



Ham Dingle Primary Academy

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Attendance Policy

Introduction

Here at Ham Dingle Primary Academy we believe it is of vital importance that our students have good attendance at school. This is a successful Academy, and all students play their part in making it so. We aim for an environment which enables and encourages all members of the community to be proud to belong and to achieve of their best. For our students to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and should be at Ham Dingle Primary Academy , on time, every day the Academy is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. It is very important therefore that you make sure that your child attends regularly, and this policy sets out how together we will achieve this.

Regular attendance at school is of critical importance to a child's education. Evidence tells us that the pupils with the highest attainment at the end of key stage 2 and key stage 4 have higher rates of attendance over the key stage compared to those with the lowest attainment¹. Any absence affects the pattern of a student's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any student's absence disrupts the learning of others in the same teaching groups by disrupting classroom routines. Ensuring your child's regular attendance at Ham Dingle Primary Academy is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from Ham Dingle Primary Academy without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

Aims

An effective whole school culture of high attendance is underpinned by clear expectations, procedures, and responsibilities. To ensure all leaders, staff, pupils, and parents understand these expectations, and how they apply at Ham Dingle Primary Academy this policy sets out:

- Section 1: the practical procedures to be followed at Ham Dingle Primary Academy in relation to attendance
- Section 2: the measures in place at Ham Dingle Primary Academy to promote regular attendance by its registered pupils
- Section 3: the responsibilities of particular members of staff in relation to attendance
- Section 4: the action to be taken by staff if a registered pupil fails to attend school regularly
- Section 5: the school's strategy for addressing any specific concerns identified in relation to attendance

Section 1: Practical Procedures

This section sets out the practical procedures to be followed at Ham Dingle Primary Academy in relation to attendance are as follows:

- Parents/carers have a legal responsibility to ensure that their child is punctual and in school at the start of the school day. Our school gates open at 08:40am. Children should be in class by 08:50am. Gates are closed at 8:50. Children arriving after the closure of the gates must be escorted to reception by a parent/carer who will need to sign them in and provide a reason as to why the child is late. The close of registers is 9:00am. The school day ends at 3:10pm for Reception children and 3:20pm for children in Years 1-6.

Please do not send messages or emails to report an absence.

¹ [Working together to improve school attendance](#)

If you wish to discuss your child's absence with a member of staff please contact Miss Donna Horton who is the school's Attendance Lead and Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead by calling Ham Dingle Primary Academy on 01384 818965. There are times when we need to contact parents about lots of things, including absence, so it is important that school holds your contact numbers at all times.

Please help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have at least two up-to-date contact numbers. Please advise the school office if your contact details change.

- Should your child be absent from school, a telephone call must be made by 08:50am to advise the Administration Office that your child will not be attending, and a reason must be provided.
- Should school not be notified of your child's absence, a telephone call will be made to obtain a reason for the absence. Where further unexplained absences occur, the school will make further contact with the parent (including foster parents and/ or social workers where appropriate). This should be with the aim of understanding why the absence has occurred, and when the pupil will return. The correct absence code will be inputted into the Attendance Register as soon as the reason is ascertained.
- Should a reason not be provided or where staff are unable to contact the parent/carer, a home visit may be carried out by school staff. If the parent/carer does not report a reason for absence, or is not contactable, the Attendance Lead will record the absence as O (unauthorised) in the first instance. The absence will remain unauthorised unless the parent returns the letter with a written reason for their child's absence and/or medical evidence is provided. If the Attendance Lead is unable to contact a parent/carer or other contact number provided by the parent/ carer, she will carry out where possible a home visit. The Attendance Lead will be required to see the child for a safe and well check.

