



DOWNHAM MARKET ACADEMY CLUSTER

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Ratified by Governors on 9 February 2017

Rationale

The Downham Market Academy Cluster of schools is committed to providing a full and efficient education to all pupils and embraces the concept of equal opportunities for all. We have developed this policy in order to give a consistent response to all students and families in our care.

We want to do our best for all our young people and believe that regular attendance at school is vital for children as it promotes good learning, positive attitudes and maintains continuity in their education and in their friendships. Children should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason is unavoidable. Permitting absence from school without a good reason is an offence by a parent.

We will endeavour to provide an environment where all pupils feel valued and welcome. For a child to reach their full educational achievement, a high level of school attendance is essential. We will consistently work towards a goal of 100% attendance for all children. Every opportunity will be used to convey to pupils and their parents or carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance.

Attendance is subject to various Education laws and this policy is written to reflect these laws and the guidance produced by the Department of Education.

Each year the Cluster schools will examine their attendance figures and set attendance/absence targets. These will reflect both national and Norfolk attendance targets. The Cluster schools will discuss their attendance figures and the success of this policy on an annual basis and will review its systems for improving attendance at regular intervals to ensure that it is achieving its set goals.

This policy will contain within it the procedures that the school will use to meet its attendance targets.

Procedures

Any child who is absent from school at the morning or afternoon registration period must have their absence recorded as being authorised, unauthorised or as an approved educational activity [attendance out of school]. Only the Headteacher or a member of staff acting on their behalf can authorise absence. If there is no known reason for the absence at registration, then the absence must be recorded in the first instance as unauthorised. The coding for any absences will be in accordance with the guidance provided by the Department of Education.

Lateness

The Cluster schools set their own registration times. Morning registration at Watlington CP School will take place at the start of school at 8.40am. The registers will remain open for 30 minutes. Any child arriving after this time will be marked as having an unauthorised absence unless there is an acceptable explanation such as delayed school transport. In cases for example, where the absence at registration was for attending an early morning medical appointment, the appropriate authorised absence code will be entered. Medical evidence may be requested to support the absence.

Children arriving after the start of school but before the end of the registration period will be treated for statistical purposes, as present, but will be coded as late before registers close.

First Day of Absence

On the first day of an absence, parents/carers should contact their child's school before the registration period closes. If no contact has been made, the school will endeavour to contact parents/carers as quickly as possible during the school day and will transfer information to the registers, alerting the Headteacher or other key staff to any wellbeing issues.

If no contact is received from parents by the end of the morning of absence, we will phone or text them. We will continue to make daily contact until a response is received. We will also make general enquires during this time and try other contact numbers.

Ten Days' Absence

Any child who is absent without an explanation for ten consecutive days will be notified to the Local Authority, by submitting a referral to the Children's Services Attendance Staff for the local area - This is a legal requirement. The school will include details of the action that they have taken.

Absence notes

Notes of telephone calls received and written notes received from parents explaining absence should be kept for the remainder of the academic year. If there are attendance concerns about the child, that may require further investigation, then the notes may need to be retained for a longer period.

If there are attendance concerns about the child, then further medical evidence may be required (e.g. doctor's note, prescription, medicine label). Headteachers retain the right to un-authorise absence without medical evidence.

Frequent Absence

It is the responsibility of all staff in each Cluster school to be aware of and bring attention to, any emerging attendance concerns. In cases where a child begins to develop a pattern of absences, the school will try to resolve the problem as soon as possible.

We monitor attendance regularly. When a child's attendance falls lower than the national average or causing concern, their parents will be contacted by the school. We will look for patterns and reasons for absence, making parents aware of the number of absences and the importance of attendance etc. Additional support may be available from outside agencies. In other cases the school will seek advice from the school's Attendance Support Education officer (ASEO). Action may include the use of the Fast Track system and/or Fixed Penalty Notices. Monitoring will continue and a Common Assessment Framework meeting could be considered.

Persistent Absence [PA]

All children whose attendance level falls below 90% will be subject to an action plan to support their return to full attendance. These action plans will be set up by the Headteacher. The action plan will include engagement with all parties who can support the child's attendance.

Systems to be used include Warning letters, meetings with parents, Fast Track, Attendance Panels, and Fixed Penalty Notices.

A Welcome Back

It is important that on return from an absence, all children are made to feel welcome. This should include ensuring that the child received help to catch up on missed work and updated on any information which has been passed to other children.

Promoting Attendance

The Downham Market Academy Cluster schools work actively together to improve attendance in our area and give consistent messages about the importance of good attendance. The school will use opportunities as they arise to remind parents/carers of their responsibility to ensure that their children receive education and will make clear the links between attendance and attainment. Information about attendance, our procedures and attendance rates are published in the School Prospectus.

The Home/School agreement mentions the importance of good attendance and the parents' responsibility. A promotional leaflet is also used.

