

REVIEWED:

SEPTEMBER 2022

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**ATTENDANCE
POLICY**

DUIHS



This policy should be read in conjunction with:

1. Safeguarding policy
2. GDPR policy
3. Behaviour policy
4. Anti-bullying policy
5. Covid-19 Risk Assessment
6. KCSIE Sept 2022
7. DFE Children missing in education
8. DFE guidance for school attendance

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Introduction

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said:

"The seeking of knowledge is obligatory for every Muslim." - Al-Tirmidhi, Hadith 74

"One who treads a path in search of knowledge has his path to Paradise made easy by God..." - Riyadh us-Saleheen, 245

Purpose

This policy is in place to ensure that students receive a full-time education which maximises the opportunities for each student to realise his true potential and supports the raising of standards of achievement. We will endeavour to provide a welcoming, caring environment, whereby all students thrive and work with students and families to enable each student to attend the Darul Uloom regularly and punctually.

The Darul Uloom will establish an effective system of incentives and rewards which acknowledges the efforts of students to improve their attendance and timekeeping but we will challenge those students and parents who give low priority to attendance and punctuality. To meet these objectives, we will establish an effective and efficient system of communication with students, parents and appropriate agencies to provide mutual information, advice and support.

Safeguarding

Students may be at risk if they do not attend school regularly. Safeguarding the interests of students is everyone's responsibility within the context of this school. Failing to attend school on a regular basis will be considered a safeguarding matter.

If school staff have any safeguarding concerns regarding a student's absence, particularly on repeated occasions, then the school's normal safeguarding procedures must be followed (See 'Safeguarding Policy'). They should use their professional judgement and knowledge of the individual student to decide as to whether welfare concerns should be escalated.

Statutory Duties

The Education Act of 1996's Section 7 imposes a requirement on parents or guardians to ensure their children receive full time education by regular attendance at a school or by other arrangements. Parents have the responsibility for making sure their children attend the Darul Uloom and on time.

Register Codes

Students' attendance will be marked using an electronic system (HUB) and the government's suggested codes will be used (see Appendix 1). The school is responsible for recording student attendance twice a day, one at the start of the morning sessions and once during the afternoon session.

Aims and Principles

It is a legal responsibility for the school to: - Record absences and late arrivals on a student's annual report, - Inform the Local Education Authority if a student does not attend regularly.

1. The school will inform the appropriate Local Education Authority if:
 - A student has a low attendance of 85% or below, or
 - A student has been absent without authorisation from the school for Five or more school days consecutively.

2. The school will liaise with outside agencies, such as the Education Welfare Service, as required in order to ensure that all students attend school regularly.
3. The school will communicate to parents its expectation with regards to student attendance regularly.
4. Students will be encouraged to strive for high levels of attendance by using the Rewards Systems.
5. The school will endeavour to improve the overall percentage of students' attendance
6. The school will endeavour to reduce the level of persistent absence (PA)
7. The school will endeavour to make attendance and punctuality a priority for all those associated with the school including students, parents, teachers and trustees.
8. The school will endeavour to develop a framework which defines agreed roles and responsibilities and promotes consistency in carrying out designated tasks.
9. The school will endeavour to provide support, advice and guidance to parents and students
10. The school will endeavour to develop a systematic approach to gathering and analysing attendance related data

Roles and responsibilities

The Darul Uloom expects all students to be punctual and maintain high levels of attendance. All students should arrive on time and ready to learn.

Parents

Parents/carers are expected to know what absences are acceptable. Any absence will only be authorised at the discretion of the Headteacher. Parents should be aware of the legal consequences of non-attendance (see below). Parents/carers should be aware that poor punctuality may result in an unauthorised absence being recorded which could lead to intervention by the Education Welfare Service.

The school follows the Department for Education (DfE) regulations and guidance. Regular school attendance is a legal responsibility on parents. The school is required by law to record absences and late arrivals on a pupil's annual report. We expect our pupils to have an attendance percentage record of over 96%. Independent schools must notify the Local Education Authority if a pupil does not attend regularly. ***The School will notify the appropriate local authority if a pupil has a low attendance of 85% or below, or if they are absent continuously without the School's authorisation for ten or more school days (as per Birmingham Local Authority Safeguarding Guidance on Missing Children). The school will follow local authority guidance fully regarding this matter.***

School's Procedures for Recording and Monitoring Attendance

Definition of an Authorised Absence

An 'authorised absence' is where the school has either given approval in advance for a student to be absent, or the school has accepted an explanation offered afterwards by parents as satisfactory justification.

- Acceptable reasons for absence are usually limited to illness or bereavement.
- It is the decision of the school as to whether an explanation for an absence is satisfactory or not.

Reporting an Absence – First Day Contact

The purpose of the 'First Day Contact' is to:

- Enable parents to inform the school at the earliest opportunity that their child is unable to attend school, the reason for this and the expected date of return.
- Enable the school to contact parents to notify them that their child has not arrived to school.
- Registers will be checked by the 'Attendance Officer' no later than 9.30am and students who are 'first day absent' will be identified.

- If the parents of a student who is ‘first day absent’ have not already contacted the school, the Attendance Officer will contact the parents via telephone on the same day by 10.00am. If contact has been unsuccessful, a text message and/or email will be sent to the parents requesting them to call the school immediately to explain their child’s absence.
- An absence will remain unauthorised until a valid explanation provided by the parents has been accepted by the school.
- If a student arrives in school after 9:00am, he will be recorded as absent for the morning session. The only common exceptions are travel disruption due to an accident or severe weather conditions.

Record of Communication with Parents In Relation to Absences

- For the complete duration of absence, parents are required to provide a valid explanation. This can be given in the following ways:
 - Telephone the school office.
 - Email the school office.
 - Write a letter or a note addressed to the school’s attendance officer (which must be clearly signed and dated).
- An appointment letter for medical or dental treatment should be shown to the attendance officer in advance.
- A letter inviting a student to an interview or an assessment linked to employment prospects, further education or transfer to another educational establishment should be shown to the attendance officer in advance.
- On the 3rd day of a student returning to school after an absence, the Attendance Officer will inform the Head if an explanation for his absence has still not been provided to the school.

Following Up Absences

Day of Absence:	Follow up:
1 st day	If parents have not already contacted the school, a member of the office staff will contact the parents via telephone on the same day by 10.00am. If contact has been unsuccessful, a text message and/or email will be sent to the parents requesting them to call the school immediately to explain their child’s absence.
3 rd day	If the student is absent for 2 days and the office has failed to contact parents, then the Attendance Officer will inform a member of the SLT. The SLT will send a letter to parents (by recorded delivery) urging them to notify the school of the reason for their child’ absence. If the parents have still not contacted the school within three school days on the date of the letter, the Attendance Officer will inform the Head teacher.
5 th day	If the school has NOT been able to trace the child after 5 days, the Attendance Officer will notify the CME (Children Missing Education) department of the local authority and child will be removed from its roll on the 6 th day. The Head Teacher will send a second letter to parents (by recorded delivery) urging them to notify the school of the reason for their child’ absence. If the parents have still not contacted the school within two school days on the date of the letter, the student may be removed from the school’s admissions register.
11 th day	If the school has NOT been able to trace the child after 11days, then the school will remove the child’s name from its roll on the 21st day. The Attendance Officer will report the student to the CME (Children Missing Education) department of the local authority as “missing.”

Appointments

Parents/carers are asked to inform the school of any barriers to their child attending the school. The Darul Uloom asks that all parents/carers inform the School Office on their child's first day of absence.

Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment will be recorded as an 'authorised absence.' In cases where it is not possible for parents to make appointments out of school hours, students should only be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary for the appointment.

