



# Attendance and Punctuality Policy

## VERSION: August 2024

## NEXT REVIEW: August 2026

Donisthorpe Primary School seeks to ensure that all their pupils receive a full-time education which maximises opportunities for each pupil to achieve the best that they can. For pupils to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and punctually. Any absence causes disruption to learning and should be avoided if at all possible. Improving attendance at Donisthorpe Primary School is the responsibility of everyone in our community – pupils, parents, governors and staff.

Regular attendance is essential for pupils to get the most out of their school experience, including their attainment, wellbeing, and wider life chances. The pupils with the highest attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 (Year 6) have higher rates of attendance over the key stage compared to those with the lowest attainment. At KS2, pupils not meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and maths had an overall absence rate of 4.7%, compared to 3.5% among those meeting the expected standard.

### Senior Attendance Champion

The Headteacher is the Senior Attendance Champion, responsible for the strategic approach to attendance in school and can be contacted on 01530 270371 or [office@donisthorpe.leics.sch.uk](mailto:office@donisthorpe.leics.sch.uk)

### Aims

- To encourage and assist all pupils to achieve excellent levels of attendance of above 97%
- To make attendance and punctuality a priority for all those associated with the school including pupils, parents, teachers and governors.
- To maximise attendance across the school population and reduce persistent absenteeism (below 90%).
- To work together with parents/carers in both a supportive and challenging role to achieve high levels of attendance.

	Attendance	Days missed
Outstanding	Attendance is 97% or higher	0-6 days of school missed
Good	Attendance is 95% or higher	6-10 days missed
Requires improvement	Attendance is below 95%	10-19 days missed
Cause for concern (Persistent absence)	Attendance is below 90%	20+ days missed

## **Pupils**

All pupils are expected to:

- Attend school regularly and to arrive on time.
- Come to school properly equipped and prepared to learn.
- Talk to a member of staff if there is a problem causing them to miss school.

## **Parents/Carers**

Parents/carers are legally responsible for ensuring their child's regular attendance at school in accordance with Section 444 of the Education Act 1996. They should ensure that:

- Their child attends regularly and is punctual, properly dressed, equipped and in a fit condition to learn
- They inform the school of the reason for any absence by 9.00am on each morning of absence. The school will then make the decision to either authorise or unauthorise the absence. If no reason is given, the absence will be automatically unauthorised
- They know that holidays will not be authorised during term time
- They make medical and dental appointments outside school time wherever possible
- They give the school up to date information regarding diagnosed medical conditions which may affect attendance
- They provide the school with up-to-date contact details

## **The School**

The school will:

- Strive to provide a welcoming, caring environment whereby each member of the school community feels wanted and secure.
- Build strong relationships with families
- Establish an effective system of incentives and rewards to recognise the efforts of pupils to improve their attendance and timekeeping and will challenge the behaviour of those pupils and parents who give a low priority to attendance and punctuality.
- Recognise all young people who fall below the DofE threshold of 90% attendance as Persistent Absentees and will treat them as a vulnerable group of pupils who warrant additional support.

## **Governors**

Governors will:

- Support school to prioritise attendance
- Work together with school leaders to establish a whole school attendance culture
- Monitor attendance figures and hold the Headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

## **Registration**

Registration is a legal requirement and creates an orderly start to the school day.

The school day is from 8.30am to 3.15pm.

Registers close promptly at 8.50am.

The afternoon register is taken straight after lunchtime at 1.00pm.

Pupils arriving after the registers are closed at 8.50am will receive a late mark. Any pupil arriving after 9.00am will receive a 'U' code in the register which equates to an unauthorised absence. If a valid explanation is received by school for the late mark, the Headteacher has the discretion to amend this to an authorised absence.

