring and encouraging attendance is an integral part of the Head Teacher's role. She has primary responsibility for monitoring the attendance of pupils in the class groups and for arranging contact with home regarding concerns about attendance and punctuality. She also ensures that class teachers maintain an accurate register of attendance and collect notes and other explanations of absence.

Stockton-on-Tees Local Authority requires our teachers to complete registers with the symbols shown in Table 1 which are entered on the computerised records.

In accordance with current legislation, each Class in school has an attendance register. It is school policy that registers are completed by 9.00am and 1.05pm and then returned to the school office.

It is our policy at Durham Lane Primary to record a late mark for children who arrive at school after class registration has taken place, but before the close of the registers at 9.30am.

It is the school's policy to encourage punctuality, actively discouraging late arrival. A pupil arriving late may seriously disrupt not only his or her continuity of learning but also that of others. Five minutes will be allocated for registration purposes at the beginning of each session. Pupils will be recorded as being late once registration has taken place. In recognition of local circumstances (such as bad weather or occasional public transport difficulties), we may keep registers open for a reasonable period. For registration to mean anything at all, a firm line must be taken on late arrivals. To do otherwise undermines the whole purpose of registration and may serve to encourage other pupils to arrive late. Particular attention will be paid to emerging patterns of late arrival.

Where a pupil does arrive and misses registration, his or her presence on site will need to be noted for purposes of emergency evacuation. Anyone arriving late must report to the school office; all gates are closed immediately the children are inside the building, so they are unable to access the site without going via the office. The pupil's record in the register will be amended as appropriate.

In responding to lateness, we will of course need to take account of the individual circumstances of each case; in some instances, enquiries may reveal that the late arrival stems from difficulties at home or other genuinely unavoidable circumstances. Teachers of pupils who persistently fail to arrive on time with valid reason need to keep the Head Teacher informed. Further action may be taken if there is no valid reason for this lateness.

Registration Procedure

Registers will be completed as quickly as convenient, preceding both daily sessions. Only 5 minutes of the school day have been allocated for the registration procedure. Registers will be returned to the school office following this registration period.

Pupils present will be so marked by a diagonal line on the register.

Pupils not present before the close of registration (9.00am) will be marked by a circle on the register.

Late

Pupils arriving at school after registration (8.55am - 9.00am) in the mornings must report to the school administrator who will adjust the entry in the class register by applying a (L) on the register, Pupils arriving after registration closes (9.30) will be marked as (U). This will be interpreted in the class register as a child present at school having arrived late after registration. This constitutes attendance for Health and Safety purposes.

If a pupil fails to attend registration for the afternoon session, an explanation note may authorise this absence, eg. a visit to doctor/dentist. Otherwise it will be treated as unauthorised.

Absence

If a child is absent from school, the school need to be informed on the day of absence. School may be notified by telephone, in person from the parent or by a written note. The school needs to be notified by 9.30 on the morning of absence. If the school does not receive notification of absence the school administrator will proceed to contact parents/carers by telephone in order to ascertain the reason for the absence.

Once we receive a reason for an absence, we may authorise that absence by inserting the correct symbol on the computer records. Reporting by telephone, verbally to a member of staff or a note are all acceptable. If after three weeks no satisfactory reason has been given the absence will be treated as unauthorised.

A list of symbols used for demarcating absence is included for staff as part of the paper register.

Only the school, within the context of the law, can approve absence, not parents.

The fact that a parent has offered a note or other notification (telephone call or personal contact) in relation to a particular absence does not, of itself, oblige the school to agree to it, if the school does not accept the explanation offered as a valid reason for absence. If, after further investigation, doubt remains about the explanation offered (or where no explanation is forthcoming at all) the absence must be treated as unauthorised. Where parentally-condoned unjustified absence appears to be a problem in relation to a particular pupil, school will involve the Attendance Officer at an early opportunity.

An excessive amount of authorised absence can also seriously disrupt continuity of learning and encourage disaffection. We must be alert to emerging patterns of authorised absence. We may authorise absence retrospectively where we are satisfied as to the explanation offered. Absences of pupils of compulsory school age without valid reason or for which no explanation has been provided will be treated as unauthorised.

Our policy deals in general with the categories of absence and cannot cover every eventuality. It will be necessary, on occasion, to exercise reasonable discretion when investigating some absences.

Key Points

- Registered pupils of compulsory school age are required, by law, to be in school.
- Whilst it is right that schools should recognise that individual pupils and families have problems, the aim should always be to expect regular attendance.
- Lateness should be actively discouraged.

