



A Safeguarding Policy

Attendance Policy

Review Date	Reviewer	Approved by	Date Approved	Implementation
November 2021	S Begum	F Hoare	November 2021	November 2021
November 2022	S Wilson	F Hoare	November 2022	November 2022
September 2023	S Wilson	F Hoare	September 2023	September 2023
September 2025				



Revision History

Issue No:	Date	Description
3	November 2021	Updated Attendance Lead and Attendance Governor Updated reference to the Law and Links to Other Policies
4	November 2022	Reviewed and updated in accordance with the guidance 'Working together to Improve School Attendance'. Added Mrs Wilson as person with overall responsibility for championing and improving attendance. Included contact details for Mrs Wilson. Included references to the analysing of attendance data. Amended the aims to include reference to identify and removing barriers to attendance and working with external agencies to provide support to improve attendance. Updated Absence procedures to include specific reference to safeguarding, contact details and persistently and severely absent pupils. Included reference to the legal action that can be used to enforce school attendance. Updated section on Leave of Absence in Term-Time to include reference to Penalty Notices. Updated section on Rewarding Good Attendance. Updated sections on The School Day and Punctuality. Updated Roles and Responsibilities to include Special Educational Needs Co-Ordinator.
5	September 2023	Change in requests for leave of absence

Introduction

As part of the North East Learning Trust, Diamond Hall Junior Academy seeks to ensure that all pupils receive an education which maximises opportunities and enables them to realise their true potential. The Academy will strive to provide a welcoming, caring environment, whereby each member of the school community feels wanted and secure.

Our aim as a Rights Respecting School, is to promote high rates of attendance and ensure children are on time for school. It is also our policy to maintain parents and pupils' awareness of the importance of regular attendance.

Mrs S Wilson, Assistant Headteacher has overall responsibility for championing and improving attendance and can be contacted via telephone on 0191 5630975 or email at enquiries@diamondhalljuniors.co.uk. Mrs Wilson will ensure the accurate completion of registers at the start of each morning and afternoon session. Attendance figures will be reported to parents in annual reports. All staff will work with pupils and their families to support parents/carers in helping them to meet their legal duty; to ensure that their child/children attend the Academy regularly and on time. The attendance target for the academic year 2022/2023 is 97%, which is equal to 6 days absence in a whole school year. The Governor with responsibility for attendance is Mrs C Harris.

School attendance is subject to various Education laws and this school attendance policy is written to reflect these laws and the guidance produced by the Department for Education.

At Diamond Hall Junior Academy, we believe that good attendance and punctuality are important in helping pupils achieve the best that they can be. Pupils should be at school on time dressed in accordance with the school uniform policy, and ready to learn, every day the school is open, unless the reason for absence is unavoidable.

Promoting excellent attendance is the responsibility of the whole school community including pupils, parents/carers, governors, and staff.

The Academy has incentives and rewards to acknowledge those pupils with outstanding and improved attendance and will support those pupils and parents/carers who are finding school attendance and punctuality difficult.

To identify patterns of absence the Academy will analyse weekly attendance data and inform parents/carers where attendance falls below the Academy target. If there are further absences the Academy will work with pupils and parents/carers to identify and remove barriers to attending school.

Aims

- To maintain high standards of attendance of pupils registered at the Academy.
- To make attendance and punctuality a priority for all those associated with the Trust and the Academy including pupils, parents/carers, staff, Governors, and Trustees.

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- To develop a framework which defines agreed roles and responsibilities and promotes consistency in carrying out designated tasks.
- To provide support, advice and guidance to parents/carers and pupils.
- To develop a systematic approach to gathering and analysing attendance related data.
- To further develop positive and consistent communication between home and the Academy.
- To promote effective partnerships with the Local Authority's (LA) Attendance Team and with other services and agencies.
- To recognise the needs of the individual pupil when planning reintegration following significant periods of absence.
- To target support for persistent absence (those whose attendance falls below 90% 19 days of absence) and severe absence (those whose absence falls below 50% 95 days of absence) to remove any barriers to attendance by working with pupils, parent/carers and across a range of local partners.
- To ensure that all stakeholders understand the importance and also value outstanding attendance.
- To recognise and reward outstanding attendance.

Links with other policies

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following Trust and Academy policies and procedures:

- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Children Missing in Education
- Safeguarding
- Supporting Pupils with Medical Needs

Attendance and Attainment

We recognise that the relationship between attendance and attainment of our pupils is inextricably linked.

Regular attendance at the Academy is crucial to maximise pupil progress and enjoyment of learning, and for this reason the Academy is dedicated to ensuring the attendance policy is adhered to.

Promoting Regular Attendance

To ensure that parents/carers are aware of the Academy's attendance procedures and their parental responsibility for their child's attendance and punctuality the Academy will:

- Give information on attendance and punctuality on the Academy's website and the Parental Guides 'Fixed Penalty Notices' and 'Holidays in School Time'.
- Involve parents/carers from the earliest stage of poor attendance.

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- Ensure parents are contacted on the first day of absence if contact has not been made by parents/carers.

To ensure that pupils are aware of the importance of good attendance and punctuality the Academy will:

- Establish and maintain a high profile for attendance and punctuality.
- Relate attendance issues directly to the Academy's values, ethos, and curriculum.
- Reward good attendance.

Types of Absence

Every half-day (1 session) absence from the Academy must be classified as either authorised or unauthorised. It is not the responsibility of parents to classify an absence, only the Headteacher is able to authorise an absence from school.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from the Academy for a good reason such as illness or medical appointments which unavoidably fall in school time. Other exceptional circumstances that warrant an authorised leave of absence will be considered on an individual basis considering the specific facts and circumstances.

Unauthorised absence are mornings or afternoons away from the Academy for reasons which the Academy does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been given. This type of absence can lead to the LA using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. Absence codes are entered in line with statutory guidance.

Absence Procedures

Under the 1996 Education Act parents commit an offence if the child does not attend school regularly. If your child cannot come to school because of illness, you should advise the school on the first day of absence by telephone. If no message is received, we will make every effort to contact you by phone call. A voice message will be left to ask you to contact the school office to explain the absence. If a message cannot be left, a text message will be sent to ask you to contact school.

It is essential that the school is kept informed of changes of contact details such as phone numbers and addresses. In cases where we continue to be concerned, we may make a 'home visit', request Attendance 100 to visit or request the police to undertake a 'Safe and Well' welfare visit. Parents are encouraged to ensure that their child brings in a letter confirming the reasons for the absence when the child returns to school.

The school will only authorise a medical absence if the circumstances are unavoidable. If a parent rings the school to confirm the pupil is unwell, the school may request supporting evidence: medical appointment card with one appointment entered, letter from a professional, doctor's note, medication prescribed by a doctor, copy of prescription, print screen of medical notes, as well as letters concerning hospital appointments or any other relevant evidence.

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The school may choose not to authorise absence without this supporting evidence as it is for the school to determine if an absence is to be authorised (Regulation 7 The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006.)

Parents are asked to make routine medical and dental appointments outside school hours wherever possible. Where such appointments in school time are unavoidable, parents should inform the school in advance and submit a copy of the appointment card. The absence will be marked unauthorised if the parent fails to submit the appointment card.

We will closely monitor your child's attendance and alert you if we feel there is an issue. The school undertakes a range of measures to support pupils where attendance is an issue. Where we fail to see an improvement in a pupil's attendance it may be necessary to make a referral to an appropriate external agency to ensure the pupil receives the support required it is important that parents work with the relevant external agency to improve their child's attendance.

If your child is experiencing difficulties, you should contact the school at an early stage and work together with staff in resolving the difficulties. This is nearly always successful.

If the difficulties cannot be resolved in this way, the school will make a referral to the Local Authority Attendance Service they will assess the case to determine the appropriateness of use of statutory enforcement procedures i.e., Fixed Penalty Notices, Magistrates Court or seek an Education Supervision Order on the child. The maximum penalty on conviction is a fine of £2500 and/or 3 months imprisonment a parenting order can also be imposed.

School Procedure

- Every two weeks, attendance certificates are given to Attendance 100 for monitoring for those children with 95% attendance or less.
- Letters are sent, meetings arranged, or a home visit will take place to discuss attendance and a target will be given to show improvement. from the information given.
- When attendance is seen to be improving, further monitoring will take place to ensure that improvement continues.
- If attendance does not improve, and continues to be a concern, the Local Authority will be informed.
- Figures for lateness will also be given to Attendance 100 - procedure as above will be followed.
- Where attendance has been identified as a concern, sessions with a member of staff will take place with the children to address the importance of attending school every day.