There are clear links from this policy to our safeguarding and child protection duties as set out KCSIE (Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023)

The Admissions Register (or "school roll")

1. As a school, we are responsible for keeping the Admissions Register up to date. This contains specific personal details of every pupil along with the date of admission or readmission to the school, information regarding parents and carers, and details of the last school attended.
2. We also hold emergency contact numbers for each pupil. It is our policy to hold more than one such number, so that we have options to make contact with a responsible adult should the need arise.
3. A pupil's name can only be lawfully deleted from the admissions register in very limited circumstances.

The Attendance Register

4. The register will be taken at the start of each morning session of each school day and once during the afternoon session. On each occasion, the school will record whether every pupil is present, attending an approved educational activity, absent, or unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.
5. These records will be kept electronically to ensure accuracy and the timely sharing and analysis of information – all of which is critical to ensure good attendance.

Punctuality and Regular Attendance

6. The school day starts at 08:50am and finishes at 3:20pm (3:10pm for Reception).

Lateness

7. The school day is split into two sessions, the morning (AM) session and the afternoon session (PM). The morning register opens at 08:40am and will close at 09:15am. Children who arrive between 08:50am and 09:15am will be recorded as late (L). Children who arrive after 09:15am will unfortunately lose their mark for the morning session, this is recorded on the child's attendance certificate as an authorised absence (U). Use of the (U) is at the discretion of the Headteacher/Attendance Lead as per the Local Authority guidance.
8. The afternoon register opens for Reception and Key Stage 1 at 12:45pm and will close at 1:00pm. The afternoon register opens for Key Stage 2 at 1:15pm and will close at 1:30pm. If children arrive after the register has closed, they will be, in accordance with the Regulations, they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will not count as a present mark. It will mean they have an unauthorised absence (U). This may mean that parents and carers could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists.

Absence

9. Parents² must contact the school when their child is absent to explain that absence. This can be done by contacting the Administration Office on 01384 900 753. We kindly ask that parents/carers do not send messages to staff via Class Dojo/email as they may not be picked up and it is important that we know their whereabouts of your child/ren.

When reporting an absence we will expect to be informed of the following;

- full name of pupil;
 - pupil's year group
 - Full name of person reporting absence and relation to child;
 - Reason for absence.
10. Where a reason for the absence is not received by 08:50am on the day of the absence, the school will within contact the parents on the same day to understand the reason for the absence.
 11. Where further unexplained absences occur, the school will make further contact with the parent (including foster parents and/ or social workers where appropriate). This should be with the aim of understanding **why** the absence has occurred, and **when** the pupil will return.
 12. The correct absence code will be inputted into the Attendance Register as soon as the reason is ascertained.
 13. Granting a leave of absence will only be made in exceptional circumstances. Each application will be considered individually considering the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind the request. If a leave of absence is granted it is for the Headteacher to determine the length of the time the pupil can be away from school. It is extremely unlikely that a leave of absence will be granted for the purposes of a family holiday. To request a leave of absence please follow the procedures below:

² Throughout this document, the terms 'parent' and 'parents' are interchangeable and apply equally to 'parents and carers' and includes foster parents and social workers where relevant.

Complete a Leave of Absence request form. These forms are readily available from the Administration Office. You will be asked to fully complete the form and provide your child's details, parents details, reason for the absence and duration of the absence including the start and end date of the absence.

A member of school staff will check the form to ensure that all of the information recorded corresponds with the details that are held on our school system for your child.

You will then receive a written response to your request. This will inform you of the decision that has been made to your request. Your request will either be approved or declined.

Should your leave of absence be approved, this will be recorded on your child's attendance certificate as an authorised absence.

Should the request be denied, this will be recorded as an unauthorised absence.

Should a Leave of Absence be taken although it has been declined by the Headteacher/Attendance Lead then a referral will be made to Dudley's Attendance Service (ESS) for a Penalty Notice to be issued to the parent/carer.

Religious Observance

- If you are expecting your child to be absent from school due to religious observance you will need to inform the school office, prior to the occasion, to share which day your child will be absent e.g for Eid. This can be one day of absence from a possible choice of two dates. Where a reason for absence is not received by 9am on the day of the absence, the school will within 30 minutes contact the parents on the same day to understand the reason for the absence. School is required to do this, following LA procedures and ESS guidance.

