

Deer Park Primary School

Attendance Policy 2023-2024



Statement of intent:

We, at Deer Park Primary School, strive for excellence and enjoyment in education by providing a safe, secure, caring family environment, where all are valued and respected as individuals. We will endeavour to enable the children to reach their full potential, by making the most of the opportunities that our school has to offer. We expect all children on roll to attend every day when school is in session, so long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so. We do all we can to encourage the children to attend and offer an environment in which pupils feel valued and welcomed.

Regular and punctual attendance is an essential prerequisite to effective learning. At Deer Park Primary School we aim to develop an ethos which demonstrates to children, parents/carers and the wider community how much we value good attendance and punctuality.

Parents' responsibilities:

- Parents have a legal duty to ensure that children of compulsory school age attend on a regular and full-time basis.
- Parents should ensure that, if their child is to be absent from school for any unavoidable reason such as illness, they should contact the school as soon as possible, preferably on the first morning of absence. This may be done by phone, by letter or in person. Verbal messages on the parent's behalf from an adult relative or representative such as a childminder or friend may be accepted at the school's discretion on the first day of absence – subsequent absences must be explained by the parent. Verbal messages from children, e.g. siblings, will not be accepted.
- Parents may not authorise their child's absence – only the school can do this, on the basis of the explanation provided by the parents. Should parents fail to provide a satisfactory reason, the school will record such absences as unauthorised. In some cases, this may be retrospective and authorisation may be withdrawn should circumstances arise leading the school to decide that the reason given was not truthful. If this occurs, this will be discussed with the parent.
- Parents should ensure that their child arrives on time for the start of registration 8.50am. Children arriving between 9.00am and 9.05am will be viewed as late and marked as L in the register. Children arriving after 9.05am should report to the office and the parent should sign their child in using the electronic signing in system. In the case of older unaccompanied children, the child should follow this procedure. Arrivals after 9.05am will be marked as U in the register. The Evacuation Report will be created at this time and any child not in school by 9.15am will be contacted by phone by the school office using the first phone number on the contact list. Further phone numbers will then be rung if a response is not given to the first contact number.

- Parents should avoid booking family holidays during term-time. Such holidays will not be authorised.

School responsibilities:

- The school will record and monitor attendance in accordance both with the statutory requirements and with the principle that regular, uninterrupted attendance is vital to a child's educational progress and personal wellbeing.
- Registers will be taken twice daily. Registers will close at 9.05am for both Key Stages and 1.10pm for Key Stage 1 children and 1.20pm for key Stage 2 children. Any child arriving after the close of the registration period will be recorded as "late" for that session.
- Teachers will complete registers in accordance with guidance given by the Headteacher. The Headteacher will inspect registers weekly in order to ensure that they are being satisfactorily maintained and to identify any potential attendance problems at an early stage.
- Should a class teacher have any concerns about a child's attendance and punctuality, the Headteacher must be informed. This can be done in person or via a note on their RM Integrus Register.
- Should a child be absent, the class teacher will enter the appropriate code in the register. Should no explanation have been received, the class teacher will inform staff in the office or the Headteacher, who will endeavour to make contact with the parent.
- All absence notes from parents should be recorded by the class teacher and a note made on their Integrus Register where they will be stored. Only notes regarding absences where there are concerns need be brought to the attention of the Headteacher, who may then choose to speak to the parents.
- The Headteacher will regularly collect attendance data and report this to the Governing Body. Attendance thresholds and targets for individual children will be identified from the data and follow up tasks and actions for both the school and the Educational Welfare Officer (EWO) will also be identified if the circumstances deem it necessary. Other agencies, such as Social Care, may also be involved.
- Deer Park Primary School will employ a number of strategies to promote regular attendance, including: publishing clear attendance information in the Governors Review.

Illness

Please notify the school on the first day of absence due to illness. Genuine illness will be authorised, although the school reserves the right to ask for confirmation from a medical professional if a child's absences are above the amount expected for a usually healthy child. Unacceptable reasons for absence will be classed as unauthorised.

Persistent absentees:

Persistent absentees are defined as children whose attendance is below 95% and where unsatisfactory reasons are given for absence. However, the procedures outlined below may apply to children whose attendance is above 95% but where there are concerns about deteriorating attendance or where patterns are emerging, e.g. regular absences on particular days or persistent lateness.

All of the above policy applies to persistent absentees, with the following additions:

- Children's names are recorded in the Persistent Absentee File in the School Office. All class teachers are aware who these children are.
- Any messages received regarding absence of these children are recorded in this file.
- If no message is received, either the office staff or Headteacher must be informed and must attempt to contact the parent at the earliest opportunity. If no contact is made or the message received is unsatisfactory, the EWO must be contacted. Again, all this should be recorded in the PA file.

Other absences

- Only in exceptional circumstances will a request for absence from school be authorised and this will only be for a very short period of time.

