



# Darlinghurst

## ACADEMY

### **Attendance Policy**

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# Attendance Policy

## Introduction and Background

Darlinghurst Academy recognises that positive behaviour and good attendance are central to raising standards of pupil achievement. With this in mind, the aim of this policy is to:

- To ensure that every child is safeguarded and their right to education is protected.
- To ensure the school attendance target is achieved, through rewards and incentives for good attendance and punctuality.
- To raise standards and ensure every child reaches their full educational potential, through a high level of school attendance and punctuality.
- To ensure all stakeholders, governors, parents, pupils and staff receive regular communication about the importance of good attendance and punctuality.
- To keep accurate, up-to-date records and have a robust and rigorous system for analysing attendance.
- To identify causes of low attendance/punctuality with individuals, classes and groups of pupils and address them.
- To work with external agencies, in order to address barriers to attendance and overcome them.

For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and are at school on time, every day the academy is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence or late arrival disrupts teaching routines and so may affect the learning of others in the same class. Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is a parental responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

This policy has been developed in consultation with the governors, teachers, LEA and parents and carers. It seeks to ensure that all parties involved in the practicalities of school attendance are aware and informed of attendance matters in the academy and outlines the academy's commitment to attendance matters. It details the responsibilities of individuals and groups involved and the procedures in place to promote and monitor pupil attendance.

Our policy aims to raise and maintain levels of attendance by

- Promoting a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure, ready to learn and valued.
- Raising awareness of the importance of good attendance and punctuality
- Ensuring that attendance is monitored effectively and reasons for absences are recorded promptly and consistently.

## Promoting Regular Attendance

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is the responsibility of parents, pupils and all members of academy staff. We believe that positively promoting good attendance and punctuality is the best way to improve and maintain.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Give parents/carers details on attendance in our newsletters
- Report to parents /carers regularly about their child's attendance within the school reports

- Contact parents/carers should their child's attendance fall below the academy's target for attendance (which may vary according to the stage in the academic year)
- Celebrate good attendance through various initiatives within the Key Stages, termly or annual attendance rewards, and rewards for improving attendance.

### **Understanding Types of Absence**

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the academy (not by the parents), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from the academy for a good reason like illness, medical or dental appointments (which unavoidably fall in school time), emergencies or any other unavoidable cause. You may be asked to provide medical evidence of any illness related absences that lead to a child's absence of more than 2 days. This is to ensure that any underlying health needs are being identified and that a pupil can be supported within the academy environment to avoid missing critical parts of their education. Evidence may be in the form of a photocopy of the prescribed medication or appointment card. The academy understands that it is not always possible to obtain evidence from medical settings in which case we request that parents speak to a member of the Attendance Team.

Unauthorised absences are those which the academy does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been given. This type of absence may lead to sanctions and /or legal proceedings.

Unauthorised absence can include, but are not limited to:

- Parents /carers keeping children off school unnecessarily e.g. because the child had a late night
- For non-infectious illness or injury that would not affect their ability to learn
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Children who arrive at school too late to get a mark
- Shopping trips
- Looking after other children or children accompanying siblings or parents to medical appointments
- Their own or family birthdays
- Holidays taken during term time
- Day trips
- Leave of absence in term time which has not been agreed

**There is no longer any entitlement in law for pupils to take time off during the term to go on holiday:**

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 were amended from 1st September 2013. All references to family holidays and extended leave have been removed. The amendments specify that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are "exceptional circumstances".

At Darlington 'exceptional circumstances' will be interpreted as:

*'Being of unique and significant emotional, educational or spiritual value to the child which outweighs the loss of teaching time'*

It is important for parents/carers to be aware that while decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis, requests will normally be refused. Any requests for leave will necessitate a meeting with the Principal.

### **We will not agree leave during term time:**

- At any time in September. This is very important as your child needs to settle into their new class as quickly as possible.
- During statutory assessment periods in May (KS2) and June (KS1). Year One pupils will also need to be in school throughout the period set aside each year by the Government for statutory phonics tests.
- When a pupil's attendance record already includes any level of unauthorised absence or they have already been granted authorised leave within that academic year.
- Where a pupil's attendance rate (in the last 12 school weeks) is already below 97% for any individual, or if it will fall below that level as a result of taking leave.

If a request is unauthorised but the leave is still taken, the case could be referred to the Local Authority who may issue a Penalty Notice under the the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003, section 23(1). This could be £60 per child, per parent (if paid in 21 days), £120 per child, per parent (if paid within 28 days). Failure to pay the fine within 28 days could lead to prosecution.

If leave of absence is authorised, the school **will not** provide work for children to do during their absence. Parents are however advised to read with their children and encourage them to write a diary while they are away.

Whilst any child may occasionally have time off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best supported between the academy, the parents and the child. If a parent thinks their child is reluctant to attend school then we will work with that family to understand the root problem and provide any necessary support. Our Pastoral Support Team may be able to offer a child/family a safe environment in which to discuss the reasons for a child refusing to attend the academy. We can also use outside agencies to help with this such as the School Nurse.

