

# **Donnington Primary School Attendance Policy**

## **Mission Statement**

Our mission is to provide all our children with high standards of teaching, learning and playing environments, so that each child can develop to his or her greatest potential and be prepared to move forward in study, work and play for their future success

## **Aims of this Policy**

- To ensure every child has good attendance at school
- To improve pupil attendance where required
- To make attendance and punctuality a priority for all those associated with the school and to communicate this effectively to pupils, staff, parents and governors
- To support pupil progress and raise educational achievement of all pupils
- To provide support and guidance to parents and pupils
- To develop a systematic approach to gathering and analysing attendance data
- To promote and reward regular school attendance
- To support those children who are not being given the opportunity of good attendance

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

The school governors along with the Headteacher and Education Welfare Service set an attendance target for the school and monitor progress towards meeting this target. Our target is for children to have 95% or above attendance in line with national expectations. The school governors are responsible for ensuring that pupil's names are recorded on the school admission register and daily register. The Headteacher has a responsibility to ensure that the daily register of pupils attending the school is taken and designates an attendance officer to monitor and report on attendance. Parents have a responsibility to ensure their children attend school regularly. The Education Welfare Service has a duty to ensure that parents meet this responsibility and the service can seek legal redress to secure a pupil's attendance if a parent fails in their duty.

## **Working with the Local Authority**

Our Education Welfare Officer visits the school on a regular basis to advise staff on managing absences, making appropriate referrals and to meet with parents.

## **Expectations set out by Ofsted on Pupil Attendance/ Absence**

Our school is inspected every three years by the Office of Standards in Education (Ofsted). When the inspectors visit, they will be looking at the school's efforts to improve attendance. Issues they will consider are:

- Where a school's attendance lies in comparison with the national average
- Use of data to improve attendance
- Whether attendance has improved as a result of actions taken by the school, including agreeing realistic targets with its local authority and meeting them
- Whether the school has been active in monitoring and promoting the attendance of different minority groups
- How attendance compares with schools in similar socio-economic circumstances
- Whether reductions in overall and persistent absence have been sustained
- The impact of systems put in place to help learners catch up following periods of non-attendance
- The support available to those pupils who are unable to attend

It is therefore very important that our school makes attendance a priority in line with the expectations for all schools nationally.

## **How Our School Manages Pupil Absence**

At our school the attendance of pupils is recorded electronically. This helps the school to produce termly data through the School Census for the Department for Education (DfE). It also helps the school provide information on pupil attendance for Ofsted inspectors. Each reason for pupil absence has a special code and this assists the school to monitor persistent absentees. In our school we expect pupils to have 95% and above attendance. Parents of pupils attending this school have a responsibility to make every effort to make sure their children reach or exceed 95% attendance. Through data analysis we can see which pupils fall below this threshold and take action. Children with below 95% attendance may be contacted by our Attendance officer

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either by telephone or letter. Parents may be invited to school for a meeting. When we have exhausted our attempts to improve a pupil's attendance we will make a referral to our link Education Welfare Officer (EWO).

### (a) Unauthorised Absences

At our school we have an expectation that parents ring school on the first day of their child's absence and send a note on their return. We may not accept a parent's reason for absence especially if the child's attendance is below 95%. Regular unauthorised absences where a parent has not provided a reason for absence means that a parent may be breaking the law. The Education Welfare Service could issue a fixed penalty charge notice of £120. Failure to pay the notice may result in you being prosecuted at Willesden Magistrates Court for your child's non-attendance at school for the period in the notice. School attendance is a very serious matter and we aim to have good communication about attendance matters with parents through our day to day interactions, parent's evenings and other meetings. If there is a problem it is better if a parent speaks with a member of staff rather than allow a situation to escalate.

### (b) Regular Pupil Sickness

If a child is regularly absent due to sickness a parent may be invited to school to discuss their child's absences, this discussion may include the EWO or school nurse. When a child is regularly absent due to illness the school may request that a parent provide medical details from their doctor before continuing to authorise further absences.

### (c) Requests for Pupil Leave of Absence in Term Time

Our school actively discourages parents making requests to take their children out of school during term time. The school is closed for 14 weeks of the year and parents are expected to use this time for taking holidays and visiting family abroad. We have a request form in the office that a parent / carer in exceptional circumstances may complete and return to the Headteacher for consideration. Parents and carers should not under any circumstances make travel arrangements during term time without discussing it with the headteacher first, as they risk losing money. Children taken out of school for unauthorised leave during term time risk losing their school place as well as receiving a Fixed Penalty Charge Notice. The headteacher's decision in this matter is final with no right of appeal.

Guidelines from the Department for Education state that Headteachers no longer have the discretion to approve absences of up to ten days a year for family holidays in 'special circumstances'.

The new rules introduced tougher criteria of 'exceptional circumstances', restricting it to absences for events such as funerals of family members.

### (d) Religious Holidays

Parents may apply for permission for a child to be absent from school on the day of the religious festival, so that children can enjoy and participate in religious observance and celebrations with their families. The school is unable to sanction leave of absence for longer than one day unless the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance and the families' *religious body* has set the day apart for religious observance (not the parents). Any leave of absence not exclusively for religious observance will be recorded as unauthorised.