Examples of this would be:

- Funeral of a close relative – 1 day
- Close family wedding – 1 day
- Medical appointments which cannot be arranged outside the school day
- All requests, in writing, should provide details and reasons why the absence is considered to be exceptional. The Headteacher, in accordance with the above criteria, agreed by the governing body, will determine if the absence will be authorised. Absence cannot be authorised retrospectively.

Review

The next review of this policy is in 1 years' time in 2024

Reviewed by Annette Lupton

Date: 10.08.23

Appendix 1 – First Day Contact Guidelines

First day contact is a widely used practice in schools and has been shown to improve attendance rates. The correct procedure at Deer Park Primary School is as follows:

1. As soon as the registers are completed by the teachers, an Evacuation Report can be created by the School Office.
2. For persistent absentees, see the relevant section above. For other pupils for whom no message has been received, staff will attempt to make contact with the parent at the earliest opportunity via the phone.
3. When contact is made, the parent will be asked for the reason for absence. In the event that no proper reason is supplied, the parent will be informed that the absence will not be authorised.
4. In the case of minor ailments, the parent will be encouraged to send the child in with an assurance that school will keep a close eye on him/her. *(NB – if there has been a spate of certain symptoms in the school or community, such minor illnesses may be treated as a valid reason for absence).*
5. Where no contact is made, a message should be left asking the parent to contact the school. Where it is impossible to leave a message, a note should be sent.
6. Reasons for absence are then added to the register.

Appendix 2 – requesting leave of absence in special circumstances

Regular school attendance is essential if children are to maximise their educational opportunities. Interruptions in school attendance disrupt continuity of learning and have a negative impact on attainment.

It is the school's responsibility to provide the best education possible. We can only do this if children attend regularly. There is a direct correlation between achievement and attendance.

The Government's guidance states that only under **exceptional circumstances** may the Headteacher consider giving permission for a child to be absent from school.

Exceptional Circumstance

Only in exceptional circumstances will a request for absence from school be authorised and this will only be for a very short period of time.

Examples of this would be:

- Funeral of a close relative – 1 day
- Close family wedding – 1 day
- Medical appointments which cannot be arranged outside the school day

All requests, in writing, should provide details and reasons why the absence is considered to be exceptional. The Headteacher, in accordance with the above criteria, agreed by the governing body, will determine if the absence will be authorised. Absence cannot be authorised retrospectively.

In line with national and local guidance the school would like to outline clearly when permission will **not** be granted:-

- During transition time as a pupil is settling into the school.

- Before or during Year 6 SATs or important revision periods leading up to these.
- If the pupil already has unauthorised absences.
- Availability of cheap holidays and cheap travel arrangements
- Days overlapping with the beginning or end of term.
- Birthday of pupil or family member.

Family holidays do not meet the criteria for exceptional circumstances. Consequently, absence for holidays will not be authorised and will be recorded as unauthorised.

Types of Absence

The parent/carer of a child of compulsory school age is required by law to ensure that the child attends the school at which he/she is registered. Should a parent fail to ensure that his/her child attends that school then the parent is guilty of an offence. When a child of compulsory school age is absent from school, the attendance register must indicate whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised and the appropriate register code will be used.

In September 2013 the Education (pupil Registration) (England) (amendment) Regulations 2013 came into force. These regulations make it clear that Headteachers should not grant approval for any leave of absence during term-time, including holidays, unless there are exceptional circumstances. These regulations also state that holidays cannot be authorised retrospectively. Any requests should be on an official school Leave of Absence request Form and handed into the School Office for consideration prior to any holiday / leave arrangements being made. You may be issued with a Penalty Notice should leave be taken which is not authorised. If unpaid this could lead to prosecution under section 444(1) of The Education Act 1996.

On 6th April 2017 the Supreme Court appeal, in relation to the Platt v Isle of Wight case, determined that under Section 444(1) of The Education Act 1996 attending school regularly means: *'in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school.'* Therefore, from 1st September 2017, if requested, Derbyshire County Council will consider the issue of a penalty notice for any period of holiday absence which has not been authorised by the headteacher regardless of a child's wider school attendance.

Unauthorised Absence

Unauthorised absence is where no explanation has been given for the child's absence or where the explanation offered is considered by the school to be unacceptable.

The school monitors attendance and if a child's attendance drops below the school's target for attendance (95%) then the school may choose to talk to the parent / carer / guardian about this. If the school is not satisfied that attendance will improve, or that there is a reasonable explanation (such as a long period of illness), it may choose to involve the Local Authority's Educational Welfare Officer to support the child, parents and the school to enable all to work together to raise attendance levels.

Every effort should be made to arrange medical or dental appointments outside of school hours. If it is necessary for a child to be out of school for this reason, please ensure the school office is notified in advance where possible. The child must also be returned to the school directly after the appointment.