## **Unexpected Absences**

In the event of a pupil's unexpected absence (e.g. illness), the school office should be informed by 9.00am,

by phoning the office on 01530 270371 and leaving a message or by email on [office@donisthorpe.leics.sch.uk](mailto:office@donisthorpe.leics.sch.uk)

The school's register will be coded in accordance with the Department of Education mandatory codes as published in the Working together to improve attendance guidance 2024.

All absences **must** be explained by a parent or carer. The Headteacher will then decide whether or not to authorise the absence.

Any unexplained absence will be unauthorised.

Absence may be authorised due to:

- Sickness
- Unavoidable medical/dental appointments
- Exceptional family circumstances
- Individual circumstances

School attendance records are completed daily and stored electronically for future reference.

If a pupil's attendance becomes a cause for concern, the school may ask parents to provide medical evidence to substantiate their reasons before the absence can be authorised.

### **Exceptional Leave**

Donisthorpe Primary School recognise that there may be times when a pupil requires exceptional leave during term time for short periods of time. In these circumstances parents must complete the 'Exceptional Leave Form' to request the absence, in advance. These requests will be considered by the Headteacher on an individual basis. If leave is granted, the Headteacher will determine the length of time the pupil can be away from school.

Exceptional leave may be granted for:

- Religious observance
- External exams
- Part-time timetable
- Visits to prospective new schools

### **Holidays/Unauthorised absence**

Donisthorpe Primary School believes that any absence from learning disrupts continuity of learning, undermines educational progress and should be avoided, therefore, holidays in term time will not be authorised, unless deemed by the Headteacher to be exceptional.

If a pupil meets the national threshold to issue a penalty notice, the Headteacher will consider if a penalty notice fine will be issued, and refer the pupil to the Local Authority.

The national threshold is 10 sessions of absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks e.g.

5 or more consecutive days of term time leave (holiday), and for fewer days where this has happened before, in line with DfE Working together to improve attendance guidance 2024.

10 sessions of unauthorised non-consecutive absence in a 10-week rolling period (including holidays and late marks).

Before issuing a penalty notice, the Headteacher will consider if further support would be more appropriate and will consider obligations Under the Equality Act 2010, such as where a child has a disability.

Penalty notices will be issued in line with the National Framework for Penalty Notices:

First Penalty Notice - £160 per parent (authorising the absence) per child when paid within 28days. This will be reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days.

Second Penalty Notice (within 3 years) - £160 per parent (authorising the absence) per child when paid within 28days.

Third Penalty Notice (within 3 years) - the third time an offense is committed, alternative action will be taken. This will often include considering prosecution or other attendance legal interventions.

*See Appendix 1 – Leicestershire County Council overview*

### **Procedures for Following Up Absence/Lateness**

If a pupil is absent and no reason has been provided by 9.45am, school will contact parents/carers, as part of the safeguarding procedure. School will contact emergency contacts in order of preference on the pupil's admission form.

If absence continues without explanation, further contact will be made to ensure safeguarding. When a pupil arrives after 9.00am, parents will be asked the reason for the late arrival.

### **Monitoring Pupil Absence and Notifying Parents of Concerns**

Attendance is monitored on a regular basis by the Headteacher. Parents/carers will be kept regularly informed of all concerns regarding attendance and punctuality. Every effort is made to resolve attendance concerns through joint support with school, parents and pupils and where necessary, wider support services.

The following steps will be followed to address attendance concerns:

- When a pupil is identified as having low attendance, an initial letter will be sent, advising parents of the attendance concern and offer support.
- If there is no improvement over a reasonable period of time, a second letter will be sent to parents/carers, inviting parents to make an appointment with the Headteacher to listen to and understand the barriers to attendance and to discuss ways that school and home can work together to support improving attendance.
- If there continues to be no improvement or absence intensifies, a third letter will be sent inviting parents/carers to a further meeting to discuss what further support can be offered, in tandem with the local authority and other relevant partners (e.g. early help, school nurse). During the meeting, the consequences of persistent and severe absence will be explained, as well as the potential need for legal intervention. It will also be an opportunity to continue to listen to and understand the barriers to attendance.
- Where voluntary support has not been effective, and there is no improvement in attendance, School will pass the case on to The Attendance Team at the Local Authority for formal support and possible legal intervention / penalty notice.

