

Dawlish College

Attendance Policy

Information for Parents

As a college we aim to:

- Maintain an attendance rate of a minimum of 97%
- Maintain parents' and students' awareness of the importance of regular attendance
- Maintain good time keeping

Good attendance is important because:

- Statistics show a direct link between under-achievement and poor attendance
- Regular attenders make better progress, both socially and academically
- Regular attenders find college routines, college work and friendships easier to cope with
- Regular attenders find learning more satisfying
- Regular attenders settle into college more easily

As a parent/carer you can help us by:

- Ensuring your child attends college regularly. Absence should only happen when your child is significantly ill and therefore unfit to attend college, or if there is an unavoidable/unforeseen reason or circumstance which is causing a difficulty.
- Telephoning or using Parentmail on the first morning of any absence to give us the reason and tell us when the child is likely to return to college
- Arranging all non-emergency medical appointments out of college hours or during college holidays
- Sending us a note confirming the reason for your child's absence when s/he returns to college
- Keeping us updated by telephone or parent-mail if your child has any extended period of absence
- Making sure we always have your current contact numbers; this includes all telephone numbers and emergency contact details

We shall:

- Always strive to ensure contact with the parents/carers of absent students on a daily basis
- Follow up unexplained absences by phone calls and letters as necessary
- Publish your child's attendance rate on her/his annual college report
- Let you know if we have concerns regarding your child's attendance and punctuality
- Make a referral to the Local Authority Education Welfare Officer, who visits the college regularly to review and support attendance and punctuality issues, if we continue to have concerns

Categorising Absence

Where students of compulsory school age are recorded as absent, the register must show whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised. Unauthorised absence must be alerted to the Education Welfare Service (EWS).

An absence is only classified as authorised when a child has been away from college for a legitimate reason and the college has received notification from a parent or carer.

Authorised absence may be granted under the following circumstances:

- Exceptional circumstance
- Exclusion
- Days of religious observance
- Medical/dental appointments that cannot take place out of college hours
- Illness – with written parental consent or a medical note
- Education off-site
- Education visits e.g. another setting
- Approved sporting activity
- Interview

An absence can only be authorised by the college and cannot be authorised by parents/carers.

Where there is no explanation for an absence, or where the explanation or reason for the absence is considered unsatisfactory, absence will be recorded as unauthorised. See unauthorised absences for further information on the potential consequences of unauthorised absences.

Illness

In most cases a telephone call, Parentmail message or a note, from the parent/carers informing the college that their child is ill will be acceptable. However, if absence levels become a concern for the college, then parents/carers may be contacted and advised that future absences will no longer be automatically authorised unless suitable evidence is presented to the college (for the college to consider) that justifies the absence as unavoidable. If evidence is not provided, the absence may be recorded as unauthorised.

In circumstances where a child has been absent from college for a significant period of time the college will:

- Be sensitive to the individual needs and circumstances of returning students
- Involve parents/carers and other appropriate agencies in establishing a return to college plan
- Agree a timescale for a review of the plan
- Involve/inform all staff in any return to college process

Medical Appointments

Parents/carers are advised where possible to make medical and dental appointments outside of the college day. Where this is not possible, students should attend college for part of the day. Parents/carers may be asked to provide evidence of appointment dates/times to allow the college to authorise the absence.

Religious Observance

We acknowledge the multi-faith nature of British society and recognise that on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside college holiday periods or weekends and this necessitates a consideration of authorised absence or special leave for religious observance.

It is reasonable for a parent/carer to request that their children not to attend college on any day officially set aside for religious observance. Parents/carers are requested to give advance notice to the college if they intend their child to be absent.

Traveller Absence

The aim for the attendance of Traveller students, in common with all other students, is to attend college as regularly and as frequently as possible.

To protect Traveller parents/carers from unreasonable prosecution for non-attendance, the Education Act 1944, section 86, states that a Traveller parent/carer is safe from prosecution if their child accrues 200 attendances (i.e. 200 half days) in a year. This is only when the family are engaged in a trade or business that requires them to travel and that the student is regularly attending college when that trade/business permits (and the 200 sessions figure is met).

