



GREENWOOD ACADEMIES TRUST

Danesholme Academies

Attendance Policy

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Expectations of Danesholme Academies.

We have a continuing responsibility to proactively manage and improve attendance across our Academies community. Attendance is the essential foundation to positive outcomes for all pupils and is therefore seen as everyone's responsibility in school.

We aim to consistently promote the benefits of good attendance at our Academies, and we set high expectations for every pupil, communicate those expectations clearly and consistently to pupils and parents, systematically analyse data to identify patterns to target their improvement efforts, and work effectively with the local authority and other local partners to overcome barriers to attendance. We also recognise that attendance cannot be seen in isolation and that the foundation to good attendance is a calm, orderly, safe and supportive environment in which all pupils want to attend and can learn and thrive. To manage and improve attendance effectively, we :

- Develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance.
- Have a clear school attendance policy which all staff, pupils and parents understand.
- Accurately complete admission and, attendance registers and have effective day to day processes in place to follow-up absence.
- Regularly monitor and analyse attendance and absence data to identify pupils or cohorts that require support with their attendance and put effective strategies in place.
- Build strong relationships with families, listen to and understand barriers to attendance and work with families to remove them.
- Share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities, and other partners when absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe.

Develop and Maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance at Danesholme Academies

Good attendance is a learned behaviour, we recognise the importance of developing good patterns of attendance from the outset. We believe this it is an integral part of the Academies ethos and culture. In building a culture of good school attendance, we:

- Recognise the importance of good attendance and, alongside good behaviour, make it a central part of the Academies vision, values, ethos, and day to day life.
- Recognise the interplay between attendance and wider school improvement efforts, building it into strategies on attainment, behaviour, bullying, special educational needs support, supporting pupils with medical conditions or disabilities, safeguarding, wellbeing, and support for disadvantaged students (including use of pupil premium).
- Recognise improving attendance is a school leadership issue and have designated senior leaders with overall responsibility for championing and improving attendance in school. Responsibilities include offering a clear vision for attendance improvement, evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes, oversight of data analysis, and communicating messages to pupils and parents.
- Make sure all teaching and non-teaching staff know the importance of good attendance, are consistent in their communication with pupils and parents, and receive the training and professional development they need.
- Make sure attendance support and improvement is appropriately resourced, including where applicable through effective use of pupil premium funding. Where possible this includes our attendance or pastoral support staff who work with families, conduct home visits and work in partnership with school leaders and the local authority.
- Set high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all pupils and communicate these regularly to pupils and parents through all available channels. In doing so, we help parents to understand what is expected of them and why attendance is important to their child's attainment, wellbeing, and wider development.
- Visibly demonstrate the benefits of good attendance throughout school life. This may include in displays, assemblies or in class.
- Recognise that attendance is never 'solved' and is a continuous process by regularly reviewing and updating messages, processes, and strategies.
- 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.

Roles and Responsibilities.

We expect our parents to:

- Ensure their child attends every day the Academies are open except when a statutory reason applies.
- Notify the Academies as soon as possible when their child has to be unexpectedly absent (eg sickness).
- Only request leave of absence in exceptional circumstances and do so in advance.
- Book any medical appointments around the school day where possible.

Danesholme Academies will:

- Have a clear Academy attendance policy on the website which all staff, pupils and parents understand.
- Develop and maintain a whole academy culture that promotes the benefits of good attendance.
- Accurately complete admission and attendance registers.
- Have robust daily processes to follow up absence.
- Have a designated senior leader with overall responsibility for championing and improving attendance.

Danesholme Academies Day to Day Processes.

We have a robust day to day process to track and follow up absence and poor punctuality which are rigorously applied across the school.

- We expect parents to contact the school when their child is absent to explain the reason and we will contact parents on the first day of absence where a reason has not been provided. This will initially be via a text message and if no contact is made the attendance officer will send a class dojo message later the same day. If absence continues without explanation, further contact will be made to ensure safeguarding processes are followed.
- Teachers will send parents a class dojo message if no reason has been given for the child's absence on day 1.
- Where reasonably possible, we will hold more than one emergency contact number for each pupil, which gives us additional options to make contact with a responsible adult.
- If no contact has been made with the parent on day three a home visit will be carried out.
- We will regularly inform parents about their child's attendance and absence levels. This will be done by sharing the amount of time missed and the impact on the pupil's learning.
- Regular meetings are held with the parents of pupils who we (and/or local authority) consider to be vulnerable or are persistently or severely absent to discuss attendance and engagement at school. This will include parent contracts and referrals if needed to EIPT.
- Identify pupils who need support from wider partners as quickly as possible and make the necessary referrals.

