



Attendance Policy
2019

Denton Community College Attendance Policy

1.0 Introduction

Staff, students and parents/carers all play an important role in ensuring that our college is a success and that our students maximise their potential. We aim to create a college that enables and encourages all members of our community to achieve excellence and to feel proud to be a part of a very special learning community- 'high expectations no excuses.' For our students to gain the greatest benefit from their education, it is vital that they attend the college every day and on time. This policy explains how all stakeholders can work together to achieve this.

Our primary aim is to support our students and their parents/carers to take as full a part in college life as is possible. To do this, our students must attend.

2.0 Principles

Denton Community College believes that full time attendance at college is vital in order to secure a good education and must be a high priority for all.

We believe, in line with the law, that children should be at college, on time, every day when college is open, unless the absence is unavoidable.

The college is committed to:

- Supporting parents/carers to ensure that children attend college regularly in order to benefit from education
- Reducing levels of unauthorised absence in accordance with DfE expectations through a strategy which focuses on raising levels of overall attendance
- Informing and supporting parents/carers and college staff in fulfilling legal responsibilities
- Taking action when appropriate to discharge its statutory duties

The legal statutes on which the college policy is based are:

- 1989 Children Act
- 1996 Education Act
- 1998 Crime and Disorder Act
- 2000 Criminal Justice and Court Services Act.
- 2004 Children Act (Every Child Matters)

3.0 Why regular attendance is so important

Each absence impacts on the progress a child makes and regular absence can be particularly damaging.

It is the legal responsibility of parents/carers to ensure that their child attends college. A parent/carer who allows their child to be absent from college without a good reason creates an offence in law and may be prosecuted.

4.0 Promoting regular attendance

The college will support parents/carers in their legal responsibility to ensure that their child attends college regularly.

We will:

- Provide parents/carers with a copy of a letter outlining Attendance Legislation/ Legal Responsibilities at the beginning of the year
- Report to parents/carers half-termly, informing them about the progress their child is making in college and what their attendance and punctuality rate is

- Celebrate good attendance by displaying individual and class achievements
- Reward good or improving attendance through prizes, certificates and special events
- Run promotional events when parents/carers, students and staff work together to raise attendance levels across the college

5.0 Understanding types of absence

Every half-day absence from college has to be classified by the college (not by the parent/carer), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required in writing.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from college that college has given permission for. This may be due to such things as illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in college time, or emergencies. (We ask that where possible appointments should be made outside of college time.)

Unauthorised absences are absences that the college does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This type of absence can lead us to use sanctions and/or legal proceedings against parents/carers.

Examples of unauthorised absences are:

- Parents/carers keeping children off college unnecessarily
- Truancy before or during the college day
- Absences that are not properly explained
- Children who arrive at college too late to get a mark
- Shopping, looking after other children or for birthdays etc
- Day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed (we do not allow holiday absence)

Whilst all children will be off college at some time because they are genuinely ill, sometimes illness can be cited when a child is reluctant to attend. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the college, the parent/carer and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend, parents/carers must never cover up this absence or give in to pressure to excuse the child from attending. This reaction gives the impression that attendance does not matter and will allow this reluctant attitude to college to become a real problem.

Persistent Absenteeism (PA)

A student becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more of their education across the college year for whatever reason. Absence at this level does considerable damage to a child's educational prospects and we require the fullest support and co-operation from parents/carers to tackle this.

We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and parents/carers will be informed of this immediately.

PA students are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system and we also combine this monitoring with academic mentoring where absence impacts on attainment.

All of our PA students and their parents/carers are subject to an Action Plan and the plan may include: allocation of additional support through a Mentor or other support worker, use of circle time, individual incentive programmes and participation in group activities around raising attendance. All PA cases are also automatically made known to the Education Welfare Service in order to alert them that legal routes may be explored by us.

Parents/Carers will be expected to attend meetings with the Attendance Leader (Assistant Headteacher) and other relevant person until the attendance of the child improves significantly and they are no longer at risk of becoming a PA student or have ceased to be a PA student.

6.0 Absence Procedures

If their child is absent Parents/Carers must:

- Contact college as soon as possible on the first day of absence (Before 8.30am) on 0161 3373838 or 0161 3362219. Before 8am, this is an answer phone service. Parents must state the name and form of their child and the reason for any absence.
- Send a note in on the first day their child returns with an explanation of the absence – parents/carers must do this even if they have already telephoned us.

If a child is absent we will:

- Telephone or text parents/carers on the first day of absence if we have not received any contact
- Invite parents/carers in to discuss the situation with our Attendance Officer, Attendance Leader, College Nurse, Education Welfare Service (or other relevant agency) if absences and concerns persist.
- Consider instigating legal proceedings (fine or prosecution via the Magistrates Court) if warnings have been given and no improvements are made.

When college staff take registers they will:

Ensure that each register during the day is taken within 10 minutes of the start of each session. Where there are technological issues, a paper register will be sent for immediately and returned to the Attendance Officer immediately.

Ensure that the register is correct and will not allow a student to take it on their behalf. When a student is late, staff will mark the student as late (code L) and will enter the number of minutes that the student is late by. Staff understand that taking a register is a contractual and legal responsibility. Where they know of truancy, they will inform the Attendance Officer of this immediately and will mark the student as absent. (Code N).

Where staff identify that a student is truant or is establishing a pattern of truancy during their lesson, they will actively seek to determine why this is happening. They will work with the student to resolve any issues and ensure that they catch up on any missed work.

Truancy is damaging to the student and has a negative impact on their progress. A student who is found to have truanted can expect to make any missed time up.