If a child has less than 90% attendance, then they will be identified as persistent absentees.

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If a pupil is absent for a minimum of **5 unauthorised absences** (2 ½ days) during the previous 6 weeks school will make a referral to the local authority.

If attendance continues to be a cause for concern and there are no improvements in the pupil's attendance following intervention by school from the LA and Attendance 100 then the Local Authority will inform parents that legal action will be taken.

Any referrals or monitoring carried out by the school will be recorded electronically. Any attendance or lateness concerns will be passed on to their transferring school

Persistently and severely absent pupils

Persistent Absence (those whose attendance falls below 90% 19 days absence) and Severe Absence (those whose absence falls below 50% 95 days absence)

The Academy will adopt a whole school approach to help and support pupils and parent/carers to remove barriers. This will include support from the Education Welfare Officer, and when needed the Academy Nurse and School Counsellor. The Academy will help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. This might include a referral to local support services where absence is a symptom of wider issues. Pupils will become part of a Support Monitoring Group depending on the needs of the student this will be led by: the class teacher, Education Welfare Officer, Academy Nurse or SENDCO. The Academy may also request that a parent/carer provides the Academy with supporting medical evidence to verify prolonged or frequent absences and will refuse to authorise absences unless this proof is provided.

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, a referral will be made to the LA Attendance Improvement Team to consider enforcement action through statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the student's right to an education

The Law

The Education Act 1996 places a duty on parents to ensure that their child of compulsory school age receives a suitable education either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

In April 2017, the Supreme Court held that attending school 'regularly' means attending in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school and not 'sufficiently frequent attendance'. This means that a child must attend school on every day that the school requires him or her to do so and failure to do this may lead to the committing of an offence.

The Academy will offer help and support if there is a problem with attendance. If attendance does not improve or the parent does not accept the help and support offered, the LA may issue the parent with a Penalty Notice or prosecute the parent in accordance with Section 444 of The Education Act 1996.

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If a child is absent without authorisation, then the parent is guilty of an offence. This is a strict liability offence i.e., all that needs to be shown is a lack of regular attendance. Sanctions can include a fine of up to £1000. If the child is absent without authorisation and the parent knew about the child's absence and failed to act, then the parent is guilty of an aggravated offence. Sanctions can include a fine of up to £2500 and a prison sentence of up to three months.

Leave of Absence in Term Time

The law states that parents/carers do not have the right to take their child out of the Academy for holidays during term time other than in exceptional circumstances.

Headteachers are no longer able to grant leave of absence during term time **unless there are exceptional circumstances**. The Academy will consider each request of absence individually; considering the circumstances, such as the nature of the event for which leave is sought and any key events taking place in the Academy at that time e.g., termly tests.

Applications for Leave of Absence, where dates can be known ahead, must be made at least 4 weeks in advance of the requested date, in writing. Any leave requested, which is for more than 5 days, proof of dates of travel will be requested.

A leave of absence is granted entirely at the Headteacher's discretion. Where a leave of absence is granted, the Headteacher will determine the number of days a pupil can be away from the Academy. As stated in the most recent DFE guidance on attendance, if an application for leave of absence is not made prior to the time of the required absence then the absence will be recorded as unauthorised regardless of circumstances.

Any leave of absence that has been declined or the parents has not sought approval for will be recorded as unauthorised. These cases will be referred to the Local Authority and a Fixed Penalty Notice could be issued to each parent for each pupil.

Please note that absence will not be authorised under any circumstances during any period of public examinations or internal assessments.

Rewarding Good Attendance –

The Academy will reward high and improved attendance through the Academy's attendance reward system. For every full week the children will be given a token. They can exchange these tokens for rewards. The more tokens they have, the better the rewards get. This gives the children a reset at the start of each week to give everyone an opportunity to improve, regardless of their previous attendance.

We will also look for every opportunity to reward those pupils with the most improved attendance and those who attend well despite adversity.

Roles and Responsibilities

Promoting positive behaviour and excellent attendance is the responsibility of the whole school community including pupils, parents/carers, Governors, and staff.

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The Local Academy Council will:

- Ensure that the importance of attendance is made clear by promoting the relevant school policies and guidance directed at parents and staff.
- At their termly meetings they will review and discuss attendance issues that have arisen to be fully aware and supportive of expected attendance targets for the year.
- Ensure that the Academy is implementing effective means of recording attendance and organising that data, including for pupils who are educated off site.
- Ensure the Academy has an Attendance Champion.

