



**Dove Bank Primary School**

# **ATTENDANCE POLICY AND PROCEDURES**

## **Introduction**

This policy reflects the DfE regulations which came into force in September 2013 which state: 'Head Teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.'

## **Rationale**

At Dove Bank Primary School we seek to ensure that all our pupils receive a full-time education which enables and encourages them to reach out for excellence and gives the best possible opportunities for children to realise their true potential.

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 reward those pupils whose attendance is very good through half termly attendance certificates. We will also make the best provision we can for those pupils who, for whatever reason, are prevented from coming to school.

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

## **Our objectives in devising a policy for promoting good attendance are:**

- To encourage full attendance and punctuality
- To monitor attendance and apply appropriate strategies to minimise absenteeism
- To acknowledge and celebrate a successful record of attendance
- To make attendance and punctuality a priority for those associated with the school including pupils, parents, teachers and governors
- To develop a framework which defines agreed roles and responsibilities and promotes consistency in carrying out designated tasks
- To provide support, advice and guidance to parents and pupils
- To work effectively with other services and agencies to support these objectives e.g. MATU
- 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.

## **Types of Absence - Authorised**

The parent/carer of a child of compulsory school age is required by law to ensure that the child regularly attends the school at which he/she is registered. Should a parent fail to ensure that his/her child attends that school regularly then the parent is guilty of an offence.

Legally, every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school as either authorised or unauthorised.

Authorised absence (coded as 'M', 'I', 'C', 'T', 'B', 'R') is where the school has either given approval in advance for the child to be absent or where an explanation offered afterwards has been accepted as satisfactory justification for absence.

Absence may generally be authorised for the following reasons:

- Illness
- Medical or dental appointments, by necessity made in school time
- Accredited Exam – ballet/music (extra-curricular)
- Approved sporting event
- An exceptional 'enrichment' opportunity (e.g. involvement in a public performance)
- Family Bereavement
- Serious family crisis
- Exclusion
- Wedding – close family relative
- Religious Observance
- Traveller child travelling for the purposes of parents employment
- Other unusual/rare 'exceptional' occasions (the nature of such occasions will be determined by school on an individual basis)

### **Procedure to follow when pupil is absent**

Parents and carers should inform the school on the morning of the first day of absence either by telephone 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 or carer by telephone or text message.

When the pupil returns to school, parents or carers must ensure that a note or verbal confirmation is provided to explain the reason for the absence.

A note may be sent to the school prior to the day of absence, e.g. if a pupil has a medical appointment. Parents 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 or carer 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 or carer and other emergency contacts if no message has been received regarding the reason

### **Types of Absence – Unauthorised (coded as 'O' or 'G')**

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.

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

- If no explanation is offered by the parent/carer
- The explanation provided is unsatisfactory (e.g. shopping, day off to celebrate a birthday, minding the house, day trip etc.)
- Family holidays in term time (unless granted under 'exceptional' circumstances)
- Where there are a sporadic absences and the attendance is declining.
- Where no medical evidence has been provided when requested.

If a pupil has an increasing number of authorised absences, classed as 'persistent absence', contact will be made with the parents to ascertain if further action needs to be taken.

The school may also make a referral to the Local Authority department responsible for CME (Children Missing Education) if there is a concern about a pupil's welfare or safety.

Parents are expected to co-operate with the school and attend any meeting when requested to do so.

### **Persistent Absence**

Persistent Absence (PA) is absence of 10% or more. An individual child is deemed to be a persistent absentee, therefore, if his/her attendance is less than 90% (regardless of whether or not the absences have been authorised).

### **Holidays during Term Time/ Leave of Absence**

Since September 2013, all schools have been given strict guidelines from the Department of Education that there is no entitlement in law for any leave of absence for a holiday during term time and as a consequence, requests for leave of absence for reasons that are not considered to be special or exceptional should not be approved.

### **Procedure for requesting a holiday in term time**

Any applications for leave of absence must be made in advance using the 'Leave Request' form and any request can only be authorised where school accepts that there are 'exceptional circumstances'. The reason for the request should be given in detail.

Any parent/carer requesting leave of absence of more than 5 days will be asked to make an appointment to see the Headteacher to explain the circumstances. Where parents/carers take children out of school without authorisation, parents leave themselves at risk of legal action.

