

**Downsell**  
PRIMARY SCHOOL



*Learning Today, Leading Tomorrow*

# Attendance and Punctuality Policy

This policy includes CMfE (children missing from education) and CME (children missing education) information

Review date:	Autumn 2024
Date Adopted by GB:	28 <sup>th</sup> October 2024
Review Date of Policy:	Autumn 2025



## **Vision**

At Downsell Primary School, our vision is to promote our core values; Respect, Responsibility and Resilience in order to develop confident, inquisitive, happy learners who:

- are inspired to have a lifelong love of learning
- have high self-esteem, high aspirations and experience success
- show good behaviour, positive relationships and make a meaningful contribution to our school, local and global community
- celebrate our diverse environment where all are equal

We will achieve this by creating an inclusive, safe and stimulating environment with high quality creative learning experiences. We value the contribution of the whole school community – children, staff, governors, parents and carers in working towards making this vision a reality.

## **Aims**

1. To ensure every child reaches their full potential both academically and socially.
2. To ensure all individuals are given equal opportunities to participate in all aspects of school life.
3. To work as a team to achieve the best possible outcomes for the children.
4. To offer a broad, personalised, balanced and enriched curriculum which will encourage academic, aesthetic, physical, social, emotional and spiritual development.
5. To ensure collaboration and respect between all individuals.
6. To have clear communication across the school.

## **Attendance Policy**

### **Statement of Intent**

Downsell Primary School aims to encourage and support all pupils to achieve excellent standards of attendance and punctuality.

This is so that:

- All pupils can take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them in the school.
- Children are able to create and maintain good relationships with other pupils and adults within the school community, thus developing their social skills and enhancing their emotional wellbeing.
- The school is able to effectively safeguard all members of the school community.
- Pupils learn good attendance and punctuality habits which will enable them to be successful in secondary school, further education and in the workplace.

### **Rights, Roles and Responsibilities**

#### **Parents**

##### **Rights**

- Parents have the right to be kept fully informed of their child's attendance/ punctuality record.
- Parents can expect support from the school if they are finding it difficult to get their child to attend regularly or be on time.

##### **Responsibilities**

- Parents have a legal responsibility to ensure that their children attend school regularly and on time.
- Parents are also responsible for contacting the school, by telephone, letter or in person, to report their child's absence and the reason for it. This should be done on the first day of absence and will need to be done for each day of absence.
- Parents must ensure that all holidays are taken during school holiday periods and not in term time.
- Parents must ensure that all contact details are kept up to date and that they have given the school at least two up to date contacts safeguarding purposes.

## **Downsell Primary School**

### The school has a responsibility to:-

- Maintain clear records of attendance and punctuality and investigate any unexplained absenteeism.
- Encourage, support and reward high standards of attendance and punctuality throughout the school.
- Work closely with parents to support them with any difficulties they may have relating to attendance or punctuality.
- Refer any issues relating to attendance and punctuality that give cause for concern to the school's education welfare officer.
- Refer any unauthorised term time absences, which could include travel delays, holidays, sickness etc to the education welfare service, with a view to issuing a penalty notice or implementing further action.

### **Key Staff**

- The Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher have overall responsibility for school attendance.
- The Attendance Officer is responsible for monitoring, chasing and ensuring up to date information on all aspects of attendances.
- The Attendance Officer is responsible for ensuring that records are updated and correct.
- The Attendance Officer will review and monitor all attendance and punctuality. They may contact parents either by letter, telephone or appointment to follow up cases of concern or for additional information as necessary.
- The school has a designated Education Welfare Officer (EWO) who is not based at the school but who visits regularly. The EWO may conduct workshops, late gates or individual sessions with the Attendance Officer and Parents / Carers to develop improved levels of attendance and punctuality. They will also deal with any cases that require supervision of Persistent Absence (<90%), as well as attend and complete any supervision of cases that require legal action at the local Magistrates Court.

### **Registration**

#### Why do we register?

Registers are legal documents and schools are required to call the register twice a day.

