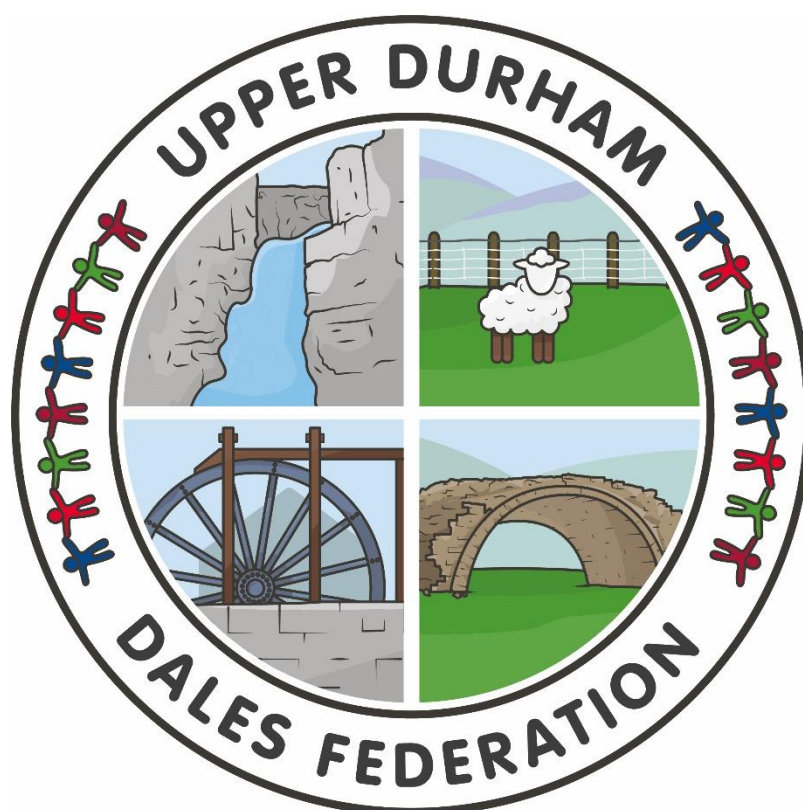


# Upper Durham Dales Federation



## Attendance Policy

2023/2024

**Attendance Policy**

**Upper Durham Dales Federation**

**Document History Log:**

<b>Author of document:</b>	Sarah Hodgkinson	<b>Job role:</b>	Executive Headteacher
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### Attendance key contact List

Name	Role	Contact details
Sarah Hodgkinson	Executive Head Teacher	s.hodgkinson@uddf.co.uk
Sarah Hodgkinson	Designated senior leader with responsibility for attendance	s.hodgkinson@uddf.co.uk

### Who in school can help if you are experiencing difficulty / require help and support:

Name	Role / type of help	Contact details
Sarah Hodgkinson Executive Headteacher	Leave of Absence Requests / complex matters	s.hodgkinson@uddf.co.uk
Alma Wroe Administrator	General day to day queries / Medical Appointments	School office
Kay Sheppard Admin assistant	General day to day queries / Medical Appointments	School office

Your child's class teacher can also provide support on attendance.

To report your child's absence please telephone the school office in the first instance:

Rookhope 01388 517268

St John's Chapel 01388 537332

Wearhead 01388 537265

## **Introduction to our school attendance vision and ethos**

**The Upper Durham Dales Federation** seeks to ensure that all of its pupils receive an education which maximises opportunities for each pupil to realise his/her true potential. Our schools will strive to provide a calm, orderly, safe, and supportive environment where all pupils want to be and are keen and ready to learn within a culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance.

Regular school attendance plays a vital role in children's wellbeing and their education, ensuring that their current learning needs are being met but also building their future ability to learn.

As attendance is the essential foundation to positive outcomes for all pupils, improving attendance is everyone's business, a concerted effort across all teaching and support staff in school, the governing body, the local authority, and other local partners.

Some pupils find it harder than others to attend school and therefore at all stages of improving attendance, the school and partners will work with pupils and parents to remove any barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships and working together to put the right support in place.

### **Why is regular attendance so important?**

Being in school every day that it is open, is important to your child's achievement, wellbeing, and their wider development. There is a renewed national focus on maximising pupils' time in the classroom, as evidence shows that the students with the highest attendance throughout their time in school gain the best GCSE and A Level results.

### **Here's what the data shows:**

Pupils with higher attainment at KS2 and KS4 had lower levels of absence over the key stage compared to those with lower attainment.

Pupils who did not achieve the expected standard in reading, writing and maths in 2019 had an overall absence rate of 4.7% over the key stage, compared with 3.5% among pupils who achieved the expected standard and 2.7% among those who achieved the higher standard.

