

**Downs Infant and Junior School**

# **ATTENDANCE POLICY**

This policy is for parents and carers. It gives guidance on the legal position regarding school attendance and outlines how the school and parents can work together to encourage pupils to attend regularly.

**Revised: May 2017**

## **Introduction**

At Downs Infant and Junior School we aim for an environment which enables and encourages all members of the community to reach out for excellence. You and your child play an important part in making it so. For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and your child should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

It is very important therefore that you make sure that your child attends regularly and this Policy sets out how, together, we will achieve this.

**This policy applies to all pupils registered at the school.**

## **Why Regular Attendance is so important**

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. You may consider that a holiday will be educational, but your child will still miss out on the teaching that their peers receive. Children returning from any absence are also unprepared for the lessons that build on the teaching they have missed. Any pupil's absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class. When teachers have to give more time to help individual children catch up on missed work, other pupils in the class may miss out on help, and underachieve as a result. This is a situation that we all have a responsibility to avoid.

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:**

- Give you details on attendance in our regular newsletter;
- Report to you half-termly on what our overall attendance and punctuality rate is;
- Acknowledge and celebrate good attendance.

## **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.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, (where appointment cards/letters are provided), family emergencies or other absolutely unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This type of absence, if frequent, can lead to the Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. Absences include:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- Absences which have never been properly explained

- Children who arrive at school too late to get a register mark
- Shopping, birthdays or other family events
- Day trips and holidays in term-time which have not been agreed
- Sibling or parental illness

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If your child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually makes things worse. If there any problem at school that may contribute to poor attendance, please come and talk to us straight away so we can address the issue immediately.

### **Persistent Absenteeism (PA)**

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling at any time during the school year 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 of this immediately.

PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system. Parents will be contacted by the school and informed if their child is deemed to be a PA pupil. All PA cases are also automatically made known to our Independent School Attendance Manager.

### **The Independent School Attendance Manager**

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the matter to the Independent School Attendance Manager who will also try to resolve the situation by agreement. However, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed and unauthorised absences or other attendance or punctuality issues persist the Independent School Attendance Manager may have to refer the matter to the local authority who will consider whether or not legal intervention is required to ensure the child attends school regularly.

Alternatively, parents may wish to speak with the Independent School attendance Manager themselves to ask for help or information. This can be arranged through the school.

### **Absence Procedures**

#### **If your child is absent you must:**

- Contact us by 10am on the first day of absence explaining the reason for this

#### **If your child is absent we will adopt a staged approach as follows:**

- Telephone or text you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you
- If attendance falls below 90% we will write to you of our concerns
- If, after receiving a letter there is no improvement, we may refer the matter to the Independent School Attendance Manager who will write to you and may arrange a meeting to discuss your child's attendance.
- Possibly refer the matter direct to the independent School Attendance Manager if attendance moves below 85%.

## 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. So, help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have an up-to-date number – if we don't, then something important may be missed. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers and reminders in the newsletter throughout the year to ensure they are current and up to date

## Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your child misses the start of the day they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons, can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage absence.

The school day starts promptly at **8.58am** and we expect your child to be in class by that time.

Registers are marked by **the class teacher** and your child will receive a late mark if they are not in by that time.

At **9.30am** the registers will be closed. In accordance with the Regulations, if your child arrives after that time they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will **not** count as a present mark and it will mean they have an 'unauthorised late' which for official monitoring purposes is treated the same as an unauthorised absence. If your child accrues 10 'unauthorised lates' in any 10 week period, a Fixed Penalty Notice warning letter will be sent directly to you from the Local Authority. This may mean that you could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists.

Being late to school can have a considerable impact over the whole school year:

5 minutes late every day = 3 days of school lost a year
10 minutes late every day = 6.5 days of school lost a year
15 minutes late every day = 10 days of school lost a year
20 minutes late every day = 13 days of school lost a year
30 minutes late every day = 19 days of school lost a year

## Leave of absence in Term-Time

Taking holidays or other absences in term time will affect your child's schooling and we expect parents to help us by not taking children away in school time.

Remember that any savings you think you may make by taking a holiday in school time are offset by the cost to your child's education and possible fixed penalty fines.

1. There is **NO** automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday or any other reason. The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 used to allow headteachers to grant leave of absence for the purpose of a family holiday during term time in "special circumstances" of up to ten school days leave per year. Headteachers could also grant extended leave for

more than ten school days in exceptional circumstances.

Amendments to the 2006 regulations remove references to family holiday and extended leave, as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days. The amendments make clear that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Any requests for leave during term-time must be made using and submitting the appropriate form (available from the school office) **at least 2 weeks before the absence** providing details of what the exceptional circumstances are together with any supporting documentation such as a letter from an employer explaining that the parent can only take their holiday during term time.

These requests will be considered by the Independent School Attendance Manager in consultation with the school. If the leave of absence is not considered to be for exceptional circumstances, you will be informed in writing.

Any period of more than 2 school days leave taken without the agreement of the school, or in excess of that agreed, will be classed as unauthorised and may attract sanctions such as a **Penalty Notice**. This is £60 per parent per child if paid within 21 days. Between 21 and 28 days the penalty doubles to £120 per parent per child. If parents refuse to pay then this could result in prosecution by the local authority.

Please note that if a child is absent from school for an extended period of leave of more than 4 weeks and/or do not return by an agreed date, they are at considerable risk of being taken off roll and would therefore lose their place at the school.

### **School Targets, Projects and Special Initiatives**

The school has targets to improve attendance and your child has an important part to play in meeting these targets. We are actively encouraged by Brighton and Hove local authority to set very challenging annual attendance targets. These for the current year will be communicated to you in our newsletter and displayed prominently in our reception area.

The minimum level of attendance we aspire to for Downs Infant and Junior School is **97%**. We will keep you updated termly about our level of attendance and our progress towards achieving this level.

However, our target is to achieve better than this because we know that good attendance is the key to successful schooling and we believe our pupils can be amongst the best in the city.

Through the school year we monitor absences and punctuality to show us where improvements need to be made. Attendance is also inspected and reported on by Ofsted as part of our inspection report. We strive to keep attendance as rated as at least 'good' and in line with local and national figures.

Information on any projects or initiatives that will focus on these areas will be provided in our newsletter and we ask for your full support.

### **Reporting**

Attendance and punctuality will be reported to the Governing Body on a termly basis in the headteacher's report.

### **Review**

This policy will be reviewed by both schools and attendance figures will be reviewed annually by governors.

### **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 school. All school staff are committed to working with parents and pupils in a way that best ensures as high a levels of attendance and punctuality as possible.

<p><b>Above 97%: Less than 6 days absence a year</b></p>
<p>Excellent attendance! These young people will almost certainly get the best grades they can, leading to <u>better prospects for the future</u>. Pupils will also get into a habit of attending school which will help in the future.</p>
<p><b>95%: 10 days absence a year</b></p>
<p>These pupils are likely to achieve good grades and form a habit of attending school regularly. Pupils who take a <u>2 week holiday every year</u> can only achieve 95% attendance.</p>
<p><b>90%: 19 days absence a year</b></p>
<p>These pupils are <u>missing a month of school</u> per year. The Government classifies pupils in this group as "<u>Persistent Absentees</u>", and it will be almost impossible to keep up with work. Parents of young people in this group may face legal action being taken by the Local Authority.</p>