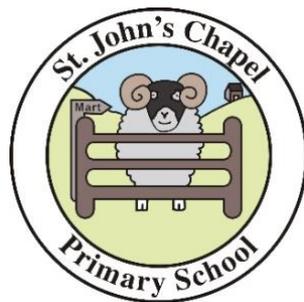


Durham Dales Partnership

Butterknowle, Frosterley, Hamsterley,
St John's Chapel, Wearhead & Woodland Primary
Schools



Attendance Policy

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Author of document:	Sarah Hodgkinson	Job role:	Co-Executive Headteacher
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Attendance Key Contacts

Please find the details of those with overall responsibility for attendance, attendance support and attendance improvement within our school below.

Name	Role	Contact details
Sarah Hodgkinson & Richard Sains	Co-Executive Headteachers	
	Governor with responsibility for attendance	

If a pupil is going to be absent from school the person who should be informed is:

Name	Job Title	Contact details
Mrs Joy Brown	Office manager	Butterknowle 01388 718369
Mrs Sue Midcalf	Office manager	Frosterley 01388 528358
Mr Andrew Harrison	Administrator	Hamsterley 01388 488279
School staff		St John's Chapel 01388 537332
School staff		Wearhead 01388 537265
Ms Katrina Scanlon	Office manager	Woodland 01388 718271

If a pupil, parent or family is having difficulty with attending school and requires advice, help or support then they can contact their child's class teacher or the Co-Executive Headteachers.:

Help & Support

Where help or support is needed with attendance the sooner school know about this, the quicker people can work together to support with this. Where needed this can involve other services to make sure that pupils and their families get the right support, at the right time from the right people.

Children Missing from Education

If pupil's whereabouts are not known following enquiries schools can legally remove pupils from the admission register (the school roll) after 20 school days of unauthorised absence. It is **vital that parents keep school informed of any change of details** and regularly update them if details change. A pupil's place in school is at risk if whereabouts are not known. Children

Missing from Education must be reported to the Local Authority and the matter may be treated as a safeguarding issue.

Introduction to our school attendance vision and ethos

The Durham Dales Partnership seeks to ensure that all its pupils receive an education which maximises opportunities for each pupil to realise their true potential. The school will strive to provide a calm, orderly, safe, and supportive environment where all pupils want to be and are keen and ready to learn within a culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance.

Regular school attendance plays a vital role in children's wellbeing and their education, ensuring that their current learning needs are being met but also building their future ability to learn.

Attendance is the essential foundation to positive outcomes for all pupils. Improving attendance is everyone's business and a concerted effort across all teaching and nonteaching staff in school, the trust or governing body, the local authority, and other local partners is required.

Some pupils find it harder than others to attend school and the school and partners will work with pupils and parents to remove any barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships and working together to put the right support in place.

Specific roles and responsibilities have been published in the [Working Together to improve school attendance statutory](#) guidance.

We recognise the link between regular attendance and the well-being, development and achievement of our students / pupils. To benefit from the learning and pastoral opportunities and support we offer we expect all pupils to attend every session they are able to attend.

Communication with our parents and pupils is vital to working together to support attendance.

We ask that parents check the contact details, address and emergency contact information held by the school are up-to-date and changes are communicated to school as soon as possible. It is extremely important that school can contact parents in an emergency, keep parents informed of events and progress or discuss any concerns at the earliest opportunity.

The school day

The school day is from:

8:40am- 3:20pm (St John's Chapel and Wearhead)

8:50am- 3:30pm (Butterknowle, Frosterley, Hamsterley, Woodland)

Registration is at 9am. The register will close at 9:30am

Pupils must be in school for the start of registration to receive a present mark, otherwise another appropriate code will be used (Attendance codes appended). Pupils arriving late for registration, but before the register has closed will be recorded as late (**Code L**).

The DfE states that pupils must not be recorded as present if they are not in school during registration.

Pupils who arrive after the registers close will be recorded as a **Code U** unless the reason means another code is more appropriate. The U code is an unauthorised absence. It is still essential to come to school even if you are arriving after the registers close.

Arriving late to school can be disruptive and unsettling to the child and the rest of their class. Parents should contact the school office if there are any issues which are affecting a pupil's ability to attend school on time.

