



Duke's Secondary School

Enabling everyone in our communities to let their light shine



Attendance Policy

Policy Preface

Northumberland Church of England Academy Trust is a Christian learning environment at the heart of its communities. We promote care and respect, and expect high standards in all aspects of our Trust life.

As a Church of England Academy Trust, we aim to build communities clearly based on the Christian values of love, forgiveness and reconciliation, integrity and the unique value of each individual. We aim to build self-esteem, model conflict resolution, protect the weak and are committed to justice and compassion. Mutual respect and trust are central within the Academy Trust.

This policy, and its associated procedures and protocols, is based on these key principles.

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Duke's Secondary School is part of
Northumberland Church of England Academy Trust



Duke's Secondary School

Attendance Policy

1. Aims

Duke's aims to meet its obligations with regard to school attendance by:

- Promoting good attendance and reducing absences, including persistent absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled
- To develop a systematic approach to gather and analysis attendance related data
- To provide support, advice and guidance to parents / carers and students
- To provide positive and consistent communication between home and school

We will support parents to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend regularly, and will promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the [school attendance guidance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- [The Education Act 1996](#)
- [The Education Act 2002](#)
- [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2010](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2011](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2016](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the [school census](#), which explains the persistent absence threshold.

This policy complies with our funding agreement and articles of association.

3. Duke's Secondary procedures

3.1 Attendance register

By law, all schools (except those where all pupils are boarders) are required to keep an attendance register, all pupils must be placed on this register.

The attendance register will be taken at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

Every entry in the attendance register will be preserved for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

3.2 Unplanned absence

Parents must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence – for example, if their child is unable to attend due to ill health – by 9.00 am or as soon as practically possible (see also section 6).

Absence due to illness will be authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask parents to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents will be notified of this in advance.

3.3 Medical or dental appointments

Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence; advance notice is required for authorising these absences.

However, we encourage parents to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

Applications for other types of absence in term time must also be made in advance. Information relating to whether the school can authorise such absences can be found in section 4.

3.4 Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late but before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code.

A pupil who arrives after the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code.

3.5 Following up absence

The school will follow up any absences to ascertain the reason, ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary, identify whether the absence is approved or not and identify the correct attendance code to use.

If the school has not received confirmation of a child absence by 9.00am, arrangements will be made by the school to contact all registered numbers, home visit or notify the relevant authorities.

3.6 Students missing in Education

If you move out of the area and your whereabouts is unknown, the school can legally remove your child from the roll after 20 school days of unauthorised absence. It is important you keep the school informed of any change of details.

3.7 Reporting to parents

Good schools have excellent levels of attendance, we are committed to establishing partnerships with our parents/carers that best support our shared ambition to address the unique needs, talents and potential of their children. Parents will be informed about attendance in all school reports and updates. Individual school strategies supporting good attendance can be found at the end of this document.

4. Authorised and unauthorised absence

4.1 Granting approval for term-time absence

The legal position is that schools may not grant any leave of absence to pupils during the time unless they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. Although the school appreciates difficulties many parents have in arranging holiday leave during school holiday time, they are asked to avoid taking holidays during term time as it will not be authorised and may result in legal action. The Principal can only authorise holidays in term time in exceptional circumstances. We define 'exceptional circumstances' as a situation that cannot be avoided. e.g. a family funeral

An extended absence for holidays will inevitably have an adverse effect on student progress and achievement.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments – as explained in sections 3.2 and 3.3
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a Traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision. Absence cannot be authorised where a pupil would miss a public examination e.g. SATs or GCSEs.

4.2 Legal sanctions

If a child of compulsory school age fails to attend regularly at a school at which they are registered, or at a place where alternative provision is provided for them, the parents may be guilty of an offence and can be prosecuted by the local authority.

If issued with a penalty notice, parents must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

The decision on whether or not to request the local authority to issue a penalty notice ultimately rests with the Principal, following the local authority's code of conduct for issuing penalty notices. This may take into account:

- A number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

If the payment is not within 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute the parent or withdraw the notice.

5. Strategies for promoting attendance

The purposes underpinning this policy are to:

- encourage 100% attendance and punctuality is good
- ensure all those associated with the school are aware of our expectations in relation to attendance and punctuality

6. Attendance monitoring

The attendance officer monitors pupil absence on a daily basis. Parents are expected to call the school in the morning if their child is going to be absent due to ill health (see section 3.2).

If a pupil's absence is unexplained we will contact the parents to discuss the reasons for this.

If after contacting parents a pupil's absence continues to rise, Duke's EWO will monitor, parents will be notified of this in writing.

Formal Intervention will begin if a pupil's absence rate is 5% or higher

The persistent absence threshold is 10%. If a pupil's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 10%, the pupil will be classified as a persistent absentee.

Pupil-level absence data is collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. We compare our attendance data to the national average, and share this with our Trustees.

7. Roles and responsibilities

7.1 Principal

The Principal is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the school on at least a termly basis. The Principal is also responsible for implementing the policy.

