



DURANTS SCHOOL – POLICY DOCUMENT

Attendance

September 2023

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Next review date: September 2026

Legal Framework

This policy is based on the LA'S 'Policy on School Attendance, - A Guide for Schools'.

If a child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school fails to attend regularly at the school, his parent is guilty of an offence. Education Act 1996

The LEA's policy is based on:

- The Education Act 1996
- The Children Act 1989
- The Crime and Disorder Act 1998
- The Education (Pupils' Attendance Records) Regulations 1995
- The Education (Pupils' Registration – Amendment) Regulations 1997
- School Attendance and the Role of the Education Welfare Officer (draft) 1997
- Social Inclusion: Pupil Support – DfES Circulars 10/99 and 11/99
- Human Rights Act

Copies of all above documents are available from the Education Welfare Service (EWS).

Responsibilities

Parents are responsible in law for ensuring that their children of compulsory school age (5 – 16 years) receive an efficient education suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs, which they may have.

Schools are responsible for supporting the attendance of their pupils and for dealing with problems, which may lead to non-attendance.

The Educational Welfare Service fulfils the statutory duty of the LA in enforcing regular school attendance. In doing so it enables school and parents to meet their respective responsibilities.

Principles

- It is recognised that for many of our pupils there will be unavoidable periods of absence from school due to health reasons, hospital appointments and respite care arrangements.
- At all other times, however, the school will support parents/carers in ensuring regular and punctual attendance.
- Regular attendance is the expectation of all pupils and the School will make this clear to parents and carers.
- The School will notify all parents on the procedures to be followed when a child is absent.
- We will keep attendance registers twice a day and ensure that this data is available on request.
- Registers will be kept in a secure place for a period of not less than 3 years.
- Early intervention is important and, therefore, the School will respond promptly to issues, which may lead to non-attendance.
- We will be sensitive to the needs of individual pupils and parents including those who have difficulty in understanding written communication and those for whom English is an additional language.
- The School will work in partnership with the EWO (Education Welfare Officer).
- Lateness due to Schools transport will be reported to the Transport Manager at the LA.

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- The Headteacher will have overall responsibility for attendance.
- While the law only covers pupils of statutory school age, all pupils at Durants are expected to attend regularly. If a post-16 student fails to attend regularly, their place at School would have to be reviewed with the LEA.

Registration

Under the Education (Pupil Registration – Amendment) Regulations 1997, all schools must keep an attendance register at the start of the morning session and at the start of the afternoon session and to record whether pupils are present, absent or on an approved educational activity. This must be completed with the pupils in view, not in the School Office etc. Morning registers must be completed and returned to the School Office by 10.00am. Afternoon registers must be completed and returned by 2.00pm.

Attendance registers are legal documents, which can be used as evidence in court cases. They must, therefore, be completed accurately.

When the register is taken the appropriate mark and/symbol should be placed against each pupil's name – gaps should not be left so that entries can be made later. (See authorised absence and approved educational activity, unauthorised absence and marking of attendance registers, guide to symbols).

Entries in registers should be written in ink and any correction made in such a manner that the original entry and the correction are both clearly distinguishable (correction fluid should not be used).

A pupil's name may not be deleted from the attendance register unless it has also been deleted from the admissions register.

Authorised Absence and Approved Educational Activity

In the context of the law, only 'the school' can approve absence. Authorised absence means that the school has either given approval in advance or that an explanation offered afterwards has been accepted. If, after further investigation, doubt remains about the explanation offered – or when no explanation is forthcoming – the absence should be treated as unauthorised.

Approved educational activities should be recorded in the register with the appropriate code only, no zero is used. Approved educational activities are as follows:

- ✓ Participation in/attendance at approved sporting activity.
- ✓ An educational trip or visit.
- ✓ Work experience
- ✓ Attending another school or college but not dual registered, i.e. integration or Link course.

The following are accepted as authorised absences and should be marked in the register with the appropriate code:

- ✓ The pupil is absent with leave that has been authorised by the Headteacher.
- ✓ The pupil is ill or prevented from attending by any unavoidable cause.
- ✓ The pupil is absent on a day set aside for religious observance.
- ✓ Family bereavement.
- ✓ The pupil is performing in an approved public performance.
- ✓ Exclusion.

