The Downs Church of England Primary School

Attendance Policy

School Mission Statement
The Downs CEP School

Mission Statement

'For with God, nothing will be impossible'

Luke 1:37

VISION STATEMENT:
Our vision for The Downs CEP School is to put *God* and *Family* at the heart of all we do. As a *nurturing* community, we use the parable of The Mustard Seed *"…if you have faith as small as a mustard seed…nothing will be impossible*." (Matthew: 17 v20) This guides the way we value and treat all members of our school community. Through our pastoral care and our rich curriculum experiences we provide a safe and dynamic learning environment in which all can flourish.

To grow in: Faith, Love, Compassion, Kindness, Respect & Forgiveness
Our six Christian Values are at the heart of our vision. Every day we aspire to grow in **Faith, Love, Compassion, Kindness, Respect and Forgiveness**, so that our school family may experience the joy and hope of **"life in all its fullness"** (John: 10 v10)

Review every 3 years

Review Date: Sep 2023	**Review Date:**	**Review Date:**		

STATEMENT OF INTENT

This policy is in line with our other policies and procedures. It underpins our Christian values, principles and ethos.

The Downs Church of England Primary School is committed to the continuous raising of achievement of all our pupils. Regular attendance is critical if our pupils are to be successful and benefit from the opportunities presented to them. We actively promote 100% attendance for all our pupils.

The policy is intended to inform all members of our school community about the procedures and expectations relating to attendance matters. It is the expectation of the Governors that all children and staff attend school when they are fit to do so.

PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

Parents have a legal duty to ensure that their child(ren) attend school regularly and arrive on time. Regular attendance is essential to the all-round development of the child ensuring that they are able to take full advantage of educational opportunities available to them. Poor attendance undermines their education and sometimes, puts pupils at risk, encouraging anti-social behaviour.

It is the parents' responsibility to contact the school on the first day of their child(rens) absence, and everyday thereafter. This is a safeguarding issue so that all parties know that your child is safe.

At The Downs CE Primary School the gates open at 8:35am and close 8:45am.

Pupils that arrive late must report to the office where the reason for lateness is recorded and lunch requirements registered with the kitchen.

Dental/medical appointment should always be made outside of school time where possible. If it is not possible to arrange an appointment outside school times the school office must be informed. Unless discussed with the school beforehand children should be collected from school before the appointment and returned as soon as possible after it, to minimise the disruption to their leaning.

STAFF RESPONSIBILITY

Staff are expected to arrive on the premises in time to prepare for their first activity/lesson. If a member of staff is unwell, and therefore unfit for their duties, they must alert the school as soon as possible so that alternative arrangements can be made; messages must not be sent via other members of staff. More information on staff related absences are found within the policy *''Management of Absence and Special Leave for Employees in Schools''*

All staff absences, for whatever reason are recorded on the schools MIS and HR Personnel Management System and may be reviewed by SLT at any time. Any concerns may then be raised with the member of staff and may result in further action; e.g. a referral to Occupational Health, advice sought from Personnel, counselling or other strategies according to the nature of the concern. The over-riding aim of the Governing Body is to try to ensure, as far as it is possible to do so, that we have fit and healthy staff.

THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL STAFF

At The Downs CEP school there is a whole school responsibility and approach to improving school attendance with staff taking individual responsibility to promote good attendance.

The Attendance Officer has overall responsibility for attendance.

Class teachers complete a register at the beginning of each morning and beginning of each afternoon session. Marking the attendance registers twice daily is a legal requirement. (The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006) Teachers mark pupils present, absent or late. The class teacher notifies the Attendance Officer of children whose attendance is causing concern.

It is the responsibility of the Attendance Officer to ensure:

- Attendance and Lateness records are up to date.
- If no reason for absence has been provided, parents are contacted on each day of absence.
- Where there has been no communication, a school text message will be sent to parents, followed up by letter if necessary requesting reasons for absence.
- The appropriate attendance code is entered into the register. (National Attendance Codes)
- Parents are informed twice per academic year of their child's attendance figure.

TIMELINE OF SCHOOL ACTION FOR POOR ATTENDANCE

It is the expectation of the Local Authority and OFSTED that children strive for 100% attendance at school and as a school. We ask parents to work with the school to achieve for our children.

ACTION PLAN:

- 96 - 100% attendance – class teacher to investigate and notify the attendance officer of any concerns. Attendance officer to contact parent/guardian if appropriate.
- 90 – 96% attendance – Attendance monitored and school intervention letters/meeting with parents instigated. Consideration to Early Help referral or referral to the local authority for Penalty Notice.
- Below 90% - Consult with the local authority School Liaison Officer and referral to the attendance service for Penalty Notice referral where absences have not been authorised and referral criteria are met.

CHILDREN MISSING IN EDUCATION

No child will be removed from the school roll without consultation between the Head Teacher and the Attendance Service. Where a child is missing from education, Local Authority guidance will be followed by completion of a Child Missing in Education (CME) referral for the following circumstances:-

- If the whereabouts of the child are unknown and enquiries by the school have failed to locate him/her.
- The family have notified the school that they have left the area but no Common Transfer Form (CTF) for a new school has been received.

