



# ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY POLICY

## DERWENT PRIMARY SCHOOL

2022/23

Date of policy publication: **September 2022**

Date of next review: **September 2023**

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Safeguarding Manager: **Mr McLachlan**

## **Contents**

1	Aims, Objectives & Rationale
2	Registration
3	Punctuality and lateness
4	Authorised and unauthorised attendance
5	Leave of Absence
6	Return to school
7	Tackling poor attendance and punctuality
8	Persistent Absentees
9	Promoting Good Attendance
10	Monitoring & Reviewing Attendance
11	Removing children from the register
12	Roles & Responsibilities
13.	Legislation & Guidance

### **1.1 Aims**

- All pupils and their families value their education;
- Few pupils are absent or persistently absent.
- Pupils are punctual and rarely late.
- No groups of pupils are disadvantaged by low attendance.
- The attendance of pupils who have previously had exceptionally high rates of absence is showing marked and sustained improvement.

### **1.2 Objectives**

- To ensure a consistent approach to registration (via integris)
- To monitor lateness and follow it up consistently
- To adopt a positive approach to promoting attendance and punctuality via rewards
- To reduce persistent absentees.
- To provide strong support and robust action for parents and carers of children whose lateness or attendance is a concern.

### **1.3 Rationale**

Children can only achieve their full intellectual potential if they arrive at school regularly and on time. The effect of poor attendance and late arrival is apparent in the achievement and development of the child as early as Little Learners (2 year provision).

Poor attendance disadvantages children. We aim to ensure that all children attend school regularly and on time to enable them to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available.

Attendance is a key whole-school improvement issue: it has a direct relationship with the attainment of individuals and groups of students and the standards thereby achieved by the school.

All children, regardless of their circumstances, are entitled to a full time education which is suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have.

Every opportunity will be used to convey to pupils and their parents or carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance. For our children to take full advantage of the educational opportunities offered it is vital your child is at school, on time, every day when the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

The routines children develop around attendance and punctuality at school are the same as the expectations of any future employer in the world of work. High attainment, confidence with peers and staff and future aspirations depend on good attendance.

Good attendance is important because:

- Statistics show a direct link between under-achievement and absence below 96%.
- Regular attenders make better progress, both socially and academically
- Regular attenders find school routines, school work and friendships easier to manage
- Regular attenders are more confident learners
- Regular attenders find learning more satisfying
- Regular attenders are more successful in transferring between primary school, secondary school, and higher education, employment or training
- Regular attenders are often more confident in their surroundings and have higher self-esteem: their relationships with their peers are more secure and their social skills more advanced.

## **2. Registration**

- Gates open at 8.40am, classroom doors close at 8.55am promptly, and registers are completed at this time, and closed at 9.00am.
- If your child arrives after 9am parents should support their child by signing them in at the school office and selecting a meal option.
- All teaching staff will attempt to register children accurately, as this is a legal requirement.
- All absences are investigated by a designated member of staff. If no reason is forthcoming from parents/carers regarding an absence, then the parents receive a phone call, text, or home visit when a slip/ letter will be left to inform of the concern regarding absence (in this case disadvantaged children and children connected to social care are made a priority). Class teachers also follow up any unexplained absences when a child returns to school as do the Safeguarding Manager/Pastoral Lead.
- If we are unable to establish a reason for absence and parents have not contacted the school, the EWO may be informed and would then investigate which could result in legal proceedings.
- Consideration will be given to inform the Local Authority if there are any concerns either by contacting the Education Welfare Service or Children's Social Care.
- Afternoon registration is at 12:45pm for years F2 to Y6
- Attendance and Dinner registers are kept electronically.
- Derwent Primary School complies with and uses the DFE compulsory national attendance codes.

