



The Downland Federation

Attendance Policy

Date established: March 2010

Date of last review: July 2019

Date of next review: July 2021

Monitoring and Evaluation: Attendance figures are reported to governors on a termly basis.

The Downland Federation is committed to the safeguarding and welfare of its students and young people

Status: **Non-Statutory**, (linked to attendance target setting)

Purpose:

To ensure that all staff at The Downs School are fully aware and clear about the actions necessary to promote good attendance.

- To encourage maximum student attendance by valuing high attendance rates.
- To monitor attendance rates for each student to ensure that they take full advantage of their educational opportunity by attending regularly.
- To identify the factors which influence student attendance and work in partnership with parents, the Educational Welfare Service and other support agencies to address difficulties and improve attendance.

Consultation:

Staff and governors were consulted on the Attendance Policy.

Relationship to other policies:

See Anti-Bullying, Safeguarding, Behaviour and Health and Safety.

Roles and responsibilities of Headteacher, staff, students and governors:

All staff should be aware of their responsibilities in promoting attendance within the school.

- Governors will ensure the effective and rigorous implementation and monitoring of the policy and have a duty, along with the Headteacher, to report on attendance figures.
- The Deputy Headteacher (Ethos and Achievement) is responsible for the strategic overview of attendance throughout the school
- Students learn best when they have good attendance. This can be achieved when expectations of attendance are high and staff follow the school systems when dealing with attendance issues. The school systems range from the use of the parent Gateway, email and regular phone calls to parents, to the use of fixed penalty notices in more extreme cases.
- Parents have a responsibility to report their child's absence on the first day
- All staff have a responsibility for monitoring levels of attendance and acting upon any concerns.
- The work of the school staff and external agencies should be effectively co-ordinated.
- The members of the pastoral team for each Year Group, under the supervision of the member of SLT with responsibility for the Key Stage, should work together to ensure that all instances of absence are followed up as soon as practicably possible and that long term strategies for improving the attendance of individual students are enacted.
- Students with poor attendance should be offered the support of the school to improve their attendance. Student support managers should co-ordinate the provision of this support
- Students should be clear about the consequences of poor attendance. Good attendance should be reinforced through praise, reward and celebration.
- Parents and students should understand that the school cannot authorise requests for term time absence unless there are exceptional circumstances. All requests for term time absence must be made using the 'Leave of Absence Form,' available in reception, at least three weeks before the leave of absence is due to take place. The forms must be submitted to the student's Head of Year / Head of Sixth Form and will then be given to the Deputy Headteacher (Ethos and Achievement) for consideration. Parents will be informed in writing about the outcome of their request for leave of absence.
- Parents have a legal duty to ensure the regular and punctual attendance of their child at school that the child is registered unless the absence has been authorised by the school. West Berkshire has provided a leaflet on this, copies of which are available from the school.
- Fixed penalty notices will be issued, according to West Berkshire Code of Conduct, in respect of unauthorised absence from school and the presence in public of excluded pupils during the first five days of exclusion.

Guidance for Staff on Attendance:

1. The importance of attendance will be highlighted to prospective parents and communicated to parents through regular entries in the parent newsletter and in other events, such as Key Stage Information Evenings
2. Attendance will be reviewed in a termly report produced by the Deputy Headteacher (Ethos and Achievement) for the SLT and Governors
3. Students will be encouraged to consider the implications of good attendance through inter-form competitions and assemblies
4. The attendance of individual students will be discussed fortnightly by the Student Support Managers and Education Welfare Officer
5. Attendance issues will be discussed weekly at the meetings between Heads of Year and form tutors, with form tutors being clear on how they should be following up the attendance of individual students
6. Attendance issues will be discussed fortnightly at Every Child Matters meetings, in which Heads of Year will work collaboratively with Student Managers to tackle attendance issues.
7. Letters will be sent to parents when a student's absence drops below 93%
8. Additional letters will be sent to parents when a student's absence drops below 90% and the student becomes a persistent absentee; in most cases the student will also be put on an attendance plan, in which the student will be given clear targets for improving attendance
9. If the Attendance Plan targets are not met, the school may decide to impose Fixed Penalty Notices in accordance with DFE guidance
10. Students with low attendance will be provided with appropriate support, including the intervention of the Education Welfare Officer
11. Students with good attendance will be rewarded by postcards home.

Guidance for Parents on Attendance:

Why is good attendance so important?

Good attendance is essential in order for students to make sustained academic progress and also for students to feel that they are active members of the school community, involved not only in lessons but also in the extra-curricular activities that are so important for their wellbeing.

We become very concerned when a student's attendance falls below 90%:

- Students who have attendance below 90% are persistent absentees from school
- 90% attendance equates to half a day missed every week
- 90% attendance in one school year equates to 4 whole weeks of lessons missed in that year
- 90% attendance over 5 years of secondary school equates to half a year of school missed
- Evidence suggests that, on average, every 17 days of school missed by a student equates to a drop of 1 GCSE grade

For these reasons the school will work very closely with the parents and carers of students who have low attendance to get to the root of the problem and provide support to help the attendance improve.

In accordance with the West Berkshire Code of Conduct, we also use fixed penalty fines when students have unauthorised absences from school. Circumstances under which fixed penalty fines can be issued are as follows. More detailed information on the Code of Conduct is available on the West Berkshire website.

- Where a pupil is present in a public place during the first 5 days of being excluded from school
- Where the pupil has had 10 or more school days of unauthorised absence within any 10 week school period

- Where a pupil has had 5 or more school days of unauthorised absence in a 10 week school period and the unauthorised absence relates to a planned leave of absence e.g. holiday.

What should I do if my child is unable to come to school due to illness?

Should your child be unavoidably absent from school, such as because of illness, can you please inform the school in the following ways. This procedure also applies to Sixth Form students.

1. By telephone – please call 01635 270000 and leave a message on the absence line.
2. By email – Email absence@thedownsschool.org. Please do not use contact@thedownsschool.org for this purpose.
3. Via the Parent Gateway.

Please ensure that your messages reach the school by the end of the morning registration period, which finished at 9.10am. In the case of illness, please contact the school each morning of absence to ensure that your child's absence record is correct. Please also use these methods of communication to inform the school if your child needs to be absent due to medical or dental appointments.

If your child is going to be absent for any reason apart from illness or medical/dental appointment, a Planned Leave of Absence form must be obtained from Reception for students in Years Seven to Eleven, or from the Sixth Form Office for students in the Sixth Form. Please allow ten days for this request to be reviewed.

If you have a concern about your child's attendance, please contact his or her tutor or, in more serious cases, his or her Head of Year to discuss the issue further.