

Attendance Policy

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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.
1.3	24 June 2022	L Paton	Reviewed in line with guidance and expectation for September 2022

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.

This policy draws from and must be read in conjunction with the DFE [Guidance working together to improve school attendance](#) and [Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance](#).

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1. Introduction

Attendance is everyone's business, and everyone involved with the care of children is equally responsible for ensuring children's attendance. This means schools, LAs, social care, NHS workers and community partners all have a responsibility to see the child in school every day, and to wrap support around that child. All partners should make children's attendance a top priority. Every child should be in school every day, supported and ready to learn. Every child has the right to a fantastic education (Dame Rachel de Souza, Children's commissioner for England).

- 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.
- 1.4. The name and contact details of the senior leader responsible for strategic approach to attendance will be published by each school. The name and contact details of school staff who pupils and parents should contact about attendance on a day-to-day basis will be published by each school. The name and contact details of school staff who pupils and parents should contact for more detailed support with attendance will be published by each school (see school level appendix).

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 and are expected to accurately record admission and attendance registers.

3. Expectations

- 3.1 What you can expect from Dartmoor Multi Academy Trust:
 - Take an active role in attendance improvement, support schools to prioritise attendance, and work with leaders to fulfil expectations and duties and set whole school cultures.
 - Ensure school staff receive training on attendance.
 - Regularly review attendance data and help school leaders focus support on the pupils who need it.
- 3.2 What you can expect from schools:
 - A clear school attendance policy on the school website which all staff, pupils and parents understand.
 - A whole school culture that promotes the benefits of good attendance
 - A dedicated senior leader with overall responsibility for championing and improving attendance.
 - Robust daily processes to follow up absence
 - To proactively use data to identify pupils at risk of poor attendance.
 - Build strong relationships with families: work with each identified pupil and their parents to understand and address reasons for absence, including any in-school barriers to attendance
 - To identify, signpost and support access to any required services when out of school barriers are identified
 - If an attendance issue persists, take an active part in the multi-agency effort with the local authority and other partners

- Where absence becomes persistent, put additional targeted support in place to remove any barriers
- Where there is a lack of engagement, hold more formal conversations with parents and be clear about the potential need for legal intervention in future.
- Where there are safeguarding concerns, intensify support through statutory children's social care.
- Work with other schools in the local area, such as schools previously attended and the schools of any siblings.
- To agree a joint approach for all severely absent pupils with the local authority.
- Ensure join up with pastoral support and where required, put in place additional support and adjustments, such as an individual healthcare plan and if applicable, ensuring the provision outlined in the pupil's EHCP is accessed

3.3 What Dartmoor Multi Academy Trust expects from pupils:

- To attend every day the school is open except when a statutory reason applies
- To arrive punctually, dressed in full uniform and equipped ready to learn

3.4 What Dartmoor Multi Academy Trust expects from Parents/Carers:

- To ensure their child attends every day the school is open except when a statutory reason applies
- To ensure their child attends punctually, dressed in full uniform and equipped to learn.
- To notify the school as soon as possible when their child has to be unexpectedly absent
- Only request leave of absence in exceptional circumstances and do so in advance.
- To avoid making medical or dental appointments during school time as far as possible.
- To work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance.
- To proactively engage with the support offered to prevent the need for more formal support.
- To proactively engage with formal support when offered – including any parenting contract or voluntary early help plan to prevent the need for legal intervention.

4. How the school is promoting and incentivising good attendance

Each school will publish its strategies and procedures (see school level appendix).

5. The school's strategy for using data to target attendance improvement efforts

- 5.1 Monitor session, daily and weekly attendance data.
- 5.2 Analyse attendance data for individual pupils, groups and cohorts across the school in order to identify patterns, trends and anomalies.
- 5.3 Use this analysis to provide regular attendance reports to class teachers or tutors to facilitate discussions.
- 5.4 Identify the pupils who need support and focus efforts on developing targeted actions.
- 5.5 Conduct thorough analysis of half termly, termly and full year data to identify patterns and trends.
- 5.6 Benchmark data at whole school, year group and cohort level against local, regional and national level.
- 5.7 Devise specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data.

6. Managing Attendance: day to day processes

- 6.1 Schools will publish the timings of the school day. 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'.

- 6.2 Parents are expected to inform the school if their child is absent by emailing/text/telephone giving the reason for absence
- 6.3 The school will follow first day calling procedures for pupils who are absent with no explanation as follows:
- After registers are taken and absence notifications are noted, produce list of pupils absent with no explanation
 - Double check in school before starting calls.
 - Call/text everyone on the contact list. We leave messages if there is a voicemail option.
 - Once contact is made, stop the 'first day calling' process.
 - Call the contact list twice.
 - If no reply at all, from anyone on the contact list for the child consider: - Does the child have additional agency support, such as a social worker, contact them. Explore any in school intelligence regarding the family.
 - Make a home visit.
 - If no answer, DSL consider referral to children's services / MASH / Police.
- 6.4 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.
- 6.5 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.
- 6.6 If the absence is for more than one day, the school should be kept informed on a daily basis.