Section 2: Promoting Regular Attendance

This section sets out the measures in place at Ham Dingle Primary Academy to promote regular attendance by its registered pupils.

- Here at Ham Dingle Primary Academy, we will regularly share cohort attendance with parents via Class Dojo. A newsletter is also published on a Friday to promote new incentives and share important information and/or updates.
- Rewarding good attendance through class promoting 'Perfect Attendance'
- Rewarding good or improving attendance through certificates and pupil prizes
- Tracking pupil attendance and reporting to you swiftly when your child's attendance and/or punctuality rate is a cause for concern

The school's strategy for using data to target attendance improvement efforts to the pupils or pupil cohorts who need it most. We monitor attendance closely and will be in touch with parents when attendance starts to become a concern. If a child's attendance falls to below 96%, the Attendance Officer or Headteacher, will inform the child's parent/carer by letter to make them aware of the situation, and that subsequent attendance will be closely monitored. Should a child's attendance fall to below 93% the parent/carer will be informed by letter of the situation and that from this point absences may no longer be authorised without proof from a medical practitioner. Parents/carers may be called in for a meeting about their child's attendance, and a parental/ school agreement contract may be drawn up. If a child's attendance falls to below 90%, further contact will be made with parents and carers, inviting them to a meeting with the Headteacher / Attendance Officer. Should a child's attendance deteriorate further, a referral may be made to Dudley's Education Support Service. If a

child's attendance falls below 90% at the end of the academic year and they have been absent for 39 sessions (half days) or 10% equivalence depending on number of days the school is open, the attendance will be classed as Persistent Absence. If children are late on 6 occasions within a half term, they are also invited to a meeting with the Headteacher / Attendance Officer in order to discuss the reasons for lateness and to allow the school to offer support.

Promoting and incentivising

14. The School will:
- a) Treat all pupils and parents with dignity. Our staff will always seek to model respectful relationships to build a positive relationship between home and school that can be the foundation of good attendance.
 - b) Regularly inform parents about their child's attendance and absence levels.
 - c) Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) consider to be vulnerable or are persistently or severely absent to discuss attendance and engagement at school.
 - d) Identify pupils who need support from wider partners as quickly as possible and make the necessary referrals.
 - e) Make the necessary statutory data returns to the local authority.
 - f) Support pupils back into school following a lengthy or unavoidable period of absence and provide support to build confidence and bridge gaps.

Data Strategy

15. The school understands that as poor attendance is habitual, prevention and early detection is crucial. We will therefore undertake regular data analysis to:
- both identify and provide immediate additional support to pupils and/ or pupil cohorts that need it;
 - look at historic and emerging patterns across the school and develop strategies to address them.
16. The school will typically carry out the following analysis:
- a) Monitoring and analysing weekly attendance (including punctuality) patterns and trends, including whether there are issues for some children on certain days;
 - b) Half-termly, termly and full-year data analysis of patterns and trends, including analysis of pupils and cohorts, identifying patterns in use of certain codes, days where attendance is typically poor and (where appropriate) subjects with low lesson attendance
 - c) Benchmarking attendance data (at whole school, year group and cohort level) against Trust-level, local, regional and national data.
17. We will use this analysis to identify pupils who need support so that we can focus staff efforts on developing targeted actions for those students and to identify any common themes to support improvement planning. We will use the data to inform us regarding the impact of school-wide attendance efforts, including any specific strategies implemented, to evaluate approaches or inform action. We will also provide regular attendance reports to class teachers or tutors to facilitate discussions with pupils and to school leaders (including any

special educational needs coordinators, designated safeguarding leads and pupil premium leads).

Absence reduction strategy

18. We will devise specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data. This may, for example, include pupils in a year group with higher-than-average absence or for specific groups of students.
19. Data and reports will be shared with the Local Governing Body.
20. As part of promoting regular attendance the school will consider the issuing of Fixed Penalty Notices.

