

# **The Dean Trust Primary** **Attendance Policy**

Last updated: November 2020

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## Statement of intent

At The Dean Trust we believe that in order to facilitate teaching and learning, good attendance is essential. Pupils cannot achieve their full potential if they do not regularly attend school.

We are committed to:

- Ensuring parents follow the framework set in section 7 of the Education Act 1996, which states that:

“The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him/her to receive efficient full-time education suitable –

(a) to age, ability and aptitude, and

(b) to any special educational needs he/she may have

Either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.”

- Promoting and modelling good attendance behaviour.
- Ensuring equality and fairness of treatment for all.
- Implementing our policies in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.
- Early intervention and working with other agencies to ensure the health and safety of our pupils.
- Rewarding regular attendance.
- Making sure that parents are clear about their legal responsibilities regarding school attendance.
- Providing support where appropriate to parents / families who are facing difficulties.
- Being prepared to challenge absence from school and ask for reasonable explanations / evidence about why a child is missing.
- Using the school’s publicity to promote positive attendance messages.
- Striving to improve attendance levels for every child.
- Work with the Local Authority and other statutory agencies to help identify families that may need additional support to facilitate improved school attendance.

Signed by:

  
\_\_\_\_\_ Exec Head/Head of School

Date: November 2020

\_\_\_\_\_ Chair of governors

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Review date: November 2022

## 1. Legal framework

1.1. This policy has due regard to legislation and statutory guidance, including, but not limited to, the following:

- Education Act 1996
- Equality Act 2010
- Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (As amended)
- Children (Performances and Activities) (England) Regulations 2014
- Children and Young Persons Act 1963
- DfE (2018) 'School attendance'
- DfE (2015) 'Child performance and activities licensing legislation in England'
- DfE (2018) 'Keeping children safe in education'
- DfE (2016) 'Children missing education'

1.2. This policy will be implemented in conjunction with the following school policies:

- **Complaints Procedures Policy**
- **Behaviour Policy**
- **Children Missing Education Policy (Local Authority guidance)**
- **Safeguarding Policy**

## 2. Roles and responsibilities

2.1. The **governing board** has overall responsibility for:

- The implementation of the Primary Attendance Policy and procedures.
- Ensuring that the attendance policy, as written, does not discriminate on any grounds, including, but not limited to, ethnicity/national origin, culture, religion, gender, disability or sexual orientation.
- Handling complaints regarding this policy as outlined in the school's **Complaints Procedures Policy**.
- Having regard to 'Keeping children safe in education' (2018) when making arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. Ensuring the school follows the **Children Missing Education Policy (local authority)**.

2.2. The **Attendance Lead / EWO** is responsible for the day-to-day implementation and management of the Primary Attendance Policy and procedures of the school, and distributing information about these to parents.

- 2.3. Staff, including teachers, support staff and volunteers, are responsible for:
- Following the Attendance Policy and ensuring pupils do so too. They are also responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented fairly and consistently.
  - Modelling good attendance behaviour.
  - Using their professional judgement and knowledge of individual pupils to inform decisions as to whether any welfare concerns should be escalated.
  - Making use, as necessary, of any specialist staff or services available to support children and their families.
  - Completing registers a.m. and p.m.
- 2.4. Parents are expected to take responsibility for the attendance and punctuality of their child during term-time.
- 2.5. Parents are expected to promote good attendance and punctuality behaviour and ensure that their child attends school every day.

### 3. Definitions

- 3.1. For the purpose of this policy, the school defines:
- **“Absence”** as:
    - Arrival at school after the register has closed.
    - Not attending school for any reason.
  - An **“authorised absence”** as:
    - An absence for sickness for which the school has granted leave.
    - Medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall during school time, for which the school has granted leave.
    - Religious or cultural observances for which the school has granted leave.
    - An absence due to a family emergency or other circumstance considered appropriate that the school has agreed.
    - Agreed activities not on the school premises but which have a clear educational advantage to the student participating in them, typically sporting or cultural activities.
  - An **“unauthorised absence”** as:
    - Parents keeping children off school unnecessarily or without reason.
    - Absences which have never been properly explained.
    - Arrival at school after the register has closed.
    - Absence due to shopping, looking after other children or birthdays.
    - Absence due to day trips and holidays in term-time which have not been agreed.