To take the rest of the day off, before or after a dental appointment, will NOT be accepted as a valid explanation for an absence

Medical evidence may be requested by the school if non-attendance is due to illness or medical appointments. It is a legal responsibility of parents to ensure their child attends school every day of the school year. The only circumstances in which they may be absent are as follows:

- 1. The student is so unwell that they cannot cope with being at school.** In such cases, it is hoped that absence will be as short as possible to avoid impact on learning and progress. Parents/guardians are asked to telephone the School on the first morning of illness and on every subsequent day that a student needs to be off school ill.
- 2. The student has an urgent and serious medical appointment which cannot be arranged outside of the school day.** We normally expect, where possible, that routine and non-urgent appointments will be made during the school holidays or for after the end of the school day.
- 3.** If a student is absent for ten or more consecutive days due to a health-related issue, the parent must provide the school with medical evidence. This can take the form of doctor's notes, prescriptions or appointment cards.
- 4.** For a prolonged absence of ten or more consecutive days due to a medical reason or bereavement, the attendance officer will liaise with the wellbeing officer and subject teachers to support the student and ensure that he is able to catch up with any missed work. He will also be provided with any other information, such as a trip letter, which was shared with students and/or parents during his absence.
- 5. Unavoidable family and other holidays/visits abroad during term time that have been authorised by the Headteacher.** Students have 13 weeks' holiday per year, and should not therefore be missing time from school. In unavoidable circumstances where a student needs to be away during term time, parents/guardians are asked to write to the Headteacher at least six weeks in advance or as soon as possible beforehand to seek permission. Such absences cannot exceed 3 days. Permission is discretionary and will not always be granted except in exceptional circumstances. The student should also see their teachers for appropriate work to reduce impact on learning and progress.
- 6. The school authorises a student's absence for reasons other than those stated above.** This could include visits, work experience, residential trips, bereavement or other life crises. It is vital that families inform school of any difficult circumstances for a student that may lead to absence.

A student's attendance record may be identified as a cause for concern if:

- Absence on a particular day of the week is repeated on a regular basis.
- Several days of absence due to medical appointments.
- Student fails to return to school at the end of an 'authorised' leave of absence.
- Student goes on holiday without gaining school permission.
- Student regularly arrives late to school.
- Student's attendance falls below 95%.

For any of the above circumstances, the parents may be invited to a meeting with a member of the SLT and/or Head teacher to discuss the matter. Following the meeting, significant improvements in the child's attendance record will be expected to be made and this will be monitored by the attendance officer.

If the student's attendance remains a cause for concern, then the parents may be asked to withdraw their child from the school. This is at the Head Teachers discretion.

The school will work in partnership with external support agencies by providing relevant information, in accordance with current data protection regulations, to support families where there are serious concerns regarding attendance.

Truancy

Truancy from school will be recorded as an unauthorised absence and will also warrant a sanction of a serious nature (see 'Behaviour & Discipline Policy'). Truancy includes a student failing to attend a lesson without the prior permission of the teacher or if a student leaves the school site at any point of the school day without prior authorisation from the school.

Risk Assessments

A risk assessment will be carried out for any student who returns to school after a prolonged period of absence due to ill health.

Infectious Illnesses

All cases of infectious illness in the home should be reported to the school immediately by telephone to allow school to make a decision on whether to inform other parents of the risk, should there be more than three cases in school. If a student has been absent with an infectious illness, parents should send in a medical certificate on his return. This should state the nature of the illness and it should certify that the student is free from the infection.

Subject teacher

The Darul Uloom expects all subject teachers to encourage punctuality through the appropriate meeting and greeting of groups. All lateness to lessons must be challenged appropriately. Subject teachers should support students who are returning to the school following an absence by ensuring that adequate resources are provided for their positive re-integration. Subject teachers are expected to monitor their class attendance and identify patterns and report any concerns to the students Personal Tutor. The link between attendance and attainment should be actively promoted.

Form Tutor

The school expects all form tutors to support the regular attendance of their students by addressing any barriers that may prevent their good attendance. Having analysed data, tutors should set realistic attendance targets with each member of the tutor group. Tutors are expected to encourage good punctuality. All assemblies must address attendance and PTs must ensure that % attendance for each student is printed off and given to students. Discussion around attendance and personal targets must then take place.

Student's absence letters must be passed, promptly, to the appropriate admin staff.

Tutors are expected to act on the attendance data to monitor the attendance of their students and report any concerns to the Inclusion Leader and parents. Tutors should support students who are returning to the school following an absence.

