



## **Durrington High School**

### **Attendance Policy**

### **2022-2023**

#### **1. Aims of the policy:**

- To ensure every student achieves and maintains excellent attendance; enabling them gain maximum benefit from the educational, and wider opportunities on offer as part of our community.
- To ensure all stakeholders understand their role and responsibilities when it comes to promoting and supporting excellent student attendance.

#### **2. Introduction and expectations**

- There is a very strong correlation between rates of school attendance and academic success; this is both nationally and at Durrington. Students who attend well and then achieve academic success have a greater range of choices as they move forward to college/later life.
- The school minimum expected attendance for each and every student is 96%. This referred to throughout this policy as “regular attendance”.
- Excellent punctuality is also an expectation of students. Being punctual each and every day prepares students well for the world of work and later life.

All students are expected to

- o be in school by 8.40am
  - o attend period 1 and all lessons on time
  - o be punctual to all other events, trips and activities they take part in and that are linked to the school.
- In exceptional cases where
    - o a student has a diagnosed medical need/condition
    - o the need/condition is supported by an up-to-date diagnosis, and
    - o the specific condition/need is known to impact the student’s ability to attend school

we will make reasonable adjustments to the application of this policy/attendance processes

- Where evidence is not forthcoming or there is no clinical professional’s support for the need for absence no adjustments can/will be made.

### 3. Expectations of parents/carers

- Through sending your child to Durrington parents and carers accept their statutory responsibilities and commit to sharing the school's moral imperative to ensuring their son/daughter attends regularly and has excellent punctuality. We, like you, want the very best for your child.
- The law further supports these expectations; the Education Act 1996 stating

*“as parent, you must ensure your child receives appropriate full-time education according to their age, ability and aptitude. If your child is registered at a school, then they must attend regularly and punctually. It is your responsibility as the parent to ensure good attendance.”*

### 4. Absence from school

- Only the head teacher (not parents/carers or other relatives) can authorise the absence of your child from school. There is no automatic right for a child to be absent from school. The head teacher may require you to provide evidence of the reason for your child's absence otherwise the absence may be recorded on the official school register as unauthorised “O”.
- If your child is for any reason not attending school parents/carers are expected to contact the school via
  - o The absence telephone number (01903 705644) or
  - o The absence email address [absence@durring.com](mailto:absence@durring.com)
- Communication should be may by 8.40am at the latest. Communication is also necessary (by the parent/carer) on every day of the student's absence.

### 5. School support to ensure regular attendance

- Staff will address attendance and punctuality concerns in a timely manner, through agreed processes. This may involve\* (as examples)
  - o communication with parents/carers,
  - o meeting with students in school to discuss our concerns
  - o setting sanctions for the student (principally to make up missed time/work)
  - o meetings with parents/carers and/or externally involved professionals,
  - o pastoral support and onward referrals to specific services
  - o liaison (with permission) with external medical professionals to evidence specific conditions/needs e.g. GPs.

The school reserves the right to request that parents/carers provide evidence from a medical qualified professional when a student's absences are frequent and/or prolonged.

- *Frequent absence* is defined as either a student having an ongoing attendance below 96% and/or there being repeated days off over a period of 3 or more weeks.
- *Prolonged absence* is defined as an absence of 3 or more days in a single or closely linked period of time.
- We also reserve the right to request medical evidence for those student's whose attendance is between 90-96% who have frequent absences and/or block absences.

## Evidencing very low attendance (<90%)

- The government classes all students with attendance less than 90% as a Persistent Absentee (PA), whatever the reason for their absence. These students are missing a minimum of one day a fortnight from school.
- Unless there is clear medical evidence to advise that school attendance may be limited or sporadic, parents/carers are expected to provide clear medical evidence for the absences. Failure to provide this in a timely way will automatically lead to onwards referrals and the involvement of partner statutory agencies.

We have a moral obligation to ensure each and every student receives the best possible education and will act in the best interests of the student to help them achieve this.

## Student learning during extended periods of absence

- Please be aware that the school is not able to provide personalised work during absences.
- If student's, when medically signed off, feel well enough to access and complete work from home they should use:
  - o Their Connect to keep up with homework
  - o Relevant google classrooms for revision materials
  - o Any other specific departmental e-resources e.g. YouTube channels

Students can also (using their school email account only) contact individual teachers for support/advice and/or direction in relation to work to complete. Contact email addresses are on the school website.

- For long term absences, supported by a hospital or CAMHS consultant letter stating the child is unfit for school and giving expected timelines for the absence, the school will refer to the local authority for consideration of short-term learning support package; this type of support remains a statutory expectation of local authorities.

In the most concerning cases where student's attendance does not improve (and/or evidence is not provided that legitimately ^and fully explains the necessity for the student to be not in school,), the school will make a direct referral to the WSCC Pupil Entitlement Team.

A referral such as this for consideration of a fixed penalty notice or formal legal action. The action determined by the Pupil Entitlement Team is solely their decision (see appendix B). No parental permission is required or expected in advance of this referral taking place; the referral is made as a direct result of a parent/carer not meeting their legal obligation to ensure regular attendance (see section 3 of this policy).

<sup>^</sup> specific evidence from a GP, consultant and/or similarly medically qualified professional (normally from within the NHS).

## 6. Advice specific to holiday related absence

The school, following government guidelines, will not grant permission for holidays in term time. Any holiday taken in term time will be recorded as an unauthorised absence ("G" coded) and could result in\*:

- A referral to the Pupil Entitlement Team.
- A safeguarding referral (for example if we are unable to establish the location of the student during the period of absence)

- A police referral – if we feel the student could be at risk.

