


Policy:	<b>Attendance Policy</b> June 2022 <b>To be implemented from August 2022</b>	
Status:	Statutory	
Review Date:	2 yearly– June 2024	

## **Introduction**

We expect all pupils on roll to attend every day, when the school is in session, as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so. We do all we can to encourage the pupils to attend, and to put in place appropriate procedures. We believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is the development of positive attitudes towards school. To this end, we strive to make our school a happy and rewarding experience for all pupils. We will also make the best provision we can for those pupils who, for whatever reason, are prevented from coming to school.

Pupils who attend school on a regular basis can take advantage of the full array of educational opportunities available to them. Research shows that those pupils who have irregular attendance are at risk of not achieving their full potential and in extreme cases, may be drawn into anti- social or criminal behaviour.

**It is the parent/carer's responsibility to ensure that the school has all current contact details and a home or mobile telephone number must be provided.**

### **1. School Responsibility - THE LAW and School Attendance**

- Under the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 the governing body is responsible for making sure that admissions and attendance registers are kept. Unless stipulated each regulation applies to all schools in England.
- School governors are bound by the statutory requirement under Section 538 of the Education Act 2006 which requires governing bodies to provide information requested by the Secretary of State. This includes absence data that will be collected every term through the School Census.
- The Headteacher (*at Diseworth CE Primary School, this refers to the Exec Head & Head of School*) and all staff work to ensure a high level of enjoyment and commitment to learning as a means of ensuring regular attendance.
- Where school attendance problems occur, the school will endeavour to work with parents/carers in the interests of the child to achieve a resolution.
- Attendance is recorded and data stored and analysed using the SIMS Attendance module.
- It is a statutory duty for class teachers to call and maintain accurate registers; these are legal documents, and may be called for as evidence by the court. Class Teachers are legally responsible for marking their class attendance register twice per day at the start of each session.

### **2 Registration**

Registration at Diseworth Primary School is as follows:

We call the register twice a day – once at the start of the morning session (8.50am) and once at the start of the afternoon session (1.00pm).

The registers should be taken and returned to the office within a 10 minute window (8:50-9:00/1:00-1:10)

Officially, in the morning, the registers are 'open' for a further 15 minutes (9:00-9:15). Children arriving within this time, but after their name is called, will be recorded as late (coded 'L') before registration closes.

Registers will 'close' after 15 minutes (9:15am). Children arriving after this time will be recorded as late after registration closes which is an unauthorised absence (coded 'U') unless there is an acceptable reason.

### **3 Definitions**

Every half-day absence has to be classified by the school (not by the parent/carers) as either **AUTHORISED** or **UNAUTHORISED**. This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required, preferably in writing or by telephone.

#### **Authorised Absence – coded as 'M', 'I', 'C', 'T', 'B', 'R'**

An absence is classified as authorised when a pupil has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent/carer or guardian – eg. if a pupil has been unwell and the parent/carer writes a note or telephones the school to explain the absence.

For absences over 3 days, school may request that parent/carers provide medical evidence.

Parent/carers do not authorise any absences and only the school can decide to authorise absences.

If referred to the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) you may be required to provide medical evidence for all absences even if it a single day.

The school may make a referral to our Education Welfare Officer if a pupil has an increasing number of authorised absences as this is classed as 'persistent absence'. Contact will be made with the parent/carers regarding the absences.

The school may also make a referral to our Education Welfare Officer if there is a concern about a pupil's welfare or safety. Parent/carers will be contacted to ascertain if further action needs to be taken.

Parent/carers are expected to co-operate with the school and attend any meeting when requested to do so by the school.

#### **Unauthorised Absence – coded as 'O' or 'G'**

An absence is classified as unauthorised when a pupil is away from school without the permission of the Headteacher. Unauthorised absences are those, which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no authorisation has been given.

All absences are coded as unauthorised if a pupil is away from school without good reason even with the support of a parent/carer. Examples of this are:

- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Parent/carers keeping pupils off school because they themselves are ill
- Family holidays or leave of absence that have not been agreed/authorised by the Governors
- If a parent/carer fails to provide medical evidence when requested to do so.

