

Darley Primary School: Policy for Attendance

Policy completed: January 2014

Co-ordinator responsible: Mr Nick Coates

Date of next review: January 2016, January 2017

How this Policy was Developed

This policy was developed from consultation with staff, governors, parents and various external bodies.

It takes full account of the school's legal obligations, noted in DFE and other materials.

School Context

Darley Primary School has around 50 pupils on roll. It is situated in the picturesque Nidderdale village of Darley and serves a wide and diverse community. The school population is made up of British, American and a small minority of ethnic children. Many of our children's parents work on the nearby RAF base at Menwith Hill and are often here on a three year tour of duty. This however can change due to global military need and as a result many of our children are highly mobile.

Aims

- To encourage prompt arrival at school.
- To encourage regular attendance.
- To ensure that routines are in place for monitoring attendance and for early identification of any difficulties.
- To work together with parents in order to achieve high standards of attendance and punctuality.

Roles & responsibilities

The School will:

- Give attendance and punctuality a high priority.
- Provide and promote a welcoming and positive atmosphere so that children feel safe and their presence is valued.
- Raise awareness of the importance of full attendance and punctuality using newsletters and other communications to parents.
- Encourage parents to fully support the policy as a vital contribution towards their child's education.
- Encourage the children to have a positive attitude towards attendance and punctuality so that they can retain this into adult life.
- Ensure that attendance is effectively monitored and absences are followed up promptly.
- Communicate effectively with other agencies (Educational Welfare Officer (EWO), Traveller Education, Health, Social Services etc.).
- Meet the legal requirements with particular reference to authorised and unauthorised absence.
- Ensure that all staff comply with the school policy and deal consistently with absence and punctuality.

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- Ensure information is available for Governors and parents.
- Ensure good liaison where a change of school occurs.
- Develop incentives for good attendance and punctuality.

Class teachers are responsible for:

- Keeping an overview of class and individual attendance looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/carers.
- Informing the Headteacher where there are concerns and acting upon them.
- Providing background information to support referrals.
- Monitoring follow-up after actions have been taken to correct attendance concerns.
- Emphasising with their class the importance of good attendance and promptness.
- Following up absences with immediate requests for explanation (but not necessarily taking this any further – responsibility of office staff).
- Discussing attendance issues at consultation evenings.

Administration staff are responsible for:

- Following up specific requests from the Headteacher for information about individuals.
- Contacting the child's home on the first day of absence if the parent has not contacted the school.
- Contacting families where concerns are raised about absence.
- Monitoring individual attendance on a daily basis where concerns have been raised.
- Providing reports and background information to inform discussion with the school's EWO.
- Providing a point of contact between individual teachers, the Headteacher and the school's EWO.
- Including information about attendance trends and class percentages in the newsletter.
- Informing the Headteacher on a formal and an informal basis of patterns of attendance noted.
- Promptly issuing registers and processing on a weekly basis.
- Collating attendance percentages.
- Processing and following up holiday forms.

The Headteacher is responsible for:

- Overall monitoring of school attendance.
- Acting as a point of contact for teaching and non-teaching staff where concerns need to be raised or advice sought.
- Liaising with other professionals to determine potential sources of difficulties and reasons for absence.
- Ensuring that the attendance policy is followed and that the actions from EWO meetings are carried out.
- Liaising with and discussing with parents issues relating to attendance.
- Feedback and discussions with the class teacher over individual cases
- Promotion of attendance issues during assemblies.

We expect the parent/carer to:

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- Provide up to date contact numbers and changes of address.
- Notify the school when their child is unable to attend, with a reason, **as soon as possible on the first day of the absence.**
- Telephone the school after the first day of absence to advise the school if the absence is continuing.
- In cases of lengthy absence, keep the school well informed so that work can be sent home in certain cases and in order for the school to be prepared for the child's return.
- Provide a note indicating attendance at the dentist, doctor or optician **before** the arranged appointment unless an emergency situation has arisen.
- Provide a note when the child returns from an absence due to sickness. This should be on the first day of the child's return to school.
- Ensure that their child arrives at school on time each day.
- Let the school know if their child is going to be late, e.g. if a car breaks down; if an urgent appointment has been made.
- Understand the importance of good attendance and punctuality and promote this with their child.

