



DAME DOROTHY PRIMARY SCHOOL AND DAYCARE

Attendance Policy

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Mission Statement

"We strive to provide a safe and happy environment where children are encouraged to be creative, resilient and hard working"

At Dame Dorothy Primary School we have high expectations for all pupils regardless of their starting point. Learning is at the core of all we do making full use of the places around us."

Introduction

Dame Dorothy Primary School promotes the view that regular attendance is vital to ensure the best possible learning outcomes for all of our children.

We feel the whole school community takes responsibility for good attendance. The object of the policy is to inform staff, governors and parents/carers how the school provides the most effective provision for all children.

This policy has been drawn up to reflect our whole school approach to attendance, has been discussed with the staff, and has had the agreement of the Governing Board.

Aims and Objectives

We aim to:

Maximise attendance rates in order to ensure that the children are able to take full advantage of the learning experiences available to them and establish a commitment to work which will be carried forward into adulthood.

Statutory Framework

Every child is required by law to attend school regularly at the school where he/she is registered. The school is obliged by law to differentiate between authorised and unauthorised absence. A letter or message from a parent or carer does not in itself authorise an absence. Only if the school is satisfied with the validity of the explanation offered by the letter/message will the absence be authorised by the Head Teacher. Evidence of medical appointments must be shown to school and a record kept.

Rights and Responsibilities

Promoting good attendance at Dame Dorothy Primary School is the responsibility of everyone in the school community – parents/carers, children, Governing Board and all school staff. Parents/carers are responsible for ensuring that their child attends school regularly and punctually and for ensuring contact details are up to date. Children are expected to make every effort to attend school and to be prompt on arrival. All staff will endeavor to encourage good attendance and punctuality through a range of strategies including personal example. The marking of registers must be meticulous and consistent.

Registration and Lateness

There is an electronic attendance register for each class which must be marked at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session, and then confirmed by the office. School starts at 8.45 am and key stage entrances will be locked at 9.00am.

All children arriving after 9.00am must report to the main school office. This will be classed as late and a record of this is kept in the school office. Lateness is monitored and where children have persistent lateness problems a letter will be sent home inviting parents/carers into school to meet with the Headteacher.

If a child is going to be absent, parent/carers must ring and inform school by 9am. There is a telephone log kept of parents/carers informing school to say their child is absent alongside a

file of written notifications from parents/carers held in the office. Archives are held electronically and in line with data protection and the school's retention schedule. Notifications of absence must be sent to the office on the day they come into school.

If a child is absent and no message has been received, school will always make a 'first response' call home to obtain a reason for absence. Records of these calls and reasons received are kept in the Attendance file in the office.

Guidelines for Absence

School Responsibility - THE LAW and School Attendance

Under the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 the Governing Board is responsible for making sure that admissions and attendance registers are kept. Unless stipulated, each regulation applies to all schools in England.

Headteachers retain the ability to authorise leave in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006. When considering such requests for a leave of absence, the school is obliged to act within the law. Leave of absence must be applied for and the decision to authorise this rests entirely with the school as the Supreme Court has made it clear that parents/carers are not entitled to remove children from school for holidays as of right. Head Teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances relating to the application. If the leave is granted, Headteachers are able to determine the number of school days a child can be absent for.

The Education (School Attendance Targets) (England) Regulations 2007 require Governing Boards of all maintained schools to set overall absence targets, and for some Governing Boards to set "focused absence targets" as required by the Secretary of State. School governors are bound by the statutory requirement under Section 538 of the Education Act 2006 which requires Governing Boards to provide information requested by the Secretary of State. This includes absence data that will be collected every term through the School Census.

The Senior Leadership Team and all staff work to ensure a high level of enjoyment and commitment to learning as a means of ensuring regular attendance.

The Headteacher holds responsibility for attendance matters, supported by Office staff and any such persons either directly employed by the school or through Service Level Agreements.

Where school attendance problems occur, the school will endeavour to work with parents/carers in the interests of the child to achieve a resolution.

Attendance is recorded and data stored and analysed using the SIMS Attendance module.

It is a statutory duty for class teachers to call and maintain accurate registers; these are legal documents, and may be called for as evidence by the court. Class Teachers are legally responsible for marking their class attendance register twice per day at the start of each session.

The Headteacher, not parents/carers, authorises absence; Dame Dorothy Primary School adheres to the DFE guidelines in authorising absence. Absence for any reason during term time is discouraged.

Absence known to be for the following reasons would be authorised:

- Illness
- Religious observance
- Attendance at medical appointments which cannot be made outside school hours where appropriate supporting documents are shown to the school

When it has become necessary to make a referral to the Attendance Officer, all further absences will be unauthorised pending investigation. The Attendance Officer liaises with the school regarding absences following contact with the parents/carers.

Family Holidays/ Absence during Term Time

Governors recognise that pupil absence during term time can seriously disrupt a pupil's continuity of learning. **Parents/carers are therefore strongly urged to avoid booking a family holiday in term time. Holidays will be marked as unauthorised leave.**

Parents/carers do not have an automatic right to withdraw pupils from school for a holiday and in law, have to apply for permission in advance.

