



ATTENDANCE POLICY

INTRODUCTION:

We aim to create a learning environment which enables and encourages all members of the community to strive for excellence. For our pupils to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend school regularly and punctually every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

Downlands has always had very good levels of attendance – 95% or above is always our target. Below this figure means too many days of school missed.

To sustain and improve good attendance it is very important that all parents/carers are aware of and support our aims, policy and procedures.

WHY REGULAR ATTENDANCE IS SO IMPORTANT:

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class. Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

PROMOTING REGULAR ATTENDANCE:

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility - parents, pupils and all members of school staff.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Report to you regularly regarding your son's/daughter's attendance and punctuality rate
- Promote good attendance by sharing individual and class achievements
- Reward good attendance through achievement points and reward postcards

UNDERSTANDING TYPES OF ABSENCE:

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required, preferably in writing.

Absences can be authorised for illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies, failure of county transport, days of religious observance, snow closures or other unavoidable causes.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- Truancy before or during the school day
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Children who arrive at school after 9:20am without good reason
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- Day trips and holidays in term time which have not been authorised in advance

This type of absence can lead to the Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings.

If your child is reluctant to attend please do not cover for their absence and make immediate contact with the school.

PERSISTENT ABSENTEEISM (PA):

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' (PA) when their attendance is at 90% or below for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parents' fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and you will be informed.

PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system and we also combine this with academic mentoring where absence affects attainment.

PA cases may be made known to the Local Authority through Pupil Entitlement and may be subject to an Action Plan.

ABSENCE Procedures:

If your child is absent you must:

- Contact us before 8:45am on the first day of absence
- Send a note in on the first day they return with an explanation of the absence – you are requested to do this even if you have already telephoned us

If your child is absent we will:

- Telephone you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you;
- Write to you if your child has under 93% to inform you we are monitoring the situation. If absence does not improve then we will invite you in to discuss the situation with a member of staff.
- Discuss the matter with the Local Authority through Pupil Entitlement if attendance moves below 90%.

TELEPHONE NUMBERS:

There are times when we need to contact parents about lots of things, including absence, so we need to have your contact numbers at all times. Please make sure we are informed promptly about any changes.

LOCAL AUTHORITY – PUPIL ENTITLEMENT:

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any attendance concerns together which is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the child to Pupil Entitlement and an Investigating Officer may be appointed. He/she will review the attendance issues and work with the family and the school to try and improve attendance. Parents or children may wish to contact Pupil Entitlement themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Telephone number: 03302 228200.

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Failure to improve attendance could result in legal action being taken. This could include prosecution of parents, Education Supervision Orders and Fixed Penalty Notices. For further details please contact Pupil Entitlement:Investigation.

Pupil Entitlement:Investigation is also responsible for issuing employment certificates. All students doing any work outside paid or unpaid need an employment certificate. Application forms can be obtained from the school. If attendance is not at a certain level, employment certificates will not be issued.

LATENESS:

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If pupils are late to registration they disrupt the Tutor's routine and can miss important information and news for the day. Similarly arriving late to lessons is disruptive.

HOW WE MANAGE LATENESS:

The school day starts at **8.45am** and pupils are required to go to their Tutor base when the bell rings.

Official Registers are marked at **8.50am in Tutor time and 2:00pm in Lesson 5**. Pupils arriving late and, unless there is a good reason, will receive a detention. Lateness after **9.20am** will be **unauthorised**. Teachers also take a register for their lesson and the same sanctions apply.

If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with the Head of Year to resolve the problem. If the problem persists you could face the possibility of a Fixed Penalty Notice. Please contact the school or Pupil Entitlement if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

ABSENCE IN TERM TIME:

Parents should be aware that there is **no** automatic entitlement in law to absence from school in term time for holidays. National guidelines state that such absence can only be granted where exceptional circumstances exist. Following consultation with the Governing body, requests for holiday absence will not be authorised. Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school, or in excess of that agreed, will be recorded as unauthorised and may result in legal action. (See information about Fixed Penalty Notices).

From 1 September 2013 schools are subject to The Education Pupil Registration Amendment Regulations which frames Downland's policy as outlined below:

- Leave of absence from school will only be granted in exceptional circumstances
- Applications for leave of absence from Downlands must be made to the Headteacher, using the school's "Request for Authorised Absence in Term Time" form which is available on the school website or from the Attendance manager. Applications must be received at least four working (school) weeks before the requested absence. If emergency circumstances arise the school should be contacted directly by phone
- It is for the Headteacher to be satisfied that the circumstances warrant the granting of leave and to determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if leave is granted
- Absence without approval of the Headteacher will be recorded as unauthorised (unlawful absence) on the students registration certificate
- Knowingly removing a student without authorisation from the school for five school days (that is ten am/pm sessions) or more will result in the imposition of a Fixed Penalty Fine.

Absence for involvement in approved activities:

- Absence for an approved activity is determined under different criteria
- Applications for authorisation of an absence for involvement in an approved activity should be completed on the schools "Request for Authorised Absence in Term Time" form available from the school. The application is subject to the Headteacher's approval as outlined above
- Guidance on activities that may be approved can be found on the reverse of the "Request for Authorised Absence in Term Time" form

Additional notes:

- Parents should be aware absence for a family holiday is not an entitlement for whatever period of time
- Parents requiring any guidance before applying for authorisation of absence for **leave** or an **approved activity** are advised and welcome to discuss their circumstances with the school.
- Each application and its circumstances will be assessed on an individual basis in consultation with the student's Head of Year.

SCHOOL PROCEDURE

1. All applications for leave of absence should be forwarded to the Headteacher.
2. Regarding authorisation of absence for an approved activity the following criteria apply:
 - a. A representative sporting activity/event
 - b. A performing arts activity/event
 - c. An affiliated or recognised club/organisation activity/event
 - d. An educational activity/event that is related to the school curriculum

FIXED PENALTY NOTICES (FPNs)

The aim of FPNs is to ensure regular attendance and punctuality which maximises educational outcomes for young people.

Downlands works within the local authority's Code of Conduct for Fixed Penalty Notices (revised Summer 2015). The Code of Conduct outlines the eligibility criteria for the issue of a Fixed Penalty Notice which is when a student has a minimum of 10 school sessions (5 days) recorded as unauthorised in a 10 week period. Unauthorised absence would include

- a) Any **absence** recorded as unauthorised
- b) A **holiday** in term time which has not been authorized by the Headteacher
- c) **Late arrival** at school after the register has closed – at Downlands this is 30 minutes after the stated registration times

Downlands will assess each case on an individual basis against the above criteria to ensure its appropriateness before referring to the local authority to issue a FPN. The assessment will involve the child's Head of Year and other professional(s) if appropriate.

Further details on FPNs are outlined in the local authority's parental guide to FPNs (Summer 2015) and the local authority's Code of Conduct (Summer 2015).

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. All school staff are committed to working with parents and pupils as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

Next review May 2017