It does not mean that part-time education for Traveller students is legally acceptable, nor does it relieve parents/carers of their duties to ensure that their children are receiving suitable education when not at college.

Exceptional circumstances and family holiday

Amendments have been made to the 2006 student registration regulations in the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013, which came into force on 1st September 2013.

Colleges can no longer grant up to 10 days' leave in special circumstances for the purpose of family holiday. The 2013 amendments to the 2006 regulations remove references to family holidays and colleges may now only grant leave in 'Exceptional circumstances'.

Exceptional circumstances are when the circumstances leading to a request for absence are 'of unique and significant emotional, educational or spiritual value to the child which outweighs the loss of teaching time'. The college considers exceptional circumstances to be those that are highly unlikely to be repeated, or an event or situation that is unique to the children involved and which would not apply to other children in the college.

In certain circumstances a parent/carer's employer might restrict annual leave to a certain time period. In these circumstances the college will ask for a written confirmation from the employer and will then consider the request.

A parent/carer must complete an **Absence Request Form** from the college office or college website when asking for absence to be considered as authorised.

The college will always put the education of the child first when deciding whether or not to authorise an absence. In doing so, the college will also take into account the child's prior attendance, age, stage of education, internal assessment weeks and educational progress when making a decision.

If a request is unauthorised and the leave is taken anyway, then Devon colleges are expected to inform the Local Authority, who may then instigate Parental Responsibility Measures (which may include Penalty Notice or Magistrate Summons)

Unauthorised Absences

There are times when children are absent for reasons, which are not permitted by law. These are known as unauthorised absences. Examples of unauthorised absence can include:

- Waiting for a delivery
- Taking or collecting a relative to/from the airport
- Going for a family day out
- Sleeping in after a late night
- Going shopping or for a hair cut
- Because it is your child's birthday
- Term time holiday/cheap flights
- Parent's illness

Penalties for unauthorised absence

Unauthorised absences may well result in the instigation of parental responsibility measures which could include a penalty notice, an Education Supervision Order or a fine from the Magistrates Court of up to £2,500 and/or a term of imprisonment of up to three months for each parent/carer.

It is Devon County Council practice to only issue one penalty notice to a parent/carer in a two year period. If a penalty notice has already been issued within the two year period then it is usual practice for a Magistrates Summons to be issued.

Penalty Notice

Amendments have been made to the 2007 penalty notices regulations in the Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013, which also came into force on 1st September 2013. The amendments reduce the timescales for paying the penalty notice for Unauthorised Absence. From September 2013, if a Penalty Notice is issued, each penalty notice will be for £60 to be paid within 21 days extending to £120 if paid from day 21 to 28. If a penalty notice goes unpaid after 28 days a Magistrates Summons will be issued.

It is Devon County Council policy to issue penalty notices or fines for unauthorised absence. The general criteria for the issuing of a penalty notice states that a penalty notice will only be issued to a parent(s) if the student has at least ten, half day unauthorised absences recorded against their name within the previous six months.

Further information can be obtained from the following link:

<http://www.devon.gov.uk/index/learningcolleges/attendance/absence-from-college.htm>

Education Supervision Order

Where the Local Authority applies to the Family Court for a Court Order to support and manage improved regular attendance.

Magistrates Summons

Under the 1996 Education Act, if a penalty notice has been previously issued within two years, it is Local Authority practice to issue a Magistrates Summons. For a first offence the maximum fine issued by the Court could be £1000 per parent/carer. If the matter returns to the Magistrates Court on a subsequent occasion the fines extend to a maximum of £2500 per parent/carer and/or a custodial sentence of up to three months.

Punctuality

If a child arrives to college late but before the registers close at 9.00am, then the child will receive a late coding ('L' Code). The student will then be given a break time detention for the same day that they arrive late.

Students who are persistently late without a suitable reason will receive further sanctions. Parents will be informed if their child is persistently late.