Strategies to Promote and Maintain High Standards of Attendance and Punctuality

- All new parents are given information on attendance as their child joins the school.
- Newsletters are used to promote this aspect of school life and serve as a reminder.
- Individual parents are approached where there is concern about their child's attendance or punctuality.
- Maintain and promote a set of class rules that refer to punctuality and readiness for work.

It is important to remember that the vast majority of children at Darley Community Primary School Junior School arrive on time every day. An important part of our attendance policy is that this good practice is commended and celebrated. In order to do this we:

- Publicise class attendance figures and award a trophy for the class with best attendance on a termly basis.
- Award attendance certificates to reward children for high attendance.

Registers

The method of maintaining the class registers is through Integris Attendance Module. Class teachers complete a register sheet twice daily and return it to the office. Weekly absence reports are printed and reasons for absence recorded using the relevant codes. (*Appendix A - Staff Guidelines for Register Codes*).

Registers close at 9.20 a.m. Lateness after this time is classed as 'late after the register has closed' unless it is for a medical appointment or a reason is provided which can be authorised by the Headteacher.

Authorised and unauthorised absence

Absences can be authorised if they are for certain reasons e.g. sickness, religious observance, approved holiday, absence following the death of a close member of the family. The ultimate responsibility to authorise absence rests with the Headteacher. If the Headteacher is not satisfied with the reasons provided, the absence may be categorised as unauthorised.

An absence will be classified as unauthorised when:

- A child is kept off school because a parent or sibling is ill.
- The parent cannot get the child to school.
- The child is taken on a shopping trip.
- The child is absent due to a birthday treat/family treat.
- A child is absent due to family work patterns.
- The child refuses to come to school or wants to stay at home.
- A child is more than half an hour late without a satisfactory explanation.

Each child's unauthorised absences (including unauthorised holiday absences) will be noted and recorded on an annual report to parents.

It is a legal requirement for a school to report percentages of authorised and unauthorised absences to parents in the annual Governors Report and to the DfES.

Parents have a responsibility to telephone the school as soon as possible on the first day of absence if their child is ill. If a child needs to be absent for a medical appointment a note must be received by the class teacher before the appointment. When a child returns from a period of absence due to a sickness, a note must be provided. The class teacher dates and signs all notes in order to complete the weekly absence report.

If the parent has not contacted the school once the morning registers have been sent to the office on the first day of absence then the school will telephone the child's home to enquire about the absence.

If a child has been absent for 3 days without an explanation, parents will be sent a letter. If no satisfactory response is received, a follow up reminder will be sent. Should this still result in a nil response, the Headteacher will write informing the parent of the Policy and the school's duty to inform the Education Welfare Officer about the child's lack of attendance.

Where there is cause for concern, i.e. when attendance is below 80% in any term, the reasons for this will be investigated and where appropriate, discussed with the EWO during one of their regular visits.

Holidays

- The law says that parents/carers do not have the right to take their children out of school for a holiday in term time.
- The Headteacher has the discretion to grant up to a maximum of 10 days leave for family holidays in each school year. This is at the discretion of the Headteacher and may not always be granted.
- The Headteacher will take into account individual circumstances such as the attendance record of the child, whether the child would miss exams or any exceptional circumstances. If any child has an attendance record of less than 90% then authorisation will not be given.
- Absences will not be authorised for any child during the week of the administration of KS2 and Year Group SATs in the Summer Term.
- Any requests must be made at least 7 days in advance on the official form obtainable from the school. The reasons must be made clear to the Headteacher in the relevant section. (*Appendix B*)
- If absence is not agreed and the pupil goes on holiday, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and reported to the Education Authority. The government has introduced Penalty Notice fines for parents whose children are out of school without the schools authorisation.
- Where a pupil fails to return within 10 school days of an agreed date schools have the power to remove the child from the school roll.
- **All other requests for absences due to other circumstances must be made in writing to the Headteacher in advance.**
- Early collection from school towards the end of the school day will not be authorised unless permission has been sought in advance, in writing, to the Headteacher or in cases of emergency.