The school will write back to the parent informing them of the decision that has been made by the Headteacher.

A copy of the request and school's reply will be kept in the student's file.

Examples of circumstances that will not be authorised:

- Availability of cheap holidays and cheap travel arrangements.
- Days overlapping with the beginning or end of term.
- During the first term, when a pupil is just starting at School, as it is very important for the child to settle into their new class;
- During an assessment/test period – Key Stage 2 SATs
- When a pupil's attendance record already includes any level of unauthorised absence
- We will also take into account the current attendance for each child when making a decision.

### **\*'Exceptional Circumstances' Criteria**

It is not possible to define all 'exceptional circumstances' therefore the circumstances of each leave of absence application will be taken into account on an individual basis. However, examples of what might be considered 'exceptional circumstances' for leave in term time, as agreed by Governors at Dove Bank Primary School are:

- Service personnel returning from or scheduled to embark upon a tour of duty abroad.
- Where it is company/organisational policy for an employee to take leave at a specified time in the year and there is no opportunity for a family holiday in school holidays i.e. in some cases a parent's employer might restrict holidays to a certain time period. This must be supported by documentary evidence from the employer.
- Where a holiday is recommended as part of a parent or child's rehabilitation from a medical or emotional issue. Evidence must be provided by qualified professionals such as a Doctor.
- An emergency situation that requires the child to be away from school.
- Where there are other factors which the head teacher may consider to be exceptional circumstances, this may be referred to the local authority for advice.

The school reserves the right to ask parents for written evidence where it feels this is required.

### **Legal Action for unauthorised Holidays – Code G**

Where the parent has taken a holiday and it has not been authorised the case may be referred to the local authority to pursue legal action.

The parent(s) of any pupil who has absences recorded as a result of an unauthorised family holiday, will each be fined £60 which must be paid within a 21 day 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, parents may face legal action under section 444 of the Education Act 1996. If found guilty of an offence under this Act, Parents will receive a criminal record and could be fined up to £1000.

## **Punctuality**

Pupils are expected to arrive punctually, ready for registration at 8.45 a.m. The school gates are locked from 9.00 am and any pupils arriving after this time must enter school through the main entrance and be 'signed in' by a parent/carer.

The register for the first session will be taken at 8:45am and be kept open until 9:15 and pupils arriving after this time will be marked as 'Late' on the class register. The register for the second session will be taken from 12:55 pm and will be kept open until 1:15

Any pupil that arrives at school after the register has closed will be coded as a 'U' code. This equates to an unauthorised mark. Legal action can be taken when a child has 'U' codes as this is deemed to be an unauthorised mark. Parents/Carers of pupils who are persistently late will be contacted by the Headteacher and will be asked to address the problem.

Where possible parents must ensure that they book all medical appointments either before school starts or after school finishes. It is useful for parents 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.

## **Travelling Families and School Attendance**

Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 stated that: 'If a child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school fails to attend regularly at the school, the parent of the child is guilty of an offence'.

However, the Section goes on to identify circumstances in which a Traveller parent is protected from conviction for the non-attendance of their children at school where it can be demonstrated:

1. that he is engaged in a trade or business of such a nature as to require him to travel from place to place,
2. that the child has attended at a school as a registered pupil as regularly as the nature of that trade or business permits, and
3. if the child has attained the age of six years, that he has made at least 200 attendance sessions during the periods of twelve months ending with the date on which the proceeding were instituted.

This legislation is designed to protect Traveller parents from unreasonable prosecution for their child's non-attendance at school.

However, it does not mean that part-time education for Traveller children is legally acceptable.

Whilst we recognise and respect the lifestyle and cultural traditions within our school community, our aim is always to ensure that children from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families, like other children, attend school as regularly and as frequently as possible so that they secure, at the very least, 200/380 sessions in each rolling 12-month period.

Dual Registration: To protect the continuity of learning, Traveller children may be dual registered. This means that if parents inform the 'base school' that the child is going to be away travelling but will return, or even if the school knows that the child comes from a Traveller family which regularly leaves the area for a time, then registration at another school, and absence in excess of four weeks – unknown location, no longer require the pupil to be removed from the base school register.

While a Traveller child is away, the base school should hold the place open and record the absence as authorised.

However, Traveller parents/carers risk losing their child's place on the School Roll if the pupil does not return to school within 20 consecutive days and re-admission cannot be guaranteed as defined in legislation.

