



Attendance Policy

Date: September 2017

Date Ratified:

Date to be reviewed: September 2020

Signed:

Aims of the policy

Regular school attendance is essential if students are to achieve their full potential. If your daughter is absent for a day of school per week misses an equivalent of two years of their school life. Research shows that 90% of young people with absence rates below 85% fail to achieve five or more good grades of GCSE and around one third achieve no GCSEs at all.

All staff at DSTC recognise that regular school attendance is the key to enabling students to maximise the educational opportunities available to them and become resilient, confident and competent adults who are able to realise their full potential and make a positive contribution to their community. DSTC values all students and we will work with families to identify the reasons for unsatisfactory attendance and try to resolve any difficulties.

Statutory Obligations

- Parents must ensure that children of compulsory school age receive full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.
- Under the Education Act 1996, the Local Authority has a statutory responsibility to ensure that parents secure education for children of compulsory school age and where necessary, use legal enforcement.
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2013, require schools to take an attendance register twice a day, once at the start of the morning session and again during the afternoon session. The register must record whether the student was: present; absent; present at approved educational activity; or unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

Categorising absence

Absence can only be authorised by the Principal and cannot be authorised by parents. All absences will be treated as unauthorised unless a satisfactory explanation for the student's absence has been received. Parents must advise the College by telephone on the first day of absence and provide the College with an expected date of return. This should be followed up in the form of a written note from the parent/carer, though verbal explanations may be acceptable where this is considered appropriate.

Absence will be categorised as follows:

- **Illness:** Parents may be asked to provide medical evidence to allow the Principal to authorise absence where appropriate. This will usually be in the form of an appointment card, prescription etc.
- **Medical/Dental Appointments:** Parents are advised where possible to make medical and dental appointments outside of the school day. Where this is not possible, students must attend the College for part of the day. Parents must show the appointment card to the Attendance Officer (AO).
- **Other Authorised Circumstances:** This relates to where there is cause for absence due to exceptional circumstances, e.g. serious family illness or bereavement.
- **Excluded** (No alternative provision made): Exclusion from attending school is counted as an authorised absence. The College will make arrangements for work to be sent home where a student is excluded for more than one day.
- **Compassionate Circumstances:** Parents who need to take their child out of school during term time due to exceptional circumstances must send a written request to the Principal. Retrospective requests will not be considered and therefore will result in

the absence being categorised as unauthorised. All requests for leave of absence will be responded to in writing outlining the conditions of leave granted or if it is not. If the permission to take leave is not granted and the parent takes their child out of school the absence will be unauthorised. In such cases the school may request the local authority issue a Penalty Notice or consider other legal sanctions including prosecution in the magistrates court.

- **Religious Observance:** DSTC acknowledges the multi-faith nature of British society and recognises that on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside school holiday periods or weekends and this necessitates a consideration (by written request) of authorised absence. Such absence will be authorised up to a maximum of two days annually.
- **Traveller Absence** It is expected that Traveller children, in common with all other children, are to attend school as regularly and as frequently as possible. To protect Traveller parents from unreasonable prosecution for non-attendance, the Education Act 1944, section 86, states that a Traveller parent is safe from prosecution if their child accrues 200 attendances (i.e. 100 days) in a year. This is only when the family are engaged in a trade or business that requires them to travel and when the child is attending school as regularly as that trade permits.
- **Late Arrival:** Registration begins at 8.40am (the start of Period One), and students arriving after this time will be marked as present but arriving late. The register will close at 8.50am and students arriving after the close of register will be recorded as late. This will not be authorised and will count as an absence for that school session and statutory action may be taken where appropriate.
On arrival after the close of register, students must immediately report to Reception to ensure that we can be responsible for them whilst they are in the College. The absence will only be authorised if a satisfactory explanation for the late arrival can be provided; for example, attendance at a medical appointment or closure of the Dartford Crossing. The absence will be recorded as unauthorised if the student has arrived late without justifiable cause. Any students whose late arrival is unauthorised will receive a break and lunchtime detention on the same day in Internal Exclusion (IE).
- **Unauthorised absence:** Absence will not be authorised unless parents have provided a satisfactory explanation and that it has been accepted as such by the Principal.

Deletions from the College Roll

In accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2013, students can be deleted from the register when one of the following circumstances applies:

- The student has ceased to be of compulsory school age.
- Permanent exclusion has occurred and procedures have been completed.
- The student has transferred between schools.
- The student has been withdrawn to be educated outside the school system.
- The student is in custody for more than four months.
- The student has 20 days continuous unauthorised absence and the College has tried to locate the student without success.

Roles and Responsibilities

DSTC believes that improved school attendance can only be achieved if it is viewed as a shared responsibility of the College staff, governors, parents, students and the wider College community.