Taking a holiday in term time means that children miss important school time. We would therefore request the co-operation of parents in considering the effect on their child's continuity of education before making requests for leave of absence in term time.

(*Appendix B - North Yorkshire Education Authority – Holiday in Term Time Guidance*).

Medical Appointments

- Parents should inform the class teacher in writing indicating attendance at the dentist, doctor or optician **before** the arranged appointment unless an emergency situation has arisen.
- Children should be collected from and returned to the school office to be signed in or out when attending medical appointments during the school day. If a child has an appointment in a morning or afternoon session and does not attend school for the other session, this will be recorded as an unauthorised absence unless it has been agreed with the Headteacher.

Public Performances

On occasions children become involved in public performances for dance groups, theatres, modelling agencies etc.

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- The Headteacher has the discretion to grant authorised absence for these events.
- The Headteacher will take into account individual circumstances such as the attendance record of the child, whether the child would miss exams or any exceptional circumstances. If any child has an attendance record of less than 90% then authorisation will not be given. Permission is at the discretion of the Headteacher and may not always be granted.
- Parents must obtain a licence to perform from the employing agency. This must be submitted to the Headteacher for completion.
- A letter must also accompany the licence indicating the time out of school that the child will require in order to participate in the performances including time required for rehearsals.
- Parents are asked to reflect upon the affect performances would have upon their child as any absence because a child is tired after a performance will be recorded as unauthorised.

Punctuality

- A member of staff is on duty on the playground from 8.40 a.m. Prior to that time children are not supervised and remain the responsibility of parents. Children should not be waiting in the playground before 8.40 a.m. This is especially important in cold and wet weather.
- The school day begins at 8.55 a.m. when the register will be taken. Children may come in and work on quiet classroom tasks after 8.50 a.m. Children arriving after 9.00 a.m. should report to the school office.
- Children arriving after 9.00 a.m. but before 9.20 a.m. will be recorded as 'late before the registers have closed'. Children arriving after 9.20 a.m. will be recorded as 'late after registers have closed'.
- Parents of children who persistently arrive late will be approached and reminded of these times and their obligation to comply. It will be explained that the lateness not only interrupts their child's education but also that of others in the class. (*Appendix C - Letters*).
- If parents know their child is going to be late for any reason, they should let the school know.
- If a regular pattern of lateness is observed, a note will be sent home asking the parent to explain the lateness or to ensure that punctuality is maintained.
- Repeated, unexplained lateness or persistent lateness without an acceptable reason will be referred to the Education Welfare Officer and/or Social Services where relevant.

Monitoring

- The Headteacher will keep the Governors informed about attendance matters.
- All staff will be expected to comply with the policy and any issues will be discussed at staff meetings.
- The Headteacher will consult the EWO each term to discuss concerns and review absence data.

Appendices:

Appendix A Register Codes – Guidelines for Staff

Appendix B North Yorkshire Holiday in Term Time Guidance & Forms

Appendix C Late letters

Registration

Appendix A

CLASS REGISTERS

The Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 1995 states that every school must keep an attendance register, which must be available for inspection during school hours.

The law requires regular attendance. Schools are required to take an attendance register twice a day: at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session. The register shows whether the pupil is present, engaged in an approved educational activity off-site, or absent. If a pupil of compulsory school age is absent, the register must show whether the absence was authorised or unauthorised.

