



# Devonshire Primary Academy Attendance Policy



Adopted by Governors/HT: Governors  
Review period: Annually  
Last review date: Jul 21  
Person responsible for policy: Attendance Officer

## **Introduction**

Devonshire Primary Academy explicitly promotes and encourages accurate punctuality and high attendance. High levels of attendance, of at least 95%, and accurate punctuality are essential if children are to take full advantage of school and gain the appropriate skills which will equip them for life and ensure that learners achieve their potential.

We constantly aim to achieve high attendance by operating an attendance policy within which children, staff, parents and Pupil Welfare Officers work together for the child's sake. We monitor and evaluate the children's attendance and implement quick, early intervention where a concern is identified.

The Attendance Officer liaises with home and other agencies when issues are identified with the child's attendance or punctuality.

The Attendance Officer carries out monthly whole school screening of all children's attendance and punctuality. Strategies for improvement are discussed and action taken when necessary. Relevant staff are informed of actions.

Positive and full attendance is seen as an excellent achievement in its own right and is promoted and celebrated as such with public recognition, certificates and prizes.

## **Principles**

Devonshire Primary Academy takes responsibility for pupils from **8:40am**, when pupils are able to enter their classrooms and begin good morning work. Pupils should be in school every day and be in the classroom on time, by **8:50am**. When a child is absent, their parent/carer must provide a reason for the absence, either in writing, via Parentapps Connect, or by telephoning school on 01253 478271 (option 1) to speak to the Attendance Officer or leave a message on the absence answerphone **before 9:30am**.

- A child should only be absent if the reason is 'unavoidable'. Every absence from school will be classified by the school (not parents), as either authorised or unauthorised. This is why the reason for the cause of each absence is always required and will be requested. Absences will not be authorised without good reason.
  - Authorised absences are sessions away from school for a justified reason, such as illness or other unavoidable causes. For pupils with less than 95% attendance, the school will request medical confirmation in order to authorise a child's medical absence. This may be a copy of an appointment card, prescription, medical letter etc.
  - Unauthorised absences are those sessions which the school does not consider reasonable or justified and for which no permission has been given. Unauthorised absences include, but are not limited to, a child having time off for:
    - Going shopping
    - Minding the house
    - Being truant
    - Having a birthday
    - Excessive holidays
    - Having a haircut
    - Absences which have never been explained
    - Children arriving too late to get a mark – after 9:30am
    - Sleeping in
    - Other reasons determined to be unacceptable by the Headteacher.Providing a note or message may not be sufficient if the reason given is 'avoidable', i.e. the child could and should have been in school.
- Prolonged periods of absence through illness will require written medical evidence (in line with Local Authority Pupil Welfare policy.)

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- Some children require encouragement and support to attend regularly and/or on time. Our policy is to resolve issues in partnership between school, parents and the child. It is never better for parents to cover up an absence or to give in to pressure to excuse their child(ren) from school and doing so gives the message that attendance at school does not matter and may make things worse. Parents are expected to contact school on the first day of an absence and work with staff in resolving problems together. Good communication between home and school is essential. Good attendance helps pupil to become “the best that we can be”.
- If problems are not resolved, we may refer the child to the Pupil Welfare Officer, who will try to resolve the difficulties by agreement, or by a further referral to another agency. However, if strategies to improve the child's attendance and punctuality have failed, penalties and/or court proceedings may be taken to ensure the child's regular attendance and punctuality. It may be deemed necessary to prosecute parents.
  - Parents or children may wish to contact the Pupil Welfare Officer (PWO) to ask for advice. The PWO is independent of the school and can be contacted at: Bickerstaffe House, Talbot Road, Blackpool, or by telephone.
  - Please contact: PWO – Karen Manning – 01253 476478
- Since 2019, Devonshire Primary Academy has authorised Pupil Welfare Service to issue fixed penalty notices for poor attendance and unauthorised leave. The penalty notice currently entails a cost of £60.00 if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice, or £120.00 after 21 days but within 28 days of receipt of notice. Failure to pay the Penalty Notice may result in a prosecution by Pupil Welfare under Section 444(1) of The Education Act, 1996.

### Procedures

If a child is unfit for school, parents should contact the academy on the first day of absence via Parentapps Connect or by telephoning school on 01253 478271 (option 1) to speak to the Attendance Officer or leave a message on the absence answerphone **before 9:30am**. The process must be repeated on each subsequent day of absence. On each occasion, parents must give a reason for an absence and state their child's name and class, as well as their own name and contact number.