### **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 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 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.

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 is guilty of an offence'. The school reserves the right to consider taking legal action against any parents/carers who repeatedly fail in their responsibility to send their children to school on a regular basis.

### **Promoting regular attendance through good practice**

It is essential that everyone involved in promoting attendance is clear about the important role that must be carried out in order to raise standards. Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility – parents/carers, pupils and all members of school staff.

The school will recognise the importance of good practice by:

- Keeping and maintaining registers accurately
- Ensuring prompt follow-up action in cases of non-school attendance e.g. by telephoning the child's home or sending a text message, after the registers have been closed and no explanation given, on the first day and subsequent days of absence, to establish a reason for a child's absence
- Ensuring that parents understand the school's attendance policy and procedures for reporting absence by issuing an advisory letter/notice promoting good attendance to all parents annually
- Reporting children missing education (CME) to the LA
- Regularly analysing attendance data and setting an annual attendance target
- Rewarding and celebrating good and improving attendance through newsletters, certificates, pencils and badges
- Providing parents with regular attendance grades for their child as part of the termly 'Progress Check Report' and annual report
- Constructively working with pupils and their families to ensure each child attends school regularly and punctually by establishing an effective and efficient system of communication with parents and appropriate agencies to provide mutual information, advice and support

### **School Attendance Strategies**

- The importance of good attendance will be discussed at the meeting for new parents
- A clear statement is in the school brochure about the high profile given to the issue of attendance
- Attendance Policy available on the school's website
- Newsletters used to remind parents about school policy and the rules about holidays in term time
- Differentiated rewards and incentives for 100% attendance, good attendance +96% and improved attendance as appropriate (end of each term)
- Attendance is reported in the Achievement Assembly to children at the end of each week. Praise and a certificate is given to the class with the highest attendance
- Assemblies held on the importance of good punctuality and attendance
- Monitoring absence and punctuality each half term, to establish regular patterns of absence and to act on any findings by reporting to parents or to the Local Authority as appropriate. Particular attention is paid to vulnerable groups of children e.g. Travellers, Looked after Children
- Prompt investigation of any issues that may be affecting a child's well-being and attendance. (If absence persists, or becomes a concern, the Headteacher will contact parents advising them about improving attendance. After this, any further unauthorised absence will result in a formal letter from the school and may end in the Local Authority taking legal action).
- Set challenging but achievable targets on an individual attendance plan (related to what is achievable for the individual child) – children reflecting on their own attendance record
- Put an agreed 'Attendance Action Plan' into place each year as part of the School Improvement Plan
- Parent workshops (to target the Traveller Community)



## **Parental Support**

Parents are asked to support the school in helping their child to establish a good attendance record by:

- Making sure their child understands the importance of good attendance and punctuality
- Taking an interest in their child's education, through asking them about their school work and encouraging them to get involved in school activities
- Discussing any worries that their child might have about coming to school and informing their classteacher about anything serious
- Not letting their child take time off school for very minor ailments
- Arranging appointments and outings after school hours or at weekends or school holidays
- Ensuring that family holidays are booked during school holiday time and not during term time (there are 13 weeks of the year during which the school is closed)
- Being very clear with their child regarding the school's expectation that they arrive at school every day by 8.55am (bus children excepted), appropriately equipped and wearing full school uniform

## **Data Analysis**

The data which is extracted from accurate and up-to-date attendance registers will be used to support the more effective management of whole-school attendance matters. Such data can be used to:

- support and underpin the target-setting process (for individual pupils, year groups, identified cohorts, the whole school) in relation to overall attendance and unauthorised absence on a half-termly and yearly basis
- identify individual children and particular groups of children who are or may be at risk of becoming persistent absentees
- facilitate and encourage early intervention
- identify particular types or patterns of absenteeism (for example, time lost to term-time holidays, regular absences on Mondays and/or Fridays, etc.)
- match attendance trends with attainment trends
- identify possible inconsistencies in the implementation of school policy
- report attendance matters to parents/carers/carers

## **Monitoring**

Attendance is monitored half-termly for any emerging patterns below 96%. Parents will be routinely contacted if attendance falls below 90% at the end of every full term.

