

Dropmore Infant School
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Chair of Governors: Mr Tim Wicks

Policy No: 032

Policy Title: Attendance Policy

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Approved by Chair of Governors: *Mr Wicks*

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Introduction:

Regular school attendance is essential if children are to achieve their full potential.

At Dropmore Infant School we believe that regular school attendance is the key to enabling children to maximise the educational opportunities available to them and become emotionally resilient, confident and competent adults who are able to realise their full potential and make a positive contribution to their community. We encourage parents to do all they can to ensure that their child attends school promptly and regularly. Good habits formed early will benefit a child's education and are a good preparation for life.

Dropmore Infant School values all pupils. As set out in this policy, we will work with families to identify the reasons for poor attendance and try to resolve any difficulties.

Dropmore Infant School recognise that attendance is a matter for the whole school community. Our Attendance Policy should not be viewed in isolation; it is a strand that runs through all aspects of school improvement, supported by our policies on Child Protection, Anti-Bullying, Behaviour and Equalities and Cohesion. This policy also takes into account the Human Rights Act 1998 and the Equality Act 2010.

Aims:

This policy will set out the importance of good attendance and the grounds on which an application for leave of absence will be approved or refused. It is intended that this clarification will improve pupil attendance still further.

Objectives:

- To share our approach to improving attendance: Awareness, Support, Improvement;
- To remind parents of their responsibility to ensure their children of compulsory school age have good attendance and receive a suitable full-time education;
- To indicate to parents the school's disapproval of term time holidays and the impact this has on a child's progress;
- To ensure that parents are clear about the law on attendance;
- To encourage parents to provide the school with accurate information so that all absence may be correctly classified (authorised or unauthorised);
- To ensure that all applications for exceptional leave of absence are made in advance so that suitable time is available for consideration and/or discussion;
- To reinforce the principle that schools may grant exceptional leave of absence but that they are not required to do so.

The Curriculum:

Parents do not have an automatic right to remove their child from school during term time and are strongly advised not to do so. Absence from school, whether for illness or for other reasons, hampers a child's progress. If parents are unsure as to whether or not to keep a child home or send them to school, we generally prefer them to come to school if they are well enough (except in case of diarrhoea and/or vomiting, when we apply the '48 Hour Rule'). If the child deteriorates, then we will always contact the parent. Children frequently 'perk up' when they are at school, and this procedure saves children missing time from their studies unnecessarily. Children should not stay at home simply to finish a course of antibiotics if they are otherwise well. Provided we have written parental consent, we will administer medicines as required. (Please see our Managing Medicine Policy for more information)

The 48 Hour Rule:

Diarrhoea and/or vomiting commonly affect children and staff. Unfortunately, it is not possible to distinguish between the causes, and infections can be easily spread, especially in children. It is essential that the same rule of exclusion applies in all cases: any child or staff member with diarrhoea and/or vomiting symptoms must not return to school until they have been free of symptoms for 48 hours (the '48 Hour Rule'). This is a recommendation from Public Health England to protect other pupils and staff. If a child is sent into school within the 48 hour period, we will contact the parents and ask for the child to be collected from school.

Legal Framework:

Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act states that **parents** must ensure that children of Compulsory School Age receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude to any special educational needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

A child is of Compulsory School Age at the beginning of the term following their 5th birthday. A child ceases to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday in June of the school year in which they reach the age of 16.

Under the Education Act 1996, the **Local Authority** has a statutory responsibility to ensure that parents secure education for children of compulsory school age and where necessary, use legal enforcement.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, require **schools** to take an attendance register twice a day, once at the start of the morning session and then again during the afternoon session. The register must record whether the pupil was:

- * present;
- * absent;
- * present at approved educational activity; or
- * unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

What is good attendance?

The threshold for **Persistent Absence** in primary schools is defined by the DfE as 90%.

At Dropmore Infant School the threshold for good attendance is 96%. Any attendances falling below 96% will be closely monitored and parents may be asked to provide evidence to support any absence in order for it to be classified as authorized.

We monitor attendance every half term and categorise attendance levels using a traffic light system as follows:

- ❖ GOLD: Excellent attendance (100%).
- ❖ GREEN: Any attendance of 96% or more is considered good attendance.
- ❖ AMBER: Any attendance between 90 and 96% is considered poor attendance.
- ❖ RED: Any attendance below 90% is considered persistent absence (DfE).