Danesholme Academies Attendance Data Analysis.

As poor attendance is habitual, prevention and early intervention is crucial. The key to this is regular data analysis to both identify and provide immediate additional support to pupils or pupil cohorts that need it, and to look at historic and emerging patterns across the Academies and develop strategies to address them. To achieve this, we:

- Monitor and analyse weekly attendance patterns and trends and deliver intervention and support in a targeted way to pupils and families.
- Use this analysis to provide regular attendance reports to class teachers or tutors to facilitate discussions with pupils and to leaders (including any special educational needs coordinators, designated safeguarding leads and pupil premium leads).
- Conduct thorough analysis of half-termly, termly, and full year data to identify patterns and trends. This includes analysis of pupils and cohorts and identifying patterns in uses of certain codes, days of poor attendance.
- Benchmark our attendance data (at whole school, year group and cohort level) against local, regional, and national levels to identify areas of focus for improvement.
- Devise specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data. This may, for example, include pupils in a year group with higher than average absence or for pupils eligible for free school meals if their attendance falls behind that of their more advantaged peers.
- Monitor in the data the impact of school wide attendance efforts, including any specific strategies implemented.

Building Strong Relationships with Families.

We treat all pupils and parents with dignity and staff model respectful relationships to build a positive relationship between home and school that can be the foundation of good attendance. In communicating with parents, we discuss the link between attendance and attainment and wider wellbeing, and challenge parents' views where they have misconceptions about what 'good' attendance looks like. Where a pupil or family needs support with attendance, we ensure the best placed person (usually FSW or pastoral manager) in the Academies works with and supports the family and wherever possible the person is kept consistent.

Where a pattern of absence is at risk of becoming, or becomes, problematic we draw on these relationships and listen to and understand the barriers to attendance the pupil or family is experiencing. In doing so, we take into consideration the sensitivity of some of the reasons for absence and understand the importance of school as a place of safety and support rather than reaching immediately for punitive approaches.

In the first instance, we:

- Support pupils and parents by working together to address any in-school barriers to attendance.
- Where barriers are outside of the school's control, we work together to support pupils and parents to access any support they may need voluntarily. As a minimum, this includes meeting with parents at risk of persistent or severe absence to understand barriers to their child being in school and agreeing actions or interventions to address them. This may include referrals to services and organisations that can provide support. These actions are regularly discussed and reviewed together with families.
- Where the needs are wider and a whole family response is more appropriate, this is likely to include a voluntary early help assessment.

Where voluntary support has not been effective and/or has not been engaged with we will work with the local authority to:

- Put formal support in place in the form of a parenting contract.
- Refer to the EIPT team.

Pupils with Medical Conditions or Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

Danesholme Academies are aware that some pupils face greater barriers to attendance than their peers. These can include pupils who suffer from long term medical conditions or who have special educational needs and disabilities. Their right to an education is the same as any other pupil and therefore the attendance ambition for these pupils is the same as they are for any other pupil. In working with their parents to improve attendance, we are mindful of the barriers these pupils face and put additional support in place where necessary to help them access their full-time education.

This may include:

- Having sensitive conversations and developing good support for pupils with physical or mental health conditions. For example, making reasonable adjustments where a pupil has a disability or putting in place an individual healthcare plan where needed. Considering whether additional support from external partners (including the local authority or health services) would be appropriate, making referrals in a timely manner and working together with those services to deliver any subsequent support.
- Working with parents to develop specific support approaches for attendance for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities, including where applicable ensuring the provision outlined in the pupil's education, health and care plan is accessed. In addition, we will work with families to help support routines and work with other partners to encourage the scheduling of additional support interventions or medical appointments outside of the main school day.

Establishing strategies for removing the in-school barriers these pupils face, including considering support or reasonable adjustments for uniform, routines, access to support in school and lunchtime arrangements.

- Ensuring joined up pastoral care is in place where needed and consider whether a time-limited phased return to school would be appropriate, for example for those affected by anxiety about school attendance.

Pupils with long term illnesses or other health needs may need additional support to continue their education, such as alternative provision provided by the local authority. Local authorities are responsible for arranging suitable education for children of compulsory school age who, because of health reasons, would otherwise not receive suitable education.

In all cases, we remain sensitive and avoid stigmatising pupils and parents and we talk to pupils and parents and understand how they feel and what they think would help improve their attendance to develop individual approaches that meet an individual pupil's specific needs.