- Leaving school for no reason during the day.
- “**Persistent absenteeism**” as:
  - Missing **10%** or more of schooling across the year **for any reason**.

#### **4. Training of staff**

- 4.1. The school recognises that early intervention can prevent poor attendance. As such, teachers and support staff will receive training in identifying potentially at-risk pupils as part of the school training programme.
- 4.2. Teachers and support staff will receive copies of this policy as part of their induction to the school.
- 4.3. Teachers and support staff will receive regular and ongoing training as part of their development and a recognition that effective attendance is a ‘whole school community’ initiative.

#### **5. Pupil expectations**

- 5.1. Pupils are expected to attend school every day and will sign an agreement at the beginning of each school year, to agree to keep their attendance at, or above, **97%** throughout the year.

#### **6. Absence procedures**

- 6.1. Parents are required to contact the school within the first 15mins of the school day or as soon as possible after this on the first day of their child’s absence. Parents can do this via the school’s telephone messaging system, the school’s office email address, in writing or in person at the school’s reception area.
- 6.2. Parents may also be required to send a note in on the first day that their child returns to school with a signed explanation of why they were absent.
- 6.3. Alternatively, parents may call into school and report to the **Reception & Administration Team** where arrangements will be made to speak to the Attendance Lead / Education Welfare Officer as required.
- 6.4. A **phone call** will be made to the parent of any child who has not reported their child’s absence on the first day that they do not attend school. When possible we will leave a message on the answerphone facility requesting a call back.
- 6.5. If we are unable to make contact with a child’s primary contact, we may try and escalate our concerns by contacting other members of the child’s family – based on the numbers provided to the school.

- 6.6. The Attendance Lead / Education Welfare Officer may make a personal visit to the home of the child to establish their whereabouts and safety.
- 6.7. In the case of persistent absence, arrangements will be made for parents to speak to the **Attendance Lead / Education Welfare Officer**.
- 6.8. In the case of the absence of 'High Alert' children (e.g. those with epilepsy or severe medical conditions) a home visit will be made if there is no contact on the first day.
- 6.9. The school will inform the local authority attendance/admissions team of the details of pupils who fail to attend regularly, or who have missed 8 school sessions (4 school days combined) without permission. This is regardless of the reasons for absence and will include the following:
- Late After Registration has Closed (U Code)
  - Unauthorised Holidays in Term Time ( G Code)
  - Unexplained absences from School (O Code)
  - Illnesses that are not supported with requested evidence (I Code)
  - Medical appointments with no supporting evidence (M Code)
- 6.10. If a pupil's attendance drops below **95%**, the **Attendance Lead / Education Welfare Officer** will be informed, and a formal meeting will be arranged with the parents. This meeting will seek to understand the reasons for a child's absence from school and a joint plan agreed by all parties involved to improve attendance.
- 6.11. If a pupil's attendance drops below 90% the Attendance Lead / Education Welfare Officer will be informed, and an attendance panel will be convened. This panel will review the child's attendance and reasons for absence. The child's parents will be required to agree to a formal 'attendance improvement contract laying out clear expectations and responsibilities for them to follow. Other agencies may be involved in this contract as a means of providing support to the family to help them ensure school attendance improves.
- 6.12. Where a pupil has not returned to school for 10 days after an authorised absence, or is absent from school without authorisation for 20 consecutive school days, the school will consult with the local authority about removing the pupil from the admissions register.

## **7. Contact information**

- 7.1. Parents are responsible for:
- Providing accurate and up-to-date contact details.
  - Providing the school with more than one emergency contact number.
  - Updating the school if their details change.

## 8. Attendance register

The designated staff members will take the attendance register at **the start of each school day** and at the **start of the afternoon session**. This register will record whether pupils are:

- Present.
- Absent.
- Attending an approved educational visit.
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

These marks will be reviewed and verified by the Administration & Reception Team working with the input and advice of the school's Attendance Lead / Education Welfare Officer. This verification and checking process is a key part of the school's safeguarding strategy and ensuring that every child is either in school or absence accounted for.