### **4 Repeated unauthorised absences**

The school will contact the parent/carer of any pupil who has unauthorised absence. If a pupil has a repeated number of unauthorised absences, the parent/carers will be asked to a meeting at the school to discuss the problem

If the pupil continues to accrue unauthorised absences the school will make a referral to the Education Welfare Officer, who will make contact with the parent/carers to arrange a meeting and seek to ensure that the parent/carers understand the seriousness of the situation.

Where required, legal action will be sought and the EWO will submit the case before the Local Authority for a Penalty Notice and /or prosecution. The Education Act 1996 (Section 444) states:

'If a child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at school fails to attend regularly at the school, the parent/carer is guilty of an offence'. The school reserves the right to consider taking legal action against any parent/carers who repeatedly fail in their responsibility to send their children to school on a regular basis.

## **5 If a pupil is absent**

Parent/carers should inform the school on the morning of the first day of absence either by telephone on **01332 810208** or leave a message, clearly stating the reason for the absence and the expected duration of illness.

When a pupil is absent unexpectedly, the class teacher will record the absence in the register, which will inform the school office. If the office has not already been informed of the reason for a pupil's absence, they will endeavour to contact a parent/carer by telephone or text message.

When the pupil returns to school, parent/carers must ensure that a note or verbal confirmation is provided to explain the reason for the absence. Verbal confirmation will be documented and recorded by staff.

A note may be sent to the school prior to the day of absence, e.g. if a pupil has a medical appointment. Parent/carers are encouraged to provide the appointment card/letter.

If there is any doubt about the whereabouts of a pupil, the class teacher should take immediate action by notifying the school office. The school will then be in contact straight away with the parent/carer, in order to check on the safety of the pupil.

Where the school has concerns about a pupil's safety EWO will be contacted and a 'Safe and Well' check will be carried out.

When a pupil is absent, the class teacher will record the absence in the register. As part of our Safeguarding Procedures, the school office will endeavour to contact the parent/carer and other emergency contacts if no message has been received regarding the reason for the absence to check on the safety of the pupil.

## **6 Requests for leave of absence**

Any time missed from school is detrimental to progress and has a negative impact on a child's achievement. At our school we view regular school attendance should be at least **96%** and encourage all parent/carers to support us in ensuring that their child's attendance does not fall below this level.

The School and its staff regard the regular attendance of children at school as being vital to each child's education and development. It is for this reason that non attendances (however short or infrequent) are treated seriously. It remains the policy of the school to only sanction non-attendance during term time **in exceptional circumstances**.

We do understand that there are exceptional circumstances under which a parent/carer may legitimately request leave of absence for a child, e.g. a family crisis. We expect parent/carers to contact the school and request the leave of absence on the official school form. The Head and Governor committee consider each request and inform the Parent/carers of their decision, in writing, as soon as possible. They will take attendance and punctuality into consideration during each request.

## **7 Holidays in term time**

New government guidelines, which came into effect on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2013, prevent Head teachers from granting any leave of absence during term time, unless there are exceptional circumstances. **A family holiday during term-time does not usually fall under the category of 'exceptional circumstances' and the school is therefore usually unable to grant leave of absence for any family holiday.**

However, if you believe a family holiday is for '**exceptional circumstances**', Parent/carers must complete a 'leave of absence' form at least 2 weeks prior to the date requested. The form must outline the **exceptional reason** why the holiday needs to be taken in term time and the specific dates when leave is required. The Head and Governor committee will then meet to consider the request. They may request additional information/evidence to support the **exceptional reason** and will inform the Parent/carers of their decision, in writing, prior to the dates of the request.