7. Authorised Absences

- 7.1. Absences from school will only be classified as authorised for the following reasons:
- Genuine illness
 - Unavoidable medical / dental appointments
 - Days of religious observance
 - Exceptional circumstances, such as bereavement or marriage of an immediate family member
 - Seeing a parent who is on leave from the armed forces
 - External examinations
 - When Traveller children go on the road with their parents
- 7.2 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.
- 7.3 Attendance award systems used within a school 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.

8. Pupils with medical conditions or special educational needs and disabilities

Schools should be the place where every child can find support for their needs, with routes into more specialist support where this is necessary. This means that every school should be able to support children with SEND, with

mental health needs, children who have problems at home, or who are experiencing bullying (Dame Rachel de Souza, Children's commissioner for England).

8.1 Some pupils face greater barriers to attendance than their peers. These can include pupils who suffer from long term medical conditions or who have special educational needs and disabilities. Their right to an education is the same as any other pupil and therefore the attendance ambition for these pupils should be the same as they are for any other pupil. That said, in working with their parents to improve attendance, schools should be mindful of the barriers these pupils face and put additional support in place where necessary to help them access their full-time education. This should include:

- Having sensitive conversations and developing good support for pupils with physical or mental health conditions. For example, making reasonable adjustments where a pupil has a disability or putting in place an individual healthcare plan where needed. Considering whether additional support from external partners (including the local authority or health services) would be appropriate, making referrals in a timely manner and working together with those services to deliver any subsequent support.
- Working with parents to develop specific support approaches for attendance for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities, including where applicable ensuring the provision outlined in the pupil's education, health and care plan is accessed. In addition, schools should work with families to help support routines where school transport is regularly being missed and work with other partners to encourage the scheduling of additional support interventions or medical appointments outside of the main school day. Please see further details on [SEN support](#).
- Establishing strategies for removing the in-school barriers these pupils face, including considering support or reasonable adjustments for uniform, transport, routines, access to support in school and lunchtime arrangements.
- Ensuring joined up pastoral care is in place where needed and consider whether a time-limited phased return to school would be appropriate, for example for those affected by anxiety about school attendance.
- Ensuring data is regularly monitored for these groups including at board and governing body meetings and in Targeting Support Meetings with the local authority so that additional support from other partners is accessed where necessary.

8.2 Pupils with long term illnesses or other health needs may need additional support to continue their education, such as alternative provision provided by the local authority. Local authorities are responsible for arranging suitable education for children of compulsory school age who, because of health reasons, would otherwise not receive suitable education. Please see further information on [supporting pupils with medical conditions at school](#).

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.
- 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 school 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.¹

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.

11.2 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.

11.3 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.

11.4 Parents will be offered supportive meetings to discuss the school's attendance concerns.

11.5 The school will consider any 'reasonable adjustments' that can be made to support and improve attendance.

11.6 As part of the strategy to improve attendance, parents and carers will be offered Early Help at every stage. You can find information about this [here](#).

11.7 Notification letters will be sent home where a child's attendance is of concern or drops below an acceptable standard as follows:

- sessions letter 1
- 15 sessions letter 2
- No improvement letter 3
- sessions late, late letter 1
- 15 sessions late, late letter 2
- Medical information letter, only where the school has reasonable doubt about the authenticity of the illness.

11.8 Referral to the Education Welfare Service.

12. Persistent and severe absence

Schools need to develop trusted relationships with children who are persistently or severely absent, and with their families (Dame Rachel de Souza, Children's commissioner for England).

12.1 Where absence escalates and pupils miss 10% or more of school (equivalent to 1 day or more a fortnight across a full school year), schools and local authorities are expected to work together to put additional targeted support in place to remove any barriers to attendance and reengage these pupils. In doing so, schools

should sensitively consider some of the reasons for absence and understand the importance of school as a place of safety and support for children who might be facing difficulties, rather than reaching immediately for punitive approaches.

- 12.2 Particular focus should be given by all partners to pupils who are absent from school more than they are present (those missing 50% or more of school). These severely absent pupils may find it more difficult to be in school or face bigger barriers to their regular attendance and as such are likely to need more intensive support across a range of partners. A concerted effort is therefore needed across all relevant services to prioritise them. All partners should work together to make this group the top priority for support – this may include specific support with attendance or a whole family plan, but it may also include consideration for an education, health and care plan or an alternative form of educational provision where necessary to overcome the barriers to being in school.
- 12.3 If all avenues of support have been facilitated by schools, local authorities, and other partners, and the appropriate educational support or placements (e.g. an education, health and care plan) have been provided but severe absence for unauthorised reasons continues, it is likely to constitute neglect. Schools and local authorities should be especially conscious of any potential safeguarding issues in these cases and where these remain, conduct a full children’s social care assessment. Further information is available in the statutory guidance on [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#).
- 12.4 In all cases, schools and local authorities are expected to make patterns of both persistent and severe absence a focus of their regular data monitoring and identify pupils and cohorts who need targeted attendance support as quickly as possible. Both persistent and severe absence should also be central to school, trust, and local authority level strategies for improving attendance

