Attendance and Punctuality Policy

Denton Community Primary School & Nursery

October 2019

This policy will be subject to review and evaluation bi-annually

Introduction

The Staff and Governing Body at Denton Community Primary School & Nursery give a high priority to children's educational achievement and believe that optimal pupil attendance and punctuality are essential in order for all young people to achieve their full potential.

This policy has been introduced in order to help achieve this aim and the staff and governors are committed to working in partnership with parents and carers to ensure that it is effectively and appropriately implemented.

When taking decisions about issuing fixed penalty notices to parents for their child's poor attendance or unauthorised absence, the school adheres to the East Sussex County Council Council Code of Conduct.

Whole school attendance targets are set annually in the School Development Plan (SDP).

Background and Principles

There are strong and evidence-based links between student attendance and educational achievement. We are committed to working in partnership with East Sussex County Council to reduce overall absence and persistent absence. The school supports the Every Lesson Counts initiative and strives to ensure all staff, students, parents and carers place a high value on school attendance. We are committed to actively promoting Early Help and promoting multi-agency support for vulnerable children and their families.

When children are supported to attend school punctually and on a regular basis, they take an important step towards reaching their full potential, and are given the greatest opportunity to learn new things and develop their skills. Regular attenders usually leave secondary school with more qualifications and access to greater employment opportunities: this journey begins at primary school as poor attendance creates learning gaps that are hard to plug.

What is good attendance?

At Denton CP School, we define good attendance as consistently over 96%, although children with underlying medial conditions or who experience a severe illness are of course exempt from such a definition.

Definitions of Absence

- Children should be at school, on time, every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable or has been agreed in advance by the school
- Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents/carers), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information and evidence about the cause of any absence is always required, preferably by text, phone, email or in writing
- Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably

fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause

- Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable. This includes: parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily, absences which have never been properly explained, children who arrive at school too late to get a mark in class registers, shopping, looking after other children or birthdays, day trips and holidays in term time which have not been authorised.

This type of absence are likely to lead to the school referring cases to East Sussex County Council's Behaviour and Attendance Team for fixed penalty notices and prosecution. Denton CP School adheres to East Sussex County Council guidelines and makes these decisions based on these. As this is a policy decision and not personal, requests for absence are addressed to the Headteacher, and together with the Inclusion Manager, monitors absences not requested in service of this policy.

Persistent Absenteeism

A pupil is defined as a 'Persistent Absentee' if they miss approximately 10% or more of all possible school sessions, regardless of whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.

If your child has attendance that has fallen below 90% over a six-week period, the school will follow the East Sussex County Council guidance set out in their School Attendance Toolkit. This will involve raising awareness of the attendance concern with parents/carers, seeking medical evidence to explain low attendance, consistently reviewing attendance every two weeks and inviting parents to attend an Attendance Support Meeting to discuss concerns.

Parents and carers will receive standard letters at every stage in the process to inform them of the school's concerns and any potential consequences of a failure to improve attendance. If there is little or no improvement in attendance, despite the intervention and support detailed above, the school will refer the case to East Sussex Behaviour and Attendance Service (ESBAS) to request that a fixed penalty notice be issued. A family may receive up to three fixed penalty notices in a 12 month period. If a family has received the maximum of three fixed penalty notices in a twelve month period, and there has been little or no improve in attendance, the school will refer the case to ESBAS to consider prosecution.

Holiday Requests/ Term Time Absence

The Head Teacher can only authorise absence in exceptional circumstances (see below). Each request will be reviewed on an individual basis.

If a parent feels there is an exceptional reason for which their child needs to be granted leave from school, permission must be sought at least two weeks before the planned absence. The School Office will provide details of how to request term time absence.

Fixed Penalty Notices

The school adheres to East Sussex County Council's Code of Conduct with regards to student attendance.

