

# Dewsbury East Primary Schools' Attendance Policy

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**Zaheda Adam**

*Bywell*

*Juniors*



**Wendy Kelly**

*Earlsheaton*

*Infants*



**Janet Potter**

*Hanging Heaton*

*J&I*



**Amanda Pickup**

*Shawcross*

*Infants*



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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION AND STATEMENT OF INTENT**

**1.1** Hanging Heaton CE (VC) J&I School regards regular attendance at school as essential to ensure the best possible learning outcomes for all children and that regular attendance at school is necessary to promote better life chances. The school's ethos encourages children to feel that their presence in school is important and that they are missed when they are absent or late. The expectation at Hanging Heaton CE (VC) J&I School is that children should be attending 100% of the time, unless absence is authorised by the Headteacher.

Absence from school presents safeguarding concerns, especially where these are frequent and/or school is not informed as to the reason for absence. For these reasons, absences should be reported to school and will always be chased up where unreported. Frequent absences will result in school requiring evidence that medical professionals are supporting the child's good health to support positive safeguarding outcomes.

There is a clear link between good attendance and high standards. For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and every child should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

The Government expects schools to ensure that all pupils regularly attend school.

This policy sets out the principles and guidelines by which we seek to raise attendance, improve punctuality, to raise levels of achievement and to maximise opportunities both in school and in later life.

### **1.2 Why Regular Attendance Is So Important**

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning and of others.

## **2.0 LEGISLATION AND GUIDANCE**

Penalty notices are issued under [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) Regulations 2007](#) and under the [Kirklees Code of Conduct](#).

[The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#) amended [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) Regulations 2007](#) shortened the time permitted to pay a penalty notice.

[The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006](#) states that the proprietor of the school may grant authorisation for a leave of absence only in exceptional circumstances with [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#) amending [r7\(4\) The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006](#) removed references to family holidays and extended leave and added that head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Currently, it is up to headteachers to determine whether circumstances are “exceptional”, and for headteachers to determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.

[The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2024](#) increased the amount to be paid to become £80 within 21 days or £160 within 28 days for the first offence; £160 within 28 days with no option for a lower payment for the second offence within a three-year-rolling period; and imposed a duty on schools to consider a different method to change parents’ behaviour on the third offence within a three-year-rolling period.

In addition, [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2024](#) introduced a single consistent national threshold for when a penalty notice must be considered of 10 sessions (usually equivalent to 5 school days) of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10 school week period.

Please be aware that parents may be recognised differently under education law than under family law.

For education law, [s576 Education Act 1996](#) defines a 'parent' as:

- all-natural (biological) parents, whether they are married or not.
- any person who, although not a natural parent, has parental responsibility for a child or young person (this could be a stepparent, guardian or other relatives).
- any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of a child or young person.

A person has care of a child or young person if they are the person with whom the child lives and who looks after the child, irrespective of what their relationship is with the child.

The circumstances of the leave of absence must be considered when deciding whether to request a fine for an absent parent over another adult within the household who is considered a ‘parent’ under the Education Act.

The DfE provides guidance on school attendance for all schools and local authorities which is regularly updated. This can be found in [Working together to improve school attendance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

### **3.0 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

Ensuring every child's regular attendance at school is the **parents'/carers' responsibility** and if they permit absence from school without good reason they create an offence in law which may result in prosecution.

School will regularly analyse individual attendance data. Where individual attendance drops below 90%, half termly letters will be issued. Should a parent receive 2 half termly letters, they will be invited into school to meet with the Headteacher and discuss support strategies and an Attendance contract. Where this is not effective, further action could be taken. This could include but is not limited to:

- A direct prosecution under Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996.
- An application to the local authority for Early Support.
- Further support offered to parents and child through school.
- An application for an Education Supervision Order.
- A prosecution including an application to court for a Parenting Order.

**PROMOTING REGULAR ATTENDANCE** and helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility – parents, and all members of school staff.

**To help us all to focus on this we will:**

- Give parents details on attendance and punctuality termly.
- Monitor whole school attendance continuously.
- Celebrate and reward good attendance by displaying class achievements.

### **4.0 UNDERSTANDING TYPES OF ABSENCE**

**4.1** Every half day absence from school is classified by the school (not by the parents) as either **AUTHORISED** or **UNAUTHORISED**. This is why information about the cause of absence is always required.

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. Absences for religious observance will also be authorised.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily.
- Absences which have never been properly explained.
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays.
- Leave of absence (formerly known as term time holiday.)

## **4.2 PERSISTENT ABSENTEEISM (PA), SEVERE ABSENTEEISM (SA) and POOR SCHOOL ATTENDANCE**

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the year for whatever reason.

A pupil becomes a 'severe absentee' when they miss 50% or more schooling across the year for whatever reason.

We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA/SA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and parents/carer's will be informed of this immediately.

When attendance starts to dip, parents will firstly be sent a warning letter and asked to provide medical evidence for further absences. Should poor attendance continue, this will be discussed with parents and, where appropriate, parents/carers will be signposted to support agencies. Failure to improve attendance may result in legal action being considered.

An Education Supervision Order is heard in Family Court. If granted, the order is for 12 months with the option of renewing for an additional 24 months. The parent will be assigned a Supervising Officer who will oversee the order; and the pupil will be assigned a Befriender who will advise, assist and guide the pupil.

