



# Darnhall Primary School



## Attendance & Punctuality Policy

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### **1 Introduction and Aim**

Darnhall Primary School recognises the importance of good attendance and the impact it has on children's progress, attainment, enjoyment of learning and relationships within school. Good attendance helps a child to realise their potential and ensure they are motivated, confident and enjoy a diverse range of curricular opportunities and experiences. Our school policy and prospectus promote good attendance, which is recognised and rewarded as an achievement. The school monitors attendance and ensures quick and early intervention if a problem is identified. A child must attend school every day that they are required to do so unless an exceptional circumstance applies. The Attendance & Punctuality Policy is based on the premise of equal opportunities for all.

## **2 Legislation**

- Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that “The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him/her to receive efficient full-time education either by regular attendance at school or otherwise”.
- Section 444 (1) of the Education Act 1996 states that “if a child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school fails to attend regularly at the school his parent is guilty of an offence”.

Therefore, regular and punctual attendance at school is a legal requirement. Additionally, regular attendance is essential to enable children to maximise their educational attainment, opportunities and further development.

- Section 576 Education Act 1996 - Meaning of “parent”

For the purposes of Education Law, the definition of a ‘parent’ and who is responsible for ensuring regular attendance to school is:

- all biological parents, whether they are married or not
- any person who, although not a biological parent, has parental responsibility for a child or young person - this could be an adoptive parent, a step-parent, guardian or other relative
- any person who, although not a biological parent and does not have parental responsibility, has care of a child or young person. This could be one parent, both parents and/or carer/s.

## **3 Procedure (updated to include Covid-19 guidance)**

Children are expected to attend school regularly, unless there is good reason for absence.

There are two types of absence:

- Authorised (where the school approves a pupil absence)
- Unauthorised (where school will not approve the absence)

The school has a duty to safeguard all its pupils. If a child is absent, the parents/carers should inform the school on the first day of absence, and each following day of absence, stating the reason.

The school office will make contact with home when a child is absent, and the parent/carers has not notified the school of the absence. If no contact can be achieved or the reason for absence is not accepted the absence will be unauthorised.

When a child is asked to self-isolate because they have symptoms of Covid-19 or they live with a family member who has been diagnosed with Covid-19, or if a family member is waiting for the results of a Covid-19 test then they will receive an ‘X’ in the register. This is to reflect that they have been absent, but that this was due to the pandemic and therefore their absence is authorised.

## 4 Lateness and Punctuality

School begins 8:40am, and all pupils are expected to be in school for registration at that time.

- Register taken at 8:50am
- Registers close 9:00am

Any child who arrives after the gates are closed must enter the school by the main entrance and report to the school office to sign in. If pupils are not in class when the register is taken, they will be coded as 'L'. Any late arrivals after 9:10am will be coded as 'U' which is an unauthorised absence for that session.

In accordance with the 'Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006', if your child arrives after the registers close, they will receive a mark, code U, that shows them to be on site, but this will **not** count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. This may mean that you could face the possibility of a Fixed Penalty Notice or other legal action if the problem persists.

Children who are consistently late for school are disrupting not only their own education, but also that of other children. Where persistent lateness gives cause for concern, you will be invited to a meeting to resolve the issues. If there is no improvement following this meeting, further action will be taken which may include referral to external agencies.

You may approach the school at any time for support and advice if you are having difficulty getting your child to school on time or maintaining regular attendance.

## 5 Registers

Registers provide the daily record of attendance of all pupils. They are legal documents and the register may be required in a court of law, for example as evidence in prosecutions for non-attendance in school.

'Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006' (section 6)

Schools must take the attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day, morning (a.m.) and once during the second session, afternoon (p.m.).

On each occasion they must record whether every pupil is:

- Present;
- Attending an approved educational activity;
- Absent;
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances; or,
- Not attending in circumstances relating to coronavirus (COVID-19)

The school should follow up any absences to:

- Ascertain the reason;

- Ensure the proper safeguarding action is taken;
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not; and,
- Identify the correct code to use before entering it on to the school's electronic register, or management information system as a priority and returned to the school office in a timely manner. This is used to download data to the School Census.

The register should be marked using the codes as advised by the Department for Education (DfE) 'School Attendance Guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities). (See *appendix 3.*)

## **6 Medical Absence**

Absence due to sickness should be reported to the school by phone on the first day of absence. The school should be kept informed during longer periods of absence. School will contact parents during the first day if no satisfactory reason for absence has been received.

Any medical absences in excess of 5 days (10 sessions) per academic year will need to be supported by medical evidence. If no medical evidence is received, then the absence may be recorded as unauthorised. The school will work with all families on an individual basis if medical absences exceed the maximum threshold.