### Persistent Absenteeism (PA)

A pupil is defined by the Government as a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level will cause considerable damage to any child's education and we need parents' fullest support and co-operation to tackle this. We monitor all absence and the reasons given thoroughly. If a child is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark we will inform the parents/carers. PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully. We also combine this with academic tracking where absence affects attainment. All of our PA pupils and their parents are subject to an Action Plan and the plan may include: allocation of additional support through the School Nurse, Pastoral Support Team, or Social Care. We may also use circle time, individual incentive programmes, individual targets and participation in group activities to support us in raising attendance.

### **Absence procedures**

If a child is absent from the academy, the parent/carer **MUST** follow the procedures below:

- Contact the academy on the first day of absence **before 9.00** am on **01702 509205** if you are unable to speak to a member of staff please leave a message if you are able

- If the absence continues for more than 2 days (weekend included) parents should make a further call to the Attendance Team
- Ensure that your child returns to the academy as soon as possible
- Supply medical evidence such as a photocopy of the prescribed medication or appointment card. If that has not been possible parents should speak to the Attendance Team.

**If your child is absent we will:**

- Telephone or text (PING) you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you
- Write to you if your child has more than 5 days absence in the Autumn term or their attendance is below 95% (Spring Term), 97% (Summer Term)
- Invite you to a meeting to discuss the situation with our Attendance and Pastoral Team where attendance continues to deteriorate.

Every effort should be made to arrange medical appointments outside school hours. If it is necessary for a child to be out of school for this reason, the child should attend the academy prior to the appointment and/or be returned to the academy directly after the appointment where possible.

**Escalation of Attendance Interventions:**

Unexplained or persistent absence will be investigated at an early stage and will involve all staff who support the child to understand the underlying reasons. The following stages will be used to resolve the situation and improve attendance:

Level 1

Where attendance is identified as a concern by the academy, i.e. when a child has taken more than 5 days of absence, parents will receive a letter from the Attendance Team reminding them of the importance of regular attendance and will include a registration certificate showing the percentage attendance.

Level 2

If the situation is not resolved at Level 1, where attendance has not improved following the initial letter, parents/carers will be invited to discuss the issue with the Attendance Team and a member of the pastoral team where any issues can be discussed and school based strategies put in place.

Level 3

If the situation is not resolved at Level 2, where attendance has not improved following the initial letter, parents/carers will be invited to discuss the issue with the Attendance Team and a member of the Senior Leadership Team where any issues can be discussed.

Level 4

If the situation is not resolved at Level 3 where attendance has not improved following the initial letter, parents/carers will be invited to discuss the issue with the Attendance Team and the academy Principal and/or Vice Principal where any issues can be discussed.

Local Authority Intervention

The academy works in close collaboration with the Access and Inclusion Team. Failure to improve attendance after level 4 will result in the academy contacting the Local Authority with a view to issuing a fixed penalty notice.

### **Lateness**

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If a child misses the start of the day, they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons; it can be embarrassing for the child and can encourage absence. Good time keeping is a vital life skill that will help our children as they progress through their school life and out into the wider world.

### **How we manage lateness:**

Registers are taken within 10 minutes of the gate closing, any child arriving after this time will receive a late mark if they are not in by that time. Children who are late are required to come in to the academy via the main office where a member of staff will require a reason for lateness which is recorded for tracking and trend-spotting purposes. The academy may telephone or PING parents/carer or send home a 'late note' in order to keep parents and carers informed.

From time to time a member of the Senior Leadership Team will undertake a 'Late Gate' check, greeting late arrivals at the main entrance to the school. At 09:30am the registers will be closed. In accordance with the Regulations, if your child arrives after that time they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will **not count as a present mark** and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. This may mean that you could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists. If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with the Attendance Team but you can approach us at any time if you are experiencing difficulties bringing your child to school on time. We expect parents and staff to encourage good punctuality by being good role models to our children and celebrate good class and individual punctuality.

### **Deletion from Roll**

For any pupil leaving Darlington Academy, other than at the end of year six, parents/carers are required to notify the Attendance Team at the earliest opportunity. This should be in the form of a signed letter advising of a forwarding address, details of the new school and date of leaving. If the child is to be electively home educated a signed letter should be given to the Attendance Team with the date of removal from state education and reason for leaving. This will be conveyed to the Home Education Team at the Local Authority who will subsequently be in contact. If the family is emigrating, evidence of their new address should be provided and date of leaving.

*We are unable to remove a child from our academy roll until we have confirmation of the name, address and the child has started at their new school.*

### **Children Missing Education**

Should the appropriate documentation not be received by the Attendance Team, this could be considered a safeguarding concern. After 20 school days, details of the missing child will be referred to the Local Authority Children Missing Education Team. The CME Team will visit the last known address, consult with the Police, other Local Authorities, Social Services, Ports and Airports to trace the possible whereabouts of the child. The CME Team will advise the academy when the missing child can be removed from roll.

### **Targets**

The academy sets targets for attendance every year and our attendance data is collected and published by the Local Authority. This is also closely monitored by Ofsted. We track absences and punctuality throughout the school year to show us where improvements need to be made. An action plan is developed each year detailing the steps we are taking to improve attendance.

Our whole academy target for 2022/23 is **97%**. We aim to achieve better than this, however, because we know that good attendance is the key to successful learning.

### **Summary**

The academy has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend. All academy staff and the Governing Body are committed to working with parents and pupils as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.