



Ditchheat Primary School
Attendance policy

We take seriously our shared responsibilities of working together as a community, striving for excellence in all we do and ensuring that all of us are valued for who we are and who we can become. Through high academic and personal expectations, we inspire our children to enjoy their time here and ensure that they leave fully prepared for the next phase of their lives reflecting on the importance of attendance and belonging.

We expect that all pupils will:

- attend school every day
- attend school punctually
- attend appropriately dressed and prepared for the day

We expect that all parents/carers will:

- ensure regular school attendance and be aware of their legal responsibilities
- ensure that their child arrives at school punctually and prepared for the school day
- ensure that they contact the school daily to report absence or, if known in advance, give notification whenever their child is unable to attend school
- notify the school of any home circumstances that might affect the behaviour and learning of their child
- notify school immediately of any changes to contact details
- attend meetings at the school as requested
- provide medical evidence for absence as requested (this may be in the form of a date stamped compliments slip confirming your visit, prescription or medicine bottle or hospital letter)

We expect that the school will:

- provide a welcoming atmosphere and a safe learning environment
- provide a sympathetic response to any pupil's or parent's/carer's concerns
- keep regular and accurate records of morning and afternoon attendance and monitor each individual pupil's attendance
- contact parents/carers each day when a pupil fails to attend and where no message has been received to explain the absence and follow up all unexplained absences to obtain explanations from parents/carers
- in the case of long term or frequent absence due to medical conditions, request verifications from a GP or other relevant body and only the school can authorise absence
- inform parents/carers of the percentage attendance of all pupils
- make initial inquiries regarding pupils who are not attending regularly
- meet with the Education Welfare Officer to monitor and support school attendance
- refer irregular or unjustified patterns of attendance to the Education Welfare Service. Failure by the family to comply with planned support set by the Education Welfare Officer may result in further actions, e.g. a parenting contract, parental prosecution or an application for an Education Supervision Order.

Policy rationale:

Clearly defined roles and responsibilities and the consistent implementation of procedures ensure that attendance and punctuality are addressed effectively to support successful learning. The policy fully adheres to the legal requirements with regards to attendance and the registration of pupils. The school will follow all procedures set out in the Department of Education policy, Keeping Children Safe in Education, (September 2016) working to safeguard children.

Effective partnership and liaison with outside agencies provides support, advice and guidance for pupils and parents. Rigorous intervention is triggered by a systematic approach to the monitoring and analysis of attendance data. Patterns of good attendance and punctuality are celebrated and families who make every effort to improve pupil's attendance are encouraged and recognised.

We are fully committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and follow best practice procedures to ensure their safety.

Registration:

Punctuality to school is crucial. Lateness into school causes disruption to that individual's learning and to that of the other pupils in the class. It is paramount therefore that all pupils arrive at school on time. The school doors open at 8:45am.

- By law, schools must take a morning and afternoon register and record the attendance or absence for every pupil
- Morning registration takes place at 8:55am and pupils who arrive after 9:00am will be recorded as late to school. The register closes at 9:10am and after this, lateness is recorded as an unauthorised absence and can be subject to prosecution by the local authority
- Afternoon registration is taken at 1:15pm and pupils who arrive after 1:15pm will be recorded as late
- Persistent lateness by a pupil before registration closes will be dealt with by the class teacher, who may seek a meeting to discuss the issue with parents
- A pupil's attendance and punctuality is recorded on their termly report and will be passed on to future schools as necessary.

NB: It is important that registers are completed correctly and on time. This enables the school office to confirm an absence with parents/carers and ensures that there is confidence in the records held; it also provides the necessary evidence for the Education Welfare Service to proceed with prosecution where the need arises.

School expectations for Good Attendance:

We consider good attendance to be 96% or above.

Attendance:

Descriptor	Attendance
Excellent	100% - 99%
Good	98% - 96%
Requires improvement	95% - 91%
Persistent Absentee	90% - 86%
Critical	85% - 80%

Absence from school:

Absences are either authorised or unauthorised. Authorised absence is where the school has either given approval in advance for a pupil to be out of school, or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as satisfactory justification for absence. All other absences must be treated as unauthorised.

Keeping a child off school with minor ailments such as headache, sore throat or slight cold is not acceptable. If your child incurs 5 or more days of absence due to illness, then any subsequent absences due to illness may require the school to request that the parent/carer obtain medical evidence from their doctor's surgery. If evidence is not received, the school reserves the right to unauthorise the absence, which may lead to further action being taken. This evidence may be in the form of a date stamped compliment slip confirming your visit, prescription, labelled medical container, screen shot or hospital letter.

Attendance administration:

The class teacher will input confirmed absences into the electronic monitoring system - each absence will be given a code in relation to the reason for absence. All codes link back to an authorised or unauthorised absence mark.

A member of staff will seek an explanation for all unexplained absence via telephone call or home visit.

Attendance Letters:

- Attendance Letter 1 will be issued when a child's attendance falls below 95% in any 12 week period
- Attendance Letter 2 will be issued should the child's attendance fail to improve. Medical evidence of future absences will be required
- Attendance Letter 3 will be issued, asking parents to attend a parental contract meeting, should a child have 10 unauthorised sessions of absence in any 12 week period
- Attendance Letter 4 will be issued should a child have 20 unauthorised sessions of absence and a referral will be made to the Educational Welfare Service.

Absence during the school day:

During school hours, the school staff are legally in loco parentis and therefore must know where pupils are during the school day.

- Whenever possible, parents/carers should try to arrange medical and other appointments outside of school time
- Parents/carers are requested to confirm, by letter, email or telephone call, the reason for any planned absence, the time of leaving and the expected return time
- Pupils must be collected from the school office and be signed out on leaving the school and be signed back in on their return at the school office.

Approved absence – Educational Visits:

Such activities may include:

- Educational visits or field trips
- Sporting events (fixtures or sports days etc)
- Enrichment courses
- Fixed Term Exclusions
- Visits to other schools.

The member of staff responsible must inform the Headteacher of pupils involved prior to the absence. It is essential that the member of staff responsible for organising an educational visit, sporting event or enrichment course also completes all the necessary documentation including a risk assessment request form to be handed to the EVO (see policy on Organising School Visits).

The class teacher or school office will use the appropriate coding to record these absences as 'authorised' or 'educated off site'.

Planned leave of absence:

Term time leave requests will be reviewed and approved only in the case of exceptional circumstances and at the Headteacher's discretion; all other absences will be unauthorised. Should parents choose to take their children on holiday when it has not been authorised by the school, a penalty notice will be raised on the tenth session of absence. A school day is made up of two sessions, morning and afternoon, therefore ten sessions is a full five days. Penalty notices will be raised with Somerset County Council following ten consecutive unauthorised sessions of absence or a total of ten sessions unauthorised absence within a twelve-week period.

If a child has 100% attendance for a 12 week period, prior to a planned absence of ten consecutive sessions, this absence will be unauthorised, without incurring a penalty notice. Where possible, all applications for term time leave should be made in advance and will be responded to in writing, the school acknowledges that in situations such as bereavement, this may not be possible.

For further details on absence procedures, please see the 'Attendance Matters' booklet on our school website.