



## Attendance Policy

### 1. Aims

Our school aims to meet its obligations with regards to school attendance by:

- Promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence

We will also support parents to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend regularly, and will promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

At Dulwich Wood we believe that good attendance supports all children to flourish and regular attendance can lead to positive routines for the children and sets good patterns for future learning and life. It can also further support great values such as commitment, faithfulness and perseverance.

Any parents wishing to discuss their child's attendance should contact the school office to arrange a meeting with the Inclusion Lead. The school wants to work with parents to ensure the child's best interests remain central at all times.

### WHY IS REGULAR ATTENDANCE AT SCHOOL IMPORTANT?

Firstly, it is the LAW:

The Education Act 1996 requires parents, guardians and carers to ensure their child receives efficient full-time education, suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. Parents, guardians and carers must ensure that they are fully aware of the school's attendance policy as any absence will have a huge impact on a child's learning. Regular school attendance is essential and parents, guardians and carers, together with our school staff all have a part to play in ensuring full potential is achieved.

Secondly, regular school attendance is great for your child:

- Statistics show a direct link between under-achievement and attendance below 95%
- Regular attenders make better progress, both socially and academically
- Regular attenders find school routines, school work and friendships easier to cope with
- Regular attenders find learning more satisfying
- Regular attenders are more successful in transferring between primary school, secondary school and higher education, employment or training

There is a clear connection between regular attendance and achievement. As attendance deteriorates, so does performance, achievement, friendship circles and self-esteem. Research shows that children with

low attendance are likely to be behind their peers. It also states that they have little chance of catching up with their peers if attendance does not improve. ([Improving Attendance at School, DfE, 2012](#))

## 2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the [school attendance guidance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- [The Education Act 1996](#)
- [The Education Act 2002](#)
- [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2010](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2011](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2016](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the [school census](#), which explains the persistent absence threshold.

## 3. School procedures

### 3.1 Attendance register

By law Dulwich Wood is required to keep an attendance register, and all pupils must be placed on this register.

The attendance register will be taken at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

Every entry in the attendance register will be preserved for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

### **3.2 Unplanned absence**

Parents must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence – for example, if their child is unable to attend due to ill health – by 9:15am or as soon as practically possible (see also section 6).

If the reason for absence is that your child is unwell we ask parents to give details i.e. 'he/she has a stomach upset and has been vomiting' or 'he/she has an ear infection.'

On the first day of unplanned absence parents must call the school office on 020 8670 5470.

If you are unable to talk to a member of the office team, parents are asked to leave a message on the answer phone clearly stating the child's full name, class and reason for absence.

Absence due to illness will be authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask parents to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents will be notified of this in advance.

### **3.3 Medical or dental appointments**

Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is classed as an authorised absence; advance notice is required for authorising these absences.

However, we encourage parents to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible.

Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

If a child has a medical/dental appointment, the school asks parents/carers to provide the office with a copy of the appointment letter – this can also be done via email.

Applications for other types of absence in term time must also be made in advance. Information relating to whether the school can authorise such absences can be found in section 4.

### **3.4 Lateness and punctuality**

The school gates are open from 8:35am and close at 8:50am.

The register for the first session will be taken at 8:55am and will be kept open until 9:25am.

If the arrival at school is after the registers have closed at 9:25am the pupil will receive a 'U' mark. This equates to an absence although we are aware that the pupil is on the school premises in accordance with health and safety.

The Inclusion Lead will speak to parents in person if a child is late more than three times over a period of a week.

Letters will be sent home to parents where children are consistently late to be dropped off or picked up. A meeting with the Inclusion Lead will be put in place to discuss a way forward to support the family.

### **3.5 Following up all absences**

The school will follow up all absences to ascertain the reason, ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary, identify whether the absence is approved or not and identify the correct attendance code to use.

If the school has not received a call by 9:15 on the first day of absences the parent/carer is called to find out what the reason for absence is.

Please note it is the parent/carers duty to inform the school of any changes to contact details.

### **3.6 Reporting to parents**

Attendance is constantly monitored at Dulwich Wood. Any absence that falls below 93% during the year is identified by the Inclusion Lead and addressed when necessary. If your child is at risk of becoming persistently absent (below 90%) you may be invited to meet the Inclusion Lead to discuss how attendance can be improved. Support and help for parents will be offered to ensure the attendance level can improve.

If, after contacting the parent and putting interventions in place, attendance does not improve, a referral may be made to Southwark's 'Family Early Help' in order to support attendance further.

Each child's attendance is reported annually and is given as a percentage for the overall on the child's end-of-year report.

## **4. Authorised and unauthorised absence**

### **4.1 Granting approval for term-time absence**

Pupils are expected to attend school every day that the school is open for learning for the entire duration of the academic year, unless there is an exceptional reason for the absence. There are two main categories of absences:

- Authorised Absence: is when the school has accepted the explanation offered as satisfactory justification for the absence, or given approval in advance for such an absence.
- Unauthorised Absence: is when the school has not received a reason for absence or has not approved a child's absence from school after a parent's request.

Headteacher or Inclusion Lead may not grant any leave of absence to pupils during term time unless they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. (See Appendix 2 for examples of exceptional circumstances).

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the Headteacher or Inclusion Lead's discretion.

Valid reasons for authorised absence include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments – as explained in sections 3.2 and 3.3
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a Traveller

family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision

Unauthorised absence includes absences taken during term time for example:

- Taking holidays or other travel, including as a result of parental work commitments, are therefore not considered exceptional circumstances.
- Leave which is taken because of the availability of cheaper fares or other costs are not regarded as exceptional circumstances.
- Claims of illness as a reason for a delayed return, particularly after normal school holidays will not be considered unless accompanied by travel tickets dated before the school opens or other agreed dates. Medical documentation from abroad will not normally be accepted unless accompanied by travel documents indicating travel dates prior to school reopening.
- Holidays due to siblings educated at other schools being on a break.

## 4.2 Legal Sanctions

**Dulwich Wood may use [Penalty Notices](#) for families who take their children out in term time for holidays, where the child is of compulsory school age.**

If issued with a penalty notice, parents must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice ultimately rests with the headteacher, following the local authority's code of conduct for issuing penalty notices. This may take into account:

- A number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute the parent or withdraw the notice.

## 5. Strategies for promoting attendance

Before children start at the school, the school states clearly that term time holidays should not be taken and the importance of regular attendance. The expectation is also contained within the 'Home and School Agreement'.

Each half term the class with the highest attendance rate and also with the best punctuality is awarded with a prize.

## 6. Attendance monitoring

The Inclusion Lead monitors overall pupil absence on a weekly basis.

Parents are expected to call the school in the morning if their child is going to be absent due to ill health (see section 3.2).

Pupil-level absence data is collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. We compare our attendance data to the national average, and share this with governors.

At Dulwich Wood we hold the absence data on internal management information system. This information is taken from the daily registers and from communications with parents regarding any absence from school. This data is only accessible by office personnel and leadership team members.

Every 6 weeks the Inclusion Lead analyses absence data with regards to any patterns or drop in attendance rates. This analysis is used to monitor attendance for individuals as well as groups of pupils, to identify where interventions may be needed. This also enables the school to evaluate the impact of additional resources or support used.

## **7. Roles and responsibilities**

### **7.1 The Governing Body**

The Governing Body is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school on at least a termly basis. It also holds the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

The Headteacher reports on pupil absence once every term through the Headteacher's' report to the governors.

### **7.2 The Headteacher**

The Headteacher is responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented consistently across the school, and for monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors.

The Headteacher also supports other staff in monitoring the attendance of individual pupils and issues fixed-penalty notices, where necessary.

### **7.3 The Inclusion Lead**

The Inclusion Lead:

- Monitors attendance data at the school and individual pupil level
- Reports concerns about attendance to the Headteacher
- Works with 'Family Early Help' to tackle persistent absence
- Arranges calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Advises the Headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices

### **7.4 Class teacher**

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office.

### **7.5 Office staff**

Office staff are expected to take calls from parents about absence and record it on the school system.

## **7.6 Parents**

Parents can help promote good attendance by letting children know that good school attendance is important. If parents, guardians or carers are worried about their child's attendance at school they should:

- Talk to their child; it may be something simple that needs help in resolving
- Talk to their child's class teacher in the first instance.
- Ensure their child is in class ready for learning by the start of the day at 8:50am
- Inform school of any absence on the first day of absence

In cases of emergency or in exceptional circumstances to make applications for leave in writing on the school's 'Leave of Absence Request Form' (Appendix 3), giving the reason for the request. Please note that completion of the form does not automatically mean the absence will be authorised.

## **8. Monitoring arrangements**

This policy will be reviewed bi-annually by the Headteacher. At every review, the policy will be shared with the Governing Body.

## **9. Links with other policies**

This policy is linked to our safeguarding policy.

## Appendix 1: attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

### Attendance codes currently in use

Code	Full name	Description
The student is counted as present.		
/ or \	Present am or pm	Present in school during registration.
L	Late	Late arrival before the register has closed
The student is counted as present, at an Approved Educational Activity.		
B	Educated off Site	The student is at an off-site supervised educational activity approved by the school.
K	Education provision provided by LA	Education provision arranged by a local authority, rather than the school
P	Sporting Activity (Approved)	Pupil is taking part in a sporting activity that has been approved by the school and supervised by someone authorised by the school.
V	Educational trip	A residential trip organised by the school or a supervised strictly educational trip arranged by an approved organisation.
W	Work Experience	A student in the final two years of compulsory education is attending work experience.
The student is counted as absent, authorised.		
C	Other Authorised Absence	Leave of absence for exceptional circumstance
C1	Other Authorised Absence	Absence for a regulated performance or employment abroad
C2	Other Authorised Absence	Pupils on part-time timetables
J1	Interview	Leave of absence to attend an interview for employment or admission into another educational institution
E	Excluded	If a student is excluded but still on the admission register, they should be marked E, for up to the sixth consecutive day of any fixed period (referred to as 'suspensions' by the DfE from Autumn 2021) or permanent exclusion.
M	Medical/Dental Appointments	The student is absent due to a medical or dental appointment that could not be made outside of school hours.

R	Religious Observance	The student is absent for religious observance on a day designated by the religious body.
S	Study Leave	Study leave should be used sparingly and only granted to Year 11 pupils for public exams. Students should still be able to come into school to revise.
T	Traveller Absence	Used when Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) or New Travellers are known to be travelling for occupational purposes and have agreed this with the school.
I	Illness	This Illness code can be used for any form of illness, if you don't want to distinguish Covid-19 illness.

The student is counted as absent, unauthorised.

G	Family Holiday (Not Agreed)	The Holiday was not authorised by the school or in excess of the period determined by the headteacher.
N	No Reason	The reason for the absence has not been provided. If no reason for an absence is provided after a reasonable amount of time, it should be changed to O.
O	Unauthorised Absence	If the school is not satisfied with the reason given for absence they should record it as unauthorised.
U	Late (After Register Closes)	Schools should keep registers open for a reasonable amount of time, after which the student should be marked with a U.

These codes are not counted so will not affect attendance figures.

D	Dual Registration	The student is registered at another school and attends it during this lesson e.g. students at a pupil referral unit. Schools should only record attendance and absences for sessions the pupil is scheduled to attend at their school.
X	Non-statutory school age absence	Sessions non-compulsory school-age children are not expected to attend. This code should only be used for early years students who have not yet passed the 1st January, 1st April or 1st September following their 5th birthday.
Y1	Unable to attend	Absence due to transport normally provided not being available.
Y2	Unable to attend	Widespread disruption to travel
Y3	Unable to attend	Part of school closed.
Y4	Unable to attend	Unexpected whole school closure (different from # for planned closures).

Y5	Unable to attend	Pupils in the criminal justice system.
Y6	Unable to attend	Absence due to public health guidance or law.
Y7	Unable to attend	Any other unavoidable cause.
Z	Pupil Not On Roll	This code can be used when setting up registers in advance of pupils joining. Schools must take attendance for pupils from the first day the student should be attending the school.
#	School Closed To Pupils	This code should be used for whole or partial school closures that are known or planned in advance such as if the school is used as a polling station.

## Appendix 2

### Exceptional Circumstances

1. Absences to visit seriously-ill relatives or for a bereavement of a close family member are usually considered to amount to 'exceptional circumstances', but for the funeral service and travelling time only, not for extended leave. Absence will only be authorised if the head teacher or Inclusion Lead are satisfied that the circumstances are truly exceptional.
2. Absences to attend parents' own wedding may be exceptional if the head teacher or Inclusion Lead are satisfied that there is a persuasive reason for holding the wedding during term time and there will be an onus on parents to show clear evidence that this absence is absolutely an exceptional circumstance. In difficult family situations the head teacher or Inclusion Lead may use their discretion in granting leave and each case should be addressed on its individual merits, taking into account the overall welfare of the child.
3. Absences for important religious observances are often taken into account, but only for the ceremony and travelling time, again, not for extended leave. This is intended for one-off situations rather than regular or recurring events.
4. The needs of the families of service personnel will be taken into account if they are returning from long operational tours that prevent contact during scheduled holiday time.
5. Reasonable adjustments for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities will be made and may result in a leave being granted as an exceptional circumstance.
6. Families may need time together to recover from a trauma or crisis, including where an absence from school is recommended by a health professional as part of a parent or child's rehabilitation from a medical or emotional issue

### **Appendix 3 - Absence form**

#### Application for Leave During Term Time

Parents/Carers must ask permission for their child to be absent during term time, and it is at the Head Teacher' and Inclusion Lead's discretion to decide whether or not the absence will be authorised. The Head Teacher or Inclusion Lead may authorise leave during term time for exceptional circumstances only. If leave is taken without permission, or no application is made, parents/carers risk being issued with a Penalty Notice or being prosecuted upon their return.

Parents/Carers wishing to apply for their child to have leave from school should complete this form and return it to school for authorisation at least two weeks before the proposed leave. The application will be discussed with the school's Link Educational Welfare Officer whose advice will guide the outcome.

## LEAVE OF ABSENCE REQUEST

Dear Parent/Carer,

In exceptional circumstances, families may need to request permission for their child not to be in school during term time. These requests will be made directly to the Headteacher or Inclusion Lead and permission will be given at their discretion following careful consideration of the child's age, the time of year, overall attendance pattern and the circumstances given.

As per current regulations and DfE advice on school attendance (2016) we would like to advise you that the Headteacher or Inclusion Lead may not grant any Leave of Absence in term time unless exceptional circumstances exist. By exceptional we mean rare, significant, unavoidable and short. By unavoidable, we mean an event that could not reasonably be arranged at another time.

Term times are for education, and children and families have 175 days off school to spend time together, including weekends and school holidays.

The School will assess each request on an individual basis, considering the impact that missing school will have on the child's education, their previous record of attendance and any special circumstances of which we are made aware, e.g. the bereavement of a close family member, the needs of the families of service personnel, or the need for time together to recover from trauma or crisis. The School will determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the request is granted.

If an absence request is granted, it will be recorded as 'authorised absence'. If a parent/carer takes their child out of school without permission this will count as an 'unauthorised absence'.

**If your child remains out of school for more than 10 days then you risk losing your child's place. This is because we can off-roll if the absence is unauthorised and we don't know where your child is officially. If you do lose your child's place in our school you are then responsible for finding another school place. You would be welcome to reapply to us through Southwark.**

The application must be made in advance using the form found at the end of this letter. Retrospective requests will not be considered. Please return this form to the School no less than 10 days before the absence is due to start.

## Leave of Absence Request Form

I have read and understood the information

However, I request you authorise a leave of absence from school for:

Student Name		Class	
Current Address:			

Dates (inclusive)	From		To	
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Reason for the Leave of Absence Request, including full details of any exceptional circumstances

Signature of Parent/Carer	
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### To be completed by the school

#### Attendance Officer/ Other School Designated Person

Date Received	
Current Attendance	
No. of days absence so far this year	
Student's Academic Progress	
Comments	

#### Headteacher/Miss Bristow

Absence Authorised	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Comments		
Signed/Dated		
Copy to Parent/Carer		

If you would like to discuss the decision with the school please contact Miss Bristow on 020 8670 5470