Attendance Facts:

- Attendance of 95% for the year equals 10 days that your child has been absent, that is 2 full school weeks of your child's learning missed for that year.
- Attendance of 90% for the year equals 19 days that your child has been absent, that is almost 4 school weeks missed.
- Attendance of 85% for the year equals 29 days that your child has been absent per, that is almost 6 school weeks missed.
- Attendance of 80% for the year equals 38 days absent per year that is over 7 school weeks missed.

Using Attendance Data:

All pupil's attendance will be monitored and will be shared with the Local Authority and other agencies if a pupil's attendance is a cause for concern. All information shared will be done so in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

At the end of every term attendance data for the term will be shared with parents and children. All parents will receive an Attendance Card for their child, regardless of the attendance percentage. (Attachment 1).

At the end of every half term the Headteacher will provide the class teachers with attendance data for the term and the school year so far for each pupil by class. Letters will be sent to those parents whose child's attendance is a cause for concern.

This pupil level data will be used to trigger school action:

- If a pupil's attendance is below 96% (AMBER) a letter will be sent to the parents and the child's attendance will be monitored for three weeks. Parents may be asked to provide evidence to support any absence in order for it to be classified as authorized. Parents may be invited for an informal meeting to discuss support and improvement.
- If a pupil's attendance falls below 90%, (RED) the pupil is considered to have Persistent Absence (as defined by the Department for Education) and their attendance is a serious concern. A letter will be sent to the parents and the County Attendance Team may be informed. Parents will be invited to attend a meeting to decide on actions. Attendance will be monitored weekly.

We also use the attendance data to celebrate good attendance.

The Attendance Cards for children with 100% attendance will be handed out at the end of term celebration assembly where those children will receive a 100% attendance sticker. A child with 100% attendance for the year will receive a 100% attendance certificate at the end-of-year celebration assembly.

Attendance data will also be used to identify emerging patterns and trends to inform whole school strategies to improve attendance and attainment.

Support Systems:

Dropmore Infant School recognises that poor attendance is often an indication of difficulties in a child's life. This may be related to problems at home and/or in school. Parents should make school aware of any difficulties or changes in circumstances that may affect their child's attendance and or behaviour in school, for example, bereavement, divorce / separation. This will help the school identify any additional support that may be required.

Dropmore Infant School also recognises that some pupils are more likely to require additional support to attain good attendance, for example, those pupils with special educational needs, those with physical or mental health needs, migrant and refugee pupils and looked after children.

The school will implement a range of strategies to support improved attendance. Strategies used will include:

- Discussion with parents and pupils
- Attendance report cards
- Referrals to support agencies
- Learning mentors
- Friendship groups
- Reward systems
- Time limited part time time-tables
- Additional learning support
- Behaviour support
- Inclusion units
- Reintegration support packages

Support offered to families will be child centred and planned in discussion and agreement with both parents and pupils.

Categorising Absences:

Where pupils of compulsory school age are recorded as absent, the register must show whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.

Absence can only be authorised by the school and cannot be authorised by parents. All absences will be treated as unauthorised unless a satisfactory explanation for the pupil's absence has been received.

Parents should advise the school by telephone on the first day of absence and provide the school with an expected date of return. This should be followed up in the form of a written note from the parent/carer, though verbal explanations may be acceptable where this is considered appropriate. Alternative arrangements will be agreed with non-English speaking parents/carers.

1. Authorised absences will be categorised as follows:

1.1 Illness (I)

In most cases a telephone call or a note from the parent informing the school that their child is ill will be acceptable. Parents may be asked to provide medical evidence where there are repeated absences due to reported illness. This will usually be in the form of an appointment card, prescription etc.

1.2 Medical / Dental Appointments (M)

Parents are advised where possible to make medical and dental appointments outside the school day. Where this is not possible, pupils should attend school for part of the day. Parents should show the appointment card to school.

1.3 Other authorised circumstances

This relates to occasions where there is cause for absence due to exceptional circumstances. The headteacher may authorise absence on compassionate grounds or for agreed educational purposes. Absence may be authorised for music or dance examinations. The date and time of the exam should be notified in advance, including details of the proposed arrangements for collection and return of the pupil concerned.

1.4 Excluded (no alternative provision made)

Exclusion from attending school is counted as an authorised absence. The child's class teacher will make arrangements for work to be sent home.