### **3. Punctuality & Lateness**

It is important that classes make a prompt and effective start at the beginning of the school day. Lateness into school causes disruption to that individual's learning and to that of the other pupils in the class / school. It is of extreme importance therefore that all pupils arrive at school on time. We are unable to take responsibility for children on the school premises before 8:40am (unless they are a member of Breakfast Club). Staff are not able to care for your children or take on the 'parenting role' before the start of the school day: parents are expected to take sole charge of their children before they enter the classroom. It is very important that children do not play on the play equipment before or after school as there is no supervision at these times. Thank you for your co-operation.

- Classroom doors close promptly at 8:55am. If children arrive after this time, they must be brought into school by an adult (alone if they are old enough to come to school and are classed as 'a walker' meaning a child whose parents have signed for them to come, and leave school alone, these children are class years 3 -6 only), if a child arrives late they need to be signed in by the parent/carer. If the register has closed this will be recorded as unauthorised Code 'U'.
- If a child arrives late, it is unfair to send them into school alone as they may not know how to complete this form and could feel awkward and embarrassed. Staff will ascertain reasons for late arrivals. Where a child is arriving persistently late, the Safeguarding Manager/Admin Staff will contact the parents and may invite them into school for a meeting to discuss why their child is not arriving at school on time, this could include a parenting contract, referral to Fast Track to Prosecution, or a meeting with the EWO. If after the meeting has been held, the lateness continues this could lead to a referral being made by the school for a Penalty Notice to be issued the parent / parents for failure to ensure regular attendance. Parents may also be referred to the Fast Track to Prosecution scheme as detailed above, which addresses high level concerns of poor attendance and poor timekeeping – this could result in a large fine or even imprisonment.
- Support will be given to families (i.e. home visits/review meetings/free breakfast club) as far as possible within the resources available to the school but children will not be directly collected from home by staff members other than in extreme circumstances or on a "one off" basis if staff availability allows.
- Children who often arrive late will be given incentives to attend on time, these could be in the form of rewards / prizes. Rewards are embedded in the school for children who arrive on time and have 100% attendance – a dojo for every child who arrives on time every day, weekly 'spot' prizes, termly treats / prizes.
- The Senior Leadership Team review attendance weekly, data is then shared with the Trust Governors who have a clear overview on the school's position both independently, within the Trust, and within the local Cluster.

### **4. Authorised & Unauthorised Absences**

Only the school, within the context of the law, can approve absence not parents and it is a statutory requirement for the Head teacher / Safeguarding Manager to decide with every absence whether it is authorised or unauthorised. Note: If a child is late after close of registration this absence will be unauthorised – Code U. If a child is absent without reason this will be unauthorised – Code O. If a child has an attendance under 90% (Classes as PA – Persistent Absentee) and is absent without evidence (prescription, medical note, appointment card) the absence will be unauthorised. If a child is absent for an unauthorised holiday, this will be Code G – unauthorised holiday.

If a child is absent from school parents/carers should contact the school on the first day of absence, if in school hours a member of staff should be spoken to, pressing option 1 and leaving a message should only be used out of school hours. The details of your child's absence should always be shared, if deemed necessary you may be contacted by a member of staff if you have left an out of hours message. Parents / carers should maintain contact with the school throughout the absence following the procedure below:

Phone the school and share reason for absence if out of hours a message should be left: this message should include the following-

- Name of your child (please spell if necessary)
- Class / Year Group
- The relationship to the child of the person who is reporting the absence and their name
- Callers must provide the reason for absence or exact nature of their child's illness. We cannot accept; illness, poorly, feeling under the weather or tired. In order to authorise the absence, we need to know exactly what is wrong with your child

The Head teacher or Safeguarding Manager reserve the right to declare any absence unauthorised if there is no explanation given, not a reasonable explanation for the absence or if the school has good reason to doubt the explanation given. In line with the 1996 Education Act, we expect all children on roll to attend school every day, when the school is in session, as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so.

