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**PIDDLE VALLEY CE FIRST SCHOOL**

**ATTENDANCE POLICY**

1. **General principles**

The aim of this policy is to promote regular school attendance of DASP pupils, enabling them to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them

All children of compulsory school age have the right to an efficient full-time education, regardless of age, aptitude, ability and any special needs they may have and schools have, a responsibility to monitor and promote the regular attendance of pupils. Irregular attendance seriously disrupts continuity of learning, undermines educational progress, can lead to underachievement and low attainment and impedes the child’s ability to develop friendship groups within school.

This policy seeks to ensure that all parties involved in the practicalities of school attendance are aware and informed of attendance matters in DASP schools and to outline DASP schools commitment to attendance matters. It details the responsibilities of individuals and groups involved and the procedures in place to promote and monitor pupil attendance.

 **2. The legal aspects**

Absence from school is a legal matter. By law, all children of compulsory school age who are registered pupils at a school must attend full-time and be punctual. Only schools (not parents) can authorise pupil absence from school, if they are satisfied with the reason provided by the parent, in writing. The role of the local education department is to encourage and enforce the law on school attendance. Ultimately, the local authority can instigate legal action. Parents can be taken to court for not fulfilling their legal responsibilities and this may result in a fine, if the parent is found guilty.

 **3. Responsibilities**

**3.1 Parents or carers**

Parents or carers have a legal responsibility to ensure that their children attend school regularly, and stay in school for every lesson after they have registered. If a child is in the care of foster parents or in a residential home, it is important that the carers recognise their parenting role where attendance to school is concerned.

**What is expected of parents and carers with regard to attendance?**

 To keep requests for their child to be absent to a minimum

 To offer a reason for any period of absence, preferably before the absence or on the first day of absence and for ensuring that the absence is covered in writing by a note sent in on the child’s return to school.

 To ensure that their child arrives at school on time, properly dressed, with the right equipment and in a condition to learn. A reason should be offered for any lateness.

 To work closely with the school to resolve any problems that may impede a child’s attendance

 To take family holidays during school holiday periods.

 To be aware of curriculum requirements and be especially vigilant with regards to attendance during important academic times such as periods of testing.

**3.2 Schools**

Schools have a statutory responsibility to record and monitor the punctuality and attendance of pupils for both the morning and afternoon sessions.

**What is expected of the school with regard to attendance?**

 To create a school ethos that pupils want to be part of

 To meet the legal requirements set out by Government

 To give a high priority to punctuality and attendance

 To develop procedures that enable the school to identify, follow up and record unauthorised absence, patterns of absence and parent condoned absence with effective monitoring and intervention

 To consistently record authorised and unauthorised absences within the guidance of the law

 To develop a range of effective strategies to follow up intermittent and long term absenteeism and promote good attendance

 To encourage open communication channels between home and school

 To develop procedures for the reintegration of long term absentees

 To develop procedures leading to a formal referral to DASP attendance panel

 To adequately provide for pupils with difficulties, within the bounds of resources available, and ensure the appropriate delivery of the curriculum

**3.3 The Local Authority:**

Dorset Local Authority has a responsibility to provide education and promote regular attendance of all statutory school age children.

**What is expected of the school with regard to attendance?**

 Through the Locality Social Worker the Local Authority provides support to schools and parents to fulfil their legal duty. The ESWAS is the enforcement agency of the LA and, as well as providing guidance and support through its officers, may take a parent to court for not fulfilling their duty under section 444 of the Education Act 1996. The court may fine the parent and put in place a School Attendance Order (SAO), an Education Supervision Order (ESO) or a Parenting Order.

**4. Policy implementation**

**4.1 Registers**

Attendance registers are marked at the beginning of each morning and afternoon in all DASP schools. As part of Safeguarding procedures, attendance is monitored daily with phone calls made to understand unreported absences.

**4.2 Recording absences**

Parents are required to offer a reason for any period of absence, preferably before the absence or on the first day of absence and for ensuring that the absence is covered in writing by a note sent in on the child’s return to school. The school will then decide if it wishes to record the absence as authorised or unauthorised based on guidance set out in the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations. These regulations state that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during school time unless there are exceptional circumstances.

**4.3 Recording lateness**

Registers are marked shortly after the start of the school day at 9:00am. At Piddle Valley CE First School, the doors open at 8:45 am and the class register will be taken at 9:00 am. Pupils who are not present at the start of the school day will be marked absent initially. If they arrive within 10 minutes from 9:00 am this will be changed to ‘present but late’.

 Lateness for any pupil arriving after this time will require either a letter or a verbal explanation to a member of staff or the Head teacher and parents will need to register their child at the school office.

All reasons for lateness will be recorded. Although the Head teacher will use her discretion, lateness of more than 30 minutes is likely to be marked as unauthorised absence.

**4.4 Monitoring attendance**

The Head teacher will review the attendance of all the schools pupils on a regular basis and:

 Parents of children whose attendance falls below 95% per term will be notified by letter informing them of the school’s concerns and offering support to resolve any problems that may be impeding a child from attending.

 Children with attendance below 95% will be monitored until their attendance returns to a satisfactory level

 Where there is still a concern six weeks after the first letter parents will be invited by letter to a meeting to discuss the issue and hopefully resolve any issues preventing the pupil from attending. An individual action plan, developed between the Head teacher, parents and pupil may be set up to support better attendance.

 If the parent/s do not attend the meeting or after such a meeting the attendance of the pupil does not improve a formal referral to the DASP attendance board will be made.

**5. Strategies for promoting good attendance and punctuality**

DASP schools use a variety of strategies to encourage attendance including:

 Class teacher will ensure that the curriculum is delivered within a culture of inclusion and in such a way that pupils feel that they have and can succeed.

 Individual pupils whose attendance has been a cause for concern will be encouraged to set and achieve personal attendance goals.

 Pupil attendance figures will be published with the annual academic reports.

 Pupil awareness of the importance of good attendance in helping them to access their right to education will be discussed regularly in class.

 Parents will be reminded regularly in newsletters about good attendance

**6. Children Missing in Education**

If the school is not notified of a reason for absence and contact cannot be made with the family then after 10 days the school will refer the child to the local authority as a child missing in education. They remain on the schools register until the child in enrolled in a new setting or the family informs the school that the child is being ‘home-schooled’. The local authority must be informed of any correspondence with the family.

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Policy reviewed by: Jayne Browne

Head teacher