- Where a pupil is absent without prior authorisation, an explanation is required. If one is not forthcoming (for whatever reason), the absence must be treated as unauthorised and the register annotated accordingly.
- Schools are not obliged to accept parental notes where there is reason to doubt the validity of the explanation offered.
- Explanations such as minding the house, looking after other children, no-one to collect the child after school, appointment of other family member, or shopping trips within school hours will not be accepted as reasons for absence.

Leave of Absence

Prior to September 2013, Parents had a right to request a holiday absence of up to 10 days (20 sessions). From 1st September 2013 this was no longer the case. Under an amendment to the regulations, schools are no longer allowed to authorise leave of absence for family holidays other than in exceptional circumstances. In addition, Head Teachers may not grant any leave of absence for students during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Examples include families of service children where a parent's annual leave is set and determined by their regiment. It is expected that service families submit a covering letter on official letterhead from their regiment confirming this. Another example is where a parent's annual leave may be set and be non-negotiable by the company/service they work for. It will be expected that a confirmation of this is provided on company letterhead and signed by the management. Other circumstances may include a holiday where this may be a final holiday with a terminally ill parent or grandparent, or where the child is involved in a wedding of a close relative (ie is a bridesmaid/page boy etc).

The Stockton council Penalty notice Code of Conduct was reviewed following the case of *Isle of Wight Council (Appellant) v Platt (Respondent)* [2017] UKSC 28 which was heard in the Supreme Court in 2017. That case clarified the definition of "regular attendance" and found that "regular" means in accordance with school rules. If the school requires that a child attends i.e. the school have not authorised a request for leave of absence during term time then the parent/carer commits an offence if he takes the child out of school

All leave of absence (other than due to illness) must now be applied for via the Leave of Absence Request Form.

Reporting Absence

At Durham Lane Primary parents are required to report absences by telephone call on the first day of absence before 9.30. If we have not heard from anyone by that time, a member of staff will seek a reason for absence by calling contact numbers.

Attendance Procedures

Intervention at School Level

Stage 1 - Monitor

This section describes the role of school in relation to improving attendance.

- 1.1 The Class Teacher has primary responsibility for monitoring attendance of the pupils in the class group and for collecting notes explaining absences, maintaining

an accurate register and informing the Head teacher with concerns about attendance and punctuality.

Stage 2 - Attendance Concerns

- 2.1 Home should be contacted, preferably by phone or by letter if this is the only option remaining.
- 2.2 A record should be kept of all contact and conversations.
- 2.3 Parents/carers should be encouraged to visit school to discuss attendance and strategies for improvement.
- 2.4 The Headteacher should discuss the pupil with the Class Teacher and, where possible, see the parent. It is important to establish the reasons for poor attendance, the general health of the pupil, home circumstances etc. The parent should be given a target for the pupil's attendance, which is higher than their normal attendance rate.
- 2.5 A date for review of attendance should be set, no more than 4 weeks later.
- 2.6 If attendance has improved, then a letter of commendation should be sent home and pupil returns to STAGE 1.
- 2.7 If attendance has not improved, then options may include:
 - (i) Contact home to discuss the review and set a further review date.
 - (ii) Discuss with the parent areas of concerns and where other support might be appropriate.

A Reminder: Only school may authorise a pupil's absence. All absences must be explained by the pupil's parents/carers.

Referral to Attendance Service

Details of the procedure followed by the Attendance Service may be found in the Local Education Authority's Attendance Procedures Document.

When making a referral to the school's Attendance Service, it is important that the following information is included:

- Action taken to date by the school.
- A print out of the pupil's attendance.
- Parent's/pupil's attitudes towards school and the school's intervention.
- Parental reasons for non-attendance.
- Action taken by school to resolve any identified problems.
- Information regarding any special educational needs the pupil may have, academic attainments and support being provided by the school.
- Information regarding potential aggression from the parents.

Roles and Responsibilities

Pupils

At Durham Lane Primary School we expect that students:

- Will attend school regularly.
- Will arrive on time.
- Will be prepared for the demands of that day.
- Will inform a member of staff of any problems they are experiencing which may impinge on their ability to attend school and access their education.

Parents/Carers

At Durham Lane Primary School we expect parents/carers to ensure:

- Their child attends school.
- They contact school on their child's first day of absence, advising of the reasons for absence.
- Their child arrives at school punctually.
- Their child is appropriately dressed and properly equipped for the day.

Penalty Notice Procedures

More information is available in the LA Penalty Notice Procedures for Attendance and Exclusion.