

# Attendance Policy

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Version Number	Date issued	Author	Update information
1.0	05 April 2019	J Lake	First Published Version
1.1	27 April 2020	H Fox	Reviewed no substantive changes. Clarification added with regard to issuing body for Penalty notices.
1.2	02 March 2022	G Smith	There have been slight changes and clarifications about the attendance processes and the support offered by schools.

*This policy has been written with consideration given to working practices. By adopting this policy, a reduction in workload has been facilitated by reducing the need for individual academies to interpret the policy locally.*

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Trust is committed to providing a full and effective educational experience for all pupils. We believe that if pupils are to benefit from education, punctual, daily attendance is crucial. Irregular attendance undermines the educational process and can lead to educational and social disadvantage.
- 1.2. The Trust actively promotes and encourages 100 per cent attendance for all our pupils. We recognise that parents have a vital role to play and that there is a need to establish strong home-school links and communication systems that can be utilised whenever there is concern about attendance.
- 1.3. If there are problems which affect a pupil's attendance, we will investigate, identify and strive in partnership with parents and pupils to resolve those problems as quickly and efficiently as possible. We will adopt a clearly focused approach aimed at returning the pupil to full attendance at all times.

## 2. Legislation

- 2.1. The Education Act 1996 requires parents/carers to ensure their children receive effective, full-time education, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. Schools are responsible for recording student attendance twice a day; once at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session.

## 2.2. The government expects:

- a. Schools and local authorities to:
  - Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence;
  - Ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled; and act early to address patterns of absence.
- b. Parents to perform their legal duty by ensuring their children of compulsory school age who are registered at school attend regularly.
- c. All pupils to be punctual to their lessons.

## 2.3. These requirements are contained in:

- a. The Education Act 1996 - sections 434(1)(3)(4) & (6) and 458(4)&(5)
- b. The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006
- c. The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2010
- d. The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2011
- e. The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013
- f. The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2016

## 3 What you can expect from the Dartmoor Multi Academy Trust:

1. We will promote good attendance and punctuality and will investigate any unexplained and/or unjustified absence.
2. We will work closely with parents/carers where pupil's absence is cause for concern.
3. We will support pupils to achieve good attendance and punctuality.
  - a. We will support pupils returning to school after prolonged absence.

## 4. What the Dartmoor Multi Academy Trust expects from pupils:

1. Every day the Academy is open and they are well enough to attend
2. To be punctual.

## 5. What the Dartmoor Multi Academy Trust expects from Parents/Carers:

1. To ensure their child attends the academy on those days it is open, punctually, dressed in full uniform and equipped to learn.
2. To ensure their child attends every day the Academy is open unless they are too ill to do so.
3. To avoid arranging holidays during term time.
4. To immediately inform the Academy if their child is unable to attend.
5. To avoid making medical or dental appointments during school time as far as possible.

## 6. Managing Attendance

- 6.1. Refer to Appendix A for an individual academy's managing attendance procedures.
- 6.2. If an attendance award system is used within a school, an attendance reward will take exceptions for 'authorised absence' into account, which are pupils whose absence marks relate to a recognised impairment (as the Disability Discrimination Act requires us to treat those with a disability 'more favourably') or those pupils granted leave for religious observance.

## 7. Punctuality

- 7.1 It is the responsibility of parents/carers to ensure their child attends full time education and arrives at Academy on time. Punctuality is monitored by the Academy and parents will be contacted if their child is not arriving to school on time. If a child persistently arrives after the registers close, cases will be referred to the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) who may consider issuing a Penalty Notice.<sup>1</sup> The EWO acts on behalf of the Devon Education Welfare Service.

## 8. Authorised Absences

- 8.1. Absences from school will only be classified as authorised for the following reasons:
  - a. Genuine illness
  - b. Unavoidable medical / dental appointments
  - c. Days of religious observance
  - d. Exceptional circumstances, such as bereavement or marriage of an immediate family member
  - e. Seeing a parent who is on leave from the armed forces
  - f. External examinations
  - g. When Traveller children go on the road with their parents
- 8.2. Parents may wish to familiarise themselves with the Notes on Infectious Diseases in Schools and Nurseries (Spotty Book) guidance [here](#). This will give guidance on how long students should be away from school if they have a contagious illness.

## 9. Absences during Term Time

- 9.1. Permission must be sought in advance to take a pupil out of school during term time, which can only be requested from a parent/carer with parental responsibility and with whom the child normally lives, using the appropriate Absence Request Form (S2 Form) for all other non-medical absence.
- 9.2. If the circumstances relating to this request are considered exceptional and the absence is authorised by the academy, the authorising of the absences will be conditional on the child's attendance being satisfactory up to the date covered by this request. If the academy withdraws the authorisation due to the attendance dropping to an unacceptable level, the parent/carer will be informed of this in writing.

