

# VICTORIA DOCK PRIMARY SCHOOL

## ATTENDANCE POLICY



*Working together for your children*

Updated: Spring 2020

To Be Reviewed: Spring 2021

<b>Safeguarding Team</b>	
Headteacher	Antonia Saunders
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At Victoria Dock Primary we do not discriminate against any child or adult on the grounds of race, disability, gender, age, gender reassignment, pregnancy, maternity, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation. We embrace the individuality of all our community members and comply fully with the Equality Act 2010.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Regular school attendance is important and our school strives for all children to have an attendance rate of at least 96%. Pupils need to attend regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them to maximise achievement. Irregular attendance undermines the education process and leads to educational disadvantage and poor attainment.

At Victoria Dock Primary School we strive to provide the very best quality of experience within our school including:

- A positive school ethos
- Value for every member of the school community
- The highest quality classroom experience
- Extra curricular activities

In this way pupils are encouraged to have a high regard for their school and for all school experience, promoting good attendance in a mutually caring environment.

## **WHY ATTENDANCE IMPORTANT?**

- The Education Act 1996 requires parents and carers to ensure their child receives efficient fulltime education, suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

- Under current government legislation, all absence figures, together with the reasons for absence have to be reported to the Schools Governing Body, the Local Authority (LA) and the Department for education (DFE).
- Parents, guardians and carers must ensure that they are fully aware of the school's attendance policy as any absence will have a huge impact on your child's learning. Regular school attendance is essential and parents, guardians and carers, together with our school staff all have a part to play in ensuring full potential is achieved.
- Pupils are expected to attend school for the entire duration of the academic year, unless there is an exceptional reason for the absence. There are two main categories of absences:
  - Authorised Absence:** is when the school has accepted the explanation offered as satisfactory justification for the absence, or given approval in advance for such an absence.
  - Unauthorised Absence:** is when the school has not yet received a reason for absence or has not approved a child's absence from school after a parent's request.
- Please be aware that when a parent telephones the school with information that their child is unable to attend due to illness, or other circumstances, this may not be automatically authorised. Your child's current and previous school attendance will be taken into consideration and as a result the absence may not be authorised.
- Keeping your child off school with minor ailments such as a headache or slight cold is not acceptable. Repeated absences will require us to request that you obtain medical evidence from your doctor's surgery. This may be in the form of a date stamped compliment slip confirming your visit, or prescription or medicine bottle. Any of the above is to be shown to a member of the school office. (Please note; that the school is not asking any parent to incur a charge for such information and will not be liable for the cost).
- There is a clear connection between regular attendance and achievement. As attendance deteriorates, so does performance, achievement, friendship circles and self-esteem.
- The achievement and maintenance of high levels of attendance is the shared responsibility of parents, guardians or carers, the school with its Governing Body and the Local Authority.

## REGISTRATION

At Victoria Dock Primary School registration should be completed by 9.00 a.m. in the morning and 1.10 p.m. in the afternoon. If pupils are away from the school premises for a whole day then the register should be marked for the afternoon session, together with the morning session. At 9.20 a.m. and 1.20 p.m. the registers are closed and if children arrive after this time they are deemed absent for the session.

The Education (Pupils' Attendance Records) Regulations 1991, which replaced the 1956 Regulations, introduced a further requirement that attendance registers must show whether an absence of a pupil of compulsory school age is authorised or unauthorised.

Authorised absence is allowed for the following reasons:

- \*B Receiving part-time and/or temporary education at an off-site unit or other than at the school where registered (including link courses, consortium arrangements)
- C Other authorised circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code)
- E Excluded (fixed or permanent)
- H Family holiday (exceptional circumstances) to a maximum of 5 days
- J Attending interview e.g. with prospective employer or with another education establishment
- M Medical/dental appointments
- \*P Approved sporting activity
- R Day of religious observance in the religious body to which the parents belong
- S Study leave
- \*V Educational visit
- \*W Work experience

\*Approved educational activities – counts as 'present' for statistical purposes.

## **PROOF OF AUTHORISED ABSENCE**

- Notes of telephone explanations or verbal explanations are recorded on the appropriate form by office staff. These are passed to the class teacher and are then filed if needed.
- If no notification of absence is received after registration is closed, a member of the school office staff will telephone home to ascertain the reason for absence and will fill in the appropriate details. This will be done by 9.30am every morning and 1.30pm every afternoon.
- Explanations of absence will be available for the Headteacher to scrutinise.
- No absence will be left unchecked. If no satisfactory explanation is received, a note will be made and advice will be sought from the Local Authority Educational Welfare team.
- Emerging patterns of absence will be recorded by the office staff so that a pattern can be established e.g. regular absence on Fridays. All documentation/evidence will be used by the Headteacher and the governors who will decide on the best course of action. This will include a letter to the parent and a meeting with the Headteacher if no improvement is seen.

## **PERSISTENT ABSENCE**

From September 2015 the criteria threshold for persistent absence has increased from 85% absence to 90%.

In terms of the number of sessions of absence, this equates to a decrease from 57 absences in one year to 38 absences.

The school will actively monitor (including creating case studies) and chase up pupils who are in danger of falling into this category.

## **GOVERNANCE**

Attendance statistics for the school are provided to the governing body on a termly basis.

## **HOLIDAYS IN TERM TIME**

At Victoria Dock Primary School the Staff and Governors are concerned at the high level of requests for absence during term time for 'holidays', and are bound to address this issue. It is extremely detrimental to your child's education to remove him/her from school during term time and holding this belief means that we are unable to justify such absence as it would not be in your child's best interests. Governors also have a responsibility to work towards and maintain high levels of attendance. Therefore, if parents choose to take children out of school they must take responsibility knowing that the absence may be unauthorised.