If a child is persistently absent, or persistently late after the registers have closed, the adult with parental responsibility can be prosecuted under Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act. If this were to happen, the attendance register would be required in court as the main source of evidence.

Registers are also important for health and safety reasons. If the school has to evacuate the building, the attendance register enables school staff to account for everyone present that day.

Registers also enable the school to safeguard the wellbeing of pupils, particularly if they travel to and from school independently.

### School timings

- The school has a Breakfast Club which starts at 7.30am for parents / carers who require childcare in the mornings. Children are not allowed to be on the premises before this time. If your child attends breakfast club then they must be registered.
- School gates open at 8.40am.
- Children are able to go into class from 8.45am. **The register will be taken at 8.50am**
- For safeguarding purposes, at 8.50am, the internal school doors to classrooms are shut and the entrances on Hall Road and Brierley Road are shut. From this time, all children must come through the main entrance on Downsell Road. Children will need to enter via the school office to be registered.
- The register is called again after the lunchtime break: 12.30pm for EYFS, 1pm for Key Stage 1 and 1.15pm for Key Stage 2.

### Punctuality

Children arriving after 8.50am will need to go to the office to be registered. They will be marked late from this point. Parent / carer will be issued with a punctuality expectations reminder slip.

Children arriving from 8.51 – 9.15am will be marked as late using the 'L' code in the register. These 'L' codes will be reviewed by the Attendance Officer and the EWO on a regular basis. We may ask to meet with parents / carers if there appears to be a pattern of lateness as your child will be missing a significant amount of learning time.

If children arrive in school after 9.15am, the register will record a 'U' mark which is an unauthorised absence for the session. This will mean that although the child is in school they will miss their registration mark for that session. This will affect their overall attendance percentage. Persistent lateness may also incur a fixed penalty notice fine.

### Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

In every instance when a child is absent from school, the school makes a decision as to whether the absence is **authorised** or **unauthorised**. **A letter from home or a phone call explaining an absence, does not necessarily mean that it is authorised by the school.**

Each period of absence will be looked at and a decision made as to whether this will be authorised or unauthorised. When looking at the absence, we will look at the overall attendance record for the pupil. What may be authorised for one family may not be authorised for another as it will be dependent on individually circumstances and the child's overall attendance record.

Religious observance (up to 3 days in an academic year) will be authorised.

Examples of absences which the school **will not authorise** include;

- Accompanying a parent/sibling/family member to a doctor or hospital appointment.
- Holidays taken in term time
- Visits to family / friends
- Trips to the airport to drop off or collect family and friends.
- Waiting in for an appointment for electricity / gas etc
- Shopping for new school shoes
- Birthday treats
- Having your hair done for a special occasion!

If your child has been absent and you have not provided us with a reason, this will automatically be recorded as 'N' code – no reason provided. You will be contacted by the attendance officer to follow up on the reason for absence, if no reason or evidence is provided, then this is automatically recorded as an unauthorised absence. Please note if you do give a reason for absence, this does not mean that the absence is authorised, this will depend on your child's overall attendance record and the circumstances.

**First Day Calling and Home Visits**

- In order to safeguard all children, the school will contact the parents/guardians of all pupils who are absent each day and for whom no message has been received. This practice enables us to ensure that all children are safe and that the register can be coded correctly.
- This safeguarding practice can only be effective if the school has up-to-date contact details for those with parental responsibility for each child. **It is important that the school has at least two contact numbers for emergencies.** Therefore, it is essential that parents/guardians ensure the school has the information it needs to carry out its role effectively.
- If your child has had 3 days of absence, and the parent / carer has not made any contact then the school or the EWO will carry out a home visit for safeguarding reasons.

**Leaving the Site during the School Day**

Parents must inform the school in advance if they need to take their child out of school to attend an appointment, interview or educational activity at another venue. It is expected that appointments other than emergency ones are booked outside of school time where possible.