The school will use the national attendance codes to ensure attendance and absence are monitored and recorded in a consistent way. The following codes will be used:

- / = Present in the morning
- \ = Present in the afternoon
- L = Late arrival before the register has closed
- C = Authorised absence
- E = Excluded but no alternative provision made
- H = Authorised holiday
- I = Illness
- M = Medical or dental appointments
- R = Religious observance
- B = Off-site education activity
- G = Unauthorised holiday
- O = Unauthorised absence
- U = Arrived after registration closed
- N = Reason not yet provided
- X = Not required to be in school
- T = Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence
- V = Education visit or trip
- P = Participating in a supervised sporting activity
- D = Dual registered – at another educational establishment
- Y = Exceptional circumstances
- Z = Pupil not on admission register

When the school has planned in advance to be fully or partially closed, the code '#' will be used for the relevant pupils who are absent. This code will also be used to record year groups who are not due to attend because the school has set different term dates for different years, e.g. induction days.



All amendments made to the attendance register will include the original entry, the amended entry, the reason for the amendment, the date of amendment and the name and role of the person who made the amendment.

Every entry received into the attendance register will be preserved for **three years**.

## **9. Attendance Lead / Education Welfare officer (EWO)**

9.1. All instances of unauthorised absence will be referred to the **Attendance Lead /EWO** who will attempt to resolve the situation through contact and correspondence with parents or carers.

9.2. When thresholds for legal action are met, such as unauthorised holidays taken in term time or the accumulation of 10 or more unauthorised absences through other means, the Local Authority has the power to issue sanctions such as prosecutions or penalty notices to parents.

## **10. Lateness**

- 10.1. Punctuality is of the utmost importance and lateness will not be tolerated.
- 10.2. Pupils should be in their classroom **on time** at the start of the school day. (see school website for start times).
- 10.3. Pupils will receive a late mark if they are not in their classroom before the register closes.
- 10.4. Pupils will receive a mark of absence if they do not attend school without an acceptable reason. Parents arriving after the registers have closed will be asked to complete a 'Late Arrival' form detailing the reasons for the absence.
- 10.5. After lunch, pupils will receive a late mark if they are not in their classroom on time.
- 10.6. Pupils will receive a mark of absence if they are not present when the register closes.
- 10.7. A 'U' mark will be used to show that a pupil is on site, but absent from the morning session if they arrive after the registration period has closed. Parents will receive a letter informing them of this and explaining the impact on their overall attendance.

## **11. Term-time leave**

- 11.1. At **The Dean Trust**, our aim is to prepare pupils for their future lives and careers. With this in mind, we require parents to observe the school holidays as prescribed and advertised beforehand.
- 11.2. The Executive Head / Head of School is **unable to authorise holidays** during term-time.

- 11.3. The Executive Head / Head of School is only allowed to grant a leave of absence in exceptional circumstances e.g. armed services personnel. Applications will be made in advance and the Executive Head / Head of School will be satisfied by the evidence which is presented, before authorising term-time leave.
- 11.4. The Executive Head / Head of School will determine the amount of time a pupil can be away from school during term time. Any leave of absence is at their discretion and can only be agreed if it is considered as exceptional circumstances notified before the absence occurs. This will be to the maximum of 5 days per academic year. Authorisation may be withdrawn at any time.
- 11.5. If parents take their child out of school during term-time they will be subject to sanctions such as penalty fines issued by the Local Authority.

## 12. Truancy

- 12.1. Truancy means any absence of part, or all, of one or more days from school, during which the school has not been notified of the cause behind such absence.
- 12.2. All staff will be concerned about the regular attendance of pupils, and the importance of continuity in each child's learning.
- 12.3. Any pupil with permission to leave the school during the day must be signed out by an adult at the school office and sign back in again on their return.
- 12.4. Immediate action will be taken when there are any concerns that a child might be truanting.
- 12.5. If truancy is suspected, the Attendance Lead / Education Welfare Officer is notified, and they will contact the parent in order to assess the reasons behind the child not attending school.
- 12.6. The following procedures will be taken in the event of a truancy to ensure the safety of the child:
  - In the first instance, a letter of warning will be sent to the parents of the pupil, informing them of the truancy and stating that any future occurrences could result in further action being taken.
  - If any further truancy occurs, then the school will consider issuing a penalty notice.
  - A penalty notice will be issued where there is overt truancy, inappropriate parentally-condoned absence, excessive holidays in term-time and persistent late arrival at school.

## 13. Children Leaving Site

- 13.1. Pupils are not permitted to leave the school premises during the school day.
- 13.2. The following procedures will be taken in the event of a pupil going missing whilst at school:
- The member of staff who has noticed the missing pupil will inform the **Safeguarding Lead and available SLT member** immediately.
  - The office staff will also be informed as they will act as a point of contact for receiving information regarding the search.
  - A member of staff will stay with the rest of the class, and all other available members of staff will conduct a thorough search of the school premises as directed by the **Safeguarding Lead and available SLT member**
  - The following areas will be systematically searched:
    - **All classrooms**
    - **All toilets**
    - **All other school rooms and spaces**
    - **Any outbuildings**
    - **The school grounds**
  - Available staff will begin a search of the area immediately outside of the school premises, and will take a mobile phone with them so they can be contacted.
  - If the pupil has not been found after **10** minutes, then the parents of the pupil will be notified.
  - The school will attempt to contact parents using the emergency contact numbers provided.
  - If the parents have had no contact from the pupil, and the emergency contacts list has been exhausted, the police will be contacted.
  - The missing pupil's teacher will fill in an incident form, describing all circumstances leading up to the pupil going missing.
- 13.3. If the missing pupil has an allocated social worker, is a LAC, or has any SEND, then the appropriate personnel will be informed.
- 13.4. When the pupil has been located, members of staff will care for and talk to the pupil to ensure they are safe and well.

- 13.5. The **Safeguarding Lead or available SLT member** will take the appropriate action to ensure that pupils understand they must not leave the premises, and sanctions will be issued if deemed necessary.
- 13.6. Parents and any other agencies will be informed immediately when the pupil has been located.
- 13.7. The **Executive Head / Head of School** will carry out a full investigation, and will draw a conclusion as to how the incident occurred.
- 13.8. Appropriate disciplinary procedures are followed in accordance with the **Behaviour Policy**.
- 13.9. Prolonged periods of unauthorised absence without contact will be handled in accordance with clauses 6.6-6.9 of this policy.
- 13.10. A written report will be produced and policies and procedures will be reviewed in accordance with the outcome.

#### **14. Religious observances**

- 14.1. The school will take advice from the local authority to establish the appropriate number of days of absence required for religious festivals.
- 14.2. Parents are required to inform the school in advance if absences are required for days of religious observance.

#### **15. Appointments**

- 15.1. As far as possible, parents will attempt to book medical and dental appointments outside of school hours.
- 15.2. Where this is not possible, a note and appointment card should be presented to the Reception & Administration Team.
- 15.3. If the appointment requires the pupil to leave during the school day, they will be signed out at the Reception & Administration Team by a parent.
- 15.4. Pupils should attend school before and after the appointment wherever possible.

#### **16. Young carers**

- 16.1. The school understands the difficulties that face young carers.
- 16.2. The school will endeavour to identify young carers at the earliest opportunity from enrolment at the school and throughout their time at the school.

- 16.3. The school takes a caring and flexible approach to the needs of young carers and each pupil will be examined on a case-by-case basis, involving other agencies if appropriate.

## **17. Rewarding good attendance**

The school will use a wide range of initiatives to reward and encourage good attendance.

Parents will be informed of their child's attendance record at various points through the school year.

## **18. Monitoring and review**

- 18.1. The school monitors attendance and punctuality throughout the year.
- 18.2. **The Dean Trust** attendance target for primary school settings is **97 percent**.
- 18.3. Details of our absence levels can be found on our **website and in the weekly newsletter distributed to all parents**.
- 18.4. This policy is reviewed every **2 years** by the **Executive Head / Head of Schools**; the next scheduled review date for this policy is **December 2020**.
- 18.5. Any changes made to this policy will be communicated to all members of staff and parents.