Examples of unsatisfactory explanations include:

- A student's/family member's birthday
- Shopping for uniform
- Closure of a sibling's school for INSET or other purposes
- "Couldn't get up"
- Illness where the child is considered well enough to attend school
- Illness of a family member
- Bus not running or car broken down
- Raining / bad weather

All absences that are not accounted for will be actioned immediately following the protocol described below.

#### Unexplained absence – children missing in education & safeguarding

Attendance, absence and exclusions are closely monitored. A child going missing from education is a potential indicator of abuse and neglect, including sexual abuse and sexual exploitation. The Head Teacher, in conjunction with the Safeguarding Manager, will monitor unauthorised absence and take appropriate action including notifying the local authority, particularly where children go missing on repeated occasions and/or are missing for periods during the school day. Staff must be alert to signs of children at risk of travelling to conflict zones, female genital mutilation and forced marriage. At least two different contact numbers will be held on file for a child which can be accessed and used by the school in case of an absence/emergency as in line with KCSinE 2022. Should a child be linked to outside agencies and have a Child Protection Plan the Social Worker will be informed immediately should absence occur.

Where a pupil who fails to attend regularly, or has been absent without the school's permission for a continuous period of more than 5 school days, the school will alert the EWO who will attempt to make contact / ascertain safety. If no contact is made the school / EWO may contact the police and request a safe and well visit. The case may also be referred to children's social care. If it is thought that a family may have taken a holiday in term time and not alerted the school the parents / carers may receive a penalty notice per parent per child – if unpaid the fine will increase – if still not paid legal proceedings may follow which could result in imprisonment.

The school uses contextual safeguarding information to assess the risk level around any unexplained absence and reserves the right to carry out safe and well checks and home visits as and when appropriate. The school will liaise with outside agencies to locate and establish whereabouts of the child, and assess their safety and well-being. Once a child has been identified as missing and cannot be located within school, the Designated Safeguarding Lead will be informed. Safeguarding procedures will then be followed.

Staff will use their professional judgement and risk assess the urgency of the situation to help inform the timeframe required in establishing the child's whereabouts before notifying the police. Parents/carers will always be informed before contact with the police is made if possible, unless a child is at immediate risk of harm and a police response is needed. This will be judged on a case by case basis.

At all times, school staff will liaise with the relevant colleagues in safeguarding/education within Derby City Council for pupils who are to be removed from the admission register outside standard transition points. All pupils who are removed from roll other than the standard transition points will be reported to the Local Authority via the on line School Information Portal: <https://sip.derby.gov.uk/education-welfare>.

Other circumstances where there may be Children Missing Education (CME) concerns are:

- Pupil has been taken out of school by their parents and the school has received written notification from the parent they are being educated outside the school system e.g. home education – this will be communicated with the home elective education team.
- Pupil does not arrive at the school as part of an admission process and we are not aware of their whereabouts. Liaison with Local Authority/ Education Welfare Service and where necessary complete relevant CME form to report child as missing. <https://sip.derby.gov.uk/education-welfare/children-missing-education>
- Pupil has ceased to attend school and no longer lives within reasonable distance of the school at which they are registered where address or new school has been confirmed and has been discussed with the children
- Pupil has ceased to attend school whereabouts are unknown. School will liaise with Local Authority and complete relevant CME online form to report child as missing. <https://sip.derby.gov.uk/education-welfare/children-missing-education>
- *Where reasonably possible, the school must hold more than one emergency contact number for each pupil or student, this will enable us to make contact with a 'responsible adult' should a child be missing from education or a welfare or safeguarding issue or concern is identified. (KCSIE 2018 para 57)*

## Illness

It is a school's decision whether to accept a reason for a child's absence and whether to authorise that absence. Parents must provide the exact nature of their child's illness. We cannot accept; illness, poorly, feeling under the weather or tired. In order to authorise the absence we need to know exactly what is wrong with your child. In some circumstances we may request further evidence of a child's illness to allow the absence to be authorised. We reserve the right to seek additional evidence related to the illness if we have any concerns regarding a child's attendance. In fact, it is good practice to have clear systems in place to escalate any concerns about high levels of absence due to illness, including agreements about accessing additional services in order to provide appropriate support to pupils, particularly for long term illness. School works closely with the Revive Clinic where School Nurses, Paediatrician and Health Visitors are based: school will work in partnership with parents to refer for a health concern if thought appropriate. Parents are also advised to seek support from their GP.

