



DULWICH PREP LONDON
Values & Academic Excellence since 1885

ATTENDANCE POLICY

This is a whole school policy which applies to all sections of the school, including Early Years



Person responsible for this policy:

Miss Louise Davidosn, Head Master

Mrs Sarah Brownsdon, Senior Deputy Head and DSL

Date of Last Policy Review: April 2021

ATTENDANCE POLICY

1. AIMS

Good attendance at school is important for a pupil's educational and social well-being. Pupils who miss school, for whatever reason, can experience a loss of self-confidence and social isolation as well as having gaps in their learning.

Children going missing from education, particularly on repeat occasions, is a potential indicator of abuse or neglect. The School's procedures for unauthorised absence and for dealing with children who go missing from education are contained in the "Children Missing from Education" section of the Safeguarding (Child Protection) Policy which is to be used for searching for and if necessary reporting any pupil missing from education.

Our aims for this policy are to ensure good attendance, discourage lateness and to ensure that a full record is kept of all absences. It is also for the school to be aware of all persons present on the school site at any one point in time. The policy will also ensure that registers are correctly kept and available for inspection by any appropriate body at any given time.

Where reasonably possible, the School will hold more than one emergency contact number for each pupil to provide the School with additional options to make contact with a responsible adult particularly when a child missing from education is also identified as a welfare and/or safeguarding concern.

The School will report to Southwark Council (and the relevant Local Authority in which the pupil resides) a pupil who fails to attend school regularly or has been absent from school without the School's permission for a continuous period of 10 school days or more.

2. REGISTERS

Registers are taken every morning by:

Early Years:	09:20
Pre-Prep:	08.45
Lower School:	08.30
Middle and Upper Schools:	08.45

Registers for the second session of the day on Alleyn Park are called at various times after 13.00, depending on the timetabled activities for the class. In Early Years they will be called after play at 12.45.

3. BACKGROUND AND REGULATIONS

The parent of a child of compulsory school age is required by law to ensure that the child regularly attends the school at which he/she is registered. Should a parent fail to ensure that his/her child attends that school regularly, the parent is guilty of an offence. (Parents who are convicted of this offence may be fined up to £2,500 and/or sentenced to up to three months in prison. Alternatively,

parents may be subject to a fixed penalty notice). When a child of compulsory school age is absent from school, the attendance register must indicate whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised. (See the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006).

4. AUTHORISED ABSENCE

Authorised absence is where the school has either given approval in advance for the child to be away or where an explanation offered afterwards has been accepted as a satisfactory explanation for absence.

Parents may not authorise absence; only schools can do this. If the parents do not provide sufficient reason for the absence then the absence will be treated as unauthorised.

Children are not allowed, without permission from the Head of Section, Senior Deputy Head or Head Master, to leave early, arrive late, or to be absent for any cause other than illness or emergency.

Should a child be absent for a genuine appointment or event that cannot occur outside of school hours, such as an NHS medical appointment, exam, or school visit, then appropriate supporting documentation should be provided ahead of the absence if requested. If supporting documentation cannot be provided, the School reserves the right to treat the absence as unauthorised. Parents are encouraged to book appointments outside of school hours or in the school holidays wherever possible.

Early Years:

Parents are required to telephone the Early Years secretary (020 8766 5531) or to email earlyyears@dulwichpreplondon.org on every day of a child's absence from school, by 9.00am, with a reason for the absence. If a child is unwell, then the nature of the illness must be indicated. Although our Nursery children are not of compulsory school age we strongly encourage parents to communicate with us if their child is going to be absent and we always follow-up unexplained absences.

Years 1 – 8:

Parents or carers are required to telephone the dedicated absence line (020 8766 5555) and leave a message or email absences@dulwichpreplondon.org on every day of a child's absence from school, by 9.00am, with a reason for the absence. If a child is unwell, then the nature of the illness must be indicated.

School may authorise an absence if:

- the child is too ill to attend and the school accepts this as valid (although if the child is off for long periods the school might ask for proof from the doctor);
- the parent has sought the advance permission of the school e.g. for a religious observation;
- the child has an emergency medical or dental appointment;
- the child is involved in an off-site educational programme;
- the child has been excluded;

- the child has an off-site examination;
- the child is visiting a senior school; or
- exceptional circumstances e.g covid.

