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Aspiration | Excellence | Transformation



Durrington High School

Attendance Policy

2024 - 2025

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1. Aims of the policy:

- To ensure every student achieves and maintains excellent attendance; enabling them to gain maximum benefit from the educational, and wider opportunities on offer as part of our community.
- To ensure all stakeholders understand their role, responsibilities and are active in 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 is 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.
- 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. Registration and punctuality

- As well as being present in school each day students are expected to be punctual to school so as not to miss out on our broad and informative period 1 schedule but also to prepare students for the expectations around punctuality in the workplace and later life.
- All students are expected to
 - o be in school by 8.40am at the very latest each day
 - 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

- Failure to attend registration on time without a valid explanation will result in a 20-minute lunch time detention. Failure to attend this detention will result in further sanctions.
- In cases of persistent late arrival to school, parents/carers will be contacted and the student will be expected to show an improvement in their punctuality or further sanctions may be put in place. Lates after the register closes will be marked as U coded which is an unauthorised absence and could result in a fixed penalty fine.

4. 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 ensure their son/daughter attends regularly and has excellent punctuality. We, like you, want the very best for your child.
- Notify the school as soon as possible when your child has to be unexpectedly absent (e.g. sickness).
- The law further supports these expectations; the Education Act 1996 stating:

“As a 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.”

5. 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
- Communication should be by 8.15am at the latest. Communication is also Necessary (by the parent/carer) on every day of the student's absence
- Where possible medical/dental appointments should be held outside of the school day however if unavoidable please contact the absence line/email in advance and provide evidence of the appointments as well as information of when the child will be collected and/or returned to school.

6. 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.

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 up to date medical evidence from a consultant to advise that school attendance may be limited or sporadic, parents/carers are expected to provide clear medical evidence for each absence. Failure to provide this in a timely way will automatically lead to onward referrals and the involvement of partner statutory agencies.
- We are likely to need to speak to the professional providing such evidence to ensure that we plan and enact any support and that it is clear, appropriate and all adults contribute to this.

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 Arbor to keep up with homework
 - o Relevant google drive links 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 a student's attendance does not improve (and/or specific evidence* is not provided that we adjudge to 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 is for consideration of a fixed penalty notice or a non-attendance referral (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).

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

7. 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 who may choose to issue a fine (see information regarding fines in appendix c)
- 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

As part of our safeguarding responsibilities we will, where we feel it is appropriate:

- 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)

8. 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 on 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/2024/07/Leave-of-Absence-Request-form.pdf>) and returning it to student services before the date of absence commences.

9. Commonly used attendance codes

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

Code used	Meaning
"/" or "\"	Present (am and pm)
O	Unauthorised absence
G	Unauthorised holiday absence
L	Late
I	Ill
M	Medical appointment
E	Excluded
U	Unauthorised late

10. Elective Home Education

The school firmly believe that children a better learning within the school environment. As part of the school children have access to a broad and balanced curriculum that is delivered by subject specialists. They also have many wider opportunities that including the change to socialise with their peers and the option to take part in a clubs, activities and trips.

That said we also recognise that parents have the right to remove their child from the school. If a request is made to the school the legal position is that:

1. the school does not need the consent of both parents to remove the student. However it would be the expectation that the parent who the child resides with most of the time to make the request.
2. the request must be in writing (which includes email) and must state where the child will continue to be educated (e.g. at another school or electively home educated) and the date from which this different educational provision will start.

Any difference of opinion between the parents of the child and relating to whether or not a child is to be removed from the school should be discussed and resolved between the parents. The school will not become involved in or mediate any such discussion or communication.

11. 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/>

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65f1b048133c22b8eecd38f7/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance_applies_from_19_August_2024 .pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65f1b048133c22b8eecd38f7/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance_applies_from_19_August_2024.pdf)

Whole school attendance lead: Miss A Hewett

Appendix A: The correlation between attendance and attainment

Attendance v attainment results for Durrington High School cohort 2023-2024

% attendance averaged in Secondary school	% achieved 5+ GCSE passes
95 – 100% attendance	78.8%
90 – 94.9% attendance	66.7%
< 90% attendance	37.9%

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 IFD,
- 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, and other sanctions are issued against parents/carers who are proven not to be fulfilling their legal responsibilities.

Penalty notices

Under the new guidance that is statutory from 19th August 2024 the fixed penalty notice fines will be as follows:

- First fine is £160 per parent per child (reduced to £80 if paid in the first 21 days)
- Second fine is £160 per parent per child (with no option for early payment reduction)
- A third referral in the same three year period will be referred directly to Magistrate's Court for prosecution. Magistrates can impose a fine of up to £2500 per parent, per child.
If a parent is found guilty of an offence, this is recorded as a criminal offence and will show on any DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) checks as 'failure to safeguard a child's education'.

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 house team at the earliest opportunity to arrange a meet to discuss support.