

## **What should I do if my child is absent?**

Students are legally required to attend school every day and should only be absent in real emergencies. If your child is not in school they must have a justified reason.

We ask parents to arrange non-urgent medical appointments out of school hours and write a note in advance. If this is not possible appointments should be arranged either first thing in the morning or later in the afternoon. We will only authorise a half day absence for a medical appointment on production of a medical appointment card and any absences without this evidence will remain on the students records as unauthorised. We would expect students to be absent for the time of the appointment only and not the whole day. The school will decide if the absence will be authorised after the reason has been given.

If a student needs to leave during the school day they must have a written parental note with them or an email must be received at school in order for them to sign out. If we do not have written permission from parents they will not be allowed to leave the school site. **School staff will not make contact with parents/guardians to confirm details of such appointments.**

If your child is absent from school please telephone our dedicated absence lines before 9.15am and leave a message clearly stating the reason for the absence. Alternatively, you may email the relevant member of Attendance staff.

**Years 7,8 & 9: Miss L Withey - 01604 598965 - [lwithey@thedustonschool.org](mailto:lwithey@thedustonschool.org)**

**Years 10 & 11: Mrs S Quinn - 01604 598967 - [squinn@thedustonschool.org](mailto:squinn@thedustonschool.org)**

If the school does not receive contact regarding absence we will endeavour to contact you via our 'In Touch' messaging service. This service will send a text message and email to the first contact on the numbers that you have provided. Please ensure we are updated regularly with any change in contact details, this includes email and home addresses. If we remain unable to contact you the absence will be coded as unauthorised. On the third day of absence we may conduct a home visit to ascertain reasons for absence. For absences relating to illness of five days or more we may request medical evidence to confirm the absence.

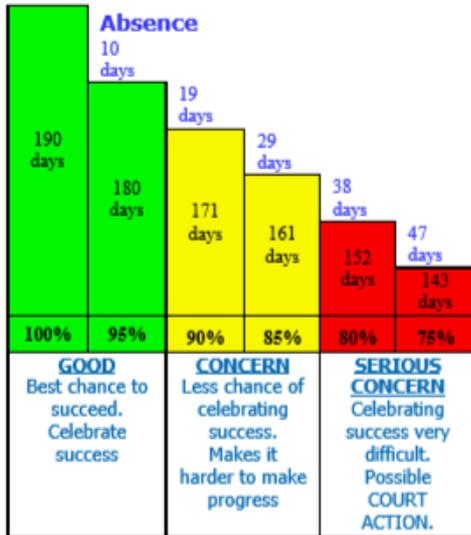
## **Establishing Good Punctuality**

Lateness to school is not acceptable and students are expected to arrive to school on time. The school day starts promptly at 8.40am. Poor punctuality not only disrupts your child's learning but the learning of others. Good timekeeping leads to good practice in your child's future. Students who arrive after the 8.40am bell will be expected to complete a 20 minute same day detention.

## **Why is Good Attendance Important?**

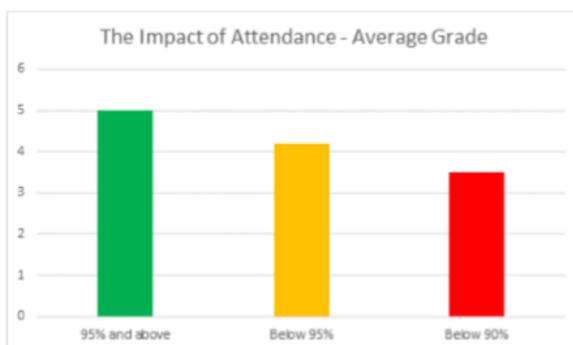
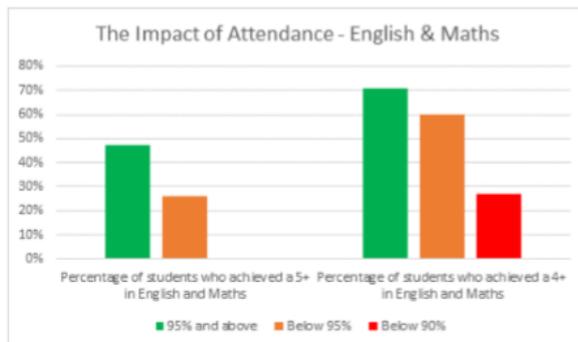
Our attendance target for students at The Duston School is 96% and we are committed to working proactively to help and support parents and students to achieve this. If students do not attend school regularly they will not be able to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. Every young person is entitled to an education, being absent from school means a lost learning opportunity.