There are four broad classifications in attendance registers:

- **Present:** pupil is on school premises at the time of registration
- **Approved educational activity:** pupil is engaged in an approved, supervised activity off site. (Counted as present for data collection purposes)
- **Authorised absent:** pupil has the authority of the school to be absent either given in advance (e.g. hospital appointment) or afterwards (e.g. notification of illness). Parents may not authorise absence; only schools can do this.
- **Unauthorised absent:** no explanation received or unacceptable reason given.

Marking the Attendance Register

- Registers must be marked at the beginning of the morning and afternoon sessions and sent to the front entrance hall (in the morning they should be sent with the dinner register and any money in the class tray). This is important as in

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case of Fire they are taken to the Fire Assembly Point (the playground) to check that all pupils are accounted for.

- Every pupil should be marked at every registration as either present, engaged in an approved educational activity off site, or absent. Blanks should not be left.
- Absences must be recorded accurately using the appropriate codes (see inside register).
- Manual registers must be marked in ink (not pencil) and it is recommended by the LEA to use consistent colour coding to distinguish presence from absence, i.e. the use of a black diagonal line to denote presence and a red circle for absence with the appropriate code. Any correction should be made so that the original entry and the correct entry are clearly visible.
- Once an explanation for absence has been received and accepted it is important that the register is updated.
- Registers are kept open for 30 minutes from the beginning of registration (i.e. the end of assembly).

Lateness

North Yorkshire LEA recommends that the following procedures should apply:

- If a pupil arrives late and the register is still open he/she should be marked as "late" but counted as present for that session.
- If a pupil arrives after the register has closed, i.e. after 9.25 a.m., and provides a satisfactory explanation, he/she should be marked as authorised absent for that session.
- If a pupil arrives after the register has closed and fails to provide a satisfactory explanation, he/she should be marked as unauthorised absent for that session.
- If a pupil arrives late having missed registration, they must go to Mrs. Langton in the entrance hall for her to mark them in the register. (This is important for emergency purposes.)

Continued...

DESIGNATED SYMBOLS

PRESENT AM PM
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LATE (Before Registers Close) Count as present
 (L)

Authorised Absences (Zero with appropriate code within it)

Other circumstances (bereavement, agreed special occasions, performances, other approved absences not covered by other codes) (C)

Excluded (E)

Family Holiday (for which leave has been granted) (H)

Medical and dental appointments confirmed illness (M)

Day of religious observance for the religious body to which the parents belong (R)

Approved study leave (S)

Traveller child travelling (T)

Approved educational activity (code letter only, no zero)

Pupil attending another institution under formalised dual registration arrangement. B

Attending interview e.g. with prospective employer or with another educational establishment I

Approved sporting activity (participation in/attendance at)) P

Educational visit or trip (UK/overseas) V

Approved work experience W

Pupil attending another institution under link course/consortium/franchising arrangement (but short of a formal dual registration arrangement) Z

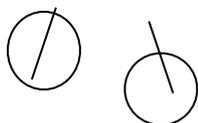
Numbers of children counted as present but currently not on site should be indicated in brackets

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Unauthorised absence

Absent

Late after registration closes



Post registration truancy

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Holidays in Term Time – Guidance for Schools

This guidance is issued as part of the LA's Behaviour and Attendance Strategy and is intended to assist head teachers, governors and school staff in making decisions about authorising holiday leave during term time.

Regulations and Guidance

The law says that parents/carers do not have the right to take their child out of school for a holiday during term time.

On application made by the parent/carer with whom the pupil normally resides, schools have a **discretionary power** to grant up to 10 days leave in each school year for the purpose of a family holiday during term time.

Save in **exceptional circumstances**, a pupil shall not be granted more than ten school days in any school year.

The Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 1995 clearly make the point that the head teacher has the final decision as to whether to authorise a holiday or not. Guidance has been issued by the DfES over a number of years and can be summarised as follows:

- No parent/carer can demand leave of absence for the purposes of a holiday as a right.
- Parents/carers should not normally take pupils on holiday in term time and this should be discouraged by the school and the LEA.
- Any request for leave should be made in advance. Holidays cannot be authorised retrospectively.
- If a school does not agree an absence and the pupil goes on holiday, absence is unauthorised.
- If a parent/carer keeps a child away for longer than was agreed, any extra time is recorded as unauthorised.