DfE guidance 'School Attendance Parental Responsibility Measures' January 2015 states:

- Penalty notices can be used where the pupil's absence has not been authorised by the school.
- If a child of compulsory school age fails to attend regularly at a school at which they are registered, or at a place where alternative provision is provided for them, the parents may be guilty of an offence and can be prosecuted by the local authority.
- Local authorities have the power to prosecute parents who fail to comply with a school attendance order (section 443 of the Education Act 1996) or fail to ensure their child's regular attendance at a school (section 444 of the Education Act 1996).

In all cases, parents planning to take the child on holiday during term time should, as soon as possible, write to the Headteacher detailing the dates of the holiday and the reasons for absence.

The DfE gives clear guidance about term time holidays. Headteachers may only authorise absences in 'exceptional circumstances'.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 came into force on 1 September 2013, changing the rules about term-time holidays. These regulations have not been amended since their introduction, and remain in force.

The regulations specify that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence to pupils during term time unless they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. If a Headteacher grants leave, he or she should determine the number of days the child can be away from school.

After consultation with Hull City Council legal team, the Governing Body of Victoria Dock Primary School has adopted the Local Authority advice and has agreed to define exceptional circumstances as follows:

- Service personnel who are prevented from taking holidays outside term time
- Acute crisis within the family, where the family needs to spend time together to support each other
- Court order/formal agreement where parents have separated

The following codes are used to record pupil absence as a result of holidays:

- **Code C** for a leave of absence authorised by the school
- **Code H** for a holiday authorised by the school
- **Code G** for a holiday not authorised by the school or in excess of the period determined by the headteacher

## **ALTERNATIVE PROVISION**

Schools are responsible for the safeguarding and welfare of pupils educated off-site. Where this is the case, they will have reciprocal arrangements in place with the alternative provider to ascertain attendance information. This should be provided daily. All unexplained and unexpected absences will be followed up by the home school in a swift and timely manner.

Victoria Dock Primary will use the appropriate code (B) to indicate that the child is accessing alternative provision, thus demonstrating the school has confirmed that the education is supervised and appropriate measures are in place to safeguard children.

## **CHILDREN MISSING EDUCATION**

When there is reasonable evidence to suspect that a child is missing education and the whereabouts of that child is unknown, the Local Authority will be notified using the appropriate form. This form will be used when all possible enquiries have been made to establish the whereabouts of pupils who:

- have moved out of the area or within the area with no destination school
- where a school has been approached for a place directly by a parent/carer
- for agencies other than schools who have knowledge of children not on a school roll.

No child will be removed from Victoria Dock Primary roll without consultation between the Headteacher and Education Welfare Service, when appropriate.

## **CHILD CRIMINAL & SEXUAL EXPLOITATION**

Children who go missing or are persistently absent from school may be an indicator of exploitation, especially if other key factors are also present.

Some other potential signs of criminal or sexual exploitation are:

- missing from home and /or being found out-of-area;
- unexplained acquisition of money, clothes, or mobile phones
- excessive receipt of texts / phone calls and/or having multiple handsets
- relationships with controlling / older individuals or groups
- leaving home / care without explanation
- suspicion of physical or sexual assault / unexplained injuries
- parental concerns
- carrying weapons
- significant decline in school results / performance
- gang association or isolation from peers or social networks
- self-harm or significant changes in emotional well-being.

At Victoria Dock Primary we monitor absenteeism daily to ascertain pupil's whereabouts to ensure they are safe from harm. We will work endlessly with all statutory and non-statutory stakeholders, including parents/carer to protect any child at risk or at possibly risk of this form of abuse.

If a class teacher or tutor is concerned about a child who is regularly absent and also presents with any of the signs listed above, they must inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead immediately, as per the school's Child Protection policy.

## **PARENT/SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP**

Under Section 7 of the Education Act 1996, parents of children of compulsory school age are required to ensure that they receive efficient full-time education, whether by regular school attendance or otherwise. Parents are thus primarily responsible for

ensuring that children attend, and stay at school. It is the responsibility of the school to support attendance and to take seriously problems which may lead to non-attendance.

Session times are clearly stated in the school prospectus and reinforced at the time of registration and starting school. Children are allowed into the school building from 8.40am and collected from the playground at 1.00 p.m. Teachers should be in the playground a few minutes before these times. The teacher on duty/lunch time supervisor will blow the whistle promptly.

The school will discourage late arrival through positive means:

- Good examples set by staff.
- Praise.
- Individual discussions where appropriate. The parents of persistent latecomers will be invited into school to discuss the problem with the Head Teacher.

Only the school can approve absences. Parents will be made aware that parentally condoned absence for no valid reason is damaging to their child's education. This message will be communicated to parents through the school website and where appropriate, through letters and at meetings with parents.

## **REWARDS**

Good attendance will be praised informally throughout the school year. It will be integrated into the positive ethos of the school, underpinned by the school's aims. Specific rewards in terms of certificates will be issued for 100% attendance at the end of each term with special presentation at the end of each academic year for pupils who have perfect attendance for one year.

## **CONCLUSION**

Victoria Dock Primary School recognises the high priority of good attendance. All staff will be made aware of this and the whole school will continually work towards good attendance.

In implementing this policy we will be aware of individual circumstances and, where appropriate, deal sympathetically with our families.