Attendance officer

The attendance officer will implement intervention strategies in consultation with the Headteacher and form tutors for all students with attendance figures below 95%. With tutors, the attendance officer should set attendance targets for each tutor group. It is the responsibility of the attendance officer to promote and celebrate good attendance through the use of the school's reward system.

The Headteacher

The Headteacher, alongside the attendance officer, is expected to promote the regular attendance of students by addressing any barriers that may prevent good attendance. The Headteacher should rigorously monitor attendance and liaise, regularly with the school's attendance officer. Attendance should appear as an item on SLT/staff meetings to allow staff to monitor the progress made towards the meeting of agreed attendance targets. It is the responsibility of the Headteacher to oversee the school's attendance policy and practice.

In collaboration with other relevant staff, the Headteacher will monitor, evaluate and review the policy and its impact annually. All attendance related action will be recorded in the school's termly report. The Headteacher will produce an annual report to trustees on matters of attendance.

Trustees

The school's trustees should monitor and evaluate attendance and ensure the policy is carried out. Authorised and unauthorised absence

It is the Headteachers decision whether an absence is authorised or unauthorised. A telephone call on the first day of absence followed by a letter on return from parents/carers does not in itself authorise an absence; only the school's acceptance of the explanation authorises the absence.

The Legal Consequences of Non-Attendance

Legal proceedings and Penalty Notices have been introduced to try and ensure the regular attendance of children in education, this is in line with Birmingham City Council's 'Fast Track' Legal Proceedings. Legal proceedings will be considered after the School have tried to engage with, and offer support to, a family of a student who has attendance issues.

If the poor/non-attendance of a student is not resolved the school may decide to take legal action against the parents or responsible adult of the child. If found guilty by a Magistrate a parent/responsible adult could be fined up to £2,500, or a Parenting Order could be issued, which lasts for up to a year.

Legal Proceedings Criteria:

- Concerning levels of absence either authorised or unauthorised – (once a year schools should send the 'School Attendance' whole school letter to parents by pupil post, email, or by placing it on their website/in their prospectus)
- The pupil has at least one session of unauthorised absence - Early Help has been refused (this includes 'no response' to attempts by the school to engage the family); the circumstances of the family do not meet the threshold for Early Help/Social Care support; Early Help/Social Care strategies have not resulted in sustained attendance improvement
- The pupil has further unauthorised absence adding up to at least 10 sessions in total over the previous 12 calendar months
- The pupil has a minimum of 10 further sessions of unauthorised absence within 12 school weeks of the warning notice being issued
- Penalty Notices

The School can seek support from the Education Legal Intervention Team (ELIT) for parents who are not actively trying to support/improve their child's attendance. The FAST TRACK procedure will be initiated and followed with the hope that attendance will improve. Failure to see any improvements could result in fixed penalty notices being issued.

Attendance Reward System

Good attendance is recognised and rewarded at the school. The attendance rewards form part of the whole school rewards system where good attendance and punctuality is rewarded at regular intervals. Students maintaining 100% attendance will be given extra recognition. Attendance focusses weeks once every half term where 100% attendance and good punctuality will be celebrated.

Punctuality

Key Principles:

School The school strongly discourages late arrival to school and will seek an explanation from the parent. All students are expected to attend school on time as it teaches them self-discipline and time management. It also ensures a calm and orderly start to the school day. The school will communicate to parents its expectation with regards to the punctuality of students regularly.

It is the responsibility of parents to ensure that their child attends school on time. Every student is expected to be at school before 8:25am and join the *Morning Adhkar* at 8.25am. Class teachers are expected to be in their positions at 8.20am. Students are expected to go to their first lesson immediate after *Morning Adhkar*. First lesson starts at 8.30am and all students will be formally registered at this time, registers will be closed at 9am.

If a student arrives after 8:30 am:

- He needs to sign the "Late Book" at reception and proceed quickly to his lesson.
- He will be registered by the Attendance Officer at the main reception.

A record of late comers and reason for lateness will be kept and discussed weekly by the attendance officer and SLT/form tutors. Any student lateness will be recorded and patterns of lateness will be analysed and intervened.