## **7 Unauthorised Absence and Fixed Penalty Notice**

An absence may be coded as 'unauthorised' if:

- i. no reason for absence has been given
- ii. medical evidence is not received when requested
- iii. a request for a leave of absence has been unauthorised
- iv. a pupil arrives at school after registration has closed at **9:10am**.

Parents/carers should be aware that Darnhall Primary School may contact the Local Authority if a pupil has 10 or more unauthorised absences in the current term with a view to issuing a Fixed Penalty Notice or other legal action. The Fixed Penalty Notice is issued individually to each parent/carer who fails to ensure their child's regular attendance at school. The Penalty is £60 per parent/carer per child if paid within 21 days rising to £120 if paid within 28 days. Non payment of the Fixed Penalty Notice may result in prosecution in the Magistrates court (*see appendix 1*).

## **8 Application for Exceptional Circumstances**

In September 2013, amendments to the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, make it clear that Head Teachers may not grant any Leave of Absence (holiday) during term time unless there are '**exceptional circumstances**'.

The Head Teacher and the Governing Body will determine what constitutes an exceptional circumstance on an individual basis. If parents/carers need to request Exceptional Leave of Absence, they must complete an 'Exceptional Leave of Absence' form available from the school office. It should be noted that if any application is declined and absence occurs of a consecutive 5 or more unauthorised days, then school may apply to the Local Authority for a Fixed Penalty Notice to be issued to each parent/carer.

The following will not be deemed to be exceptional circumstances:

- Family holiday
- Availability of less expensive holiday
- Availability of holiday accommodation
- Parent/carer's working commitments
- Holiday pre-booked by another family member

A child's absence during term time seriously disrupts their continuity of learning. Not only do they miss the teaching on the days they are away but are less prepared for the lessons building on that teaching when they return to school. There is a consequent risk of under achievement, which we must seek to avoid.

The Governing Body is responsible for ensuring any attendance issues are dealt with in line with school policy.

## **9 Religious Observance**

We recognise that some pupils may need to participate in days of religious observance. Where a day of religious observance;

- falls during school time and
- has been exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil belongs

We ask that parents/carers notify Darnhall Primary School in writing in advance where absence is required due to a religious observance.

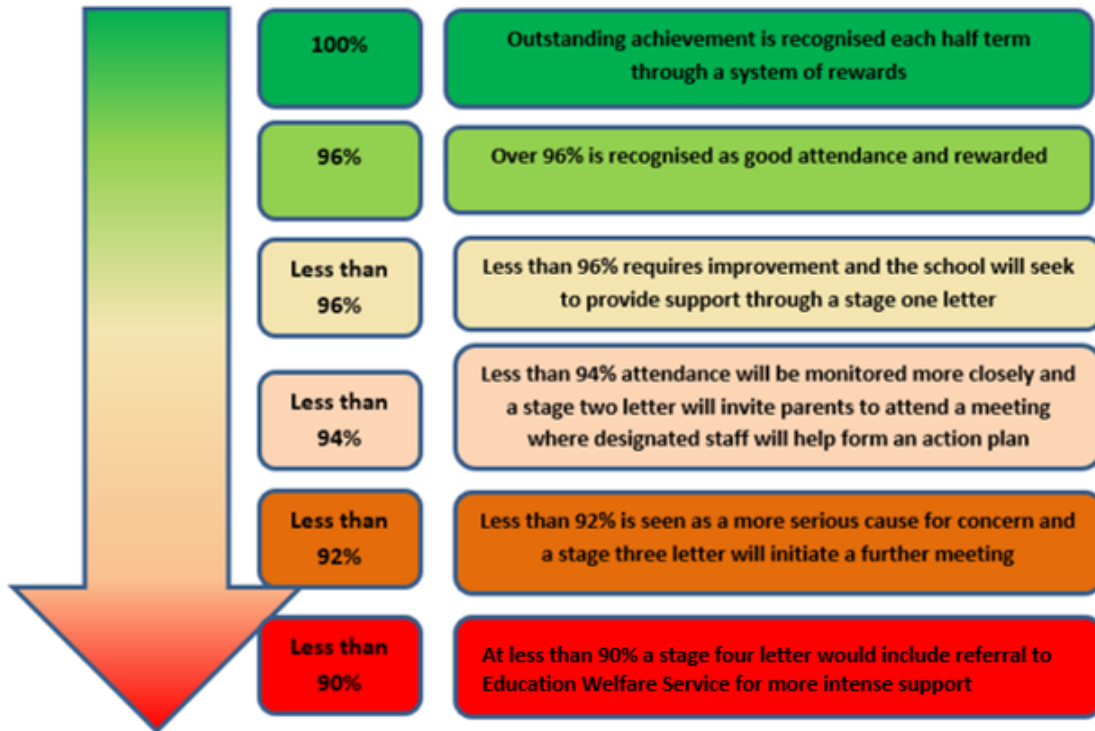
## **10 Enforced School Closure**

If Darnhall Primary School was forced to close for a period of time, we have the facility to operate an online virtual school. The expectation is children will still engage with ALL activities when work is set. Procedures for online learning will be sent to parents as and when required.