## **Evaluation**

When evaluating success, the school will consider whether or not:

- Patterns and trends in the school's attendance and pupils' punctuality are improved
- Parental response to absence has improved
- The school has been successful in raising the profile of attendance by celebrating good attendance within the school, governing body and the local community
- Pupils and parents are fully aware of the importance of punctuality and regular attendance and aware of the attendance procedures operating within school
- Parents and governors are made aware of the current law on attendance
- Attendance issues have been included as topics in school assemblies or PSHE lessons

## **Safeguarding**

Any attendance issues which may be related to safeguarding and child protection issues will be followed up in accordance with the Child Protection Policy.

## **Related Policies**

- Child Protection
- S.E.N
- Behaviour
- Anti-bullying
- Equal Opportunities and Inclusion
- Traveller Education

**Appendix 1 – Letter to request a meeting for a child with high levels of authorised absence (less than 90%)**



**Dove Bank Primary School**

*Putting Children First*



Bagworth Road  
Nailstone  
Warwickshire  
CV13 0QJ

**Head of School: Mrs. Andrea Fletcher**

Telephone: 01530 262371

Email: office@dovebank.leics.sch.uk

**ABSENCES FROM SCHOOL**

[date]

Dear [name of parent/carer],

I'm writing to express my concern at [name's] recent high levels of absence from school.

[His/her] current attendance has fallen to [percentage]. Falling below 95% attendance will likely have an impact on [his/her] academic achievement.

We acknowledge that each family's circumstances are different and we aim to work with parents to provide the best education for every child.

Pupils' welfare is of paramount importance to us and we believe that regular attendance throughout the year is essential for their success and fulfilment.

We want to make sure that we can support [name's] education in the best way possible, including looking into how we can help [him/her] to address gaps in learning due to absence.

I therefore request that you contact the school office on 01530 262371 as soon as you can to make an appointment to discuss this with me.

Yours sincerely,

A Fletcher

Mrs Fletcher  
Head of School

## Appendix 2 – Letter to request a meeting for a child with high levels of unauthorised absence



**Dove Bank Primary School**

*Putting Children First*



Bagworth Road  
Nailstone  
Warwickshire  
CV13 0QJ

**Head of School: Mrs. Andrea Fletcher**

Telephone: 01530 262371

Email: [office@dovebank.leics.sch.uk](mailto:office@dovebank.leics.sch.uk)

### UNAUTHORISED ABSENCES FROM SCHOOL

[date]

Dear [name of parent/carer],

I'm writing to express my concern at [name's] recent unauthorised [absence/absences] from school.

[Name] has been absent from school for a total of [number] unauthorised sessions ([number] days) on the following dates:

>[date]

>[date]

>[date]

We acknowledge that each family's circumstances are different and we aim to work with parents to provide the best education for every child.

Pupils' welfare is of paramount importance to us and we believe that regular attendance throughout the year is essential for their success and fulfilment.

Unauthorised absences can result in a penalty notice being issued by the Local Authority. More information about penalty notices is available here: <https://resources.leicestershire.gov.uk/education-and-children/schools-colleges-and-academies/school-attendance>.

I therefore request that you contact the school office on 01530 262371 as soon as you can to make an appointment to discuss this with me.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Fletcher  
Head of School

### Appendix 3 – Letter to request a meeting for a child where there are concerns about punctuality



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CV13 0QJ

**Head of School: Mrs. Andrea Fletcher**

Telephone: 01530 262371

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#### CONCERN ABOUT PUNCTUALITY

[date]

Dear [name of parent/carer],

I am writing to you because [name] has been late to school [number] times in [timeframe].

[He/she] arrived at school after the register had closed on the following dates:

>[date]  
>[date]  
>[date]

[He/she] also arrived at school late (but before the register had closed) on the following dates:

>[date]  
>[date]  
>[date]

The school day begins promptly at 8.45am and registration closes at 9.00am.

Arriving promptly makes sure that your child doesn't miss work, and that disruption to the teacher and other pupils is minimised. Persistent lateness can lead to a significant loss in learning time.

We are committed to working with families to make sure every pupil gets the support they need. I would therefore like to arrange a meeting to discuss how we can work with you to help improve [name's] punctuality.