The school reserves the right to

- Make unannounced home visits,
- contact other professionals/partner agencies
- and/or contact extended family should we not know where a student is.
- Recode attendance marks should it be ascertained that a student is on holiday (and a different reason for absence has been indicated by parents/carers)

## 7. Requesting an absence

We recognise that parents/carers may, at times, request absence from school for their son/daughter. This can/will only be granted if the school feels that the necessity for the absence is exceptional. Exceptional circumstances\* are unlikely to include:

- Leaving early to go on a family trip/holiday or similar
- Going to a family wedding
- Taking part in multiple\* or extended sports/dance/drama related trips/events/competitions.

\*regional and/or national level sports representation or similar are generally considered differently

The term exceptional will be considered in an individual case by case basis. Part of the consideration will be the impact the potential absence is likely to have on the individual student's education. The headteacher's decision is final in relation to authorising exceptional absence.

Any requests for an absence from school must be made in advance by completing the Leave of Absence Request form (available on the school website and here <https://durringtonhighschool.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Leave-of-Absence-Request-form.pdf> and returning it to your child's form tutor before the date of absence commences.

## 8. Commonly used attendance codes

Below are some of the more commonly used attendance codes\*:

| Code used  | Meaning                      |
|------------|------------------------------|
| "P" or "A" | Present (am and pm)          |
| O          | Unauthorised absence         |
| G          | Unauthorised holiday absence |
| L          | Late                         |
| I          | Ill                          |
| M          | Medical appointment          |
| E          | Excluded                     |

## 9. Elective Home Education

We understand and respect parents right to opt to electively home educate their child.

However, it remains our professional viewpoint that secondary school offers the broad and balanced curriculum that will open up the greatest amount of opportunities for children in their future. We strongly recommend that parent/carers, unless there is a substantial and well-resourced educational provision in place for your child at home, work with us to keep your child attending school with us.

## 10. References & Key school contacts

<https://www.gov.uk/school-attendance-absence>

<https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/education-children-and-families/schools-and-colleges/school-attendance-and-behaviour/school-absences/>

**Whole school attendance lead:** Mrs S Temple

**Next^ review date:** April 2023

(^updates may be made and policy republished in line with new guidance and updated practice)

## **Appendix A: The correlation between attendance and attainment**

**Attendance v attainment results for Durrington High School cohort 2020-2021.**

| % attendance          | % achieving 5+ GCSE Passes at 4+ |
|-----------------------|----------------------------------|
| 95 – 100% attendance  | 86.8%                            |
| 90 – 94.9% attendance | 87.5%                            |
| < 90% attendance      | 45.8%                            |

## **Appendix B: Sources of information, support and guidance for parents/carers**

**Medical support can be gained from\*:**

- Your GP
- Local health clinics
- Calling 101 and/or visiting A&E in the case of adjudged emergency need
- Visiting a local pharmacist for general advice

**Emotional/wellbeing support can be explored\* via**

- Your GP
- Local Find-It-out centres: <https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/18969>

Websites/apps including:

- <https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/education-children-and-families/support-for-families/search-for-family-activities-and-support/>
- <https://calmharm.co.uk/>
- <https://www.nhs.uk/apps-library/blueice/>
- <https://youngminds.org.uk/>

**Via WSCC**

- <https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/education-children-and-families/schools-and-colleges/school-attendance-and-behaviour/school-absences/>

## **Appendix C: Implications if parents/carers don't ensure regular attendance and/or punctuality**

As regular attendance (as shown in appendix A) is so important in terms of student's life chances the school has moral obligation and legal duty to act where this is not the case. In more concerning cases:

- where the student's attendance remains under 96% despite intervention
- where there are frequent and/or prolonged absences including 10 or more unauthorised sessions (the same as 5 days off) over a 10 school-week period
- where attendance is below 90% (classed as persistent absenteeism)

the school will act. Action could result in a referral/report to be made to\*:

- WSCC Pupil Entitlement Team for consideration of a fixed penalty notice or legal action.
- WSCC MASH,
- The Police and/or any other statutory agency for further action.

It is likely (depending on capacity and level of concern) that home visits will be made by staff if\*:

- a) There is no/very limited contact from parents/carers relating to a student not attending school
- b) The reasons given for absence raise a concern (lack of or potentially spurious)
- c) We are unable to speak/contact the student's main contact(s)

Unfortunately, we do have a minority of parents/carers that are prosecuted each year for failure to ensure regular attendance. Fines (currently £120 per parent/carer), and other sanctions are issued against parents/carers who are proven not to be fulfilling their legal responsibilities.

### **Defence against Prosecution:**

The law sets out a number of defences and you must be able to evidence one of these in order to be found not guilty.

- The absence was authorised by the Head teacher
- The absence was due to sickness or an unavoidable cause. (This is generally held to be in relation to the child, not the parent and conclusive and up-to-date medical evidence has been provided to explain, in full, the reason for the absence)
- The absence was on any day exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parent belongs. The religious observance must be one which is recognised by the Department for Education.
- If your child has no fixed abode and you are engaged in a trade or business of such a nature as to require you to travel from place to place; that your child attends school as a registered pupil as regularly as the nature of that trade or business allows and that if your child is at least 6

**What is not a defence?**

The following are example of reasons that would not be acceptable as defences;

- My child wouldn't do what I told them to do
- I've tried my hardest but my child won't go to school
- My child was too scared to go to school
- My child was bullied at school
- I had to look after my mother and couldn't take my child to school
- I didn't have any money to pay for petrol/bus fare.
- I was ill.

Prosecution is always a last resort. The school will work with parents and students to ensure regular attendance for all students. If you have concerns about your child's attendance, please contact his/her company team at the earliest opportunity to arrange a meet to discuss support.