Devonshire Primary Academy operates a First Day Calling system. If there has been no contact by the parent, we will: -

- Send a Parentapps Connect push notification/email/SMS or telephone the pupil's first contact number. Parents should note that the Parentapps Connect service advises if messages have been received by the parent. This can be used as evidence if the pupil is referred to the PWO.
- If no response is received from the parent, all of the pupil's contact numbers may then be tried.
- Pupil Welfare may be asked to make contact if the school are unable to.

Leave may be granted in an emergency (e.g. a family death) or for medical appointments which are unavoidably in school time, provided that a written explanation or appointment card is produced. The academy asks that, where possible, appointments e.g. medical/dental are made outside school time.

### Holidays

Holidays will not be authorised in term time, unless it is an exceptional circumstance. The decision to authorise, or not, is at the discretion of the Headteacher.

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All holiday requests must be made in advance of the event and in writing by the parent looking after the child. Holiday forms are available from the office or you can make a request in writing via Parentapps Connect.

### **Registration**

Pupils must arrive between 8:40am and 8:50am.

Lessons start promptly at 8:50am.

The attendance register is a legal, statutory document which must be maintained at all times by staff. We register pupils at the beginning of both the morning and afternoon sessions.

Registers are taken electronically by classroom teachers and are stored electronically by the school office.

When a child fails to arrive for an afternoon session, it is the class teacher's responsibility to find out the child's whereabouts and inform the office immediately if there is a concern that the child may have left the premises. The Senior Leadership Team will be contacted for further action and parents will be contacted thereafter. Children leaving the premises without permission will result in the parents being contacted, then the Police.

### **Punctuality**

Children are expected to arrive at school on time every day. Children who are persistently late will be dealt with in the same way as pupils with poor attendance:

- Parentapps Connect push notifications/emails/SMS and phone calls will be sent/made to parents.
- Letters will be sent home advising parents of minutes late and the frequency of the lateness.

Children who are late and arrive after 8:50am must be accompanied by a parent or carer to the office doors to be signed in electronically by a member of the office staff. Reasons as to why a child arrives late will be recorded and parents will be contacted if a concern arises about poor punctuality.

If there is no improvement in a child's lateness, Pupil Welfare Service will be involved.

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### **Special Circumstances**

It is recognised that there may be circumstances when a child may arrive late because of transport difficulties or because of prolonged illness. We will adopt a sympathetic approach in these instances and work with the child and family to help in any way possible. We ask parents to keep the academy informed of any special circumstances which will impact on a child's attendance and punctuality.

### **Rewards**

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Devonshire Primary Academy recognises and celebrates good attendance. We celebrate good attendance with different rewards across the academic year. These can include -

- Half termly reward for best class attendance e.g. DVD & popcorn.
- Participation in Blackpool Football club's 100% Attendance Party.
- Presenting children with certificates; pupils who achieve 100% attendance for the full school year receive a prize.

### **Attendance Matters**

Our attendance policy will be published on the school website and will be reviewed annually.

<b>Above 97% = Less than 6 days absence a year.</b> Excellent attendance! Young people who are achieving above 97% will almost certainly get the best grades they can, leading to better prospects for their future.
<b>95% = 10 days absence a year.</b> These young people are likely to achieve good grades and have good future prospects, however, they could still improve their attendance.
<b>90% = 19 days absence a year.</b> Young people who are missing this much time off school will be absent for almost a month per school year, making it difficult for them to achieve their best.
<b>85% = 29 days absence a year.</b> Young people who are missing this much time off school will be absent for almost six weeks per school year, making it very difficult for them to keep up with their work and therefore unlikely to do their best.
<b>80% = 38 days absence a year.</b> Young people who are missing this much time off school will be absent for one full year over the five years of education, making it almost impossible to keep up with work and dramatically limiting future prospects.

*Persistent Absence is defined as 90% and is set nationally through Government Legislation.*

*90% attendance equates to 19 days absence per year.*

*85% attendance equates to 28 days.*

*80% attendance equates to 38 days.*

### **Penalty Notice Amendment** **Covid-19 Related**

Parents and carers should be advised that any requests for leave that include additional absence due to parental choice to isolate prior to the leave will be unauthorised. Such absences will be included within the period of unauthorised leave should a Penalty Notice be requested.

Other such absences that are not within the current government guidelines will also be unauthorised.

If parents/carers feel that there are there are exceptional circumstances for the absence, they should request to discuss this with the Attendance Officer/Headteacher prior to the absence.