Please contact the school office on 01530 262371 to arrange a meeting.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Fletcher  
Head of School

## **Appendix 4-Information sheet for parents Information to Parents about Fixed Penalty Notices**

### **What is a Fixed Penalty Notice?**

The Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 introduced legislation that made provision for a Local Authority to issue Fixed Penalty Notices. These notices require a fine to be paid by parents of pupils who have unauthorised absence from school.

A separate Penalty Notice will be issued to each parent for each child who has unauthorised absence.

### **In what circumstances will Fixed Penalty Notices be issued?**

A Fixed Penalty Notice will be issued in three situations:

- If a holiday is taken during term time without the authorisation of the Head Teacher.
- If a pupil has unauthorised absence from school and their parent/carer fails to co-operate with the Education Welfare Officer to improve this situation.
- If a pupil has unauthorised absence from school and this does not improve following a warning letter.

### **What are the Penalties?**

If a Fixed Penalty Notice is issued the penalty is £60 when the payment is made within 21 days and £120 when the payment is made after 21 days but prior to 28 days. Failure to pay within 28 days will result in a summons to appear before the Magistrates Court on the grounds that you have failed to secure your child's regular attendance at school.

### **Why has the government introduced this legislation?**

The message of this new legislation is that it is really very important that every child attends school for as many of the 380 half day sessions of the school year as possible. It is the responsibility of parents to ensure that their children do not take unnecessary time off school.

### **What must I do?**

You should get in touch with the Headteacher as soon as possible, to discuss the reason for your child's absence from school. This may avoid the risk of a Fixed Penalty Notice being issued to you.

Every school in Leicestershire is supporting the message that school attendance is a high priority. We hope that parents will help us to ensure that all children at Dove Bank achieve the very highest levels of attendance at school.

## Appendix 5-letter for parents to request leave of absence.



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**Head of School: Mrs. Andrea Fletcher**

Telephone: 01530 262371

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### Requests for Leave of Absence

Dear Parent/Carer

I am writing to advise you about our procedures for dealing with requests for leave of absence during term time.

Missing school for any reason is likely to deprive a child of educational opportunities and hamper their progress at school. Although we acknowledge that parents may sometimes prefer to take holidays outside of school holidays this has to be balanced against the effect on pupils' progress at school.

In September 2013 the government abolished the right of headteachers to authorise absence specifically for holidays of up to 10 days per year if special circumstances existed. Instead, headteachers are only allowed to grant leave of absence for any reason if they are satisfied exceptional circumstances exist. 'Exceptional circumstances' may include for example the wedding of parents/carers (for the day of the wedding) or a close family bereavement. However, we are keen to stress that each leave of absence request will be treated individually and with sensitivity.

There are certain times of the year when a child may experience problems because of missing school. These include examination periods (such as SATs), at the time of starting in a new class and at the start of a new school term. The school will also take these and other factors into account.

If due to exceptional reasons you do need to request leave of absence, please do so in writing by submitting a Leave of Absence Request form at least 4 weeks before the start of the proposed absence. The school will respond to your request in writing within 5 working days.

Both the school and the Local Authority take the issue of school attendance very seriously and parents should be aware that where leave of absence is taken during term time without permission, the absences will be treated and recorded as unauthorised. In extreme cases, parents may be issued with Education Penalty Notice fines of £60 (rising to £120) per parent per child by the Local Authority.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Fletcher  
*Head of School*

**APPLICATION BY PARENT/CARER FOR CHILD'S LEAVE OF ABSENCE FROM SCHOOL DURING TERM TIME**

Pupil's Name ..... Class .....

Home Address .....

I wish to apply for my child to be absent from school during the following dates:

Date of Last day at School ..... Date of Return to School .....

Total number of school days missed .....

Reasons for absence from school:

.....  
.....

*I make application for my child named above to have authorised absence from school for the reasons stated. I understand that if this is not agreed then any absence will be treated as unauthorised and may lead to the issue of a Penalty Notice from the Local Authority.*

Name of Parent/Carer making application .....

Signed ..... Date .....

**PLEASE RETURN COMPLETED APPLICATION FORM TO YOUR CHILD'S SCHOOL GIVING AT LEAST 4 WEEKS' NOTICE OF INTENDED ABSENCE**

.....  
(This part to be returned to parent)

Permission authorised / unauthorised for ..... Class.....

to take a holiday from .....to..... (inclusive).

Reason .....

Signed..... (headteacher) Date.....