LATENESS

The expectation is that the children will arrive on time and no earlier than 10 minutes before school opens begins. From this time there will be a teacher on duty in the relevant waiting area or classroom, as agreed by staff. The registers are completed electronically by the teacher on Horizon between 8:35am-8:45am. Any child arriving at school after 8:45am must enter the school via the school office to register. Arrivals between 8:45am and 9.15am are recorded as late, code 'L', in our internal records, but is marked as present in the register. Any child that arrives after 9.15am is recorded as 'U' in the register which indicates an arrival after the register has closed. This statistically equates to an absence.

Frequent lateness after the register has closed, code 'U', will be discussed with parents and could provide grounds for a referral to the School Liaison Officer or the issue of a Penalty Notice.

All absences for appointments need to be recorded and, where possible, taken out of school hours.

Penalty Notice Proceedings for Lateness – Penalty Notices are issued in accordance with Kent County Council's Education Penalty Notices Code of Conduct effective from January 2016.

- 10 sessions of late arrival after the registers have closed during any possible 100 school sessions for a Penalty Notice Warning Letter.
- The Penalty Notice Warning Letter sets out 15 school days during which no unauthorised absence is to be recorded
- If unauthorised absence is recorded during the 15 day period, Penalty Notice(s) will be issued (one per parent per child)
- Where a Penalty Notice is not paid within 28 days of issue the Local Authority will instigate court proceedings

SICKNESS

Parents must be aware of the need for good attendance, but to balance this with the individual health issues of the child. Again, there is an understanding that younger children may often have more time off through sickness than older children whilst they build their immunities. Patterns of attendance will be investigated and monitored by the Attendance Officer who will address any concerns directly with the family and make referrals to the School Liaison Officer (SLO) when appropriate.

ABSENCE IN TERM TIME

From September 2013 the Department for Education have amended the pupil regulations by removing the Head Teachers ability to authorise leave of absence for the purpose of a family holiday. Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 says that the parents are guilty of an offence failing to secure regular attendance at school unless they can prove that the child was absent:

- With leave (the school given permission)
- Due to sickness or any unavoidable cause (the sickness or unavoidable cause must relate to the child, not the parent)
- Religious observance
- Failure by the Local Authority to provide transport

In law these are the only acceptable reasons for any child being absent from school.

There is **no** entitlement to holidays during term time. 90% attendance equates to half a day off every week. If this pattern continued during primary education, this would be equivalent to 23 or 24 weeks or half of a school year. This level of absence can result in lower standards of attainment and unstable friendship groups. It is unfair to expect teachers to set additional work for these children, or indeed spend significant time with them, helping them to 'catch up' as this takes them away from the rest of the class. **Therefore, our expectation is that no holidays will be taken during term time.**

We do however understand that there may be some exceptional family circumstances that require short absences in term time. Therefore all requests will need to be made in writing to the Headteacher, who will decide if the time will be authorised. The local authority advises that the fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are that the absence is rare, significant, unavoidable and short; it is designed to cater for unforeseen emergencies.

If the absence is not authorised and the holiday is taken anyway, the case may be referred to the PRU, Inclusion and Attendance Service who may issue a Penalty Notice to each parent for each child taken out of school.

Failure to pay the penalty in full by the end of the 28 day period will result in prosecution by the Local Authority.

Exceptional circumstances could include for example:

- Service personnel returning from a tour of duty abroad where it is evidenced the individual will not be in receipt of any leave in the near future that coincides with school holidays.
- Where an absence from school is recommended by a health professional as part of a parent or child's rehabilitation from a medical or emotional issue.
- The death or terminal illness of a person close to the family.
- To attend a wedding or funeral of a person close to the family.

AUTHORISING ABSENCE

The Head Teacher is not obliged to accept a parents explanation, a letter or telephone message as authorisation in itself of an absence. If an absence is not authorised then parents will be notified. If no explanation is received, absences will not be authorised.
Absence (leave) during term time can only be approved in 'exceptional circumstances'. The following reasons are examples of absences that **will not** be authorised:

- Non persistent specific illness e.g. poorly/unwell
- Absence of siblings if one child is ill
- Oversleeping
- Inadequate clothing/uniform
- Confusion over school dates
- Medical/Dental appointments of more than half of day without very good reason
- Child/Family members birthday
- Shopping trip
- Family holidays

Persistent unauthorised absence may result in an AS1 referral to the Local Authority School Liaison Officer for consideration of prosecution. The school will follow procedures prior to referral and parents will be notified in writing.

Local Authority Action may include:-

- Attendance Improvement Meeting
- Home Visits
- Liaison with other agencies.
- Fast Track to Prosecution

Penalty Notices Proceedings for Poor Attendance - Penalty Notices are issued in accordance with Kent County Council's Education Penalty Notices Code of Conduct effective from January 2016

- A Penalty Notice can only be issued in cases of persistent unauthorised absence or where an excluded child is found in a public place during school hours.
- Absence for 10 or more half day sessions (5 school days) without authorisation during any 100 possible school sessions – these do not need to be consecutive.
- The PRU, Inclusion and Attendance Service issue a warning letter setting out 15 school days during which no unauthorised absence is to be recorded
- If unauthorised absence is recorded during the 15 day period a Penalty Notice will be issued (one per parent per child)

Where penalty notices are imposed, the regulations state that the penalty will be £120 to be paid within 28 days, reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days. Penalty Notices are issued to each parent of each child. Failure to pay the penalty in full by the end of the 28 day period may result in prosecution by the Local Authority.