- Schools may delete from roll a pupil who fails to return within 10 school days of the agreed return date unless there is a good reason for the continued absence, such as illness.

A clear procedure for requesting leave of absence should be available to parents/carers and included in the schools prospectus and policy statement. (See revised application pro-forma attached)

Head teachers and Governing bodies should have clear policies on promoting school attendance. The head teacher's discretion to grant leave should be used sparingly but this discretion should not be fettered by applying policies (for example, blanket bans) which might suggest that each application has not been considered on its individual merits.

Head teachers need to consider the following before authorising leave:

1. The child's previous attendance history.
2. The child's stage of education and progress.
3. The time of year (public examinations)
4. The nature of the trip (an exceptional experience)
5. Family circumstances e.g. whether the parents/carers are restricted in terms of leave from their employer.

Some schools have reported an increase in the number of parental requests for short periods of term-time leave on more than one occasion during the school year rather than one "annual" holiday.

It is the intention of the regulations that the discretion on the part of the school to grant leave relates to "going away" on holiday. It is therefore not intended to cover day trips or taking a holiday at home. Head teachers may however use their discretion to grant separate periods of holiday leave (for families to go away on holiday) provided that in doing so the total amounts to no more than 10 days in the school year, unless the circumstances are exceptional.

Exceptional Circumstances

Save in exceptional circumstances, a pupil shall not be granted more than ten school days in any school year and parents/carers must make out a particularly strong and persuasive case for taking the child away for more than two weeks of the school term. In such cases schools should explore with parents/carers why such leave is necessary and agree a clear date for the pupils return.

Where leave of absence in term time of more than two weeks duration is planned to visit family members overseas, school staff may wish to discuss with parents/carers the most appropriate time of year and point in the pupil's educational career for the visit, so as to minimise the effects on the pupil's education.

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APPLICATION FOR PUPIL LEAVE OF ABSENCE FROM SCHOOL DURING TERM TIME

This form should be completed by the parent/carer and returned to the school as far in advance as possible and at least 7 days before the first date of the period of absence being requested. Parents/carers must obtain the schools permission before making any bookings for holidays in term time.

No parent/carer can demand leave of absence for the purposes of a holiday as of right. The law says that schools have a discretionary power to grant up to 10 days authorised absence in a school year. Each application is considered individually by the school, taking into account factors like the timing of the holiday and the child's attendance record.

Taking a holiday during term time means that children miss important school time – both educationally and for other school activities. Before completing this application parents/carers are asked to consider the effect on their child's continuity of education.

Name of pupil(s)

Address

Telephone

I request permission for my child to be absent from school

From..... To..... Total school days.....

Reason for application

Signature of parent/carer..... Date.....

For school use only

Seen by head teacher/head of year (signature)..... Date.....

Decision reached.....Other outcome.....

Date reply returned.....

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APPLICATION FOR PUPIL LEAVE OF ABSENCE FROM SCHOOL FOR
PARENTAL HOLIDAY

REPLY

Name of pupil(s)

Address

Your son/daughter has been granted leave of absence for.....days
starting.....returning on.....

Your son/daughter has not been granted leave of absence.

(delete whichever is not applicable)

What the law says about school attendance

Parents are responsible for making sure that their child attends school regularly. If your child fails to attend regularly the Local Education Authority may take action against you in the Magistrate's Court (Magistrates can fine parents up to £2,500 or impose a custodial sentence. Magistrates can also impose a Parenting Order) Alternatively the Local Education Authority can issue a penalty notice. (Currently £50 if paid within 28 days, rising to £100 if paid after 28 days but before 42 days).

Where can I get more information and help?

Contact the schools Education Social Worker (telephone number available from the school)

Date:

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