If the child arrives after the register close (9.00am) then Department of Education guidance means that the child will be coded as arriving after the registers have closed ('U' Code). The 'U' code is an unauthorised absence for the entire session. See unauthorised absences

Monitoring absence

We are keen that parents should realise when their child's attendance rate has slipped. We will regularly closely monitor attendance. An attendance rate of 90% means that in the whole college year of 190 days, there would be 19 days of college being missed. This is nearly four weeks in a year and understandably will have an impact on a child's attainment. An attendance of below 90% falls into the persistent absence category, as defined by the Department for Education.

Leaving college

If your child is leaving our college (other than when they cease to be of compulsory college age) parents are asked to give the college comprehensive information about their plans including any date of a move, new address and telephone numbers, contact details for your child's new college and the start date when known. This should be submitted to our college in writing.

When students leave and we do not have information about where they have gone, your child is considered to be a 'Child Missing Education'. This means that the Local Authority (LA) has to be notified and the LA has a legal duty to carry out investigations, which will include liaising with Children's Services, the Police and other agencies, to try and locate your child.

By giving us the above information, these investigations can be avoided.

In accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, students will only be deleted from our college's register when one of the following circumstances applies:

- The student has ceased to be of compulsory college age
- Permanent exclusion has occurred and procedures have been completed
- Death of a student
- Transfer between colleges and the student has started at the new college
- Student withdrawn to be educated outside the college system and written notification has been received from parents/carers and forwarded to the LA
- Failure to return from an extended holiday
- An evidenced medical condition prevents their attendance and return to the college and alternate provision has been put in place
- Left the college but not known where he/she has gone after both the college and the Local Authority have tried to locate the student and twenty college days have elapsed

APPENDIX 1:**Codes for explaining absences**

/	Present AM
\	Present PM
B	Educated off-site
C	Leave of absence authorised by the college
D	Dual registered – at another educational establishment
E	Excluded
F	
G	Holiday not authorised by the college
H	Holiday authorised as exceptional circumstances
I	Illness not medical or dental appointment
J	Interview
L	Late arrival before the register has closed
M	Medical / dental
N	No reason yet provided for absence
O	Absent from college without authorisation
P	Approved sporting activity
R	Religious observance
S	Study leave
T	Traveller absence
U	Arrived at college after registers closed
V	Educational visit
W	Work experience
X	Isolating or shielding
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances
-	All should attend no mark recorded

Encouraging Good Attendance at Dawlish College

Staff Responsibilities

- Letters sent to congratulate students
- Weekly attendance data provided for Leadership Team
- Concerns highlighted at Case Review Meeting each fortnight, with Education Welfare Officer where appropriate
- Discussion with Education Welfare Officer where appropriate

- Keep registers in line with statutory and safeguarding requirements
- Follow up and investigate absence promptly with students
- Inform Leadership Team of attendance concerns
- Student Welfare Officer to liaise with students and families in addressing barriers to attendance
- Send attendance letters in discussion with Education Welfare Officer
- Be aware of vulnerable students and individual cases
- Where appropriate seek advice and intervention from Education Welfare Officer

- Ensure Escalation Process consistently followed with discretion when appropriate. (LT/EWO)
- Responsible for College Attendance Data and meeting Attendance Targets
- To monitor and support attendance of vulnerable Students
- Offer intervention and pastoral support on an individual basis.
- Consider bespoke provision to support families

Intervention

- Praise for students
- Certificates
- E- praise points
- Lunch with the Principal
- Entries into end of year prize draw.

.....
Pupils falling below 95%
 Staff to monitor and take note of reoccurring patterns

Following continuing concerns over attendance

- Level 1 letter sent to parents/carers to alert of current attendance rate
- Student Welfare Officer to discuss with student – offer of pastoral support
- Continuing concerns Level 2 letters sent to further reiterate college expectations
- Medical evidence request letter sent where appropriate.

Following continuing attendance concerns

- Level 3 letter sent, where appropriate. Unauthorising any further absence unless medical evidence is provided.

Leadership Team, Student Welfare Officer and Education Welfare office to consider:

- General attendance meeting
- Legal meeting

Possible legal escalations

- Penalty Notice
- Court proceedings