The school does not permit pupils to leave school grounds until a parent or carer has signed them out at the school office.

Other than in an emergency, a letter or an appointment card must be presented at the office or a phone call made in order for the school to be able to authorise the absence.

*The school will not authorise early collection for reasons such as:-*

- Seeing someone off or collecting them from the airport
- Going on holiday early
- Going to birthday parties, weddings and other celebrations
- Collecting siblings from other schools

If the child is returning from an appointment in time to take a school lunch, this must be booked before 10.30am that day. Children returning to the school must report to the office to be signed in before they return to class.

**Monitoring Attendance and Punctuality**

The Attendance Officer analyses the attendance data weekly to identify pupils falling below 96% attendance (our school target), emerging patterns of absence or lateness. Parents are kept regularly informed of any relevant attendance and punctuality concerns the school may have. As a result of this monitoring, individual cases will be referred to the Education Welfare Officer. The Deputy Headteacher provides the Governing Body with a termly report on attendance and punctuality. The school provides the Local Authority with attendance data on a half-termly basis and the Department of Education on an annual basis.

**Pupils absent due to complex barriers to attendance**

- Headteacher, parents, class teacher and SENCO will meet to identify the barriers to good school attendance. If appropriate, the child's views will also be gathered. Our school action plan may be put in place to support progress towards improved attendance.
- School-based interventions may be offered – this may be academic or social and emotional interventions
- External Interventions may be offered: referrals to outside agencies such as the Educational Psychologist, CAMHS, Early Help/Family Support Services
- A home-school book to establish and maintain clear communication between the parent / carer and the class staff

**Pupils absent due to mental or physical ill health or SEND**

- Headteacher, parents, class teacher and SENCO will meet to identify the barriers to good school attendance. If appropriate, the child's views will also be gathered.
- If appropriate, the attendance policy will be implemented alongside supporting children with medical needs policies.
- School-based interventions may be offered
- External Interventions may be offered: referrals to outside agencies such as the Educational Psychologist, CAMHS, Early Help/Family Support Services

- A home-school book to establish and maintain clear communication between the parent / carer and the class staff
- Where a pupil has an education health and care (EHC) plan and their attendance falls, or the school becomes aware of barriers to attendance that related to the pupil's needs, the school will inform the school's SEND officer.

### **Children with social workers**

Where a child has a social worker or is under child and family assessment, we will inform the named social worker or any periods of absence.

We recognise children missing education can act as a vital warning sign to a range of safeguarding issues including neglect, sexual abuse and child sexual and criminal exploitation.

### **Children missing from education (CMfE)**

Parent / carers have a legal duty to ensure that their child is receiving full time education. If your child is absent from school for a period of 20 school days then they will be seen as a child missing from education and they can be taken off roll.

If a child has not been in school for 5 days and we have not been able to make contact by telephone, email, letter or home visit, then we will make a referral to the Behaviour, Attendance and Children Missing in Education (BACME) team.

Where a pupil has been absent for 10 days with no valid medical reason or on holiday without a return date, then we will make a referral to BACME.

BACME carries out necessary safeguarding checks and attempts to locate the pupil's whereabouts. During this period, we will continue to mark the pupil's absence as unauthorised absence until they return to school or they are removed from the school roll.

No pupil is removed from the school register until advised to do so by BACME once all necessary safeguarding checks have been made.

### **Children missing education (CME)**

The local authority has a statutory duty to have systems and procedures in place to monitor children missing education (CME).

The duty applies in relation to children / young people of compulsory school age who are not on a school roll, and who are not receiving a suitable education otherwise than being at school (for example, at home, privately, or in alternative provision).



## **Taking Children off the School Roll**

Extended periods of absence could result in a child's name being taken off the school roll and the place filled by a child on the school's waiting list. The school will only remove names from the school roll at the direction of the school's designated Education Welfare Officer and only after appropriate safeguarding checks have been made.

## **Persistent Absenteeism**

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' (PA) when their attendance level falls to less than 90% for whatever reasons (this includes authorised and unauthorised absences). Absence at this level is damaging to a pupil's educational prospects and will be dealt with by intervention from the Senior Leadership team and the Educational Welfare Officer.

## **Sanctions**

Our school will make use of the full range of potential sanctions – including, but not limited to, those listed below – to tackle poor attendance.

Decisions will be made on an individual, case-by-case basis.

### **1. Penalty notices**

A penalty notice can be issued to parent / carers for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

In consultation with the EWO, the school will make a referral for the issuing of a penalty notice.

Before referring for a penalty notice, the school will consider the individual case, including:

- Whether the national threshold for considering a penalty notice has been met (10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks)
- Whether a penalty notice is the best available tool to improve attendance for that pupil
- Whether further support, a notice to improve or another legal intervention would be a more appropriate solution
- Whether any obligations that the school has under the Equality Act 2010 make issuing a penalty notice inappropriate

A penalty notice may also be issued where parent / carers allow their child to be present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification, during the first 5 days of a suspension or exclusion (where the school has notified the parents that the pupil must not be present in a public place on that day). Each parent / carer who is liable for the pupil's offence(s) can be issued with a penalty notice.

## **Statutory Policy**

The penalty notice fine is paid directly to the local authority. If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

If issued with a first penalty notice, the parent / carer must pay £80 within 21 days, or £160 within 28 days. If a second penalty notice is issued to the same parent / carer in respect of the same pupil, the parent / carer must pay £160 if paid within 28 days. A third penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent / carer in respect of the same child within 3 years of the date of the issue of the first penalty notice.

In a case where the national threshold is met for a third time within those 3 years, alternative action will be taken instead.

## **2. Notices to improve**

If the national threshold has been met and support is appropriate, but parents do not engage with offers of support, the school may offer a notice to improve to give parents / carers a final chance to engage with support.

Notices to improve will be issued in line with processes set out in the local code of conduct for the local authority area in which the pupil attends school.

They will include:

- Details of the pupil's attendance record and of the offences
- The benefits of regular attendance and the duty of parents under section 7 of the Education Act 1996
- Details of the support provided so far
- Opportunities for further support, or to access previously provided support that was not engaged with
- A clear warning that a penalty notice may be issued if attendance doesn't improve within the improvement period, along with details of what sufficient improvement looks like, which will be decided on a case-by-case basis
- A clear timeframe of between 3 and 6 weeks for the improvement period
- The grounds on which a penalty notice may be issued before the end of the improvement period

## **Supporting families**

As a school we want our children to achieve the very best outcomes from their own starting points. In order for us to support with this our pupils need to be in school, every day and on time.

The following is a list of the procedures we have in place to support our families in improving attendance and outcomes for all pupils:

1. Updated daily attendance percentage on Weduc
2. Information and expectations set for Reception pupils to instil good routines from early on
3. Informal and formal meetings with parents / carers in place before escalation
4. Child friendly attendance and punctuality policy
5. Personalised support in place for families

The school adopts the following process for managing attendance:

1. Tracking all pupils' attendance
2. In the first instance, meetings for those 91 – 93% attendance with school action plan agreed
3. Formal meetings for those with attendance of 90% or below
4. Local authority involvement (EWO) for those with attendance of 90% or below
5. The following of government guidance in regards to penalty notices or notices to improve

### **Confidentiality**

Issues surrounding attendance and punctuality can sometimes be of a sensitive or distressing nature. All school staff should maintain the highest level of confidentiality when dealing with such issues.