1.5 Religious Observance (R)

Dropmore Infant School acknowledges the multi-faith nature of British society and recognises that on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside school holiday periods or weekends and this necessitates a consideration of authorised absence or special leave for religious observance.

It is reasonable for a parent to allow their children not to attend school on any day of religious observance if recognised by the parent's religious body. Parents are requested to give advance notice to the school if they intend their child to be absent. However, in the interests of fulfilling the academic requirements of the school and limiting the authorised absence rate of the school, it is identified as reasonable that no more than one day be designated for any individual occasion of religious observance/festival and no more than three days in total in any academic year. Absence in excess of this will be categorised as unauthorised.

2. Late Arrivals will be categorised as follows:

2.1 Late Arrival (L)

Drop-off time is between 8:45am and 9:00am, when the gate is closed. The Register is taken at 9:05am. Pupils arriving after 9:05am will be marked as present but arriving late (L). Children arriving after 9:00am (though not yet classed as late) miss out on early morning activities to consolidate their learning.

2.2 Unauthorised Absence (U)

The register will close at 9:30am. Pupils arriving after the close of register will be recorded as an unauthorised absence for that school session, unless a satisfactory explanation for the late arrival can be provided (for example, attending a medical appointment).

2.3 Procedure for pupils arriving after 9:00am

All pupils arriving after 9:00am must use the main entrance and immediately report to the school office to ensure that we can be responsible for their health and safety whilst they are in school. An entry in the late book by the adult dropping off is required. The child will be sent to their classroom immediately, accompanied by a member of staff if necessary.

2.4 Punctuality Matters!

Being frequently late for school adds up to lost learning: arriving 5 minutes late every day adds up to over 3 days lost each year! The start of the school day is an important time for children to develop their social skills with peers, as well as preparing them for their learning.

3. Unauthorised Absences

Absence will not be authorised unless parents have provided a satisfactory explanation and that it has been accepted as such by the school.

Examples of **unsatisfactory** explanations include:

- A pupil's/family member's birthday
- Shopping for uniforms
- Having their hair cut
- Closure of a sibling's school for INSET, holiday or other purposes
- Tiredness - "Couldn't get up"
- Illness where the child is considered well enough to attend school
- Holidays taken without the authorisation of school

Leave of Absence and Extended Leave:

Parents do not have an automatic right to remove their child from school during term time for the purpose of a holiday and are strongly advised not to do so. Parents should be aware that if their child is absent for 10 school days they will miss 5% of their education during that academic year.

Parents wishing to take their child out of school during term time must send a written request to the head teacher before arrangements are made. **Documentary evidence of leave and return dates may be required in order to process your request.** Retrospective requests will not be considered and therefore will result in the absence being categorised as unauthorised.

Each request will be considered individually and will take the following factors into account:

- Length of the proposed leave
- Age of the pupil
- The pupil's general absence/attendance record
- Proximity of SAT's and public examinations
- Pupil's ability to catch up the work missed
- Pupil's educational needs
- General welfare of the pupil
- Circumstances of the request
- Purpose of the leave
- Previous term time holidays taken
- When the request was made

All requests for leave of absence will receive a written response.

It is particularly important that exceptional leave applications are not applied for where children already have a poor record of attendance. If a child has already missed a significant amount of curriculum time, it is unlikely that an application for leave would be approved. Parents should never anticipate approval for leave of absence. Work **will not** be set or sent home by teachers for pupils to complete during absence for holidays during term time. Leave of absence will not be granted for any child during Assessment weeks or for Year 2 pupils during National SATS Test weeks, which always fall during May.

If the permission to take leave is not granted and the pupil is absent, the absence will be **unauthorised**. In such cases the school may refer the matter to the County Attendance Team who may issue a Penalty Notice.

4. Traveller Absence

The aim for the attendance of Traveller children, in common with all other children, is to attend school as regularly and as frequently as possible.

To protect Traveller parents from unreasonable prosecution for non-attendance, the Education Act 1944, section 86, states that a Traveller parent is safe from prosecution if their child accrues 200 attendances (i.e. 200 half days) in a year. Traveller absence (Code T) is acceptable only when the family is engaged in a trade or business that requires them to travel and when the child is attending school as regularly as that trade permits. It does not mean that part-time education for Traveller children is legally acceptable, nor does it relieve parents of their duties to ensure that their children are receiving suitable education when not at school.