Granting Leaves of Absence

Only exceptional circumstances warrant a leave of absence. Danesholme Academies will consider each application individually taking into account the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind the request.

If a leave of absence is granted, it is for the Executive Principal to determine the length of the time the pupil can be away from school.

As head teachers should only grant leaves of absence in exceptional circumstances it is unlikely a leave of absence will be granted for the purposes of a family holiday.

Monitoring the Attendance of Children with a Social Worker.

In addition to the benefits for all pupils, good attendance at school also provides an additional safeguard for vulnerable pupils. We know that absence for pupils with a social worker, has been historically higher, with a quarter of children who have ever needed a social worker persistently absent compared to less than 10% of those who had never been in need.

Danesholme Academies therefore realise the importance of improving the attendance for this group.

- Regularly monitor the attendance of children with a social worker and make contact with the social worker when the child is absent.
- Provide training for designated teachers about their role in promoting the attendance of children who have ever needed a social worker.
- Children who have a child protection plan will have a home visit on the first day of non-attendance and the results of this will be shared with their social worker.

Persistent and Severe Absence.

Where absence escalates and pupils miss 10% or more of school (equivalent to 1 day or more a fortnight across a full school year), we work with the local authorities to put additional targeted support in place to remove any barriers to attendance and reengage these pupils. In doing so, we sensitively consider some of the reasons for absence and understand the importance of school as a place of safety and support for children who might be facing difficulties, rather than reaching immediately for punitive approaches.

Particular focus is given by all partners to pupils who are absent from school more than they are present (those missing 50% or more of school). These severely absent pupils may find it more difficult to be in school or face bigger barriers to their regular attendance and we recognise they are likely to need more intensive support across a range of partners. A concerted effort is therefore needed across all relevant services to prioritise them. All partners work together to make this group the top priority for support – this may include specific support with attendance or a whole family plan, but it may also include consideration for an early health plan or an education, health and care plan or an alternative form of educational provision where necessary to overcome the barriers to being in school.

Contents of a Parenting Contract

All parenting contracts contain:

- Details of the requirements the parent(s) is expected to comply with.
- A statement from Danesholme Academies agreeing to provide support to the parent(s) to meet the requirements and setting out details of the support.
- A statement by the parent that they agree to comply with the requirements for the period of time specified by the contract.

The requirements specified, and the support provided, will depend on the individual case, and will be tailored to the needs of the individual parent and family. There is not, therefore, a prescribed list, but requirements may include:

- Measures to ensure the pupil attends school or alternative provision punctually and regularly
- Requiring the parent to attend meetings with the school.
- Accessing or partaking in the support or programmes offered

The support provided by Danesholme Academies to help the parent satisfy those requirements may include:

- Provision of a FSW or pastoral manager to support the family
- Signposting or referrals to wider local authority or health services that might support the family (e.g. housing needs, drug and alcohol support)
- Signposting or referrals to voluntary and community sector programmes or support (e.g. foodbanks or community support groups)
- Support and advisory services (e.g. benefit support)
- Formal parenting programmes (e.g. a course with a specified number of sessions, eg: 1,2,3 Magic)

Our parenting contracts do not have a minimum or maximum duration. Each individual contract sets out the duration it will be in place, and most are for between 4 – 6 weeks but can be longer if needed.

1Once the requirements and support elements of the contract have been agreed, Danesholme Academies and the parent will write up the contract together and sign it. The contract are written in language that the parent can easily understand (including a translation where necessary). All parties, including other partners working with the family, are given a copy.

Non-compliance with a Parenting Contract

Danesholme Academies work with the parent to gain their cooperation and compliance throughout the parenting contract process.

Where a parent does not comply with the requirements set out in the contract, the pastoral manager will contact the parent and seek an explanation and decide whether it is reasonable, and the contract remains useful. If the explanation shows that the contract is proving difficult to comply with through no fault of the parent, then a meeting will be arranged with the parent to review and amend it. Where no explanation is given, or the pastoral manager is not satisfied with the explanation, we will serve the parent with a warning to explain that the contract is not working and may be terminated, and another course of action pursued, if the parent does not engage. This will be in the form of a letter, and a record of it kept.

If there are further instances of non-compliance, a meeting will be arranged with the parent to review the contract and discuss how it can be made to work. Following this meeting, the school should decide whether the non-compliance is undermining the contract to the extent that it is no longer useful in which case an alternative course of action (such as a different legal intervention) would need to be decided upon. The decision and reasons will be recorded.