Absence will **not** be authorised in the following circumstances:

- where there is no explanation for the absence or where the explanation or reason for the absence is considered unsatisfactory.
- family holidays.
- waiting on a delivery.
- going for a family day out.
- going shopping or for a haircut.
- because it is your child's birthday.
- sleeping in after a late night.
- parents are unwell (*call us, we can help to get your child to school*).

School Outings / Visits / Residential Trips

Children who are educated off site, dual registered, or who are engaged in supervised educational activities away from school premises, will not be marked as authorised absent, and will be recorded as on an approved educational activity.

Opportunities for children to attend these are provided; if they don't go, the children are **expected in school**, where alternative arrangements will be made for them.

Governors **will not authorise** absence if the child does not attend school during this time, unless there is a valid medical reason (a bad cold is not acceptable) or medical certification is provided or there are exceptional family circumstances.

Leave of Absence in Term Time

If the school believes that a child has been absent for a family holiday when they have been reported as ill, then the school will attempt to establish communication with the parents before treating the issue as an unauthorised absence.

Long Term Absence

When children have an illness that means they will be away from school for over five days, the school will do all it can to send material home, so that they can keep up with their schoolwork.

If the absence is likely to continue for an extended period, or be a repetitive absence, the school will contact the relevant Local Authority support services, so that requests can be made for the child to be given some tuition outside school.

Absence for Religious Reasons

The school will authorise one day of absence per religious festival, up to a maximum of 3 days in any one academic year, on the day specifically set aside by the Religious Body of which the parent/carer is a member and this will be marked as 'R' in the register. If parents/carers require an additional day this must be requested in advance and this can only be authorised if it is felt that exceptional circumstances apply (this would be marked in the register as 'C').

Penalty Notices

Reducing absences from school is a key priority nationally and locally because missing school damages a pupil's attainment levels, disrupts school routines and the learning of others. Where a child is absent with no reason provided and the headteacher has grounds to believe that the child is on holiday, the headteacher may wish to challenge this absence and apply for a penalty notice to be issued. Please note that this process must not be used to address other forms of unauthorised absence from school. As part of the decision making process headteachers are required to consider the following:

- The information provided on the parental application, particularly who is taking the child on holiday.
- Who should the penalty notice be issued against? (this should take into consideration parental responsibility in relation to education law balanced against the dynamics and makeup of the family).
- Is the decision consistent with the school's policy
- Is the decision fair?

Parents/carers commit an offence if a child fails to attend school and those absences are classed as unauthorised. A Penalty Notice is an alternative to prosecution, which does not require an appearance in court unless the fine is unpaid after 28 days. Full payment of the Penalty Notice means that parents/carers can avoid being prosecuted and convicted. Penalty notices are issued per parent per child at £120. However, if paid within 21 days the cost is £60. In cases of unauthorised absence parents/carers will receive a written warning of the possibility of Penalty Notice being issued.

Inclement Weather or other reasons the school building may be closed

In case of inclement weather (or other reason the school building may have to close) the school will endeavour to stay open for as long as it is safe to do so. Any decisions to close the school building will be communicated to parents at the earliest opportunity and the school will inform parents via Class Dojo and the school website, in addition to publicising through the Derbyshire County Council website and on local radio. If you are in any doubt as to whether the school will be open or closed then please check the latest information on the Derbyshire County Council website or alternatively ring the school office.

There will be five days during the school year when the school will be closed for staff-in-service training. These dates will be relayed to you at the earliest opportunity after the dates have been finalised.

Any decision to close the school building by the Head Teacher or other authorised person will not have a detrimental effect on any child's attendance record.

Covid19 Guidelines

If your child needs to isolate because they have tested positive for Covid-19, please contact the School Office as soon as possible with regards to the circumstances for the isolation. We will require the date that symptoms first occurred should you or your child receive a positive test result. Your child's absence will be recorded as I and will count as any other illness. We will provide online learning through SeeSaw for the period of isolation.

Leave of Absence Request Form

Please note - In September 2013 the Education (pupil Registration) (England) (amendment) Regulations 2013 came into force. These regulations make it clear that Headteachers should not grant approval for any leave of absence during term-time, including holidays, unless there are exceptional circumstances. Derbyshire County Council will consider the issue of a penalty notice for any period of holiday absence which has not been authorised by the headteacher regardless of a child's wider school attendance.

Child's name:

Class:

Child's Address.....

Name of Applicant(s) and address (if different)

The dates of the proposed absence from school are:

from: to.....[inclusive]

Total number of school days requested

The reason for making this request during term time is fully explained as follows :-
(Provide details and reason here explaining why the absence is 'exceptional')

[illegible]

I have enclosed a copy of a relevant document to support my request e.g. a letter of special invitation

I understand that absence will only be authorised for exceptional and unavoidable circumstances and that holidays will not be authorised.

Parent/carers name:

Signature:

Date:

For School use: Date received:

Attendance %:

Has been authorised / Has not been authorised

SIGNED: _____ **DATE:** _____
Headteacher

If the request is for a Family Holiday Please submit it before the holiday is booked.