The types of scenarios when medical evidence may be requested include:

- Attendance is lower than 90%
- There are frequent odd days absences due to reported illness.
- The same reasons for absence are frequently repeated.
- Where there is a particular medical problem and school may need evidence to seek additional support/provide support, undertake a risk assessment
- When absences occur either side of a school holiday or weekend.

Derwent Primary School follows the guidelines from the DfE and Public Health England. Pupils who are absent for a period of time longer than that recommended may have these additional absences unauthorised. The guidelines have been distributed to all staff and will be reviewed on an ongoing basis.

Wherever reasonably possible, we expect parents to make routine appointments (e.g. medical, dental) outside of school time - if this is not possible, please give as much written notice as possible with a copy of the appointment slip.

## Authorised Absence

Absence may also be authorised for Religious Observance. Derwent Primary School acknowledges the multi-faith nature of British society and recognises that on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside school holiday periods or weekends. In these circumstances, parents and carers should request a leave of absence following the procedure below, code R will be used on such occasions.

There are other, infrequent, occasions where absences are permitted and coded as 'Authorised Circumstances' - C. This relates to where there is cause for absence due to exceptional circumstances, e.g. serious family illness or bereavement. Parents/carers should communicate with school if there are such circumstances. The Head teacher's decision is final in such matters.

## **5. Leave of Absence in Term Time**

The Government have issued new regulations in September 2013 regarding Leave of Absence; The Education (Pupil Regulations) (England) Regulations 2006 as amended by Education (Pupil Regulations) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013.

- Head teachers shall not grant any Leave of Absence during term time unless they consider there are exceptional circumstances relating to the application.
- Exceptional circumstances being defined as being of unique and significant emotional, educational or spiritual value to the child which outweighs the loss of teaching time.
- Parents do not have any entitlement to take their children on holiday during term time. Any application for leave must establish that there are exceptional circumstances and the Head Teacher must be satisfied that the circumstances warrant the granting of leave.
- Head Teachers will determine how many school days a child may be absent from school if the leave is granted.
- Applications for Leave of Absence must be made in advance and failure to do so will result in the absence being unauthorised.
- The school can only consider applications for Leave of Absence which are made by the resident parent / carer.
- Applications for Leave of Absence which are made in advance and refused will result in the absence being unauthorised which may result in legal action against the parent, by Fixed Penalty Notice, if the child is absent from school during that period
- If a Fixed Penalty Notice is issued and is not paid within the timeframe set out in that Notice, the matter may be referred to Legal Services to consider instigating criminal prosecution proceedings under S444 of Education Act 1996.

Each application for a Leave of Absence will be considered on a case by case basis and on its own merits. Derwent Primary School understands that holidays are generally less expensive during term time but this does NOT count as an exceptional circumstance. Leave of absence will only be authorised if school feel there are exceptional circumstances.

Leave of absence which is taken for the following reasons will not be authorised and does not count as exceptional circumstance:

- Availability of cheaper holidays
- Availability of desired accommodation
- Poor weather experienced in school holidays
- Overlap with beginning or end of term
- Booked the wrong dates by mistake or without checking
- Booked by another family member
- Attending a family wedding
- Family birthdays.
- Availability of time off work
- Day trips
- Holidays taken without following school procedure.
- Valuable family time

Parent/carers must follow school procedures when requesting leave of absence for their child:

- Requests should be made at least 4 school weeks in advance of the proposed absence or at the earliest possible time, by completing a Leave of Absence request form, available from the School Office or by speaking with Mr McLachlan. If school is aware of any language difficulties that may preclude a request form being completed appropriate support will be offered to the parent/carers.
- Any letters should be addressed to the Head teacher Mrs Burke or Mr McLachlan explaining why the leave is essential and the reasons why it needs to take place during term time.