CIRCUMSTANCES WHEN PENALTY NOTICES CAN BE ISSUED

Unauthorised Absence/Truancy:

- Persistent late arrival at school (after the register has closed amounting to 6 sessions in a period of 6 weeks).
- Pupils whose attendance has not reached a satisfactory level during a 6 week period following intensive support
- Where parents allow their child to be present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification in a fixed term or permanent exclusion
- Persistent absence (below 90% over a period of time with no reasonable or medical explanation or 6 or more sessions of unauthorised absence within a term)
- Penalty notices may be issued for all unauthorised leave taken during term time.

Unauthorised absences will be issued with a fixed penalty notice to any adult with parental responsibility who takes the child out of school for the absence (in cases where parents are separated: one separated parent will not be fined for the action of the other separated parent).

The Education Regulations 2013, which came into force on 1st September 2013, removes reference to holidays and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days. The amendments now make it clear that head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.

The National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT) guidance suggests the following as circumstances which might be considered to be exceptional:

- Bereavement
- Serious illness of a close family member
- Wedding within the immediate family
- Service personnel returning from a long tour of duty

We also authorise absence for significant religious festivals (eg Eid; Hannukah) although we cannot authorise a holiday to celebrate this (ie travelling to spend Eid with family).

If the decision is made not to authorise, the Headteacher will send a letter to the parent/s confirming that a leave of absence has not been authorised and will include a warning that a penalty notice may be issued.

If an unauthorised absence is taken, the Headteacher will complete a request that consideration be given to the issue of a penalty notice. The request will be sent to the Behaviour and Attendance team (ESBAS) within two weeks of the pupil returning to school. The Behaviour and Attendance team (ESBAS) will then issue a penalty notice.

Penalty Notices for term time holidays may be issued if:

- Unauthorised holidays (absence without consent) have been taken within the term time;

Or

- Excessive delayed return from holiday without prior school agreement (beyond one additional school day).

WITHDRAWAL OF PENALTY NOTICE

Penalty notices may only be withdrawn in the following circumstances:

- When it is issued to the wrong person
- When issued outside the terms of the Code of Conduct
- When an offence has not been committed
- If a parent can prove it was delivered to the wrong address
- If there are unforeseen exceptional circumstances and the leave of absence becomes authorised

PROSECUTION FOR NON PAYMENT OF A FINE

The prosecution would not be for non-payment of the fine, but for the original offence of failing to ensure child's regular attendance at school. The Council may use the fact that a penalty notice has been issued and remains unpaid as evidence.

The Council's Behaviour and Attendance team (ESBAS) would look at all the circumstances of the case when assessing the likelihood of securing a conviction for the original attendance offence. If the decision is made to proceed with prosecution then as a matter of good practice, in any interviews with parents, the Local Authority will act in accordance with the spirit of the Codes of Practice set out in the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE), ensuring that the parent understands the basis for the interview, their needs are taken into account, their rights are explained and the interviews are conducted fairly.

Absence Procedures

If your child is absent you must:

- Contact us before 8.50am (start of the school day) on every day of absence (unless a medical professional has given advice to take a specified number of days absence from school)
- Provide medical evidence if the reason for the absence is sickness and it is likely that the absence will continue for more than a week

If your child is absent we will:

- Text or telephone you on each day of absence if we have not heard from you
- Invite you in to discuss the situation if a period of absence persists or absences are regular
- Refer the matter to East Sussex Behaviour and Attendance Service (ESBAS) if the situation does not improve
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Punctuality

While all families may on rare occasions be unavoidably late, general poor punctuality is not acceptable. The school day begins at 8.50am and children must be in their playground at this time.

How we manage punctuality:

- Our registers open at 8.50am and close at 9.00am.
- Children arriving after 9.00am need to be taken to the office and signed in. Office staff will enter each child onto the appropriate class register with 'L' (late) mark.
- Children arriving after 9.20am need to be taken to the office and marked into the register with a 'U' which means that although a child is now present in school the absence will count as a half day unauthorised absence.

If there was a genuine need to be late (ie something medical) then the lateness would not be unauthorised as described above.