When in or around Buckinghamshire, if a Traveller family can reasonably travel back to their base school (see below) then the expectation is that their child will attend full-time.

Dropmore will be regarded as the base school if it is the school where the child normally attends when they are not travelling. However, the pupil must have attended in the last 18 months. Traveller children can register at other schools temporarily whilst away from their base school. In such cases, the pupil's school place at Dropmore will be kept open for them whilst travelling. This is to protect them from unfairly losing their place at their school of usual attendance.

Dropmore can operate effectively as the child's base school only if we are engaged in on-going dialogue with Traveller families. This means that parents must:

- advise of their forthcoming travelling patterns before they happen; and
- inform the school regarding proposed return dates

Dropmore will authorise absence of Traveller children if we are satisfied that a family is travelling and has given indication that they intend to return.

Traveller children will be recorded as attending an approved educational activity when:

- The child is on roll and attending another visited school
- Undertaking supervised educational activity under the jurisdiction of another Local Authority's Traveller Education Service
- The child is undertaking computer-based distance learning that is time evidenced

Where Traveller children are registered pupils at a school and are known to be present either at a site (official or otherwise) or in a house and are not attending school, the absence will be investigated in the same way as for any other pupil.

Deletions from the Register:

In accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, pupils will be deleted from the register only when one of the following circumstances applies:

- The school is replaced by another school on a School Attendance Order
- The School Attendance Order is revoked by the Local Authority
- The pupil has ceased to be of compulsory school age
- Permanent exclusion has occurred and procedures have been completed
- Death of a pupil
- Transfer between schools
- When a parent informs the school in writing that the pupil is to be withdrawn to be educated outside the school system
- Failure to return from an extended holiday after both the school and the local authority have tried to locate the pupil
- A medical condition prevents their attendance and return to the school before ending compulsory school-age
- In custody for more than four months (in discussion with The Youth Offending Team)
- 20 days' continuous unauthorised absence have elapsed and both the Local Authority and school have tried to locate the pupil
- A pupil has left the school but it is not known where he/she has gone after both the school and the Local Authority have tried to locate the pupil

Dropmore Infant School will follow Buckinghamshire Council's Children Missing Education Protocol when a pupil's whereabouts is unknown.

Roles and Responsibilities:

Dropmore Infant School believe that improved school attendance can only be achieved if it is viewed as a shared responsibility of the school staff, governors, parents, pupils and the wider school community.

Class teachers will:

- Actively promote the importance and value of good attendance to pupils and their parents;
- Form positive relationships with pupils and parents;
- Contribute to a whole school approach which reinforces good school attendance; with good teaching and learning experiences that encourage all pupils to attend and to achieve;
- Comply with the Registration Regulations, England, 2006 and other attendance related legislation;
- Implement systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils;
- Analyse attendance data to identify causes and patterns of absence;
- Contribute to the evaluation of school strategies and interventions;
- Work with other agencies to improve attendance and support pupils and their families;
- Document interventions used to a standard required by the local authority should legal proceedings be instigated.

We request that Parents will:

- Talk to their child about school and what goes on there. Take a positive interest in their child's work and educational progress;
- Instil the value of education and regular school attendance within the home environment;
- Encourage their child to look to the future and have aspirations;
- Contact the school if their child is absent to let them know the reason why and the expected date of return. Follow this up with a note on return;
- Try to avoid unnecessary absences. Wherever possible make appointments for the Doctors, Dentists etc. outside of school hours;
- Ask the school for help if their child is experiencing difficulties;
- Inform the school of any change in circumstances that may impact on their child's attendance;
- Support the school; take every opportunity to get involved in their child's education, form a positive relationship with school and acknowledge the importance of children receiving the same messages from both school and home;
- Encourage routine at home, for example, bed times, homework, preparing school bag and uniform the evening before;
- Be honest about their child's absence;
- Not keep their child away from school to go shopping, to help at home or to look after other members of the family;
- Avoid taking their child on holiday during term-time. Where this is unavoidable, send a written leave request to the Head Teacher in advance of booking the holiday.

Legal sanctions:

Where intervention fails to bring about an improvement in attendance, the Headteacher will notify the County Attendance Team of the irregular attendance.

The County Attendance Team or school, may invite parents to attend a Parenting Contract Meeting and issue a formal warning of a Penalty Notice.

Parenting Contracts (Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003)

A Parenting contract is a voluntary agreement between the Local Authority, school and the parent, it can also be extended to include the child and any other agencies offering support to resolve any difficulties leading to improved attendance.