- Once the decision has been made by the school it cannot be reversed and there is no appeals procedure. The head teacher's decision is final.
- If the Head teacher deems that the reasons for the request are exceptional and authorises the absences a reply confirming that the request has been authorised will be sent to the parent/carer.
- If the Headteacher deems that the reasons are not exceptional and the leave of absence will not be authorised, a reply informing the parents of this decision for each child and warning of the legal implications of the absence been taken will be sent to each parent/carer.
- If the decision is to not authorise and the child is absent from school, in all cases the school will request that the Local Authority issues a Penalty Notice to both parents; there is no appeal process. These notices are per parent per child.

## **6. Return to school**

We recognise the effect that absence and poor attendance has on children's academic progress as well as their wellbeing and welfare. All teaching staff / support staff follow our return to school protocol:

### **Return to School Protocol**

Step 1 – Ask child why they were absent in a sensitive and none intrusive manner ⇨		Check Integris for reasons of absence	
Step 2 – If this reason is different from the one provided by the parent / carer inform Mr McLachlan / Mrs Burke ⇨		Teachers / TA's should not challenge children or make them aware of differing reasons given	
Step 3 – If child appears upset or worried, if their absence was due to an upsetting event or if it is a repeated absence:			
⇩		⇩	
Inform DSL / HT - It is vital that parents understand the impact of absence on pupil – If outside agencies are involved inform them of the absence and impact	Share details of Childline Signpost to adults who can offer support: DSL / HT Arrange 1-1 support in school	Record on my concern - for high level / urgent concerns verbally inform DSL's immediately	
Step 4 – Consider 'catch up' for the child on work they have missed – do this in a supportive sensitive manner – remember that the absence is not the fault of the child			
At all stages staff such be sensitive and understanding of the child, offering support and signposting when / if needed. It is good practice to embed the importance of good attendance with children and share that if they are unwell or have an appointment that cannot be taken out of school time, that they will miss some learning and will need to catch up. It is important to do this gently – no child should ever feel 'blamed' for not attending school.			
Conversation examples to use may be: We missed you yesterday, was everything ok? Do you remember the reason why you were off school? How did you feel when you were off school, do you feel better now? Would you like to talk about anything now that you are back? It is lovely to see you, whilst you were away we covered *** in class, would you like me to show you today?			

## **7. Tackling poor attendance and punctuality**

- All parents and carers are contacted if their child's attendance falls below 96% and support offered support.

- The Headteacher will hold weekly meetings with the Senior Leadership Team to consider the patterns of attendance and punctuality across the school, and the attendance and punctuality of individual children in the school, and discuss any action necessary.
- Parents / Carers are invited into school for Attendance meetings when concerns are raised over Persistent Absenteeism / persistent late arrivals.
- Failure to make necessary improvements will result in a referral to the EWO and could lead to Fast Track to Prosecution being implemented.
- Whole school attendance data is also a standing agenda item for Senior Leadership meetings and with Governors.
- There is a strong culture of promoting good attendance and timekeeping across the school with rewards and incentives in place.

## **8. Persistent Absentees**

Pupils with persistent absenteeism will be identified (pupils below 90%) and an action plan will be put in place to address the underlying reasons for the absence level.

The school will support the families of persistent absentees as far as resources allow, recognising that ultimately, a child's attendance at school is the responsibility of the parent.