13 Attendance Prosecution

- 13.1 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, their parents may be guilty of an offence and can be prosecuted by the local authority.
- 13.2 Prosecution in the Magistrates Court is the last resort where all other voluntary and formal support or legal intervention has failed or where support has been deemed inappropriate in the circumstances of the individual case. Where it is decided to pursue prosecution, only local authorities can prosecute parents and they must fund all associated costs, including in the preparation of court documentation.
- 13.3 Local authorities have the power to prosecute:
- Parents who fail to comply with a school attendance order issued by the local authority to require a parent to get their child registered at a named school (under section 443 of the Education Act 1996). This may result in a fine of up to level 3 (£1,000).
 - Parents who fail to secure their child’s regular attendance at a school, for which there are 2 separate offences: section 444(1) where a parent fails to secure the child’s regular attendance; and section 444(1A) where a parent knows that the child is failing to attend school regularly and fails to ensure the child does so. The section 444(1) offence may result in a fine of up to level 3 (£1,000) and the section 444(1A) offence may result in a fine of up to level 4 (£2,500), and/or a community order or imprisonment of up to 3 months.
 - Parents who fail to secure the regular attendance of their child at a place where the local authority or governing body has arranged alternative provision (under sections 444 and 444ZA). This may result in a fine of up to level 3 (£1,000), or if the parent is found to have known the child was not attending regularly and failed to ensure that they did so, a fine of up to level 4 (£2,500), and/or a community order or imprisonment of up to 3 months.

- Parents who persistently fail to comply with directions under an Education Supervision Order (under Schedule 3 to the Children Act 1989) or breach a Parenting Order or directions under the order (under section 375 of the Sentencing Act 2020). These may result in a fine of up to level 3 (£1,000).

13.4 The decision to prosecute rests solely with the LA as an independent prosecuting authority, but in deciding whether to prosecute the local authority may wish to consider:

- The level of engagement from the parent and whether prosecution is the only avenue left to demonstrate the severity of the issue to the parent and/or cause parental engagement with the support they require.
- Whether all other legal interventions have been considered and are not appropriate or have been tried and have not worked.
- Whether statutory children's social care intervention would be more appropriate in the case (including a Child in Need or Child Protection Plan), especially where absence is severe.
- The parent(s)' response to formal warning(s) and/or evidence given in the interview under caution – including any statutory exemptions to prosecution that might apply (see below).
- The Attorney General's guidelines for public prosecutors, including public interest tests and equalities considerations.

13.5 The 1996 Act also sets out the circumstances in which a pupil has not failed to attend school regularly and therefore the parent has not committed an offence under section 444(1) or (1A) of the Act (the statutory defences). These are:

- The parent proves the pupil was prevented from attending by their ill health or any unavoidable cause, including exclusion.
- The pupil has been granted leave of absence by the school or, in the case of alternative provision, by a person authorised to do so.
- The absence was on a day set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parent(s) belong.
- The parent proves the local authority were under a duty to provide transport to the school and have failed to do so.
- If the school is an independent school, the parent proves that the school is not in walking distance of the pupil's home and the local authority have not made suitable arrangements for the child to either board at the school or be admitted to a state funded school closer to home.
- If the absence was from certain types of alternative provision, the parent proves the child is receiving education otherwise than by regular attendance.
- If the absence was from alternative provision, the parent had not been notified about the provision in writing before the absence.
- If the child has no fixed abode and the parent can prove that their trade / business requires them to travel, and the child has attended school as regularly as the nature of the trade or business permits, and (if the child is 6 or over) the child has attended school for at least 200 sessions during the preceding 12 months up to and including the date on which the proceedings were instituted.

14. Policy Circulation

14.1. This Policy will be published on the Trust's website and included in the Trust's Policy Monitoring Schedule.

14.2 This Policy will be published on each school's website and circulated to all parents.

14.3. 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.

14.4. The Trust Executive Team, is responsible for overseeing, reviewing and organising the revision of this Policy.

15 Relevant legislation and guidance

[Working together to improve school attendance](#)

[Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance](#)

[The Education Act 1996](#)

[The Children Act 1989](#)

[The Crime and Disorder Act 1998](#)

[The Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003](#)

[The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)

[The Sentencing Act 2020](#)

[The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006](#)

[The Education \(Parenting Contracts and Parenting Orders\) \(England\) Regulations 2007](#)

[The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) Regulations 2007](#)

[Parental responsibility measures for attendance and behaviour](#)

[Children missing education](#)

[Keeping children safe in education](#)

[Working together to safeguard children](#)

[Elective home education](#)

[Alternative provision: statutory guidance for local authorities](#)

[Exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England](#)

[Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions](#)

[Ensuring a good education for children who cannot attend school because of health needs](#)

[Promoting and supporting mental health and wellbeing in schools and colleges](#) [Approaches to preventing and tackling bullying](#)

[Voices of England's missing children](#)