



Dennington Church of England Primary School

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Executive Headteacher: Dr Paul Parslow-Williams

Head of School: Mrs Charys Rushbrook

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10th March 2023

Dear Parents and Carers,

We are writing to you to inform you of recent changes to the All Saints Schools Trust attendance policy and to reiterate our commitment to high pupil attendance at Dennington CofE Primary School. A copy of the new policy is included with this letter.

Why is high attendance important?

Having experienced school closures during the Covid pandemic, many of us now fully recognise the importance of face to face contact in the classroom. It has been wonderful in recent months to have sustained uninterrupted blocks of teaching and learning. Despite this, as a school, we do have concerns about the levels of attendance of some of our children.

We believe that one of the reasons for this is that school attendance data is often misunderstood– while 90% may be good as a mark in a test, in attendance terms it means one day a fortnight being missed. Over a year this adds up to over a month of schooling! Whilst we aim for 100%, we understand that children are ill sometimes and there are other events in life that need to take priority. Nonetheless, even allowing for these, we would still expect the vast majority of children's attendance to be 96% and above. See the table below for a summary.

96% and above	Good attendance
91-95%	Attendance is starting to slip and is becoming a concern.
90% and below	Pupil is officially designated as a 'persistent absentee'. The child will be discussed with the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) and further actions may be taken.

We know that all our parents and carers at Dennington CofE Primary School want the very best for their children and understand that having a good education is vital to ensure that they have the very best of opportunities available to them. If children do not attend school regularly they may:

- Struggle to keep up with school work and have gaps in their learning.
- Miss out on the social side of school life. Poor attendance can affect children's ability to make and keep friendships; a vital part of growing up.

Setting good attendance patterns from an early age, from nursery through primary school will also help your child later on in their life. Children who have a poor school attendance record may have less chance of securing a job when they are adults.

Research links poor attendance with lower academic achievement. Generally, the higher the percentage of sessions missed across the key stage at KS2 (Year 6 SATs) and KS4 (GCSEs), the lower the level of attainment at the end of the key stage.

- **Among pupils with no missed sessions over KS2, 83.9% achieved the expected standard compared to 40.2% of pupils who were persistently absent.**
- **Among pupils with no missed sessions over KS4, 83.7% achieved grades 9 to 4 in English and maths compared to 35.6% of pupils who were persistently absent.**

Dennington Church of England Primary School is part of the All Saints Schools Trust.

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Why is it so important to attend every day?

- Learning is a progressive activity; each day's lessons build upon those of the previous day(s). One week of absence could miss an entire topic, particularly in subjects taught daily such as English and mathematics.
- Reading the material and completing work independently does not compensate for direct interaction with the teacher and peers.
- Many classes use discussions, demonstrations, role-play, model making, experiments and other forms of participation as part of the daily learning activities, and these cannot be made up by those who are absent.

What can parents do to help?

- Help your child understand the importance of regular attendance, including arriving to school on time every day.
- If there is something worrying your child which may make them reluctant to attend, please let us know as soon as possible so that we can help.
- Where possible arrange any non-urgent appointments, trips and holidays outside of school time.

What will we do?

- Continue to support pupil well-being and address any concerns which could impact on attendance.
- Closely monitor children's attendance. When attendance becomes a concern, we will notify parents which may include a request for a meeting at school (or home visit in some circumstances).
- Organise meetings with the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) to discuss pupils with poor attendance. Arrange home or school visits for those of most concern. This could include escalation leading to fines and/or court appearances.

Due to recent changes in Trust policy, the school cannot authorise holidays during term time. Requests for a leave of absence will only be granted in extreme extenuating circumstances which will be considered on a case-by-case basis. If parents/carers choose to take their child(ren) on a term-time holiday without the Headteacher's (Head of School/Executive Head) authorisation, the child(ren)'s absences will be marked as unauthorised. A fixed penalty notice fine will be issued when 6 or more unauthorised absence sessions (not necessarily consecutively) have occurred (3 whole days in total). The penalty notice fine is £60 if paid within 21 days; please note this is £60 for each child, for each parent/carer (i.e. 2 children, 2 parent/carers = £240 fine) increasing to £120 between 21 and 28 days. Please note 1 session is half a day.

Children are at school for 190 days out of the 365 that make up a year. This is barely over half of the total and leaves 175 days for vacations, shopping, non-urgent appointments and visits.

Children only get one chance at school, and your child's future may be affected by not attending school regularly. We look forward to continuing to work in partnership with our parents and carers.

With thanks for your understanding,

Paul Parslow-Williams (Executive Headteacher) and Charys Rushbrook (Head of School)

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