In the case of a persistent absentee, the school's procedures will be followed. Mr McLachlan will write to the parent and invite them into school for a meeting to discuss their child's absences, during this meeting the parent will be notified that any further absences will not be authorised unless written medical evidence is produced. If a parent fails to attend the arranged meeting Mr McLachlan will write to the parents informing them of the above.

At all stages, Mr McLachlan will liaise with the Head teacher and make any necessary safeguarding referrals.

## **9. Promoting good attendance**

- Children receive a Dojo point for being present in school and arriving on time.
- Children with 100% attendance are rewarded termly with an activity/prize.
- Attendance data is shared with parents/carers on class dojo.
- Any children achieving 100% attendance for the year will have the chance to win a large prize/treat and be rewarded with a certificate.
- At the end of the year, the class with the highest attendance across school will be rewarded with a class treat.
- A link on the school website to promote good attendance and timekeeping highlighting guidelines around absentees. Including taking a holiday in term time.

## **10. Monitoring & Reviewing Attendance:**

Attendance and punctuality data is regularly reviewed to ensure that improvements are being made across the school, especially for key groups of pupils (disadvantaged pupils).

Whole school attendance data is included weekly on ClassDojo. It is also communicated with members of staff; the Head teacher and the Senior Leadership Team meet once a week to review attendance across the school and key messages are disseminated to all staff, and attendance figures are a standing item on the weekly Senior Leadership Team meetings minutes which are then shared with all staff. These are broken down into groups so as to highlight where there might

be need for additional incentives / support: ie SEN / SC / Disadvantaged and none Disadvantaged / none compulsory school age / Whole School.

Attendance figures are included within each child's annual report, along with a grading of their attendance percentage. Attendance levels are also shared at parents' consultation days.

## **11. Removing children from the register**

Derwent Primary School follows the guidance from Derby City Council in relation to removing children from the school's register (Appendix 2).

## **12. Roles and Responsibilities:**

### **Responsibilities of Teachers / support staff**

- Ensure that all students are registered accurately & on time.
- Promote & reward good attendance at all appropriate opportunities.
- Liaise with the appropriate member of staff on matters of attendance and punctuality.
- Communicate with pupils and parents/carers regarding absences and poor punctuality.

### **Responsibilities of Pupils:**

- Attend every day unless the reason for absence is unavoidable.
- Arrive in your classroom on time, every day.
- If you walk to school without an adult make sure that you do not go elsewhere before school, arrive on time.

### **Responsibilities of Parents and Carers**

- Ensure your child attends school every day unless the reason for absence is unavoidable.
- Ensure your child arrives in their classroom on time, every day.
- In the event of being late your child will need to be taken to the main entrance, they will need to be signed in with a reason for the lateness and a meal option selected.
- In the event of any absence, inform the school on the first day of absence and every subsequent day of absence by phone (01332 346222) or at the school office, unless a doctor has supplied written evidence for a specified length of time.
- Avoid taking their child out of school for non-urgent medical or dental appointments.
- Provide written medical evidence to support any absence if requested by the school.
- Only request for leave of absence if it is for an exceptional circumstance - ensuring our school procedures are followed.

### **Holidays**

Many families will want to take a holiday over the summer period, which may involve travelling abroad. As ever, parents should plan their holidays within school holidays and avoid seeking permission to take their children out of school during term time.

Ultimately, local authorities and schools have a range of [legal powers to enforce attendance](#) if a child or young person misses school without a valid reason.

### **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 complies with our funding agreement and articles of association.

**Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is a parent/carers' legal responsibility as per the Education Act 1996 Section 444 and permitting absence from school that is not authorised by the school creates an offence in law.**

**Linked policies: Safeguarding Policy, Behaviour Policy.**

**Key Documents:**

[KCSIE \(2022\)](#)

[Children Missing Education](#)

**Derbyshire Missing Children Protocol:** <https://sip.derby.gov.uk/education-welfare/children-missing-education>

**Reviewed September 2022**

**Next Review date September 2023 – unless new guidance / initiatives are to be included**