If your child is persistently late, you will be contacted by the Headteacher or the Inclusion Manager who will discuss the concerns with you. Any child who receives 10 unauthorised lates in a 10 week period may be referred to the Council's Behaviour and Attendance team resulting in a fixed penalty notice.

Summary of Responsibilities

Pupils will:

- Attend school regularly
- Arrive on time and be appropriately prepared for the school day
- Tell a member of staff about any problem which is making it hard for them to attend school regularly

Parents/carers will:

- Encourage their children to attend school every day and on time
- Ensure that they contact the school by 8.50am whenever their child is unable to attend school
- Ensure that their children arrive in school fully prepared for the school day
- Provide the school with up to date home, work and emergency contact numbers
- A request for absence in exceptional circumstances must be submitted at least two weeks in advance (unless an emergency) via the School Office
- Make arrangements to complete curriculum work if an extended period of absence has been agreed

Teachers will:

- Ensure that registers are completed accurately and on time at the start of each morning and afternoon session
- Report any concerns relating to attendance to the designated safeguarding lead/deputies
- Inform parents/carers of attendance percentages for their child/children via the annual report
- Following a lengthy absence, the return to school and the reintegration of a pupil will be planned in conjunction with the young person, parent/carer, other agencies (as appropriate) and the Inclusion Manager

The Headteacher will:

- Oversee the attendance policy
- Set annual targets for attendance
- Inform governors of attendance data through Headteacher reports
- Oversee any appeals against decisions taken by Inclusion Manager

The Inclusion Manager will:

- Monitor all pupils whose attendance falls below 96%
- generate absence/punctuality letters to parents/carers and organise Attendance Support Meetings with parents/carers
- Liaise with the local authority Behaviour and Attendance team (ESBAS) to issue fixed penalty notices
- Support the school attendance leads in monitoring and identifying levels of absence/lateness causing concern

The Governing Body will:

- Ensure that the school has a whole school attendance policy in place
- Receive annual reports from the Headteacher in respect of attendance data and trends
- Monitor the effectiveness of the whole school policy.

The Local Authority will:

- Support and challenge schools to improve attendance and reduce persistent absence
- Upon the request of the school, the Local Authority has the power to issue parents or carers with a fine for unauthorised absence under section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003. The Local Authority also has the power to prosecute parents or carers under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, if the fine is not paid.

Appendix 1 - Exceptional Circumstances

1.1 Acceptable reasons for absence:

- Medical
- Bereavement
- Serious illness of a close family member
- Wedding within the immediate family
- Service personnel returning from a long tour of duty
- Religious observance
- Visiting a prospective new school
- Performer's License procured from council (taking part in pantomime; theatrical shows etc)

1.2 Unacceptable reasons for absence:

- Shopping trips
- Day trips
- 'Treats' (including taking birthday trip)
- Booking holidays because it is cheaper in term time

Appendix 2 – Absence Codes

/	PRESENT (A.M.)
\	PRESENT (P.M.)
B	EDUCATED OFF SITE (NOT Dual registration)
C	OTHER AUTHORISED CIRCUMSTANCES (not covered by another appropriate code/description)
D	DUAL REGISTRATION (ie pupil attending other establishment)
E	EXCLUDED
F	EXTENDED FAMILY HOLIDAY (agreed)
G	FAMILY HOLIDAY (NOT agreed or days in excess of agreement)
H	FAMILY HOLIDAY (agreed)
I	ILLNESS (NOT medical or dental etc appointments)
J	INTERVIEW
L	LATE
M	MEDICAL/DENTAL (NOT Illness)
N	NO REASON YET PROVIDED FOR ABSENCE
O	UNAUTHORISED CIRCUMSTANCE (not covered by another appropriate code/description)
P	APPROVED SPORTING ACTIVITY
R	RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE
T	TRAVELLER ABSENCE
U	LATE (after registers closed)
V	EDUCATIONAL VISIT OR TRIP
Y	ENFORCED CLOSURE
#	SCHOOL CLOSED TO PUPILS
*	DFES Z: PUPIL NOT YET ON ROLL
-	ALL SHOULD ATTEND/NO MARK RECORDED