



What should I do if my child is absent from school?

By law, schools must record absences and the reasons given.

You are therefore required to contact the school immediately if your child is absent. On their return to school you must then send a note explaining the reason for the absence.

The school office should be informed in writing of absences known in advance, such as dental appointments. If you wish to request a longer absence – which may or may not be authorised (see overleaf) – you will also need to complete a Leave of Absence Request from which is available from the main reception.

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ATTENDANCE

Information for Parents and Carers

At The Downs Primary School and Nursery we recognise that positive behaviour and good attendance are central to raising standards of pupil attainment

For all the children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and be at school on time every day the school is open, unless the reason is unavoidable. Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning.

Our Attendance Policy aims to raise and maintain levels of attendance by:

- Promoting a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure and valued.
- Raising awareness of the importance of good attendance and punctuality.
- Ensuring that attendance is monitored effectively, in line with Government and Local Authority requirements, and reasons for absences are recorded promptly and consistently.
- Working in partnership with parents / carers so that they are aware of their child's attendance record and the impact that this is having on their education.

The schools full Attendance Policy is available from the school office or the school website at:

www.downs.essex.sch.uk

Understanding different types of absence

Every half day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required and it is a legal requirement. If we are unaware of the reason for your child's absence it will be recorded as unauthorised.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness, medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time (e.g. hospital or orthodontist appointments), emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school and the Governing Body, following Government guidelines, do not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Local Authority (Educational Welfare Service) using sanctions and / or legal proceedings including penalty notices and fines.

Unauthorised absence includes:

- Parents / carers keeping children off school unnecessarily e.g. because they had a late night or for non-infectious illness or injury that would not affect their ability to learn.
- Truancy during the school day.
- Absences which have never been properly explained.
- Children who arrive at school too late to be registered (after 9.30am)
- Shopping trips.
- Looking after other children or children accompanying siblings or parents to medical appointments.
- Their own or family birthdays.
- Day trips.
- Holidays in term time.

Holidays in Term Time

There is no longer any entitlement in law for pupils to take time off during the term to go on holiday.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 have been amended from 1st September 2013. All references to family holidays and extended leave have been removed, together with the right for parents / carers to apply for up to ten days holiday during term time.

The amendments specify that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are 'exceptional circumstances'. At The Downs 'exceptional circumstances' will be interpreted as: *being of unique and significant emotional, educational or spiritual value to the child which outweighs the loss of teaching time.*

It is important for parents / carers to be aware that while decisions will be made on a case by case basis, requests will normally be refused.

We will not agree leave during term time:

- At any time in September. This is very important as your child needs to settle into their new class as quickly as possible.
- During assessment periods in February, May and October. Year 1 pupils will also need to be in school throughout the period set aside each year by the Government for statutory phonics tests.
- When a pupil's attendance record already includes any level of unauthorised absence or they have already been granted authorised leave within that academic year.
- Where a pupil's attendance rate in the last 12 school weeks is already below 95% or if it will fall below that level as a result of taking leave.