Pupils who did not achieve grade 9 to 4 in English and maths GCSEs in 2019 had an overall absence rate of 8.8% over the key stage, compared with 5.2% among pupils who achieved a grade 4 and 3.7% among pupils who achieved grade 9 to 5 in both English and maths.

Generally, the higher the percentage of sessions missed across the key stage at KS2 and KS4, 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.

The Upper Durham Dales Federation recognises the importance of good attendance and, alongside good behaviour, make it a central part of our schools' vision, values, ethos, and day to day life. Excellent and improved attendance is recognised in our Celebration assemblies each term.

The Upper Durham Dales Federation recognises the links 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).

**This policy is supported by our policies on:**

Safeguarding  
behaviour and anti-bullying  
supporting pupils with medical conditions  
SEND

**The school and all partners will work together to:**

**EXPECT**

Aspire to high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents and build a culture where all can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across the school.



**MONITOR**

Rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.



**LISTEN AND UNDERSTAND**

When a pattern is spotted, discuss with pupils and parents to listen to understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.



**FACILITATE SUPPORT**

Remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. This might include an early help or whole family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues.



**FORMALISE SUPPORT**

Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners should work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances this may include formalising support through a parenting contract or education supervision order.



**ENFORCE**

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, enforce attendance through statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.

## **Expectations**

We recognise that the relationship between attendance and achievement of our students is inextricably linked.

Regular school attendance is crucial to maximise pupil progress and enjoyment of learning, and for this reason our federation is dedicated to ensuring its attendance policy is adhered to.

### **We will ensure that:**

- All students have an equal right, and access to, an education in accordance with the national curriculum, or agreed alternative.
- Attendance is a priority across the school.
- All schools aspire to high standards on attendance.
- Students will not be deprived of their education opportunities by, either their own absence or lateness, or that of other students.
- Action is taken where necessary to secure an improvement in attendance.
- All schools build strong relationships with families, listen and to understand barriers to attendance and work with families to remove them.
- We act early to address patterns of absence.

### **1. Attendance data**

Attendance data is reviewed regularly on an individual pupil basis to support the attendance improvement of those pupils who need it most. Where patterns of poor attendance have been identified, communication with families will take place and parents/carers may be invited into school so all parties can work together to resolve the situation before the concerns become entrenched.

All families will be provided with a copy of their child's attendance certificate on a termly basis and will be informed as to the current expectations with regard to attendance. The DFE target for good attendance is currently 96% and attendance of 90% or below is considered to be persistent absence. Therefore, attendance of 96% or greater will be printed on green paper, 90.1%-95.9% on orange paper and 90% or below will be printed on red paper.

### **3. Listening to and understanding barriers to attendance**

When a pattern is spotted, the school will meet with pupils and parents to listen to and understand barriers to attendance and make a plan as to how all partners can work together to resolve them.

#### **4. Facilitate support**

If your child is reluctant to come to school, please talk to your child's teacher as soon as possible to try and address any concerns. Parents and carers may be invited to attend a meeting with the Headteacher to discuss any barriers to attendance or punctuality. Support may be offered beyond school, such as Early Help. Where persistent or severe absenteeism is sustained and external support is not effective, the school will call upon the support of the Attendance Improvement Team to further support the family. This will be a more formalised level of support in conjunction with the Local Authority's policies.

#### **5. Formalise support**

Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners will work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances, this may include formalising support through a parenting contract or education supervision order.

#### **6. Enforce**

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, attendance may be enforced where necessary through statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.

### **General / frequently asked questions**

#### **When can children be absent from school?**

When you register your child at school, you have a legal duty to ensure your child attends that school regularly.

This means that your child must attend every day that the school is open, unless:

- Your child is too ill to attend that day.
- You have asked in advance and been given permission by the school for your child to be absent on that day due to exceptional circumstances.
- Your child cannot attend school on that day because it is a day you are taking part in religious observance
- Your local authority is responsible for arranging your child's transport to school and it is not available on that day or has not been provided yet; or



- You are a gypsy/traveller family with no fixed abode, and you are required to travel for work that day meaning your child cannot attend their usual school. In most circumstances, however, your child is required to attend another school temporarily during such absences.

These are the only circumstances where schools can permit your child to be absent.

### **What do I need to do if my child needs to be absent from school for one of those reasons?**

You should contact their school as early as possible to explain why. If not, your child's school will contact you on the first morning of their absence to find out why.

All parents can request a 'leave of absence' for their child which gives them permission to be absent from school. Leaves of absence must be applied for before your child will be absent and will only be granted in exceptional circumstances.

Your child's headteacher has the final say over whether to approve the request and how long your child can be absent.

Their decision will be made after considering the specific facts and circumstances behind your request.

### **Can I take my child on holiday during term time?**

Parents should plan their holidays around school breaks and avoid requesting leaves of absence for holidays unless it is unavoidable.

As leave of absence is only granted in exceptional circumstances, it is unlikely that your child's headteacher will agree a leave of absence for a family holiday.

If permission is refused and you keep your child off school on the days requested, you are likely to be committing an offence and be issued a fixed penalty notice or be prosecuted by your local authority.

## **Attendance Procedures and Absence Processes**

### **Attendance and absence management**

#### **Promoting good attendance and punctuality**

In order to promote attendance and punctuality the federation will give out half termly awards for pupils whose attendance is 97% or above during the half term. Improved attendance will also be acknowledged with a certificate in Celebration assembly.

Children who arrive at school before the register closes each day will receive a stamp on their personal reward chart. Each term, children will have the opportunity to exchange their stamps for an item from the 'attendance shop', with items being given a 'stamp value'. This is to encourage prompt arrival at school each morning.

#### **Communication**

Parents are asked to report and explain the reasons for absence and to make sure your contact and emergency contact details are up to date.

It is vital, that school can contact parents if their child becomes unwell during the school day or in order to discuss the reasons for absence.

The school will analyse absence across the school. As a result of this, some families will receive letters to inform them if their child's absence is lower than it should be if no prior discussion has taken place (unless this is due to, for example medical needs). If we have concerns regarding your child's attendance then we may contact you by phone, letter, invite you to a meeting or make a visit to your home.

As a parent you may identify concerns about school attendance early on if you have seen a change in your child's attitude to school or in their willingness to attend. If this is the case, please share your concerns with us and we can work together to ensure that school attendance doesn't ever need to decline. The quicker that concerns are shared, the quicker they can be resolved.

The school will work with you to discuss ways that we can offer support in finding a way to improve attendance.

### **On the first day of absence**

If a child is absent for any reason, parents or carers are asked to phone the School Office giving a reason for the child's absence. If a child is absent from school and there is no phone call from home then school will phone parents/carers to enquire about the absence.

Doctors and dentist's appointments should be made outside of school time. If this is not possible, your child should miss the minimum amount of school time necessary. If they are well enough to come back to school following the appointment they need to.

### **Periods of extended absence**

If a child's absence continues beyond 3 days then parents are requested to notify the school to update them. If a phone call is not received, the school will telephone to verify the absence and take any relevant action in relation to assuring itself of the child's welfare.

If the school receives no reason for any absence then an unauthorised absence will be recorded. Continued absenteeism and unauthorised absences could result in more formal action.

### **Absence authorisation**

The High Court has confirmed that the school's Head Teacher authorises absences. In some circumstances, the school may request that parent's provide medical evidence to support absences.

We are committed to supporting your child effectively, to ensure that they get the very best education possible and therefore have the best life chances. All challenges made concerning persistent absences, will be handled sensitively and in confidence.

### **Punctuality:**

The school doors open at 8:40, giving children time to enter school, hang coats up and join 'Wake up, Shake up'. **Registration time is at 9:00am.** It is important for all children to be on time, as missing the first few minutes of any lesson can be disruptive and unsettling, both for children and for the rest of the class. The beginning of the day is often when children take part in some intervention work such as gross or fine motor skills, practising handwriting or responding to marking and making corrections to previous work. Missing out on any of this work impacts negatively on the attainment of children. Pupils that are late beyond 9:00 often miss out on the start of the lesson and find it hard to catch up and know what to do when they enter their class. If a child arrives in school after 9:00am then a late mark will be recorded in the register (L). Registers will be closed in the classroom at this point. A further 15 minutes will be given for late arrival and any children arriving beyond 9:15 late will be recorded as (U) which is a late after registers close mark and this is classed as an unauthorised absence (a number of these marks can also contribute to more formal action being considered).

### **In summary:**

**In the morning, arrival up to 9:00 will be marked as present (/), arrival from 9:00 to 9:15 will be marked as late (L) and arrival after 9:15 will be marked as unauthorised late (U)**

Exceptions to this policy will only apply to those pupils arriving by home to school transport.

### **If your child is late for school:**

All children arriving late at school will be asked the reason for their lateness and this will be recorded on the school's attendance data base (Arbor).

### **If a child is late (after registers close) for school on a number of occasions:**

If punctuality becomes an issue we will contact you and arrange a meeting so that we can find out why. At first this will be informal and we may be able to support you, or signpost you to services that can help.

**If lateness becomes persistent** with no identifiable reason we will invite you to an Attendance Planning Meeting (APM), where we can discuss the issue and set targets for improvement.

### **If the school continues to have concerns about a child's punctuality**

If the targets set in the attendance plan are not met and punctuality remains a problem, more formal intervention will be taken as necessary, through statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.

### **Help & Support**

If you need help with attendance, it is important that you contact school about the issues as soon as possible. The quicker we know what the problem is, the quicker that we can work together to solve it and put a plan together which will meet your child's needs and ensure your child can benefit from all that school has to offer. Where needed we can also involve other services to make sure that your child and your family gets the right support, at the right time from the right people.

### **Leave of Absence in Term Time**

Head teachers are only able to grant leave of absence during term time **if there are exceptional circumstances**. The school will consider each request of absence individually; taking into account the circumstances, such as; the nature of the event for which leave is sought, the pupil's prior attendance and any important events taking place in school at that time.

An application for leave of absence must be made well in advance via a form which is available from the school website or in person from the school office. Where a leave of absence is granted, the head teacher will determine the number of days a pupil can be away from school.

A leave of absence is granted entirely at the head teacher's discretion. If an application for leave of absence is not made prior to the time of the required absence, then the absence will be recorded as unauthorised regardless of circumstances.

**Please note that absence will not be authorised under any circumstances during any period of public examinations or internal assessments.**

### **Pupils with specific needs**

This attendance policy considers the needs of children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities and those with medical conditions. In these cases, the consideration of attendance will always take into account the reasons for absence in light of each child's individual needs. We will always consider our obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

### **Children Missing from Education**

If you move from the area and your whereabouts are unknown, the school can legally remove your child from the roll after 20 school days of unauthorised absence. It is **vital that if you keep school informed of any change of details** and regularly update them if details change. Your child may be at risk of losing their school place if your whereabouts are not known.

It is also important that emergency contact information is kept up to date and that if you are leaving the area, you provide details of where and how you can be contacted. If you do not do this and the school is unable to trace your child, this would be treated as a **safeguarding matter**.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

#### **Governing Body:**

As part of our school approach to maintaining high attendance, the governing body will:

- Ensure that the importance of attendance is made clear by promoting the relevant school policies and guidance directed to parents and staff.

- Annually review the school's attendance policy and ensure that all provisions are in place to allow school staff, parents, and students to implement the policy effectively.
- Ensure regular meetings of the Curriculum, school performance and welfare committee take place and they will take the lead role in monitoring attendance and coordinating provision and policies for attendance. The governor's meetings will review and discuss attendance issues that have arisen in order to be fully aware and supportive of expected attendance targets for the year.
- Ensure that the school is implementing effective means of recording attendance and organising that data, including for children who are educated off site.

### **School Leadership Team:**

As part of our school approach to maintaining high attendance, the leadership team will:

- Be active in their approach to promoting good attendance with students and their parents.
- Ensure the school's teaching and learning experiences encourage regular attendance and that students are taught the value of high attendance for their own progression and achievement.
- Coordinate with the governing body to monitor the implementation of the policy and its effectiveness, with annual review of full policy.
- Ensure that all staff are up to date with the school's attendance policy and that staff are fully trained to recognise and deal with attendance issues.
- Ensure government legislation on attendance is complied with and that the leadership team are up to date with any legislation changes and how to implement them.
- Nominate or appoint a senior manager to take responsibility for overseeing and monitoring attendance provision and that this person has sufficient time and resources to give to the job.
- Report to Full Governing Body and / or Curriculum, school performance and welfare committee meeting each term on attendance records, data and provision.
- Ensure that systems to record and report attendance data are in place and working effectively.

### **Teachers and support staff:**

As part of our school approach to maintaining high attendance, the teachers and support staff will:

- Be active in their approach to promoting good attendance with students and their parents.
- Ensure the school's teaching and learning experiences encourage regular attendance and that students are taught the value of high attendance for their own progression and achievement.
- Ensure the senior manager responsible for overseeing attendance and any other relevant personnel are kept fully aware of and up to date with any concerns relating to students that may impact on their attendance.
- Ensure compliance with regulation and guidance on attendance.
- Work professionally with parents, carers, students and relevant agencies to secure improvements in attendance via appropriate support or enforcement measures.
- Ensure understanding and that they are following the correct systems for recording attendance and that attendance is taken each session.

### **Parents / Carers:**

As part of our school approach to maintaining high attendance, we expect that parents / carers will:

- Engage with their children's education – support their learning and take an interest in what they have been doing at school.
- Promote the value of good education and the importance of regular school attendance at home.
- Follow the procedures outlined in this policy regarding absences, ill health, medical or dental appointments, leave of absence in term time and punctuality.
- Do everything they can to prevent unnecessary or avoidable school absences.
- Keep the school informed of any circumstances which may affect their child's attendance and work with staff in resolving any issues that may be having an impact on their child.
- Enforce a regular routine at home in terms of homework, bedtime etc so that the child is used to consistency and the school becomes part of that routine. It is vital that the child receives the same messages at home as they do at school about the importance of attendance.