



Pupil Attendance and Punctuality Policy

Policy reviewed by: Kirstie Stroud & Barrie O'Shea
Policy last reviewed: June 2016
Next review due: June 2019

Attendance is a priority for Duncombe School. Our expectation is that all children achieve the target of 100% attendance each year. Good attendance is essential for a child to achieve the very best now and in the future and sets up good habits for their future. Absence disrupts the education of the individual pupil and the whole class. Research shows that children who do not attend school regularly:

- Do not achieve well in school (national data shows a correlation between high attendance rates and high academic performance);
- Find it difficult to maintain friendships;
- Miss out on social events;
- In extreme cases, are more likely to become involved in crime.

It is a legal requirement that students of compulsory school age receive full-time education and this means regular attendance at school. At Duncombe, we take the issue of attendance very seriously and do all we can to obtain and reward very high attendance from all our students. We regard children's school attendance for 190 days annually as a right and not in any way optional.

Authorised Absences

Absence can only be authorised where there is a good cause. Parents cannot authorise absence; only the Headteacher can do so. The Department for Education has issued guidelines to all schools detailing valid reasons for authorised or justified absences:

- (i) A child is ill or receiving medical attention;
- (ii) Days of religious observance, notified in advance, always limited to one day at a time;
- (iii) Absence due to family circumstances (e.g. bereavement, serious illness).

We expect absences to be kept to a minimum; routine medical and dental appointments should be arranged out of school hours wherever possible and pupils should attend as much of school as is possible on those days.

Unauthorised Absences

These are absences where:

- no letter or acceptable explanation is provided by parents/carers;
- the reason for the absence does not fall into one of the categories of authorised absence above.

No absences are authorised for holidays or visits during school time. The school will support Islington Council in the implementation of a Penalty Charge for unauthorised absences or if necessary the prosecution of parents who may regularly take their children out of school depriving them of their entitlement to education.

Punctuality

Being on time gets a child off to a good start to make the most of his/her learning. It sets positive patterns for the future and leads to good attendance. Being punctual also leads to better achievement because the child does not miss out on the learning which begins as soon as the school day starts. It also avoids other children's learning being disrupted. Arriving 15 minutes late a day equals to two weeks of lost learning a year! The school keeps records of all lateness as well as absence.

Rewards for good attendance

The school not only encourages good attendance and punctuality but also promotes an extensive reward structure to thank those children for whom, never being absent or late, is a normal part of their daily life.

- Class points and a certificate are awarded to the three classes with the highest attendance each week (class points lead to a trip for the winning class every half term).
- Every class earns class points for each child with 100% attendance and punctuality for the week.
- The class with the highest weekly attendance gets to look after "Rascal and his kennel" for the week.
- The top class(es) with weekly attendance of 99% or more receive a board game for their class.
- Children with 100% attendance and punctuality are rewarded every half term with an invitation to an Attendance Party with a film, refreshments, prizes and the chance to have a non-uniform day. KS1 takes place in our school and KS2 at Arts and Media School Islington.
- For every Attendance Party a child attends, they will be given a ticket (up to 6) in the end of year raffle for a Wii or Play Station console.
- This is a community commitment, therefore, the whole school community, regardless of personal attendance, receives an ice-cream from the ice-cream van at the end of the year if the whole school attendance target is achieved.

- Parents whose child's attendance has significantly improved are written to, to congratulate them and encourage continued improvement.

Structures to deal with poor attendance

- The Headteacher gives every child an attendance target in their annual report and refers to it the following year. No attendance below 96% (current at time of writing the policy) is acceptable.
- Attendance is a priority. Our current School Development Plan lists attendance as our top priority. An Attendance Group meet half termly to drive attendance forward. The group includes Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher, Assistant Headteacher with responsibility for Inclusion, Attendance Admin Officer, Attendance Teaching Assistant, Education Welfare Officer and senior EWO and Home School Support worker.
- The Attendance Group work towards implementing the attendance action plan. The action plan is regularly reviewed and, where necessary, updated. All members of staff work closely with families to support good attendance. Families are encouraged to seek support from the school if they are having problems with their child's attendance or punctuality.
- The EWO meets weekly with the HSS worker to implement the actions of the Attendance Group.
- Targeted families are visited at home or interviewed at school by the EWO and school employees.
- All relevant support agencies are liaised with in order to improve attendance.

Holidays

Our Attendance Policy is principally one of celebration and reward based. However we are rigorous with not approving Authorised Absences and if necessary, bringing serious offenders to the courts. Holidays should be taken out of term time. Duncombe School will not authorise holidays taken during term time. Parents who take their child(ren) away during term time for over 5 days risk being issued a penalty notice by the Local Authority and in serious circumstances, a court appearance with the possibility of a conviction. A penalty notice can only be waived, if parents produce a death certificate of a close relative and the absence from school is kept within reasonable limits (maximum 10 days).