



Dacorum Education
Support Centre

Attendance Policy

The Government's aim is that children achieve over 95% attendance. At DESC, the staff and Management Committee are committed to promoting these excellent levels of attendance and punctuality, enabling our pupils to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them and we want parents/carers to join us in this community commitment to high standards. Excellent levels of attendance and punctuality will help the children in our school community to maximise their learning, preparing them for their secondary education and the world of work.

Responsibilities and Expectations

The responsibility for excellent attendance is shared between DESC, the young people and Parents / Carers. It is important that these groups understand the expectations which this policy makes of them.

DESC will:

- Provide a safe learning environment.
- Ensure that records of attendance are maintained accurately and consistently on a daily basis as required by the DfE.
- Keep records for a minimum of 3 years.
- Promote and encourage excellent levels of attendance.
- Follow up all instances of poor attendance and punctuality and unexplained absence.
- Work closely with parents/carers and young people to support regular attendance promptly responding should attendance/punctuality be a cause for concern.
- Discuss attendance issues with the young people to support and enable them to improve their attendance
- Provide attendance and punctuality details on pupil's reports.
- Forward the EWN1 'Deletion from Roll' form to the Attendance Team within 2 weeks of removing a child from the school roll, having made all reasonable checks to locate the child. Should the school have concerns the Headteacher must alert the Attendance Improvement Officer (AIO) immediately. The AIO must be informed once a child has been absent for 2 weeks.
- Inform alternative providers of known absence
- Report attendance to the young person's main schools and other agencies involved

Parents/Carers:

- Under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 parents/carers have a legal duty to ensure that their child attends regularly and punctually.
- Parent/carers should:
 - ensure that their child is properly dressed and equipped and in a fit state to learn
 - instil in their child an appreciation of the importance of attending regularly
 - impress upon their child the need to observe the centres code of conduct
 - take an active interest in their child's school career e.g. praising good work and behaviour, attending parents' meetings etc
 - work in partnership with the school to resolve any issues which may lead to poor attendance
- inform the centre on the first day of absence, of the reason for their child's absence, and maintain regular contact
- provide medical confirmation for absence if necessary
- ensure that the centre is informed of any changes of contact details
- avoid taking leave of absence and booking holidays during term time
- avoid organising medical / dental appointments during sessions when young people are expected to attend

Young People are

- Expected to attend centre regularly and punctually in accordance with their programme
- Are expected to be committed to actively improving their attendance/punctuality.

Registration

- Registers are taken as young people arrive for tuition using an electronic system (SIMs)
- Registers are marked consistently by staff using attendance codes in accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006.
- Pupils are expected to be ready to learn.
- Pupils will not leave the centre site without permission.

Lateness:

- Any young person arriving after the start of their first session will be signed in as late – a satisfactory reason must be given.
- Any young person arriving late but within the first 30 minutes, will be marked as 'L', late before closure of register (present)
- Any young person arriving after the register closes, thirty minutes after the start of their tuition marked 'U' , late after closure of register (unauthorised absence) unless the Headteacher agrees to an alternative register symbol e.g. 'C' (other authorised circumstances).

Absence:

- Parents must provide notification to the centre for all absences – records will be kept for 3 years.
- It is the Headteacher's decision whether to authorise an absence or not. This responsibility may be delegated to other staff within the school.
- All medical/dental appointments should be made, whenever possible, out of school hours.
- The centre operates a '1st Day Response' policy. Should a parent not contact the school by thirty minutes after the students official start time, on the first day of absence with a reason for the absence, the centre will contact the parents/carers for the reason.
- If a young person is ill, parents are requested to inform the centre on the first day of absence and then on a daily basis. It is important that communication is maintained.
- All young people must be signed in and out at Reception. This is a Health and Safety requirement.

Authorised Absence:

Most absence will be authorised by the Headteacher. Authorised absence is a legitimate absence from school.