There are 175 Non-school days each year which allows 175 days to use for family time, visits, holidays, shopping, household jobs and other appointments. There are 190 School days in each school year.



The impact of good attendance can be clearly in the 2018/19 GCSE results:

Attendance Percentage	Percentage of students who achieved a 5+ in English and Maths	Percentage of students who achieved a 4+ in English and Maths	Average Grade
95% and above	47%	71%	Grade 5
Below 95%	26%	60%	Grade 4
Below 90%	0%	27%	Grade 3



## **Legal Responsibilities**

As a parent it is your legal duty to make sure your child attends school and as a parent you are committing an offence if you fail to ensure your child attends regularly. If concerns regarding attendance continue the school will complete a '**Parenting Contract**', the first legal steps which could lead to prosecution from the local authority. This could then result in a PACE interview being held under caution in accordance with the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984. You should also be aware that if convicted of an offence of failing to ensure regular attendance of your child at school under **Section 444, 1/1A Education Act 1996**, you could be fined up to **£2,500 and/or receive a term of imprisonment not exceeding 3 months**.

## **Persistent Absence**

Persistent Absence is referred to by the Government as absences of 10% or more or where actual attendance is less than 90%. **ALL** absences have a negative impact on a student's attendance record and may result in them being identified as 'persistently absent' and subject to close scrutiny by the school. It does not matter if the absence is authorised in exceptional circumstances, illness or medical appointments, or is an unauthorised absence due to truancy, school refusal or other unexplained absence. The progress of students and the outcome they can achieve when leaving school is heavily affected by low attendance, Ofsted look very closely at persistent absence figures when making judgements about schools and as a result those students identified are monitored as a high risk group.

## **Can I Get Help If My Child Is Not Attending**

The School **Attendance Team** can give you advice and support if you need help with your child's attendance. It is very important that you speak to the school at your earliest opportunity if you have any concerns regarding your child's attendance.

**Be Honest About the Reasons For Absence** - You know your child better than anyone else. If you suspect your child is avoiding school, for example by saying they are ill and you suspect they are not, please contact us.

## **Don't give in to your child if he/she complains of illness but you see no physical signs**

- If you are unsure, send him/her to school with a note of explanation and a contact number should we need to contact you. You may well find this works and the number of times it happens reduces. It will also help your child to develop the right habits for the future where in the workplace absences and lateness are not tolerated. If this continues, please request to meet with your child's tutor, it may be an indication that your child is unhappy in school. Make sure your child understands that you do not approve of them missing school, but be on the alert for any particular reasons for non-attendance such as bullying or problems with school work. You can help your child by discussing why education is important and support them by attending parent's evenings and meetings in school. Take an interest in your child's education and ask them about their day, praise and encourage their achievements at school.

## **Absence for Term Time Holidays**

From 1st September 2013 changes to the law give **no** entitlement to parents to take their child on holiday during term time. Any application for leave must only be in exceptional circumstances (agreed at the discretion of the Principal) and parents can be fined by the Local Authority for taking their child on holiday without the consent of the school. The initial Fixed Penalty Notice of £60.00 is issued to each parent for each child (two parents, two children = £240.00).

We do recognise that parent's circumstances (financial position, working commitments etc.) vary, however all parents are still required to ensure that children only miss school on an unavoidable occasions.

All requests for absence due to exceptional circumstance must be made by completing the 'Request for Absence' form which can be downloaded using the link below. The request will be reviewed by the Principal and a decision will be made if it meets the criteria for authorisation. Any absence not authorised may be referred to the local authority and may result in further action being taken.