Attendance Awards

The Cluster schools will reward pupils who have good or improving attendance, in particular through praising the individual child and, for example, by awarding certificates for 100% attendance on a weekly, half termly and termly basis.

Holidays in Term Time

Holidays during term time are not permitted. Parents will be reminded of the effect absence can have on a pupil's potential achievement. Absences in term time will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances and but parents must apply in advance for permission using the Cluster request for leave of absence form. In certain year groups, due to teacher and statutory assessments and controlled assignments, no absences will be authorised during certain periods, e.g. SATs and exam periods.

Penalty Notices

The government states that any excessive absence or any refusal of leave of absence must be recorded as unauthorised on the child's records. Parents need to be aware an accumulation of unauthorised absences will result in Penalty Notices or legal proceedings against them.

The Local Authority operates a system where any pupil will meet the criteria for legal intervention where they have:

1. 85% attendance or less, with at least 15% unauthorised absence over a 6 week period; or,
2. Below 90% attendance within a 12 week period where some or all of the absences are due to unauthorised term time holiday absence

The intervention could be in the form of a Fixed Penalty Notice.

Categorisation of Absence

Any child who is on roll but not present in the school must be recorded within one of these categories.

1. Unauthorised Absence
2. Authorised Absence
3. Approved Educational Activity

1. Unauthorised absence

This is for those children where no reason has been provided, or whose absence is deemed to be without valid reason.

2. Authorised absence

This is for those children who are away from school for a reason that is deemed to be valid under the Education Act 1996.

3. Approved Educational Activity

This covers types of supervised educational activity undertaken off site but with the approval of the school.

Note children recorded in this category are deemed to be present for attendance returns purposes.

This would include:

- Work experience placements
- Field trips and educational visits
- Sporting activities
- Link courses or approved education off site

If a child is receiving education off site or is attending at a school where they are dual registered with, the school will liaise with the other education provider to check on attendance.

The Registration System

The school will use a computerised system for maintaining attendance records. The following national codes will be used to record attendance information.

Code	Description	Meaning
/	Present (AM)	Present
\	Present (PM)	Present
B	Educated off site (NOT dual registration)	Approved education activity
C	Other authorised circumstances (Not covered by another appropriate code / description)	Authorised absence
D	Dual registration (i.e. pupil attending other establishment)	Approved education activity
E	Excluded (no alternative provision made)	Authorised absence
F	Extended family holiday (agreed)	Authorised absence
G	Family holiday (NOT agreed <u>or</u> days in excess of agreement)	Unauthorised absence
H	Family holiday (agreed)	Authorised absence
I	Illness (NOT medical or dental etc. appointments)	Authorised absence
J	Interview	Approved education activity
L	Late (before registers closed)	Present
M	Medical / dental appointment	Authorised absence
N	No reason yet provided for absence	Unauthorised absence
O	Unauthorised absence (not covered by any other code / description)	Unauthorised absence
P	Approved sporting activity	Approved education activity
R	Religious observance	Authorised absence
S	Study leave	Authorised absence
T	Traveller absence	Authorised absence
U	Late (after registers close)	Unauthorised absence
V	Educational visit or trip	Approved education activity
W	Work experience	Approved education activity
X	Untimetabled sessions for non-compulsory school-age pupils	Not counted in possible attendances
Y	Enforced closure	Not counted in possible attendances
Z	Pupil on yet on roll	Not counted in possible attendances
#	School closed to pupils	Not counted in possible attendances

Record preservation

Schools must ensure compliance with attendance regulations by keeping attendance records for at least 3 years.

Computer registers will be printed out at least once a month and bound into annual volumes or preserved as electronic back-ups or microfiche copies and will be available for each month

Register Security

Registers or attendance marking sheets if used must be safely stored.

Attendance Targets

The Cluster schools will set attendance targets each year. A system for analysing performance towards the targets will be established and a senior school manager will be responsible for overseeing this work. The schools will make use of the attendance data

available on the “RAISEONLINE” system, when setting its target. Targets will relate to national averages.

Attendance Governor

Each Cluster school will have a named governor for attendance

Documents used to support this policy:

- A promotional leaflet: “ Attendance Information for Families”
- Cluster request for leave of absence form
- Template school letters regarding attendance
- Medical form to support absence

Policy Review

This policy was drawn up in agreement with all schools in the Downham Market Academy Cluster. It will be reviewed every 3 years

Appendices

1 The Law

The Education Act 1996 Part 1, Section 7 states:

The parent 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 needs he may have.
either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

For educational purposes the term parent is used to include those that have parental responsibility and/or those that have the day to day care of the child.

The legislation that appertains to children who are of compulsory school age and are registered at school is contained within this Act.

Part V1 Section 444 contains the details of when an offence is committed if a child fails to attend school.

Register and Admission Roll keeping.

The legal requirements are found in:
The Education [Pupil Registration] (England) Regulations 2006