### **Parent / Carer Consultations**

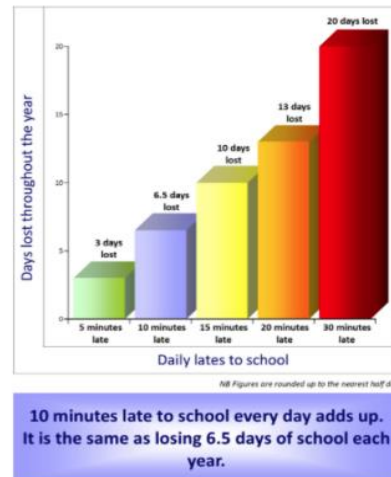
Downsell Primary School aims to encourage and support all pupils to achieve excellent standards of attendance and punctuality. We recognise it is important to report on a child's attendance and punctuality at each parents' consultation meeting. Your child's class teacher will inform you of your child's attendance and punctuality details.

### **REMEMBER .....**

- A year has 365 days, 52 weeks and 12 months
- A school year has 195 days, 39 weeks and six terms
- Five days in each school year are training days for teachers (INSET days)
- Pupils attend school therefore for 190 days
- A school day is divided into two sessions. Therefore a pupil should attend for 380 sessions

### Missed days = missed learning.

Attendance percentage	Missed days of learning	
100%	0 days off school	Green
99%	Equates to 2 school days off school each year	
97%	Equates to 5 school days off school each year	
95%	Equates to 10 school days off school each year	Yellow
90%	Equates to 20 school days off school each year	Red
85%	Equates to 30 school days off school each year	



### Promoting and Rewarding High Standards of Attendance and Punctuality

Downsell Primary School works hard to promote and reward good attendance and punctuality and those with improving attendance and punctuality.

Strategies include:

- Regularly reviewing the curriculum to ensure that it is exciting and stimulating making pupils eager to come to school.
- Displays in central areas to promote and inform about class attendance.
- Acknowledging all children who achieve 96% and above for the half term and for those with improving attendance.
- Raffles and prizes for those who achieve 96% and above and those with improved attendance at the end of the academic year.
- Including guidance, advice and information about attendance and punctuality in newsletters.
- Reporting on a child's attendance and punctuality through the school app, parent / carer consultations and reports.
- Updated daily attendance information available on Weduc
- Holding structured meetings with parents / carers and the Education Welfare Officer to support improved attendance and any returns to school following extended periods of absence.
- Using the traffic light system to provide parents / carers with an easy to use system of understanding their child's attendance and the impact.

	Percentage	Comment
Green	96 – 100%	Your child's attendance meets our school expectation. You have supported your child with achieving the best possible outcomes in life. If your child has achieved 100% - well done!
Amber	94 – 95.9%	<b>Stage 1:</b> Your child's attendance is a cause of concern. We know that this may be due to illness or other authorised absences but we hope that by bringing this to your attention now, will help you and your child.
	91 – 93.9%	<b>Stage 2:</b> Your child's attendance is a cause for concern. At this stage, we will need to arrange a formal meeting to support you and your child with improving this.
Red	90% and below	Your child's attendance is far from our expectations and they are now on the <b>persistent absentees list</b> . We will need to meet formally and draw up an action plan together. Unless rapid improvement is made you will be flagged up to our EWO and your case may be referred on further, which can also lead to possible fines.

## **Appendix 1 - Guidance to Staff on Attendance and Punctuality**

### **1) The role of SEAL and PHSE in securing good attendance and punctuality**

To promote good attendance and punctuality, school staff should:

- Regularly review the curriculum offered in an attempt to make it as topical, exciting and fun as possible so that pupils want to come to school and join in.
- Work hard to create a welcoming and positive school ethos where children feel safe, settled and valued.

### **2) The roles and responsibilities of Class Teachers and TAs**

The member of staff in charge of the class at the beginning of each session should:

- Call the register promptly and any absence notes are returned to the office.
- Inform the Attendance Officer of any information you may have regarding a child's absence e.g. pupil has said they are going on holiday or moving house, as soon as you have been given that information.
- Mark children present as long as they arrive before the calling of the register has been completed.
- Save and close your register by 8.55am for the morning register and 5 minutes after the start of the afternoon session
- Communicate any concerns or observations about emerging patterns of absence or lateness to a senior leader and also adding it to CPOMS.
- Apply this policy consistently and fairly to all members of the school community.