Holidays taken without permission will be recorded as 'unauthorised absence' – family holiday not agreed ('G' Code). This matter will then be referred by the Headteacher to the Education Welfare Officer, who works on behalf of the school and who may request that the Local Authority issues a Penalty Notice

**PLEASE NOTE: As we are a Local Authority maintained school we are therefore expected to follow their absence procedures.**

## **8 Issuing a fine**

As of 1<sup>st</sup> September 2013, LCC will issue Penalty Notices where parents choose to take a family holiday during term time and where the Headteacher deems the holiday to fall outside of their definition of 'exceptional circumstances.

The parent/carer(s) of any pupil who has absences recorded as a result of an unauthorised family holiday, may each be fined £60 which must be paid within a 21day period. Failure to pay the fine(s) within this timescale, will result in the fines being doubled to £120, which will need to be paid within 28 days of the original fine being issued. If the fine(s) remain unpaid after the full period of 28 days has expired, parent/carers may face legal action under section 444 of the Education Act 1996. If found guilty of an offence under this Act, Parent/carers will receive a criminal record and could be fined up to £1000.

## **9 Long-term absence**

When pupils 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 school work. This work must be completed and returned to school so that the school can monitor the pupil's progress.

Where it is deemed that a pupil is unable to return to school due to chronic medical or other medical reasons the school will make a referral to our EWO to ascertain if any alternative provision for education can be requested. Parent/carers will have to provide medical evidence that clearly states a pupil is unable to return to mainstream education.

Parent/carers must provide the school with medical evidence when their child is going to be off from school for long periods but alternative provision is not being sought. The school may refer this for further investigations to our EWO who will make contact with the parent/carers.

## **10 Lateness and punctuality**

Pupils are expected to arrive punctually, at **8:40am**. The school gate is locked from 8:50am and any pupils arriving after this time must enter school through the main entrance and be 'signed in' by a parent/carer.

Registers are open between 9-9:15 and pupils arriving during this time will be marked as 'Late' on the class register ('L' code)

Any pupil that arrives at school after the register has closed (9:15) will be coded as a 'U' code. This equates to an unauthorised mark. Parent/carers may be requested to meet with the EWO if this becomes a regular problem. Legal action can be taken when a child has 'U' codes as this is deemed to be an unauthorised mark.

Where possible parent/carers must ensure that they try and book all medical appointments either before school starts or after school finishes. It is useful for parent/carers to provide the school with the appointment card and/or letter for any medical appointment. All medical appointments will be coded as an M which does equate to an authorised absence.

Parent/carers of pupils who are persistently late will be contacted by the Headteacher and will be asked to address the problem. School may make a referral to our EWO who will make contact with the parent/carers.

## **11 Rewards for good attendance**

All pupils who have exceptional attendance in any half term will receive a certificate. There are also special certificates for outstanding attendance for the whole school year. These are presented in our achievement assemblies.

## **12 Attendance targets**

The school sets its own attendance targets each year. These are set by the Curriculum & Standards committee in the Autumn term and agreed at the first full governors meeting. The targets are challenging yet realistic, and based on attendance figures achieved in previous years. The school considers carefully the attendance figures for other similar schools when setting its own targets.

### **13 Monitoring and review**

It is the responsibility of the governors to monitor overall attendance, and they will request a termly report from the Headteacher. The governing body also has the responsibility for this policy, and for seeing that it is carried out. The governors will therefore examine closely the information provided to them, and seek to ensure that attendance figures are as high as they should be.

The Headteacher will monitor attendance on a monthly basis to identify any pupils who are persistently absent or who continually arrive late. Parent/carers will be informed by letter and will be expected to address this, otherwise the Educational Welfare Officer will be informed.

The school will keep accurate attendance records on file for a minimum period of three years.

The rates of attendance will be inspected by OFSTED who will make a judgement about the school's attendance in their inspection report.

Class teachers will be responsible for monitoring attendance and punctuality in their class, and for following up absences in the appropriate way. If there is concern about a pupil's absence, they will contact the school office immediately. If there is a longer-term general worry about the attendance of a particular pupil, this will be reported to the Headteacher, who will contact the parent/carers.

**This policy will be reviewed by the governing body every two years, or earlier if considered necessary.**