Pupils with medical conditions or special educational needs and disabilities

21. The school recognises that some pupils face greater barriers to attendance than their peers. These can include pupils who suffer from long term medical conditions or who have special educational needs and disabilities. Their right to an education is the same as any other pupil and therefore the attendance ambition for these pupils is the same as they are for any other pupil.
22. That said, in working with their parents to improve attendance, we will be mindful of the barriers these pupils face and put additional support in place where necessary to help them access their full-time education. This will include:
 - a) Having sensitive conversations and developing good support for pupils with physical or mental health conditions. For example, making reasonable adjustments where a pupil has a disability or putting in place an individual healthcare plan where needed.
 - b) Considering whether additional support from external partners (including the local authority or health services) would be appropriate, making referrals in a timely manner and working together with those services to deliver any subsequent support.
 - c) Working with parents to develop specific support approaches for attendance for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities, including where applicable ensuring the provision outlined in the pupil's education, health and care plan is accessed. In addition, the school will work with families to help support routines where school transport is regularly being missed and work with other partners to encourage the scheduling of additional support interventions or medical appointments outside of the main school day. *Please see the School's SEN policy for further details on SEN support.*
 - d) Establishing strategies for removing the in-school barriers pupils may face, including considering support or reasonable adjustments for uniform, transport, routines, access to support in school and lunchtime arrangements.
 - e) Ensuring joined up pastoral care is in place where needed and consider whether a time-limited phased return to school would be appropriate, for example for those affected by

- anxiety about school attendance, recognising that such arrangements can be for a limited time only.
- f) Ensuring data is regularly monitored for these groups including at board and governing body meetings and in Targeting Support Meetings with the local authority so that additional support from other partners is accessed where necessary.
23. Pupils with long term illnesses or other health needs may need additional support to continue their education, such as alternative provision provided by the local authority. Local authorities are responsible for arranging suitable education for children of compulsory school age who, because of health reasons, would otherwise not receive suitable education. **Please see the school's policy on supporting pupils with medical conditions at school for further information.**
24. In all cases, the school will be sensitive and avoid stigmatising pupils and parents; and talk to pupils and parents and understand how they feel and what they think would help improve their attendance to develop individual approaches that meet an individual pupil's specific needs.

Part-time timetables

25. All pupils of compulsory school age are entitled to a full-time education. In very exceptional circumstances, where it is in a pupil's best interests, there may be a need for a temporary part-time timetable to meet their individual needs. For example, where a medical condition prevents a pupil from attending full-time education and a part-time timetable is considered as part of a re-integration package. Please note that a part-time cannot be used as a reasonable adjustment for SEND, unless this is on a temporary basis and as advised by an external agency e.g., Educational Psychologist.
26. A part-time timetable must only be in place for the shortest time necessary and not be treated as a long-term solution. Any pastoral support programme or other agreement should have a time limit by which point the pupil is expected to attend fulltime, either at school or alternative provision. Formal arrangements will also be put in place for regularly reviewing it (minimum monthly) with the pupil and their parents. In agreeing to a part-time timetable, a school has agreed to a pupil being absent from school for part of the week or day and therefore will treat such absence as authorised. We will of course consider how best to support learning when a child is working on a part time timetable.

Section 3: Particular Responsibilities

This section outlines responsibilities of particular members of staff in relation to attendance.

The name and contact details of the leader responsible for the strategic approach to attendance in school are:

Name: Mrs C. Feane

Role: Designated Safeguarding Lead & Attendance Lead.