If your child is late for school:

All children arriving late at school will be asked the **reason for their lateness** and this will be recorded on the child's attendance certificate on SIMS (Butterknowle, Frosterley, Woodland) or Arbor (Hamsterley, St John's Chapel and Wearhead).

If a child is late (after registers close) for school on a number of occasions

The Co-Executive Headteachers may send a letter to parents/carers to register their concerns. Alternatively, the individual school's Deputy Headteacher may telephone or have a face-to-face conversation with the parent/carer.

If the school continues to have concerns about a child's punctuality

The Co-Executive Headteachers may request a meeting with parents/carers to discuss concerns, expectations and support. Breakfast club offers or meet and greet for support may be considered. Alternatively, a referral to the local authority for action may be made if the absences continue and are unauthorised (U code).

Term dates and planned Inset days

Details of term dates can be viewed on Class Dojo (Butterknowle, Frosterley and Woodland) or Weduc (Hamsterley, St John's Chapel and Wearhead)

Leave of Absence in Term Time

All schools can grant a leave of absence when a pupil needs to be absent from school with permission, however Head teachers are expected to restrict leave of absence in term-time to the specific circumstances in [regulation 11 of the School Attendance \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2024](#). There is discretion to consider exceptional circumstances based

on the individual facts, circumstances and background behind the request. Permission must be requested in advance by a parent the pupil normally lives with completing the form. A Leave of Absence form is available from the school office.

Where a leave of absence is granted, the head teacher will determine the number of days a pupil can be away from school.

A leave of absence is granted entirely at the head teacher's discretion. If an application is not made for leave, then the absence will be recorded as unauthorised regardless of circumstances.

The DfE have stated that generally they do not consider the need or desire for a holiday or other absence for leisure or recreation to be an exceptional circumstance.

On the first day of absence

If a pupil is to be absent for any reason, parents or carers are expected to contact the School by telephone or email providing a reason for the absence. Alternatively, they may contact their child's class teacher via Weduc or Dojo. If a pupil is absent from school and there is no contact from parents/carers then school will contact home to find out why the pupil not in school. This will be done by telephone in the first instance but if staff are unable to make contact, this will be followed up with an email or Dojo/Weduc message.

Appointments should be made outside of school time where possible. If this is not possible, your child should miss the minimum amount of school time necessary. Attending school before an appointment is advised. If they are well enough to come back to school following the appointment they should do.

Periods of extended absence

If a child is unwell with a cold or minor ailment, parents/carers should contact school each morning to provide an update on their child's current health. When a child has an ailment that requires a specific exclusion period, for example winter vomiting, parents/carers are required to update school as to their child's whereabouts if they are unable to return to school at the expected time. For longer term conditions, school staff will advise as to how frequently parents/carers should update school.

No reason for absence provided

If no reason for absence has been provided and there has been no contact from home, school staff will call and request a reason for absence. If they are unable to contact parents/carers they will leave a message asking them to contact school to explain their child's absence. This may be escalated if there are welfare/safeguarding concerns (further phone calls, contacting other emergency contacts, home visit etc)

If the school do not receive a reason for any absence, it will be recorded as unauthorised. Regular absence and unauthorised absences could result in more formal action.

Where 10 or more unauthorised absences are recorded in any 10 rolling school week period the school must consider whether a penalty notice may be appropriate for irregular attendance and, if so, the matter will be referred to the local authority.

Absence authorisation

The High Court has confirmed that the school's Head Teacher authorises absences.

We want to support all our pupils to ensure they can access their education and will take a support first approach. This will sometimes require communications and conversations to better understand the circumstances which may lead to absence.

In the majority of cases a parent's notification that their child is too ill to attend school will count as that evidence and can be accepted without question or concern.

Only where the school has genuine and reasonable doubt about the authenticity of the illness should medical evidence be requested to support the absence. This will be requested when there is a need for clarification to accurately record absence in the attendance register – i.e. making a decision that code I is the absence code that accurately describes the reason the pupil is not in school.