Unauthorised Absence:

Absence will be unauthorised by the Headteacher if he/she considers the absence is not legitimate. Absence will be unauthorised when:

- No explanation has been provided by parents/carers following a request from Centre
- Attendance levels are below 85%. The Government classifies children with attendance below 85% as Persistent Absentees, whatever the reason for absence. Medical confirmation or copies of appointment letters/cards may be requested
- The Headteacher is dissatisfied with the explanation provided.
- The reason for the absence is not directly related to the child e.g. parent is ill
- Absence is not considered to be an exceptional circumstance e.g. shopping during school hours, birthday trips
- Leave of absence is taken without the agreement of the Headteacher

Follow- Up Action

Lateness:

- Parents / carers are expected to provide a reason for lateness.
- Being punctual and arriving in centre on time not only makes for a good start to the day but it shows consideration to others as it avoids repetition of instructions and teaching.
- Parents whose children arrive regularly late for school will be contacted by a member of DESC staff.
- Any young person who arrives in centre after the end of registration is to be marked absent. However a different code will be used in registers to differentiate between those who arrive during registration and those who arrive after.
- Any young person who arrives after the close of registration will be marked absent.

Absence:

- The centre operates a '1st Day Response' policy (see 'Absence' section).
- For Persistent Absentee pupils (pupils with attendance under 85%) the centre may request medical confirmation or copies of medical letters/appointment cards.
- The centre will provide support to assist all young people returning to school from a long term absence.
- Young people who are persistently absent or no contact from home will receive a home visit.
- Early contact will be made with parents when there is failure to attend without good reason and there is a pattern of absences or an excessive number of absences or lateness.
- Weekly contact with parents will be made by the young person's Link Mentor when any issues will be discussed.

Rewards:

At DESC we run an extensive programme of rewards:

- Regular letters are sent home praising good attendance.
- Termly certificates are produced for excellent attendance.
- Pupils with good attendance will gain merits.
- Outstanding attendance is rewarded at the presentation evening.

Leave of Absence During Term Time

- There is no automatic entitlement in law to time off during term time for a holiday.
- In accordance with DfE guidance, requests for leave of absence will only be given in exceptional circumstances. Requests will be considered on an individual basis and must be made on a form available from the office at least 4 weeks prior to the commencement of the requested leave of absence (Appendix 2).
- Should the leave of absence not be requested, or requested and not agreed by the Headteacher and taken, the leave will be unauthorised, putting the parents/carers at
- Risk of the centre applying to the Local Authority for a Penalty notice to be issued to the parents. Should the absence be part of on-going poor attendance, this may result in the involvement of an Attendance Improvement Officer.
- Retrospective permission will not be granted for leave of absence already taken.
- Parents/carers are expected to contact the centre if they are unable to return from leave of absence on the agreed date, providing a reason for the delay. They may be requested to provide confirmation of the reason for the delay.

Should a parent proceed with leave of absence when permission has not been granted and the absence exceeds 4 weeks, the Headteacher may remove the pupil from the roll of the school.

In both circumstances, the school must notify the AIO and a pupil will only be removed from roll should the school and local Authority (AIO) be unsuccessful in locating the family, at which time, the child will be referred to the Children Missing Education Officer (CME).

- Should unauthorised leave of absence lead to cumulative absence exceeding 20 sessions across the current and/or previous term, the centre can apply to the Local Authority for a Penalty Notice fine to be issued to the parents/carers.

Penalty Notices

DESC operates Penalty Notices.

If a pupil has at least 21 sessions (half day = 1 session) unauthorised absence in the current and/or previous term, including leave of absence where permission has been denied, the Headteacher can apply for a Penalty Notice fine to be issued to parents/carers by the Local Authority. A fine of £60 is issued if paid within 21 days or £120 if paid within 28 days. Fines can be issued to each parent/carer for each child. Parents can discharge potential liability for conviction by paying the penalty. Should the fine not be paid within 28 days the Local Authority must consider prosecution for the offence.

Attendance Improvement Officer

DESC works in partnership with the allocated attendance Improvement Officer (AIO) who visits regularly to improve attendance for individual young people and the whole of DESC. AIOs form the Attendance Team, part of Integrated Service for Learning, employed by Hertfordshire County Council.