7.2 The Assistant Principal

The Assistant Principal is responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented consistently throughout the school. The Assistant Principal works with the Education Welfare Officer who will where appropriate, lead on subsequent action for poor school attendance, collate all information and prepare a case file, which may progress to legal action from the Local Authority.

7.3 The school Attendance Administrator

The attendance administrator:

- ensure all registers are accurate
- any comments are recorded on SIMS
- any concerns are reported on Safeguard
- prepare data on request
- liaise with Education Welfare Officer / Pastoral staff / Assistant Principal

7.4 Form tutor / Subject

Form tutor / Subject teacher are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information onto the school system (SIMS)

8. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Assistant Principal. At every review, the policy will be shared with the Chief Executive Officer, Principals and the Trustees.

Appendix 1: attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DFE's guidance on school attendance.

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Pupil is on a work experience placement

Code	Definition	Scenario
Authorised absence		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence	Pupil from a Traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
Unauthorised absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
N	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed

Code	Definition	Scenario
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody
Z	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
#	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day

9. Linked Documents

Holiday letters

Authorised holiday

Unauthorised holiday

No request Unauthorised

Duke's letters

Attendance reward letter termly

6 day absence letter

10 day absence letter

Unauthorised absence letter

Head of House letter / attendance mentoring

EWO expectations letter

EWO 1st meeting invite letter

EWO 2ND meeting letter

EWO post meeting letter

EWO referral to EWS letter

Covid-19 Attendance Policy Appendix A (September 2020)

In March when the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak was increasing, we made it clear that no parents/carers would be penalised or sanctioned for their child's non-attendance at school. Now the circumstances have changed and it is vital for all children to return to school to minimise as far as possible the longer-term impact of the pandemic on children's education, wellbeing and wider development.

Missing out on more time in the classroom risks pupils falling further behind. Those with higher overall absence tend to achieve less well in both primary and secondary school. School attendance will therefore be mandatory again from the beginning of the autumn term. This means the usual rules on school attendance will apply, including:

- Parents/carers duty to secure that their child attends regularly at school where the child is a registered pupil at school and they are of compulsory school age;
- schools' responsibilities to record attendance and follow up absence
- the availability to issue sanctions, including fixed penalty notices in line with local authorities' codes of conduct.

Following the Government guidance released on Thursday, 9th July <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak/guidance-for-full-opening-schools>, attendance will once again become mandatory from September 2020. Therefore, the majority of pupils will be able to return to school. Parents/carers should note however that:

- a small number of pupils will still be unable to attend in line with public health advice because they are self-isolating and have had symptoms or a positive test result themselves; or because they are a close contact of someone who has coronavirus (COVID-19). Where a period of self-isolation ends, we would then expect the student to return to school unless medical evidence suggests otherwise.
- Shielding advice for all adults and children will pause on 1 August, subject to a continued decline in the rates of community transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19). This means that even the small number of pupils who will remain on the shielded patient list can also return to school, as can those who have family members who are shielding.
- if rates of the disease rise in the local area, children (or family members) from the area, and that area only, will be advised to shield during the period where rates remain high and therefore they may be temporarily absent (see below).
- some pupils no longer required to shield but who generally remain under the care of a specialist health professional may need to discuss their care with their health professional before returning to school (usually at their next planned clinical appointment).

Where a pupil is unable to attend school because they are complying with clinical and/or public health advice, we will offer them access to remote education. It is our expectation that any pupil working remotely accesses this provision.

Where children are not able to attend school as parents are following clinical and/or public health advice, absence will not be penalised.

We appreciate the anxiety returning to school could cause for many students and their families. We are committed to working with our families to ensure all students can return to school safely in September. Where families feel there may be difficulties, we ask they contact school to discuss what support can be put in place to enable students to return.

From September 2020, regular attendance codes will be used to record school attendance. Absence from school can be authorised in the following cases (It is the school's decision whether an absence is authorised):

- Sickness (please inform the school before 9am on EACH day of sickness related absence);
- Medical appointments – please provide evidence e.g photograph of appointment card/letter
- Days of religious observance;
- Exceptional family circumstances;
- By permission of the Principal;

Parents/carers should be encouraged to avoid booking family holidays during term time. The Principal's permission now needs to be given prior to a 'Family Holiday' being taken by a student and leave of absence will only be granted in exceptional circumstances. Parents/carers should put this request into the Principal prior to making any bookings. Holidays should not be taken during periods of formal examinations. Since September 2013, schools can only authorise a holiday in exceptional circumstances. Any parents/carers/guardians who have a holiday request denied and still take their child(ren) out of school face a fixed penalty notice being issued by the Local Authority;

For students whose attendance drops expected levels, the school reserves the right to mark any future absences as unauthorised (unless medical evidence is received). A request for a fixed penalty notice (fine) could then be requested from the Local Authority.

In order to define attendance and absence related to COVID-19 correctly during this period, the following codes will be used on registers:

CODE	ACTION
/	Present
X	COVID related absence
I	Illness / Positive COVID test
C	Authorised absence
O	Unauthorised absence