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- ✓ The pupil is dual registered under a formalised arrangement.
- ✓ Family holiday of no more than 10 school days.
- ✓ The pupil is a child of a Traveller family who temporarily leave the area giving reasonable indication of their return.

Unauthorised Absence

The absence of a pupil from registration and subsequently from school should be marked by a circle in black ink. This absence can be subsequently authorised if the school receives a satisfactory explanation.

The pupil will be recorded as unauthorised absence if the following reasons apply:

- No explanation is forthcoming from the parent.
- The school is dissatisfied with the explanation.
- The pupil is taken shopping during school hours.
- The pupil is away from school on a family holiday for a period exceeding the negotiated period (maximum 10 days).
- The pupil is on holiday without permission or the parents have failed to apply for permission in advance.

Marking of Attendance Registers Guide to Symbols

The register must be marked with the appropriate code. Guidance is kept in each register.

Punctuality

Registration is between 8.50 and 9.00 am. Any pupil arriving in school after this time will be considered as late.

Most pupils travel to Durants on Schools Transport and, therefore, cannot control what time they arrive at school. If a pupil arrives late due to transport difficulties the lateness will be authorised.

If a pupil continually holds up schools transport because they are not ready in the mornings, the school will liaise with schools transport on the procedure to be used.

Holidays during Term Time

Parents do not have the legal right to remove their children from school during term time for the purposes of a holiday. Schools, however, do have the discretion to grant parents leave for their children during term time.

Only in exceptional circumstances will the school agree absences of more than 10 days. This does, however, mean that absences of up to 10 days still have to be agreed.

Each request for a holiday in term time will be considered individually, taking account of the child's age, the time of year, the nature of the trip and the possible benefits, the child's attendance pattern and educational progress.

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Consideration will be given to cultural needs and family circumstances, such as minority ethnic children returning to their country of origin. In these cases longer periods of time will be granted but parents will be asked to justify why the holiday needs to be taken during term time.

If the school does not agree the absence and the pupil still goes on holiday, the absence is unauthorised.

Procedures for requesting absence

It must be remembered that only the school can authorise an absence. All requests must be made via the School Office.

Parents requesting an absence must adhere to the following procedure:

- Complete a “Request for Permission for Absence” form (see appendix 1). Send into Headteacher well in advance of the absence. This includes holidays, appointments, hospice stays etc. These forms will be provided in other languages. If a family has difficulties with written requests, they may telephone the Headteacher to make their request.
- If the request is for a holiday, reasons must be given as to why it has to be taken during term time.
- Permission for all absences is not to be requested through the pupil’s home/school book or sent to another member of staff at the school.
- The Headteacher will reply stating whether or not permission has been granted.
- The School Office will notify class staff of the absence.

Procedures for absence that has not been granted in advance

If a pupil is absent from school unexpectedly, the following procedure must be followed:

- On the morning of the absence, the parent must telephone the School by 10.00am to notify them of the pupil’s absence. They should also give an indication of how long it is expected that the child will be absent from School. Verbal messages to Bus Escorts are to be discouraged as this places the escorts in a position that they have to remember to pass the message on.
- If a parent does not telephone the School by 10.00am, the School Office will telephone the parent to ascertain why the pupil is absent.
- Parents are expected to keep the School informed throughout the absence.
- The School Office will notify the class of the absence.
- When the pupil returns, the parent must confirm in writing, why the pupil has been absent. If this is written in the pupil’s Home/School Book, a photocopy must be taken and placed on their file. This will be placed in the register for the class teacher to see and sign. Once the teacher has signed the letter it will be placed on the pupil’s file.
- Parents, who have difficulties with literacy or have English as an additional language, will only need to telephone to notify the school of the absence.

Strategies to be used in dealing with absenteeism

- The School (this will be staff from the School Office unless it has been agreed that someone else is more appropriate) will telephone parents when no notification has been received for an absence.
- The Headteacher will monitor attendance.
- The school will work in partnership with parents to enable discussion on why a pupil is absent and to look at ways that will ensure they can return to school. This can be carried out by the class teacher, Head of Department, Deputy Head, Headteacher or School Nurse but it must be agreed, in advance, with the Headteacher who will take the lead.