### **Punctuality**

Pupils must arrive at school to start their lessons by 8.55am. The school gates open from 8.30am and children may enter the building from 8.45am in Reception, KS1 and KS2. Nursery classroom is open from 8:55am and children must be in the classroom by 9:00am.

Any child arriving after this time must enter the building via the office entrance. The register is taken at the beginning of the morning and afternoon sessions. Pupils arriving after the register is closed (9:30am) may find they are marked as absent for the whole morning or afternoon. The school has a 'Late Book' in the office where children's names are recorded when they are late and an explanation is requested by a member of staff. The importance of punctuality will be conveyed to both parents and children by a staff member. **Children are late if they arrive after 8.55am.**

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Children should be collected from school at 12:00 (Nursery) 3.20pm (Reception) 3:25 (KS1) and 3:30 (KS2). If a parent/carer is going to be late collecting their child because of an emergency they should ring the school office. Parents/carers should ensure they are on time to collect their children. Any parent/carer who regularly collects their child late will be invited to meet with the headteacher. In very serious cases of children being left late at school the child may be deemed to be abandoned with the local police station and social care being informed. We will also inform the Education Welfare Service about parents/carers who are frequently late collecting their children.

### **School Census Data**

Our school must submit data to the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) on the number of pupil's that are persistently absent, for whatever reason. Currently the DCSF are focusing on pupils with 80% and below attendance. 20% absence is the equivalent to one day's absence, every week throughout the school year. 20% absence over 5 years is the equivalent to a whole year missed.

### **Progress and Attainment**

It is well researched that a pupil's progress and attainment is linked to attendance. "If a school can improve attendance by 1%, they will see a 5-6% improvement in attainment" (DCSF)

It is therefore vital your child does not miss the start of the school day by being late. Children arriving late can often feel uncomfortable when entering a class already settled and working hard. A late child entering a class also disrupts the learning of other children and diverts the teacher's attention from teaching.

Children who have poor attendance fall behind with their work and have gaps in their knowledge and skills. This is not only detrimental to the individual child but the class as a whole.

### **Children with Special Educational Needs (SEN)**

We have high expectations of attendance for children with SEN and there should be no reason why children with SEN have different levels of attendance. Children with SEN may require a higher proportion of medical appointments as a result of their particular needs. As for all children, parents should be encouraged to make appointments out of school time whenever possible. Children with a statement of SEN will have this reviewed annually and at our school, attendance will be considered as an important part of the review process as well as on an on-going basis.

### **Children on Long Term Leave due to Illness or Disability**

Occasionally some children have to be away from school over a long period of time due to illness or disability. We will ensure that if they are well enough they can continue their education either in hospital or by arranging home tuition.

### **Dental & Medical Appointments**

Wherever possible, parents should make every effort to avoid making medical or dental appointments during the school day. It is preferable to try and arrange these during holiday periods or at the beginning or end of the school day. An appointment at the beginning of the school day should not result in a whole day's absence from school.

### **Bullying**

Our school does not condone bullying by any member of staff, parent or pupil. If bullying does occur, it will be dealt with as a very serious matter. No child should feel they cannot come to school for fear of being bullied. There is no place in our school for bullying.

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### **School Governors**

The Headteacher has a responsibility to report on attendance issues at every full meeting of the governing body. Our governors support the Headteacher in managing requests for pupil leave of absence and take the position that families have “no automatic right” to such leave in line with the law.

### **Safeguarding Children**

Our school must be able to demonstrate to Ofsted that it knows the whereabouts of each child and reason for their absence. It is very important for the local authority to be able to track children if they are not attending school and in some cases for schools to make a referral to Social Care. If a parent/carer is moving house they should let us know if they no longer require a place for their child, with the date that they will be leaving. It is also helpful to us to have the name of the new school that their child will be attending. If this information is not available at the time, then a forwarding address and telephone number should be left with the school. Children who leave the school and their whereabouts are unknown will have their details entered on the Brent Children Missing from Education Database.

### **Support for Parents/Carers and Children**

We give reminders about punctuality and attendance from time to time in newsletters or at Consultations evenings. We feel it is important for children to be taught about the importance of punctuality and attendance as part of preparing them for their future lives and economic well-being. Parents should expect that staff will discuss absences and punctuality with the children.

At the end of each year children with 100% attendance are rewarded with a certificate.

Authorised and un-authorised attendance numbers as well as late arrivals are reported in the annual report.

The office staff will help answer any questions about punctuality and attendance and an appointment can be made with the Attendance officer if this is helpful.

### **School Attendance Sweeps**

The Education Welfare Service in cooperation with schools and the police carry out a number of school attendance sweeps in the borough throughout the year. These are carried out in normal school hours and involve stopping any young person believed to be of school age, whether accompanied by an adult or not. The purpose of a sweep is to find out if a child should actually be in school that day, or if they do not have a school place.

### **Monitoring and review**

The Attendance Officer is responsible for monitoring the implementation of this policy. All staff monitor pupils' attendance and report any concerns to the Attendance Officer

This policy will be reviewed every two years or earlier if necessary.