General Responsibilities

The Governing Body will:

- Ensure that the importance and value of good attendance is promoted to students and their parents.
- Regularly review the school's Attendance Policy and ensure the required resources are available to fully implement the policy.
- Ensure that the Registration Regulations, England, 2013 and other attendance related legislation is complied with.
- Agree college attendance targets and, where appropriate, link these to the Performance Management of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) within the College.
- Monitor the students attendance and related issues through termly reporting at Learning Enrichment and Curriculum (LCE) Governors meetings.
- Ensure that attendance data is reported to the Local Authority or Department for Education as required and on time.
- Ensure that there is a named member of SLT to lead on attendance, (currently the Vice Principal for Engagement).
- Ensure that the College has clear systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all students, including those who are educated off-site.
- Ensure that there are procedures for collecting and analysing attendance data frequently to identify causes and patterns of absence.
- Ensure that data is understood and used to devise solutions and to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions.

SLT and Raising Standards Leaders (RSL), with the support of the Attendance Office (AO) and Pastoral Leaders (PL) will:

- Actively promote the importance and value of good attendance to students and their parents.
- Form positive relationships with students and parents to support high attendance.
- Ensure that there is a whole school approach which reinforces good school attendance. For example, good teaching and learning experiences that encourage students to attend and achieve.
- Monitor the implementation of the Attendance Policy and ensure that the policy is reviewed regularly.
- Ensure that staff are aware of the Attendance Policy and are able to address attendance issues.
- Ensure that the Registration Regulations, England, 2013 and other attendance related legislation is complied with.
- Ensure that there is a named member of the SLT to lead on attendance.
- Return school attendance data to the Department for Education as required and on time.
- Report the school's attendance and related issues through termly reporting to the LCE Governors.
- Ensure that systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all students, including those who are educated off-site are implemented.
- Ensure that attendance data is collected and analysed frequently to identify causes and patterns of absence.
- Interpret the data to devise solutions and to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions.
- Ensure that all the above priorities are shared with and reinforced by all relevant school staff.

- Develop a multi-agency response to improve attendance and support students and their families, including working the School Liaison Officer (SLO) for Kent County Council (KCC).
- Document interventions use the standard required should legal proceedings be instigated.

DSTC request that parents will:

- Help their daughter to get up and out of the house, so that they are on time to College.
- Instil the value of education and regular school attendance within the home environment.
- Encourage their daughter to look to the future and have high aspirations.
- Contact the College if their daughter is absent to let them know the reason why and the expected date of return. Follow this up with a note where possible.
- Try to avoid unnecessary absences. Wherever possible make appointments for the doctors, dentists etc. outside of school hours.
- Ask the College for help if their daughter is experiencing difficulties.
- Inform the College of any change in circumstances that may impact on their daughter's attendance.
- Support the College; take every opportunity to become involved in their daughter's education, form a positive relationship with the College and acknowledge the importance of children receiving the same messages from both school and home.
- Avoid taking their daughter out of school during term-time, where this is unavoidable, and only in exceptional circumstances send a written leave request to the Principal in good time.

Specific Responsibilities

Specific responsibilities and actions are detailed in the Attendance Protocol (Appendix A).

Support for students and parents

DSTC recognises that poor attendance can be an indication of difficulties in a child's life. This may be related to problems at home and or in school. Parents should make the College aware of any difficulties or changes in circumstances that may affect their child's attendance and or behaviour in school, for example, bereavement, divorce/separation. This will help the College identify any additional support that may be required.

DSTC also recognises that some students are more likely to require additional support to attain good attendance, for example, those students with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), those with physical or mental health needs, and Children in Care (CiC).

The College will implement a range of strategies to support improved attendance.

Strategies used will include:

- Discussion with parents and students.
- Attendance meetings with the AO/SLO, PLs, RSLs.
- Attendance contracts.
- Attendance report cards.
- Referrals to support agencies e.g. Early Help.
- Pastoral support.
- Mentoring.
- Reward systems
- Support from the SEND team.

- Reintegration support packages.

Support offered to families will be child centred and planned in discussion and agreement with both parents and students. Where parents fail or refuse to engage with the support offered and further unauthorised absence occurs, DSTC will consider the use of legal sanctions.

Legal Sanctions

Penalty Notices: Penalty Notices will be considered when:

- A student is absent from school and the absence has not been authorised by the school.
- A student has accrued unauthorised absence following written warning to improve.

A Penalty Notice gives each parent the opportunity to discharge themselves of their legal responsibility if a £120 fine is paid within 28 days, reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days of the date the Notice was issued. Failure to pay the Penalty Notice may result in a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

Prosecution: Where intervention fails to bring about an improvement in attendance, the Local Authority will be notified and legal action in the Magistrates' Court may be taken. The College will provide the Local Authority with evidence required for a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 and will appear as a prosecution witness if required by the court. This is to ensure that parents realise their own responsibilities in ensuring attendance at school and most importantly about returning children to education.

Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 states that if a parent fails to ensure the regular school attendance of their child if he/she is a registered student at a school and is of compulsory school age, then they are guilty of an offence. A parent found guilty of this offence can be fined up to £2500 and or be imprisoned for a period of three months.