



# Dunstable Icknield Lower School

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## Attendance Policy

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Dunstable Icknield Lower School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people.



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## Attendance Policy

1. Dunstable Icknield Lower School actively encourages regular attendance. Children need to attend regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. Irregular attendance undermines the educational process and may lead to educational disadvantage.
2. Parents/carers are primarily responsible for ensuring that children attend school. It is the school's responsibility to support attendance and to take seriously problems which may lead to non-attendance. Parental responsibility extends beyond securing regular school attendance, so it is also important that parents/carers ensure that their children arrive at school on time every day. School starts at 8.55am.
3. Pupils attend for 190 days each year – a total of 38 weeks.

### **School Attendance and the Law**

4. Under the 1996 Education Act, parents/carers and carers are responsible for ensuring their children attend school regularly and punctually. Failure to do so could result in legal action being taken against them by the Local Authority.
5. The register is a legal document and schools must, under the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006 take a register at the start of the morning session, and again during the afternoon session. Since September 2006, schools have been required to use statutory registration codes (see DfE document, School Attendance Guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities, November 2016).
6. Under the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006, only the school (and not parents/carers) can authorise an absence. Where the reason for a pupil's absence cannot be established at the time the register is taken, that absence shall be recorded as unauthorised. If a reason for absence is provided by the parent/carer, the school may decide to grant leave of absence which must be recorded as authorised using the appropriate national code.
7. The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2013 have removed all references to family holidays and leave of absence shall not be granted unless an application had been made in advance and the Headteacher considers that leave of absence should be granted due to exceptional circumstances. Headteachers no longer have the discretion to authorise up to ten days of absence. This discretion has been removed by the aforementioned Regulations (2013). Whilst the Headteacher will consider all requests on a case-by-case basis, parents/carers must be aware that requests will normally be refused.
8. Where a family **chooses** to take a holiday during term time, the absence will be coded as unauthorised (G code) and a Penalty Notice may be issued to each parent/carer for each child (where 5 or more days of unauthorised absence are recorded as a result).
9. If leave of absence is **taken without the request having been agreed**, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. This may result in the Local Authority issuing a Penalty Notice, using the legal powers under Section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003, to issue Penalty Notices (or fixed fines) to parents/carers whose children fail to attend school regularly. If this penalty is not paid the Local Authority will instigate legal proceedings against the parent/carer in the Magistrates Court.



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10. In compliance with the Education Act 436A (Chapter 2 Part 6) the school will, after making appropriate checks, report all Children Missing from Education to the Local Authority, Education Welfare Service, who has a duty to investigate the whereabouts of such children and negotiate their prompt return to suitable education.

## **Communication**

11. At the induction meetings for children about to join the school, the importance of regular attendance is discussed and explained. At this initial meeting parents/carers are asked to arrange their family holidays within school holidays, rather than in term time so that their child's education is not disrupted. The school's policy relating to authorisation of holidays is also communicated to parents/carers.
12. When children join our school at other times of the year, the importance of regular attendance is discussed with parents/carers.

## **Attendance Registers**

13. These are required in law to be called twice a day; once at the commencement of the morning session and once at the commencement of the afternoon session. The registers are closed at 9.10 am.

## **Absence**

14. All parents/carers are asked to contact the school by 9.30 am if their child is absent. If no notification is received about a child's absence, then a member of the School's Administration Team will phone the child's parents/carers by 10.00 am to establish the reason for the absence. If there is no response from the first contact, school will phone the emergency contacts to confirm reason for child's absence. If there is no response from any contact, school may take further action.

## **Punctuality**

15. It is important that children arrive for school punctually to ensure a calm and purposeful start to the day. Where pupils arrive late for school [after the register has closed] this will be marked as unauthorised absence for that session, even though they may arrive later.

## **Illness, Medical and Dental Appointments**

16. If the school is satisfied that a pupil is absent as a result of illness, the absence will be treated as authorised. Leave for medical or dental appointments will be authorised where confirmation has been received from the parents/carers [either in person, telephone call or writing].

## **Attendance Incentives**

17. Children with 100% attendance for a whole term will receive a certificate and 5 house points.
18. Children in the class with the best attendance at the end of each term will receive 2 house points each.



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## **Monitoring Attendance**

19. Attendance is monitored initially by a member of the school's admin team. The Headteacher oversees the monitoring process and when the attendance of a child becomes a concern, meets with parents/carers to discuss attendance.
20. The Headteacher meets regularly with the Central Bedfordshire Home School Attendance Officer. Any issues identified concerning absence, illness or lateness will be addressed by the Home School Attendance Officer by letter, telephone or meeting with strategies put in place to improve attendance.
21. The Central Bedfordshire Home School Attendance Officer may refer a pupil to Education Welfare Service where attendance remains a concern following school intervention. The Education Welfare Service will work with schools and families to address attendance issues. However, if attendance fails to improve, legal action may be taken against parents/carers and could include a Penalty Notice, Education Supervision Order or Prosecution.

## **Leave of Absence**

22. Schools can only agree to absence if they believe there are exceptional circumstances which warrant it e.g. Attendance at the funeral of a close family member.
23. School can agree to an absence to facilitate religious observance if the request is received in advance of the absence. Only 3 days will be granted in any one academic year to facilitate religious observance.