Promoting good attendance and punctuality

- Submit a daily attendance return to the Department of Education, in line with the legal expectations placed on all schools;
- Build strong relationships and work jointly with families;
- Give parents/carers details on attendance by sending home termly attendance certificates
- Promote the benefits of high attendance to pupils in assemblies and through activities in PSHE sessions and family group time.
- Accurately complete admission and attendance registers and have effective day to day processes in place to follow-up absences
- Reward good or improving attendance;

Attendance data

We will regularly analyse attendance and absence data to identify pupils that require support with their attendance. This will usually be at individual pupil or family level, due to our small numbers on roll in each school. We will look at historic and emerging patterns across the school and develop strategies to address them.

We will also consider pupil cohorts such as those who have free school meals; special educational needs or disabilities; pupil premium; children with a social worker etc to identify where additional support may be required.

We will use the information to inform what we do to support and aid discussions between staff, pupils and families.

We will monitor the data to understand the impact of what we do.

We will communicate information to parents and carers in writing, through face-to-face discussions and we may also share this information with other professionals in TAF meetings.

Absence concerns

Parents may identify concerns about school attendance early if there is a change in their child's attitude to school or in their willingness to attend. If this is the case, concerns should be shared with school so that everyone can work together to ensure that school attendance does not decline. The earlier concerns are identified and shared, the quicker they may be resolved.

Persistent absence

Pupils who miss 10% or more of their sessions at school are persistently absent. Parents/carers will be notified if their child has missed more than 10% of school sessions and will be offered a meeting to identify reasons for absence and support with barriers to attendance.

Severe absence

Pupils who miss 50% or more of their sessions at school are severely absent. School will work with pupils, parents and partner services and agencies to provide additional support through a more formal, planned approach in conjunction with the local authority to prevent severe absence and an attendance support meeting will be held.

National framework for penalty notices and other legal intervention

To improve consistency of practice across the country there is a national framework for penalty notices.

At the point where there are 10 unauthorised absence sessions recorded in any 10-rolling school week period, schools must consider if:

- further support is appropriate.
- support is appropriate but is not being engaged with.
- support is appropriate but is not improving attendance.
- support is not needed, such as in cases of term-time leave of absence.

If support is appropriate, it should continue.

If support is appropriate but is not improving attendance or is not being engaged with, then a referral for consideration of legal intervention should be made to the local authority. This can include, but is not limited to, a Notice to Improve, an application for an Education Supervision Order, Fixed Penalty Notice or Offence Investigation Interview (PACE caution).

If support is not appropriate, such as where a holiday in term-time has taken place, a referral for a penalty notice will be made. ([DCC - Penalty Notice Code of Conduct](#))

Penalty notices offer the opportunity to deal with an irregular attendance offence without the need to go to court. Penalty notices are issued at a rate of £160, reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days.

There is an escalation policy which means that if a second notice is issued within a three-year period, the second notice will only be payable at the rate of £160. Further offences will not be eligible for the offer of a penalty notice and parents may be prosecuted in court. ([DCC - Penalty Notice Leaflet](#))

If penalty notices are not paid, then a prosecution for the original irregular attendance offence will take place.

If convicted at court under section 444 of the Education Act for failing to secure the regular attendance of a registered pupil at school, a parent may be fined up to £1000 for each offence. If there is evidence that a parent knowingly failed to secure the attendance and there is no reasonable justification for this, they can be fined up to £2500 and/or face up to 3 months in prison, be subject to probation supervision or have a curfew imposed as maximum sentences.

Pupils with specific needs

The Durham Dales Partnership acknowledge that it is essential to consider the specific needs of individual pupils and families, who have specific barriers to attendance. Where attendance is adversely affected, we will consider the individual circumstances and the factors contributing towards the absence. This will be applied fairly and consistently and consider the obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

This policy is supported by our policies on:

Safeguarding, behaviour, supporting children with medical needs

The school and all partners will work together to:

EXPECT

Aspire to high aspirations of attendance from all pupils and parents and build a culture where all can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across the school.



MONITOR

Rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.



LISTEN AND UNDERSTAND

When a pattern is spotted, discuss with pupils and parents to listen to understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.



FACILITATE SUPPORT

Remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. This might include an early help or whole school family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues.



FORMALISE SUPPORT

Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners should work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances this may include formalising support through an attendance or education supervision order.



ENFORCE

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, enforce attendance through statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.