Sanctions

DUIHS takes its attendance and punctuality seriously. The school recognises the negative impact of poor punctuality and attendance on a child's wellbeing, behaviour and progress. As such the following sanction will be strongly enforced:

1st late – 1st warning

2nd late – a 2nd warning and a corresponding detention

3rd late – a 3rd warning, a corresponding detention and a meeting with the headteacher, involving parents

4th and consistent lates thereafter – further meeting with parents, exclusion will be considered

1st unauthorised absence – 1st warning

2nd unauthorised absence – a 2nd warning

3rd unauthorised absence – a 3rd warning, meeting with the headteacher, involving parents

4th and consistent absences thereafter – further meeting with parents, exclusion will be considered

It is to be noted that where lateness and poor attendance correlates with poor safeguarding at home, relevant authorities will be contacted with relevant urgency.

We are frequently asked to comment on punctuality for employment, Further Education and Higher Education references – a record of poor punctuality may affect this.

Application for Leave of Absence Due to Exceptional Circumstances

The school does not normally authorise absence for holidays in term-time and strongly discourages parents from making such requests.

Leaves of absence will not be authorised if:

- ...the pupil's attendance is below than 95%
- ...they are pupils in years 10 and 11
- ...students are in examination periods – these are shown in the school calendar issued in September
- ...it is during period of year 10 work experience

Leave of absence

The school does not authorise a leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances which warrant the leave. Each application will be considered on an individual basis. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the Head teacher's discretion.

When requesting a leave of absence, parents must complete an 'Application for Leave of Absence' form (which can be obtained from the school office) and submit it to the Attendance Officer.

- Parents must also adhere to the following:
 - All sections of the form must be completed before it is submitted.
 - The form must be received at least one month before the date of leave stated on the form.
 - The form must be received by the Attendance Officer before any bookings are made.
- Parents should be aware that leave of absence may not be authorised:
 - If a student's attendance record is a cause for concern,
 - If the date of leave is close to or during the school's internal assessment periods or external examination period,
 - If the date of leave is during the period of Work Experience,
 - If the school is not satisfied that the individual facts and circumstances, provided by the parent on the application form, warrant the leave.
- Where a leave of absence has been granted, the Head teacher will determine the number of days a student can be away from school. A date of return to school will be agreed upon and stipulated on the 'Application for Leave of Absence' form.
- If the student fails to return to school on the agreed date, it will result in the following:
 - Any days of absence in excess of those which were authorised by the school, will be recorded as unauthorised. The stages outlined in section 'Following Up Absences', will be taken.
 - Parents will be contacted on the first day of the unauthorised absence as explained in section 'Reporting an Absence - First Day Contact'.
- In case of a flight delay or cancellation, parents must provide valid evidence of this on the first day of their child returning to school.
- *The school cannot give retrospective approval for a leave of absence. If the parents did not apply for the leave of absence in advance, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.*
- The school reserves the right to remove a student's name from the attendance register if he has an unauthorised absence of three or more days beyond the agreed date for his return to

school. In such circumstances, parents are expected to pay a term's fee from the 1st day of the unauthorised absence.

Actions to be taken for pupils whom attendance is a cause for concern

- Absence on a certain day on a regular basis - Attendance Officer who will send a letter to parents to discuss their concern.
- Too many absences on a certain day due to medical appointments - Attendance Officer who will send a letter to parents to discuss their concern.
- Pupils who fail to return to school at the end of an authorised leave of absence – meeting with a member of the SLT/Head will be arranged. The stages outlined in section 'Following Up Absences', will be taken.
- Pupils who go on holiday without gaining school permission:
 - recorded as 'G' in registers
 - Parents are contacted by Attendance Officer
- Pupils regularly attend school after registration is closed: pupils/parents should be reminded that punctuality is important and that attending once registration has been completed is marked as an unauthorised absence – pupils/parents reminded that this can affect their child's sixth form applications.
- If a pupil's attendance falls below 95% the parents are called in for a meeting with the Attendance Officer/member of SLT/Head
- If a pupil's attendance does not improve once the parents have been brought in, the parents may be asked to withdraw their child from the school.
- Any pupil who reaches 5 unauthorised absences may be removed from school roll
- Any pupil who is consistently missing lessons may be removed from school roll