Senior Leadership Team:

- Be active in their approach to promoting good attendance with pupils and their parents/carer.
- Ensure the Academy's teaching and learning experiences encourage regular attendance and that pupils are taught the value of high attendance for their own progression and achievement.
- Ensure that all staff are up to date with the Academy's Attendance Policy and that staff are fully trained to recognise and deal with attendance issues.
- Ensure government legislation on attendance is complied with and that the leadership team are up to date with any legislation changes and how to implement them.
- Nominate or appoint a senior manager to champion attendance and to take responsibility for overseeing and monitoring attendance provision and that this person has sufficient time and resources to give to the job.
- Report to the Local Academy Council each term on attendance records, data, and provision.
- Ensure that systems to record and report attendance data are in place and working effectively.

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Co-ordinator:

- Work closely with feeder schools for smooth year 2/3 transition for those pupils with SEND and offer additional small group or 1-1 visits to school during year 2/3 transition or for pupils transferring to the Academy.
- Develop good support for pupils with health conditions.
- Develop specific support for pupils with SEND.
- Work in partnership with relevant support services.
- Regular data monitoring with SLT.

Staff:

- Be active in their approach to promoting good attendance with pupils and their parents.
- Ensure the Academy's teaching and learning experiences encourage regular

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attendance and that pupils are taught the value of high attendance for their own progression and achievement.

- Ensure the senior manager responsible for overseeing attendance and any other relevant personnel are kept fully aware of and up to date with any concerns relating to pupils that may impact on their attendance.
- Ensure compliance with regulation and guidance on attendance and the accurate completion of registers at the start of each morning and afternoon session, and at the beginning of each teaching class, using the correct code in the register.
- Work professionally with colleagues, parents/carers, pupils, and relevant agencies to secure improvements in attendance via appropriate support.

Parents/Carers:

School attendance parental responsibility measures' (January 2015) define a parent as:

- All natural parents, whether they are married or not.
- Any person who has parental responsibility for a child or young person; and,
- Any person who has care of a child or young person i.e., lives with and looks after the child.

As a parent you have decided to have your child registered at the Academy, and therefore have an additional legal duty to ensure your child attends school regularly. This means your child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school.

- Support the school and their child in aiming for 100% attendance each academic year and ensure their child attends school daily and on time.
- Ensure that their child attends school regularly, punctually, dressed in the school uniform, fully equipped, with a positive attitude to learn.
- Notify the school before 8.30am of any absence.
- Avoid taking their child out of school for non-urgent medical or dental appointments only request leave of absence if it is for an exceptional circumstance.
- Ensure the school has updated contact numbers.
- Will actively work with the school staff and relevant multi-agency staff, to solve any attendance issues as and when they occur.

Pupils

- Will aim to achieve 100% attendance each academic year
- attend school daily.
- Will arrive on time and be appropriately prepared for the day.

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- Will tell a member of staff about any problem or reason that may prevent them from attending school.

Punctuality/Lateness

School starts at 8.40am followed by five-minute intervals when all pupils should be in their class line to be collected by the teacher to be taken into the class in preparation for the register being taken.

Pupils will start school at the staggered times of:

- Year 6 – 8.45am
- Year 5 – 8.40am
- Year 4 – 8.45am
- Year 3 – 8.50am

Pupils will finish school at the staggered times of:

- Year 6 – 3.15pm
- Year 5 – 3.10pm
- Year 4 – 3.15pm
- Year 3 – 3.10pm

The afternoon register is taken at 12:30pm in year 3 and 4 and 1:30pm in year 5 and 6. It is essential that all pupils are registered on both occasions.

Pupils who arrive after registration **must** sign in accordance with the school procedures. Parents must sign in their child at reception explaining why the child is late. Arrival after the close of registration with no valid reason will be marked as unauthorised absence and coded “U” in the register. Parents of pupils who have patterns of lateness will be contacted to discuss the importance of good time keeping and how this might be achieved. If lateness persists parents, will be invited to attend a meeting in school and discuss the problem. If the lateness continues a referral will be made to the Local Authority Attendance Service and a Fixed Penalty Notice could be issued or ultimately the parent could be prosecuted.