## **5.0 ABSENCE PROCEDURES**

### **5.1 If a child is absent parents/carers must:**

- Contact the school office as soon as possible on the first day of absence by phone on 01924 463035 providing a reason for the absence;

### **5.2 If a child is absent school will:**

- Telephone parents/carers on the first day of absence if we have not heard from them.
- Invite parents/carers in to school to discuss the situation with our Attendance Worker and/or Head teacher if absences persist.
- Refer the matter to the Local Authority Education Safeguarding Team if attendance continues to sit below 90%

## **TELEPHONE NUMBERS**

There are times when we need to contact parents/carers about lots of things, including absence, so we need to have contact numbers at all times. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year.

- **It is the responsibility of the parents and carers to inform the school of change of phone number**

## 6.0 LATENESS

**Poor punctuality is not acceptable.** If a child misses the start of the day they miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher, getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons; it can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage absence.

- Children should arrive at school between 8.30-8.40am and leave at 3pm.
- Children will receive a late mark if they are not in class by 9am.
- All children arriving after registration period will be recorded as late.
- Each instance recorded as “Late” counts as unauthorised absence and reduces the overall attendance level for the child

If a child has a persistent late record parents/carers will be asked to meet with the Attendance Worker/Learning Mentor or the Head Teacher to resolve the problem, but parents/carer’s can approach us at any time if they are having problems getting children to school on time.

## 7.0 PENALTY NOTICES

Penalty notices may be issued:

- If parents have not sought permission from the head teacher before taking their child out of school for leave during term time.
- If the head teacher has refused the request but the absence occurs anyway.
- If a child has not returned to school by the agreed date with no satisfactory explanation.

**AND**

- Where the individual leave of absence has been recorded by the school as unauthorised in the attendance register on at least 10 school sessions within a rolling 10-week period and – where appropriate – all measures of support have been exhausted.

## 8.0 LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Taking leave of absence in term time will affect a child’s schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking children away in term time. There is no automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on leave of absence.

Guidance from the DfE makes it clear that Leave of absence in term time should only be granted in **exceptional circumstances. This is always at the discretion of the Headteacher.**

We **DO NOT** consider the following as **exceptional circumstances**; these are not however an exhaustive list:

- **Parent/s work/holiday rota**
- **A family holiday at a lower cost**
- **Parent/s wedding of a child at the school as this can be arranged during school holidays**
- **Booked by a member of the extended family without your knowledge**
- **Family reunions or gatherings**

In all cases authorisation must be obtained from your child's Headteacher prior to making arrangements. A penalty notice may be issued to each parent of each child if the parents have not sought permission from the school before taking their child out of school for a leave of absence in term time.

If the leave of absence is not authorised following the request, a penalty notice is issued to each parent of each child

Currently this is £80 within 21 days or £160 within 28 days for the first offence; £160 within 28 days with no option for a lower payment for the second offence within a three-year-rolling period; and that school may prosecute the parent under Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996 on the third offence within a three-year-rolling period.

Failure to pay the penalty notice could result in the local authority commencing legal proceedings against you for the offence of not ensuring your child's regular school attendance. If found guilty, you may be fined up to £1000 and you will receive a criminal record.

Taking unauthorised absence may result in a child losing their school place and not being re-admitted should the space be taken in the meantime.

Parents/carers wishing to take their child out of school for a Leave of absence during term time must complete the **Leave of Absence Request Form** and return to the Head teacher **before** booking the Leave of absence. The form is available from the school office.

Note: There must be a minimum of 10 school sessions (this can be split over weekends or school holidays) before triggering a penalty notice request.

## **9.0 SUSPENDED/EXCLUDED PUPILS**

If a pupil has been suspended or excluded, that pupil may not be in a public place during the period of suspension/exclusion without just cause (such as attending a medical appointment). If that pupil is seen in a public place, a penalty issue is issued to each parent of each child. This is for £80 per parent and £80 per child if it is paid within the first 21 days, increasing to £160 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days.

## **10.0 RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE**



In line with Kirklees LA guidance, we may authorise up to 3 days within a 12 month period (and the days fall on a usual school day) on days exclusively set aside for religious observance where a religion other than Christianity is practiced.

### **11.0 ATTENDANCE AND EDUCATION SAFEGUARDING TEAM**

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problem together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the child to the Attendance and Pupil Support Officer from the Local Authority. He/She will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed and unauthorised absences persist, these officers can use sanctions such as Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court. Full details of the options open to enforce attendance at school are available from the school or the Local Authority.

### **12.0 FIRST DAY CALLING PROCEDURES**

Should children not be in school and we are not informed, we will implement the following procedures to ensure children are safe.

- 1) By 9am: Class registers/Integrus G2 completed and returned to office
- 2) Late children checked against registers if recorded separately
- 3) Absence messages checked
- 4) By 9.15am: First day text sent to first name on contact list asking for response
- 5) 9.40-9:50am:
  - If no response to text call first name on contact list
  - Ring down contact list until reply is received, ensuring where possible that someone from outside of the family home has been contacted
- 6) If no reply send second text to first and second contacts on list
- 7) Alert HT/DSL that this child is absent and no contact has been made within an hour of school start time
- 8) HT/DSL to risk assess the current level of concern and consider whether circumstances warrant a home visit
- 9) Home visit to be made following decision at 8), where possible by school staff or any other agency involved with the child
- 10) Contact Police to initiate a "safe and well" check if all other stages have been completed and there is still no contact regarding the absent child. This should be done using the 101 number.

### **13.0 SUMMARY**

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance. Equally parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend regularly. All school staff are committed to working in partnership with parents, children and families to ensure as a high a level of attendance as possible.

### **14.0 SCHOOL ATTENDANCE CHAMPION**

Our School Attendance Champion is Mrs Potter – contact on 01924 463035 for further detailed support on attendance.