Please note that, wherever possible, parents should submit supporting documentation for the reason for absence.

Excessive amounts of authorised absence may often be as damaging to continuity of learning as unauthorised absence. The school will therefore only authorise absence sparingly and only after careful consideration, particularly where children have a history of irregular attendance. Inappropriate authorisation of absence may seriously undermine effective intervention by the local education authority and compromise any potential legal action.

Requests for Leave of Absence:

The Head of Section is only allowed to authorise absence for family holidays during term time in exceptional circumstances, and only in advance. If you would like to make a request for leave of absence for your child you must complete a Leave of Absence Request Form, which is available on the school website or in any of the Section offices, and return it to the Section office **at least two weeks in advance of the planned absence**. You will be notified about the outcome of your request by email.

5. UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE

Unauthorised absence is where no explanation has been given for the child's absence or where the explanation offered is considered by the school to be unacceptable.

Absence will not be authorised in the following circumstances:

- no explanation is offered by the parent/carer;
- the explanation offered is unsatisfactory (shopping);
- family holidays which are taken without the school's prior consent or knowledge and/or are in excess of any time agreed with the school;
- lateness when the child arrives after the register has closed and fails to offer a satisfactory explanation;
- when the school does not agree that absence should be authorised;
- where no supporting documentation can be provided when it has been requested and would have been reasonable to do so; or
- where the School has reason to suspect that the reason for absence is not genuine.

6. LATENESS

Repeated lateness at the beginning of a school session can amount to a failure to attend regularly for the purpose of Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

Lateness is monitored by the school and, where necessary, parents will be contacted by their child's Head of Section or the Senior Deputy Head.

7. UNEXPLAINED ABSENCE

If a pupil is not registered in school at the usual time for their section and no contact has been made with school via a Section Secretary or absences@dulwichpreplondon.org, the Section Secretary will use the contact details of the primary carer in order to ascertain the whereabouts of the child. If no contact is achieved with the primary carer, then the school will contact the second 'emergency contact' given. As per DfE guidance, the school 'will use their professional judgement and knowledge of the individual pupil to inform their decision as to whether welfare concerns should be escalated'.

The Section Secretaries will continue to attempt to make contact at every registration point throughout the day and contact will be made with the Schools Police Liaison Officer to arrange a home visit if three consecutive registration opportunities are unaccounted for.

8. PERSISTENT ABSENCE

The school monitors the attendance of pupils and parents will be contacted if their child's attendance is poor, regardless of whether or not the absence has been authorised. Poor absence is defined by a percentage of less than 90% per term. Parents may be asked to meet with their child's Head of Section or the Senior Deputy Head to discuss their child's attendance. If no improvement is seen in attendance, further action may be taken including contacting the Educational Welfare department at Southwark Council's Early Help Service.

The School has a legal responsibility for taking and maintaining an accurate school register of all pupils twice each day throughout term time. This happens once at the beginning of the morning session and once at the beginning of the afternoon session. The School will inform the relevant Local Authority of any pupil who fails to attend school regularly, or has been absent without the school's permission. The School will also inform the relevant Local Authority of any absences when the DSL has a concern.

The School will also inform the relevant Local Authority and/or Children's Social Care, as appropriate, immediately if:

- A single absence raises child protection concerns (see the Safeguarding (Child Protection) Policy); or
- A pupil has ten consecutive days of unauthorised absence (other than for reasons of sickness or authorised leave of absence).

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parent's fullest support and cooperation to tackle this. We monitor all absence thoroughly. The parent of any student who is at risk of moving towards persistent absenteeism will be informed of this immediately so that the situation can be rectified.

Any pupil whose attendance falls below 90% is discussed by pastoral staff and appropriate measures are put in place to ensure that:

- a. attendance improves; and
- b. the underlying reasons for attendance falling are understood and the pupil supported, where possible.

In addition to the above, details regarding a current pupil's attendance history will be passed on to their future schools.

9. COVID ADDENDUM

While children are required to self isolate, quarantine or work from home at unpredictable times because of the current COVID pandemic, any COVID related absence will continue to be marked **X** as per the DfE guidance to ensure that pupils are not penalised for excessive absence. This process will be reviewed inline with DfE updates.