## 11 What can parents/carers do to help?

Let the school know straight away why your child is absent. Home/school communication is extremely important in supporting your child to achieve and feel settled in school. Try to make any dental/GP appointments outside of school time.

The table below sets out the attendance targets and at what stage parents/carers will be contacted about their child's attendance.



See appendix 2 for further breakdown of missed sessions.

## 12 Impact.

All pupils will achieve well by developing knowledge and skills on their journey through school. Due to robust monitoring of attendance, all pupils, including vulnerable children and children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), will have fair and equitable access to school in order to achieve the best possible outcomes. Pupils will leave Darnhall Primary School ready for a successful transition to secondary education.

## Appendix 1

### **Cheshire West & Chester**

#### **Code of Conduct for Education Fixed Penalty Notice (Unauthorised Leave of Absence & Irregular Attendance)**

1. A Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) can only be issued in cases of unauthorised absence.
2. A maximum of two FPNs may be issued in an academic year and these FPNs may be issued against each parent/carer of a child. Once two FPNs have been issued, should there be further unauthorised absences, the Local Authority are able to move to prosecution immediately.
3. A FPN may be issued per parent per child.
4. Penalty Notices may be considered appropriate if:
  - Unauthorised absences of at least 10 consecutive school sessions (five school days).
  - Sessions either side of a weekend or school holiday will be counted as consecutive school days.
  - For poorly attending learners, at least 10 sessions (five school days) lost due to unauthorised absence during a school term. These do not need to be consecutive.
  - For poorly attending learners, persistent late arrive at school in a term. Persistent means at least 10 sessions of late arrival.
  - Truancy
  - The presence of an excluded child in a public place in the child's first five days of exclusion.
6. The school must notify parents of the Attendance Policy and clearly state that parents may receive an FPN for an unauthorised leave of absence relating to holiday in term time.
7. Schools and the Education Welfare Services will take into account and exceptional circumstances when determining whether to issue a FPN.

## Appendix 2

### What does 'percentage attendance' mean?

Parents/carers should be advised that from September 2015 the Government have categorised those pupils who have attendance of 90% and below as 'Persistent Absence' pupils (P.A.). RSA will be specifically targeting this cohort of pupils, in an effort to improve their attendance in the future. The table below shows the learning time lost against percentage attendance figures.

Attendance during one school year	Equivalent Days	Equivalent Sessions	Equivalent Weeks	Equivalent Lessons Missed
95%	9 Days	18 Sessions	1.4 Weeks	45 Lessons
90%	19 Days	38 Sessions	3.4 Weeks	95 Lessons
85%	29 Days	58 Sessions	5.4 Weeks	145 Lessons
80%	36 Days	72 Sessions	7.1 Weeks	180 Lessons
75%	48 Days	96 Sessions	9.3 Weeks	240 Lessons



## Appendix 3

### Absence Codes:

According to the DfE guidance the following codes are used on the register.

<b>Code I</b>	Illness	Schools can request medical evidence from parents/carers if they feel the authenticity of an illness is in doubt.
<b>Code M</b>	Medical or dental appointments	Parents/Carers are encouraged to arrange appointments out of school hours but the school will authorise if confirmation of the appointment is provided.
<b>Code C</b>	Other circumstances	This code will be used for any authorised non-medical reasons for a child's absence from school, i.e. – family funeral.
<b>Code D</b>	Dual Registered	This code will be used if a pupil is registered at two schools.
<b>Code J</b>	Interview	This code will be used when it has been agreed that the pupil can miss school to attend an interview or entrance exam
<b>Code P</b>	Approved sporting activity	This code will be used in times of approved sporting activities in school times, i.e. – training sessions, trials and sporting events.
<b>Code R</b>	Religious Observation	This code is used to cover major religious festivals during term-time. The school will only authorise one day absence for religious events.
<b>Code V</b>	Educational visits and trips	
<b>Code W</b>	Work Experience	
<b>Code G</b>	Family holiday not authorised by the school or in excess of agreed period	
<b>Code U</b>	Arrived late to school after 9.30am	
<b>Code N</b>	Reason for absence not yet provided	
<b>Code O</b>	Absent from school without authorisation	
<b>Code X</b>	Period of self-isolation due to Covid-19	

<b>Governors Policy Review Record</b>	
Policy title	Attendance Policy
Responsible Staff member(s)	Attendance Officer
Governors review by date	Sept 2021
For ratification at GB meeting date	