It is important to note that any pupil who arrives to school after 9:30am will be marked with a letter ‘U’ in the register. This means that despite being in school, they will technically be marked absent from school for the morning sessions. It will be recorded on the register as an unauthorised absence and could result in the issuing of Fixed Penalty Notice.

School Procedure

- Every two weeks, attendance certificates are given to Attendance 100 for monitoring for those children with 95% attendance or less.
- Letters are sent, meetings arranged, or a home visit will take place to discuss attendance and a target will be given to show improvement. from the information given.

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- When attendance is seen to be improving, further monitoring will take place to ensure that improvement continues.
- If attendance does not improve, and continues to be a concern, the Local Authority will be informed.
- Figures for lateness will also be given to Attendance 100 - procedure as above will be followed.
- Where attendance has been identified as a concern, sessions with a member of staff will take place with the children to address the importance of attending school every day.

If a child has less than 90% attendance, then they will be identified as persistent absentees.

If a pupil is absent for a minimum of **5 unauthorised absences** (2 ½ days) during the previous 6 weeks school will make a referral to the local authority.

If attendance continues to be a cause for concern and there are no improvements in the pupil's attendance following intervention by school from the LA and Attendance 100 then the Local Authority will inform parents that legal action will be taken.

Any referrals or monitoring carried out by the school will be recorded electronically through a secure management system of CPOMS. Any attendance or lateness concerns will be passed on to their transferring school via the CPOMS system.

Fixed Penalty Notice

With effect from 1st September 2014, the use of Fixed Penalty Notices will be implemented for unauthorised absences from school where such absence meets the criteria.

The criteria for issuing FPNs are contained in the Sunderland Local Code of Conduct, a copy of which can be found on the school website. A frequently asked questions response sheet has been prepared to assist parents in understanding how the scheme is administered, and this is also available on the school website.

There is much research which demonstrates the links between regular attendance at school and academic achievement – the more a pupil attends the more they can achieve. If a child has two weeks off or several odd day's absence from school over a sustained period, those days cannot be recovered, the learning is missed, and they will be in danger of falling behind and not achieving their full potential.

It is important that we work in partnership with parents to ensure that good attendance is maintained throughout the school year. Therefore, it is essential that parents support the school by:

- Ensuring that children attend regularly and arrive punctually.
- Informing the school on the first day of absence if their child/children is unable to attend due to illness. Some indication should be given of the likely length of the absence.

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- Providing a dated note explaining the absence when their child/children return to school if the information has not been communicated by other means.
- Avoiding the organisation of a family holiday during school time.

In the case of unauthorised term time leave, the letter that is sent by the Headteacher refusing a term time leave application will be regarded as the formal warning. If you then take the decision to remove your child from school for the holiday, the school will request the Local Authority to consider issuing a Fixed Penalty Notice.

It is expected that parents will contact school at an early stage and work together to resolve any attendance problems; there may be times when external agencies are needed to offer specialist support.

In Year Transfers

If your child is leaving other than at the end of Year 6 to go to Secondary School, parents are asked to

- Complete the relevant Local Authority In-Year Transfer form and give this to the school for the Head teacher of Diamond Hall Junior Academy to complete and send this to your school of preference.
- Arrangements will be different if your child is moving out of the authority. Please speak to us if you think that you may be moving out of authority and we will ensure that all appropriate records etc are forwarded to your child's new school.

Children Subject to a Child Protection Plan or Looked After by the Local Authority

If a child is subject to a Child Protection Plan or identified as a Child in Need, attendance is carefully monitored and reported at Core Group Meetings.

If a child is Looked After by the Local Authority, attendance is carefully monitored and reported at termly PEP meetings.

Pupils Who Attend Alternative Provision

If a child attends alternative provision for part of the week, close links will be maintained between the two providers daily. The providers will inform each other of any absence. Attendance will be checked each day. It is important that the parent contacts the school if their child is absent.

Children Missing Education

When pupils leave, and parents have not given the school the above information, and cannot contact you, then your child is considered as a Child Missing from Education. This means that the Local Authority has a legal duty to carry out investigations, which will include liaising with Children's Services (formerly Social Services) the Police and other agencies, to try to track and locate your child. By giving us the above information, unnecessary investigations can be avoided.

The LA must be informed of any pupil who fails to attend school regularly or has been absent without school permission for a continuous period of ten days or more.

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The LA must be informed of any pupil to be deleted from school admission register (IAT9) and follow missing from education protocols.