Donisthorpe Primary School recognises that some pupils face greater barriers to attendance than their peers. We are mindful of individuals pupils' barriers and will put additional support in place where necessary to help them to access full-time education. In very exceptional circumstances, where it is in the pupils' best interest, we may consider a part-time timetable.

## Penalty Notices for unauthorised absences: What you need to know about the changes.

With the introduction of the new National Framework for Penalty Notices, the following changes will come into force for unauthorised absences that occur after 19<sup>th</sup> August 2024.

### 5 Consecutive Days of Term Time Leave.

Penalty Notice fines will be issued for term time leave of 5 or more consecutive days, and for fewer days where this has happened before.

### 10 Sessions of Unauthorised Absence in a 10-week period.

Penalty Notice fines will be considered when there have been 10 sessions of absence in a 10-week period.

### Per Parent, Per Child

Penalty Notice fines will be issued to each parent, for each child who was absent.

For example: 3 siblings absent for term time leave will result in each parent receiving 3 separate fines.

#### First Offence

The first time a Penalty Notice is issued for Term Time Leave or irregular attendance the amount will be:

£160 per parent, per child when paid within 28 days.

Reduced to £80 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days.

#### Second Offence (within 3 years)

The second time a Penalty Notice is issued for Term Time Leave or irregular attendance the amount will be:

£160 per parent, per child when paid within 28 days.

(No option to pay at £80 level)

#### Third offence and Any Further Offences (within 3 years)

The third time an offence is committed for Term Time Leave or irregular attendance a Penalty Notice will not be issued. The case will proceed to the Magistrates' court.

Magistrate's fines can be up to £2,500 per parent, per child.



Please consult your school's attendance policy and speak with your school if you are thinking of taking your child out of school during term-time. It is likely you will need to make a written request to take your child out of school and any leave of absence will need to be agreed by your Headteacher before it is taken.

## Appendix 2- Request for Leave of Absence

Child's Name	Class
Date of leave requested:	
From:	To:
Please state the reason for the leave requested. Please give as much information as possible. The Headteacher may request additional information before making a decision.	
Signed	Date
Signed by person with parental responsibility for this child	
<p><b>Please note:</b></p> <p>Parents do not have an automatic right to take their child out of school for a holiday. The Headteacher has the discretionary power to grant leave if it is considered that there are special circumstances relating to that application.</p> <p>Special Circumstances DO NOT include the circumstances such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Wanting to go away for the weekend</li><li>• Wanting to take a family holiday</li><li>• Friends or family organising a holiday without realising when school holidays fall</li><li>• The financial implications of going on holiday (ie: it's cheaper to take a holiday during school time than during school holiday time)</li><li>• Taking a Friday off "to avoid the traffic" etc when going away for the weekend</li><li>• A day off for a special occasion (eg birthday)</li></ul> <p><b>No absences will be authorised:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• During the week of, or the week before; Year 6 SATs for any reason other than illness</li></ul> <p><b>In brief, the regulations mean that:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Parents cannot demand a leave of absence as an automatic right</li><li>▪ The Headteacher may ask for additional information before making a decision</li><li>▪ The Headteacher will not apply blanket policies to approve/reject all applications</li><li>▪ All requests must be considered on their own merits but there must be special circumstances before the request is granted</li><li>▪ Extended periods of absence will be granted only in exceptional circumstances</li><li>• Leave of absence may be granted for special circumstances that are a "one-off" special event, this is at the Headteacher's discretion, and also for parents who cannot take a holiday during school holiday time (e.g. their own place of work will not allow it) or because parents have been unable to go on holiday during school holiday time (e.g. due to a stay in hospital etc.). Under these circumstances, leave may be granted by the Headteacher</li></ul>	