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- If appropriate, and in agreement with parents, contact other agencies to help the child return to school, i.e. Children's Social Care, Transport Department, SEN Services.
- A referral will be made to EWS by the Headteacher if:
 - A pattern of irregular attendance is either continuing or deteriorating (sporadic days or blocks of absence)
 - Parents do not accept responsibility for ensuring their child attends school regularly
 - Parents refuse to discuss ways of improving attendance
 - Parents condone unjustified absence
 - Parents request excessive authorised absence
 - Schools own efforts to improve the situation have been unsuccessful.

Good Practice

- ✓ All parents will be notified annually of their responsibilities and the procedures they are required to follow (see Appendix 2). This will be produced in different languages.
- ✓ Certificates will be awarded at the end of each academic year to those pupils with 100% attendance and those who have only missed one or two days of school.
- ✓ Certificates will be awarded to those pupils whose attendance has shown great improvement.
- ✓ Certificates will be awarded to those pupils whose attendance would have been 100% apart from absences due to necessary appointments or hospice stays.
- ✓ Individual attendance rates will be reported on pupils Annual Review Reports.

This policy was agreed by the Governing Body and will be reviewed annually by the Headteacher.

Absence from School – The Law

The following bullet points are requirements of the law and have not been set by Durants School. They apply to all children who attend school, not just to Durants.

- As a parent (or person responsible) for a pupil registered at Durants School, you are responsible for making sure s/he attends school regularly.
- Whenever possible, family holidays should be taken during the school holidays.
- The school is responsible for granting permission for absence, and can authorise absences.
- If you want permission for your child to miss school for a very special occasion or a family holiday, you should ask permission, well in advance, giving full details. This also includes hospital appointments, respite care and stays in a hospice or hospital.
- Please do not expect permission to be granted. We will consider your request carefully and take your child's attendance record into account. We will not agree to absence of more than 10 school days, in any one school year, for family holidays.
- If you wish to proceed, please fill in the form below and return it to the Headteacher.

Request for permission for absence from school

Please may my son/daughter be absent from school. The details are given below.

Today's date: _____ Name of pupil: _____

Date absence starts: _____ Date of return to school: _____

Reason for absence, (if this is for a family holiday, please state why it has to take place during term time):

School's Response

- The Headteacher authorises the absence from School.
- The Headteacher does not authorise the absence from School for the following reason:

Signed:

Date:

Dear Parent/Carer,

Important Information on School Attendance and procedures for requesting time absence from School

All parents have a responsibility by law to ensure their child attends school. It is recognised that for many of our pupils there will be unavoidable periods of absence due to health reasons, hospital appointments and respite care arrangements. The law, however, covers all children and it states that parents must:

- ensure their children attend school regularly,
- arrive on time,
- that they are properly dressed and in a condition to learn,
- notify the school regarding absence as soon as possible,
- where possible arrange dental and medical appointments outside school hours,
- only take family holidays during holiday times,
- be aware that absences for shopping, birthdays etc are not acceptable.

In the context of the law, only 'the school' can approve absence and parents must request permission for their child to be absent. The following procedure must be adhered to when requesting time off school:

What you must do if you wish to keep your child off school for any reason

- Complete a "Request for Permission for Absence" form (see attached). Send into the Headteacher well in advance of the absence. This includes holidays, appointments, hospice stays, etc.
- If you are requesting time off for a holiday, you must give reasons why it has to be taken during term time.
- Permission for absences must not be requested through the pupil's home/school book or sent to another member of staff at the school.
- The Headteacher will reply stating whether or not permission has been granted.

If your child is absent from school unexpectedly, (e.g. they are sick) the following procedure must be followed:

What you must do if your child is sick or off school unexpectedly

- On the morning of the absence, you must telephone the School by 10.00am to notify us of your child's absence. You must say how long it is expected that your child will be absent from School.
- Please do not rely on Bus Escorts giving verbal messages as they may forget to pass them on.
- Please keep us informed throughout your child's absence.
- When your child returns to school, a letter must be sent to the Headteacher to confirm why your child has been absent.

I apologise if these procedures appear to be harsh, but as already stated, this is a requirement of the law. If you would like further information or a copy of the School's Policy, please contact the School Office.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher

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