Examples of what may constitute exceptional circumstances:

- A bereavement
- Special religious commitment

Absence is unauthorised if:

- No explanation is forthcoming
- The Headteacher is dissatisfied with the explanation
- The child stays at home to look after other children
- The child is shopping
- The child is absent for unexceptional special occasions (e.g. birthday treat)
- The child is on a family holiday for longer than the time allowed
- The child is on holiday without prior permission

Where applications for leave of absence are made in advance and refused, the child will be required to be in school on the dates set out in the application. If the child is absent during that period, it will be recorded as an unauthorised absence, which may result in legal action being taken against the parent(s)/carers, by way of a Fixed Penalty Notice if requested by the school. Failure to make an application for leave in advance can also result in a Fixed Penalty Notice being issued to the parent(s)/carers. All matters of unauthorised absence relating to a Leave of Absence will be referred to the Local Authority Attendance Team.

Response to Absence

Dame Dorothy works closely with the Attendance Team. The Attendance Team role is to discharge the Local Authority's statutory duty to investigate and enforce school attendance through the statutory powers. The Attendance Officer and Headteacher monitor attendance and regular lateness and absence is monitored closely.

If any child has not been registered or the school has not been notified about a child's absence, the office will contact the parent or carer on the first morning between 9am and 10am.

If contact is not made through first day phone call a text is sent asking the parent/carer to contact the school immediately.

If no response or contact is made within the first 2 days, the school will treat this as a safeguarding concern and contact the Attendance Team.

If vulnerable pupils such as CLA or a child subject of a protection plan is absent, and contact cannot be made with parent or carer, contact will be made to the Attendance Officer and Social Worker on the first day.

School will complete weekly IAT9 for admission and deletion from school role.
School will alert the LA's Children's Services to migratory, missing or removed children and alert the Attendance Team.

Whenever the school is unable to contact a parent or carer because of inaccurate/outdated contact details the class teacher will attempt to meet the parents/carers.
School will be vigilant to any parents/carers requesting extended holidays to countries of origin which poses the possibility of female genital mutilation, forced marriages, child sexual exploitation and extremism.

Contact details are requested from each person with parental responsibility to be updated at the start of each new academic year.

ALP- School has signing in and out books for both staff and pupils. Those pupils who attend ALP during school day will be signed out of school. A phone call will then be placed by the Office staff to the ALP to ensure a child has registered.

Regular Lateness and Absence

Pre-stage 1

The school will discuss the matter with an Attendance Officer who will contact parents/carers and try to offer support and guidance.

Stage 1

Concerns will be raised if a child has four weeks, each broken by absence or there is a pattern of absence over a period of time. If the situation continues a letter of concern will be sent from the Headteacher to the parent/carers. This will detail how many sessions the child has been absent from school and will include a reminder to parents/carers of their responsibilities for ensuring their child attends school regularly.

Stage 2

If the situation persists the parents/carers will be invited to an interview in school with the Headteacher, Attendance Officer, a representative of the Governing Board and the Educational Social Worker where appropriate. Parents/carers will be reminded of the legal action which may be taken if there is no improvement and this will be confirmed in writing by the Local Authority.

Stage 3

If attendance does not improve after 2 weeks a further interview will take place between parents/carers and a senior member of the Education Social Work Service. At this meeting a decision will be made whether to refer the matter to stage 4 (School Attendance Panel).

Stage 4

If there is no satisfactory improvement within approximately 2 weeks a formal letter will be sent to the parents/carers asking them to appear before the School Attendance Panel to explain why the child's attendance is not satisfactory. The panel will make recommendations regarding further action. This action could be either:

- Immediate prosecution of the responsible parent or carer.
- The parent/carer be given a short period (usually no more than 4 weeks) to improve the pupils attendance.

Stage 5

The case will be referred to the ESWs central office for the preparation of papers for legal proceeding against the responsible parent/carer.

Fixed Penalty Notice

When unauthorised absence occurs, dependent upon the length and reason for the absence, the school has the option to request the Local Authority to issue a Fixed Penalty as an alternative to presenting the matter directly to the court.

Fixed Penalty Notices are issued in accordance with Sunderland City Council's Code of Conduct for Penalty Notices. It is important to note, Fixed Penalty Notices are issued to each parent of each absent child, (for example 2 children and 2 parents, means each parent will receive 2 notices in the amount of £60 each, totaling £120 for both children, this is increased to £120 per child if it is not paid within 21 days).

Where a Fixed Penalty Notice is not paid within the required timeframe as set out on the notice, the matter will be referred for prosecution under S444 Education Act 1996 and parent will receive a summons (which will give them notice of the time and date they will be required to appear before Sunderland Magistrates Court for the offence of failing to ensure their child's regular attendance at school.

All correspondence relating to non-attendance will make reference to the possibility of a FPN being issued by the Local Authority.

Attendance Awards

Weekly class attendance is reported in the school newsletter. The class with the highest weekly attendance is rewarded with additional play time at the class teachers discretion.

All children with 100% attendance per term are given certificates of attendance and an attendance prize.

Children exceeding the school attendance target of 95% are also given a certificate of attendance.

Two children from each class who have a weekly 100% attendance are chosen at random and given a reward in the form of pencils, note books etc.

School uses additional promotions and interventions in order to improve overall attendance which may vary by class. The school holds a weekly assembly where Attendance is promoted to children through celebration of that week's highest attending class.