Email: cfeane@hamdingleprimary.co.uk

Telephone: 01384 818965

Name: Miss D. Horton

Role: Deputy DSL and Attendance Lead

Email: dhorton@hamdingleprimary.co.uk

Telephone: 01384 818986

- Responsibility for identifying unexplained absences on “day 1” will fall to Miss D. Horton.
- Responsibility for identifying further unexplained absences will fall to Miss D. Horton
- Information and contact details of the school staff who pupils and parents should contact about attendance on a day-to-day basis are the administration team:

<https://www.dudley.gov.uk/resident/learning-school/parental-support/dudley-education-investigation-service/>

- More detailed support on attendance can be requested from Miss D. Horton, Attendance Lead.

Section 4: Specific Action for Failure to Attend Regularly

This section sets out the action to be taken by staff if a registered pupil fails to attend the school regularly.

27. Where a pupil or family needs support with attendance, it is important that the best placed person in the school works with and supports the family. Wherever possible, we will keep this person consistent.
28. Where a pattern of absence is at risk of becoming, or becomes, problematic the school will draw on these relationships and listen to and understand the barriers to attendance the pupil or family is experiencing. In doing so, the school will take into consideration the sensitivity of some of the reasons for absence and understand the importance of school as a place of safety and support.
29. In the first instance, the school will support pupils and parents by working together to address any in-school barriers to attendance.
30. Where barriers are outside of the school’s control, we endeavour to work together with all partners to support pupils and parents to access any support they may need. As a minimum, this will include meeting with pupils and parents at risk of persistent or severe absence to understand barriers to being in school, agreeing actions or interventions to address them and keeping those actions under regular review in discussion with pupils and families. This may include referrals to services and organisations that can provide support. This may include Dudley’s Front Door and/or Education Support Service. Where absence intensifies, so will the support provided, which will require us to work in tandem with the local authority and other relevant partners, as follows:
 - If the needs and barriers are individual to the pupil this may include provision of mentoring, careers advice, college placements, 1-2-1 tuition or out of hours learning, or where appropriate an education, health and care plan or alternative provision.
 - Where the needs are wider and a whole family response is more appropriate, this is likely to include a voluntary early help assessment.
 - Where engagement in support is proving challenging, the school will hold more formal conversations with the parents (and pupil where they are old enough to understand). This is likely to be led by the senior leader responsible for attendance and may include the school’s point of contact in the local authority School Attendance Support Team (ESS). The aim of these meetings will be to clearly explain the consequences of persistent and severe absence to the pupil and family and the potential need for legal intervention in

future but will also be an opportunity to continue to listen to, understand the barriers to attendance, and explain the help that is available to avoid those consequences.

- Where voluntary support has not been effective and/or has not been engaged with the school will work with the local authority to:
 - Put formal support in place in the form of a parenting contract or an education supervision order.
 - Intensify support through statutory children's social care involvement where there are safeguarding concerns, especially where absence becomes severe (below 50% attendance).
 - Issue a fixed penalty notice where support would not be appropriate or has not been successful or engaged with and it is likely to change the parents' behaviour.
 - Prosecute parents where all other routes have failed or are not deemed appropriate. This could include making the case for a community or parenting order where the parent is convicted to secure engagement with support.

31. In all cases, the school will monitor the impact of any intervention(s) and adjust where necessary in discussion with the pupil, parents and any other partners involved as part of any whole family plan or team around the family. Where interventions are failing, the school will work together with all parties to identify the reasons why and either adjust or change the approach.

Local Governing Body (LGB) Responsibilities:

32. The LGB recognises the importance of school attendance and will:

- promote it across the school's ethos and policies.
- Ensure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties.
- Regularly review attendance data, discuss, and challenge trends, and help school leaders focus improvement efforts on the individual pupils or cohorts who need it most.
- Ensure school staff receive adequate training on attendance.

33. The LGB will also ensure:

- that the attendance policy and its contents are generally made known within the school and to parents of registered pupils at the school, and
- that steps are taken at least once in every school year to bring the attendance policy to the attention of all those parents and pupils and all persons who work at the school (whether or not for payment).

Policy Written by: Andrew Tilley

Date: January 2024

Ratified by the LGB: 12/10/23

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