The contract will outline attendance targets and will detail agreed actions that will help to achieve the target. The contract will be reviewed regularly.

The contract can be used as evidence in a prosecution should irregular attendance continue.

Penalty Notices (Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003)

Penalty Notices will be considered when:

- Intervention has failed to bring about improvement and further unauthorised absence has occurred following written warning to improve.
- A pupil has taken leave of absence i.e. for the purpose of a holiday in term time and the absence has not been authorised by the school

A Penalty Notice gives the parent the opportunity to avoid a prosecution. A £60 fine, per parent/carer, per child must be paid within 21 days. The fine increases to £120 per parent/.carer, per child if paid after 21 days but within 28 days of the date the Notice was issued.

Failure to pay the Penalty Notice may result in a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

Prosecution:

The school will provide the Local Authority with evidence required for a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996. This is to ensure that parents realise their own responsibilities in ensuring attendance at school and most importantly about returning children to education.

Equality Impact Assessment:

Dropmore Infant School values all pupils. We monitor attendance of all pupils. We will work with families to identify the reasons for poor attendance and try to resolve any difficulties, irrespective of special educational or medical needs or protected characteristics.

Intervention Flow Chart

School will notify parent of the child's irregular school attendance and offer them the opportunity and support to improve.

- If you receive a letter informing you of concerns regarding your child's attendance you should
- Ensure your child attends school regularly.
 - Contact the school to discuss any difficulties you or your child may be experiencing.
 - Speak with your child to see if there are any reasons why they are reluctant to attend.

If there is no improvement and the parent has not provided a good reason for the absence, the school may refer to the County Attendance Team.

The County Attendance Team will invite you to attend a Parenting Contract Meeting and may issue a Warning of a Penalty Notice.


A Parenting Contract is a voluntary agreement between you and the Local Authority aimed at supporting you in improving your child's school attendance.

Whilst your involvement in a Parenting Contract is voluntary, if you fail to engage with the support offered and your child's attendance remains irregular, the County Attendance team may issue a Penalty Notice or begin legal proceedings in the Magistrates' Court.

If you are issued with a Penalty Notice of £60 per parent/carer, per child this must be paid in full within 21 days otherwise the Penalty will increase to £120 per parent/carer, per child. If you fail to pay the Penalty by the 28th day, the Education Welfare Service may instigate legal proceedings against you.

If you are found guilty of this offence you can be fined up to £2500 and/or be imprisoned for a period of three months.

APPENDIX 1 – Template Attendance Card

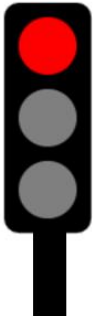


Dropmore Infant School
Great memories that are made here... last forever

Attendance DD/MM/YYYY – DD/MM/YYYY
number of sessions attended ÷ total number of sessions


Child's Name

This term
xxxx's attendance is
YY.Y%



RED
(PERSISTENT ABSENCE)
Your child's attendance will be closely monitored.

RED = below 90% **AMBER** = Between 90% and 96% **GREEN** = 96% and above **GOLD** = 100%

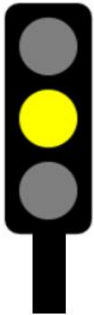


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Attendance DD/MM/YYYY – DD/MM/YYYY
number of sessions attended ÷ total number of sessions


Child's Name

This term
xxxx's attendance is
YY.Y%



AMBER
Your child's attendance has dropped below 96%.

RED = below 90% **AMBER** = Between 90% and 96% **GREEN** = 96% and above **GOLD** = 100%

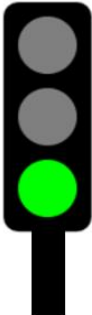


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Attendance DD/MM/YYYY – DD/MM/YYYY
number of sessions attended ÷ total number of sessions


Child's Name

This term
xxxx's attendance is
YY.Y%



GREEN
Congratulations!!

RED = below 90% **AMBER** = Between 90% and 96% **GREEN** = 96% and above **GOLD** = 100%




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Attendance DD/MM/YYYY – DD/MM/YYYY
number of sessions attended ÷ total number of sessions

Child's Name

This term
xxxx's attendance is
100%



GOLD
Congratulations!!

RED = below 90% **AMBER** = Between 90% and 96% **GREEN** = 96% and above **GOLD** = 100%