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<sup>1</sup> In Devon, penalty notices will be issued by the Legal Proceedings Officer employed by the Council and based within the Education Welfare Office. For further information visit [Devon Education and Families](#).

- 9.3. If a request is refused and the child is taken out of school, this will be recorded as an unauthorised absence, which may then be liable to a penalty notice, payable by each parent/carer, or the subject of court proceedings which could result in a fine of up to £2,500 and/or a term of imprisonment of up to 3 months.
- 9.4. A session is defined as one half day of school. If a student misses a full day of education this is counted as 2 sessions.

## 10. Truancy

- 10.1 It is the legal responsibility of parents/carers to ensure their child attends all lessons as required. Parents/carers will be informed by the Attendance Officer if their child has been identified as truanting from the Academy. Persistent cases may be referred to the Education Welfare Officer who may consider issuing a Penalty Notice.<sup>1</sup>

## 11. When Attendance Causes Concern

- 11.1. If a child of compulsory school age fails to attend regularly at a school at which they are registered, or at a place where alternative provision is provided for them, the parents may be guilty of an offence and can be prosecuted by the local authority. Please see Appendix A for a school's managing attendance procedure.
- 11.2. The Academy will utilise the support of the Education Welfare Service (EWS), where attendance is a concern. The EWS service can support and advise parent/carers who may be experiencing difficulties with their child's attendance.
- 11.3. If attendance continues to be unacceptable, the academy, with support from the EWS, will instigate the fast track to prosecution process as per the flow chart in Appendix B
- 11.4. For continued unacceptable attendance the local authority may make the decision to issue a Penalty Notice, requiring a parent to pay a fine of up to £120 per parent/carer. In certain circumstances, a parent/carer may be prosecuted and be required to attend the Magistrates Court where they could face up to 3 months' imprisonment and/or a fine of up to £2,500. The parent/carer will be given every opportunity to improve their child's attendance and they will receive a written warning before any legal action is taken.

## 12. Policy Circulation

- 12.1. This Policy will be published on the Trust's website and included in the Trust's Policy Monitoring Schedule.
- 12.2. This Policy will be circulated to every Member, Trustee/Director, Governor and Senior Employee by sending an email to the link on the Trust's website on an annual basis and when each new Member, Trustee/Director, Governor and Senior Employee joins the Trust.
- 12.3. The Trust Executive Team, is responsible for overseeing, reviewing and organising the revision of this Policy.

## School Attendance Management Procedures

1. Registration times are determined at local school level and are clearly stated on schools' websites. Pupils arriving after registration opens but before registration closes are deemed as late '*before registration closes*'. Pupils arriving after registration closes are considered '*late after registration has closed*'. They will lose their mark for the whole session and the absence is recorded as 'unauthorised'.
2. If your child is ill, or absent from school for any reason, it is expected that parents/carers will ring in to the school office in the morning before 9.30am to inform the school of the reason for absence. If your child is unwell, please give details of the illness.
3. The school has an answerphone and it is acceptable for a parent to leave a message. If no message has been received, the office staff will contact the parent. If you do not respond to school then they may conduct a welfare check by visiting your home.
4. All planned **non-medical** absence from school must be requested using an Absence Request (S2) form. Where possible, **medical appointments** should be made out of school hours or during school holidays. For any appointments during the school day, please **send in** a copy of your child's appointment card/letter. (office staff can take a copy for you).
5. The reason for late arrivals and early departures will be added as a comment in the session mark for the day so that the school and parents have a complete record of any absences for their child.
6. If the absence is for more than one day, the school should be kept informed on a daily basis. If a pupil is absent due to illness for more than three days, the parent will be asked to provide an appointment card/prescription indicating that the pupil has been seen by a medical professional. The reason for this is that when a pupil is quite unwell for sustained periods of time, we, as a school, are obliged to demonstrate that we have followed the absence process. This is not about the school doubting what a parent has said, it ensures that when the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) visits the school to monitor pupil attendance below 90%, we can speak on behalf of the parent and explain the circumstances surrounding a pupil's low/erratic attendance or prolonged absences.
7. Parents will be contacted on the first day of absence whenever any student is absent without reason, or persistently late, and will be reminded, if necessary, of their legal responsibility for ensuring that a child of compulsory school age attends school regularly.
8. The Attendance Officer/Senior Leader is responsible for following up any concerns for attendance, informing parents where there are concerns regarding attendance, and for reporting persistent problems to the designated senior leader.
9. Notification letters will be sent home where a child's attendance is of concern or drops below an acceptable standard.
10. As part of the strategy to improve your child's attendance to school, you may be offered Early Help. You can find information about this [here](#).