Telephone numbers:

Parents/carers need to ensure that we always have an up-to-date telephone number to contact them on. This is essential so that college can make contact to share important information and reach them should college need to do so urgently. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year.

The Education Welfare Service (EWS):

Parents/carers are expected to contact college at an early stage and to work with college staff in order to resolve any problems. This collaborative approach is often successful. If for whatever reason we are unable to work with parents/ carers and difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, college will refer the matter to the Education Welfare Service for further advice. We will continue to try to resolve the situation by agreement but if support fails, the college may use sanctions such as Penalty Notices or seek to prosecute in the Magistrates Court. Please contact college or the Education Welfare Service for further information if you require it.

Alternatively, parents/carers or students may wish to contact the EWS themselves to ask for help or information. The EWS is independent of the college and will give impartial advice. Relevant telephone numbers are available from the college office or by contacting the Local Authority directly.

7.0 Support

Referrals for support are made by the Attendance Leader in conjunction with the relevant Head of Year.

We will undertake a number of steps to address the non-attendance of the student and these include:

- Action by the Form Tutor e.g. checking data, contacting home, making the relevant referrals
- Action by the attendance team – usually contact with parents/carers by telephone or by letter
- Discussing concerns with the EWS
- Making referrals to the Education Welfare Service when a child is considered to be ‘missing from education’
- Issuing of a Fixed Penalty Notice where unauthorised absence is taken

We will intervene when:

- A pattern of irregular attendance has developed
- A period of non-attendance has been established
- Letters sent by the college have met with little or no response
- There is a lack of co-operation in ensuring the student’s regular attendance
- A pattern of post registration truancy is persisting despite the college trying to prevent this
- A parent/carer withdraws a student having expressed an intention to educate their child otherwise than at college
- A pattern of persistent lateness develops
- There are child protection concerns
- There are specific welfare issues which are preventing a student from accessing education
- A student is withdrawn from college by parents/carers who are moving to a new area and the college does not receive a request for the student’s records from a school in the area

8.0 Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. There is a Form Tutor period in the morning and students receive their a.m. mark at the beginning of the day at 8.40am. If they are late and arrive between 8.45am and 9.45am they will be marked as late (L). If they arrive after 9.45am, they are marked as late after registers have closed and will receive an absent mark (U). If a student is late they will therefore miss out on their education. Furthermore, late arriving students disrupt lessons and the learning of others. This is unfair.

9.0 How we manage lateness

The college day starts at **8.40 am** and we expect all students to be in Form at this time.

Registers are marked by **8.45 am** and all students will receive a late mark if they are not in by that time.

At **9.45am** and **2.15pm** (for afternoon registration) the registers will be closed. In accordance with legal regulations, if a child arrives after that time they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will **not** count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. This may mean that parents/carers face the possibility of a Penalty Notice being issued by us if the problem persists.

If a child is late repeatedly, parents/carers will be asked to meet with the Attendance Leader or his/her representative in order to resolve the problem. Please remember that you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child into college on time.

10.0 Holidays in Term Time

The law gives no entitlement to parents/carers to take their child on holiday during term time. The law makes it clear that schools must not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there is an exceptional circumstance causing any absence. All 'exceptional' absence must be proven and evidence will be asked for.

Holiday absence as a reason for absence, is not considered exceptional, no matter how short the absence.

The law states the following:

"Schools must not grant any leave of absence during term time".

The legal statement below outlines the law concerning Penalty Notices from 1st September 2013. It is important to note that **both** parents/carers will be issued with a Penalty Notice if their child is taken out of college without the consent of college.

Penalty Notices for Non- College Attendance

Section 444(A) of the Education Act 1996 empowers designated LA Officers, Head Teachers (and Deputy and Assistant Head teachers authorised by them) and the Police to issue Penalty Notices in cases of unauthorised absence from school. This means that when a student has unauthorised absence of 10 sessions (5 days) or more, in any half term/term (where no acceptable reason has been given for the absence) or if the child persistently arrives late for college after the close of registration, their parent/s or carer/s may receive a Penalty Notice fine of £60, which must be paid within 21 days. If payment is made after 21 days but within 28 days, the penalty is increased to £120. Non-payment of a Penalty Notice will result in consideration of prosecution under the provisions of Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

11.0 College Targets (2019-2020)

College sets targets each year in order to improve attendance and every child has an important part to play in our meeting these targets.

The minimum level of attendance for this college during the academic year 2018-2019 is **96%** attendance. However, we consider 98% to be the target for the majority of our students. We will keep parents/carers updated regularly about how well their child attends in relation to this target.

Good attendance is the key to a successful education. (To put our targets into context: 90% is equivalent to half a day of missed education each week.)

Throughout the college year we monitor absences and punctuality to show us where improvements need to be made.

12.0 In Summary

The college has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents/carers and to promote excellent attendance. Equally, parents/carers have a duty to make sure that their children attend.

All college staff are committed to working with parents/carers and students in order to ensure that whole college attendance is as high as possible.

13.0 Dissemination

This policy is shared with all staff through the Staff Handbook. Parents/carers are informed of the policy on an annual basis via the college prospectus, and students are informed via their college planners.

14.0 Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

A Governors sub-committee will review the Attendance Policy on an annual basis. Compliance is monitored by the Attendance Leader on a termly basis and the associated routines are reviewed every year by the Senior Leadership Team.

I have read and understood the terms and conditions set out in Denton Community College Attendance Policy. By accepting a place at the College, I agree to:

- Endorse the college's Attendance Home-College Agreement
- Inform the College of any changes of address or contact numbers
- Ensure that my child arrives to College each day on time
- Aim for my child to reach a minimum of 96% attendance

Parent/Carer Name:

Signed:

Child's Name:

Form: