



DORMSTON SCHOOL

Attendance & Punctuality Policy

Date	Review date	Attendance Leads	Nominated Governor
02.09.23	17.07.24	Jayne Elliott Nicholas Amos	George Craig
			Ratified: Sept 2023 Date:

Introduction

The Governors and staff at Dormston School are united in their belief that regular school attendance is the key to enabling children to maximise the educational opportunities available to them. Helping them to become emotionally resilient, confident and competent adults who are able to realise their full potential and make a positive contribution to their community.

Dormston School values all children. As set out in this policy we will work with families to identify the barriers to achieving and maintaining excellent attendance and offer the right service at the right time to try to resolve any difficulties.

The Attendance Leader, Attendance Officer and Liaison Officer will monitor attendance and use attendance data to identify any patterns of concern, whilst also celebrating success! Attendance concerns will be raised with parents/carers if reasons are not known by the school, e.g. a long period of illness. This information may be shared with the Local Authority following concerns. Where the school have concerns or experience lack of engagement from families we will follow the schools escalated approach as an intervention to improving attendance. The schools escalated approach is child-centred and prioritises support and developing strong working relationships with families. We will use the early help process to provide support prior to escalation and consider how we can work with families to enable your child to access their right to education.

Our aim is to always to work in partnership with parents/carers. Any referral for consideration of a penalty notice is deemed to be a last resort. Attendance figures for each child are available on the Go4Schools platform which is updated daily and as a school we will always ensure we communicate with parents/carers if we feel their child's attendance is becoming of concern.

Attendance Legislation

Under section 7 of the Education Act 1996 a parent/carer is responsible for making sure that their child of compulsory school age receives a full-time education that is suitable to the child's age, ability, aptitude and to any special educational needs that the child may have. This can be regular attendance at school or by education otherwise.

If a child of compulsory school age who is registered at a school fails to attend regularly at the school, then the parent may be guilty of an offence under Section 444(1) / (1A) of the Education Act 1996.

If students are to succeed in their education and reach their full potential, it is essential they attend school regularly and are punctual. Parents/carers are informed of the school's expectations and procedures during their child induction processes, through newsletters and other communication

between school and home.

Our school staff will always contact parents/carers to notify them of a cause for concern in relation to their child's attendance.

To meet these objectives, the school will establish an effective and efficient system of communication with students, parents/carers and appropriate external agencies to provide mutual information, guidance and support. ^{[L}_{SEP]} **The school has a computerised attendance package which is used to take daily registers twice throughout the school day and monitor attendance data throughout the term / academic year.**

To support good attendance and safeguarding at Dormston we:

- ensure the school is welcoming and every child feels a sense of belonging and connectedness;
- ensure the school site is open at the stated times;
- ensure the regular, efficient, and accurate recording of attendance is complete by every class teacher each day. This further supports our approach to safeguarding within the school;
- take safeguarding seriously and we will always contact you on the first day that your child is absent from school. If your child arrives late after the close of registration, we will record their arrival at the attendance office and ensure they know where they need to go;
- consider any requests for leave in term time individually. This will be aligned to the Local Authority code of conduct;
- notify the Local Authority within 5 days if a new child is joining the school roll;
- inform the Local Authority of children whose parents have notified the school in writing and have opted for Elective Home Education;
- work closely with the school's Pastoral Team (including head of House/Deputy Head of House). Notify the Local Authority of Children Missing in Education – aligned to the DfE 2022 Attendance paper.

Home/School Partnership

Securing a high level of attendance requires the school and home to work closely together. To achieve this, it is essential that parents/carers:

- ensure their child attends school regularly, punctually, and properly equipped;
- notify the school of an absence by 9.00am on each day of absence;
- take family holidays during school holiday time and not in term time;
- provide the school with up-to-date contact details for all adults with parental responsibility; ^{[L}_{SEP]}
- contact the school as soon as possible about any concerns they have about their child's attendance.

In return, we will: ^{[L}_{SEP]}

- nominate a designated senior leader for attendance and have a named person within

the Governing Body responsible for attendance;

- contact home on the first day of absence if no message has been received; ^[L]_[SEP]
- follow up promptly any concerns that parents/carers have that may be affecting their child's engagement and attendance to school;
- regularly and consistently remind students of the importance of good attendance and punctuality including setting challenge targets as part of self-review;
- develop a multi-agency response to the attendance agenda;
- complete attendance intervention, including home visits, to ensure that any reason for absence is clarified and that a child's pace of learning isn't affected by absence.

We also ask that students:

- attend school regularly and punctually;
- arrive at school no later than 8.40am (breakfast club is in place from 8.20am each morning);
- attend lessons promptly, including the registration session.

Reporting a Pupil's Absence

Parents/carers must inform the school by 9am if their child is absent and give the reason and likely duration of the absence. They can inform the school of any absence by phoning or emailing the school through the information on the front page of our website

- a register is taken each child's Form Tutor at the start of the school day;
- any child arriving after 8.40am must report to the Attendance Officer through the entrance to the left of main reception – our single point of entry for late students;
- registers will be checked promptly after completion to identify students who are absent without notification;
- before 10am school will attempt to contact the parents/carers of those students not in school and for whom no reasons for absence have been given;
- school operate a 'red flag' system whereby priority is given to vulnerable students (this includes pupils who we need to safeguard and our Looked After Children);
- we will continue to ensure that absence is followed up where no response from home can be sought.

Where an unexplained absence meets the Local Authority's threshold, we will make a referral to the Child Missing in Education specialist team.

Unauthorised Absence^[L]_[SEP]

Headteachers, or a Designated Officer, on their behalf, have the power to decide if an absence is authorised. A request form, or notification of an absence, does not automatically give authorisation.^[L]_[SEP] Unauthorised absences include all unexplained or unjustified absences not relating to a child's ill-health and will include a reason not considered as authorised circumstances.

Unauthorised absence is any absence which does not fall into the following categories:

- absence due to sickness or other unavoidable cause;
- an absence for religious observance sanctioned by the religious body to which the parents/carers belong;
- medical or dental appointments agreed prior to the absence (parents should seek to return

- their child within 30 minutes of the appointment);
- agreed leave of absence under exceptional circumstances.

Only the school can authorise absence, not the parents/carers, and the school is not obliged to accept the explanation offered as a valid reason.

The best interests of the child will be the deciding factor in authorising or unauthorising any absence requests.

Leave during term time for extended periods or holidays:

We expect all students to attend school regularly and, as such, will not authorise any extended leave or holidays during term time unless in exceptional circumstances.

We also expect parents to share the same commitment to learning and to plan holidays and leave during the school holidays. If, in the extreme case, parents wish to request leave for exceptional circumstances, they must write to the Headteacher giving at least ten school days of notice. The Headteacher will consider each application and a nominated officer within the school will respond to parents with the outcome of the application.

We are obliged to follow the Local Authorities' policy with the escalation of unauthorised absence. As a parent, you are entitled to make representation to the Headteacher using our 'exceptional circumstances form' detailing the exceptional circumstances in which your request is based upon. If the reasons for absence detailed in the request are not deemed to be exceptional, the school may refer the absence to the Local Authority and an initial Penalty Notice of £120 per parent/adult for each child, reducing to £60 for early payment could be the outcome.

This would require payment being made directly to the Local Authority within 21 days. Please note that the school does not benefit financially from this action.

Non-payment may mean that the Penalty notice will rise to £120 after 21 days but within 28 days of receipt. If the penalty has not been paid within 28 days of issue the Local Authority may choose to instigate legal proceedings under section 444 (1) of the education act 1996. If found guilty of an offence under this Act, parents may receive a criminal record and could be fined up to £1000.

Further information can be found on the Dudley local authority website – 'penalty notice code of conduct'.

Lateness

A child is late if they arrive at school after 8.40am. A warning bell will be sounded at 8.38am. Students who arrive after the start of the school day but before registers have closed will be marked as L on the official register. Students who arrive after registers have closed will be marked as U. Students will receive a behaviour event when they are late to school by the Attendance Officer.

If a student is late to form twice in a week they will receive a behaviour event from their Form Tutor. If they are late to Assembly, they will receive a behaviour event. Receiving 2 behaviour events in a day will result in a 30 min detention.

If a pupil arrives late to school after a specified time decided by the attendance lead then they will receive a 30-minute detention that day.

When a child is persistently late, contact will be made with the parents/carers and an attendance contract or punctuality plan will be put in place.

We may take advice and/or refer a case of persistent lateness to the Local Authority.

Medical Appointments

Where possible, routine medical appointments should be booked for outside of the school day. In certain circumstances, where this is not possible, parents / carers should notify the school in writing or by showing the appointment letter or by telephone message of the time and date of the child's medical appointment. Students should attend school before and after the medical appointment as far as is practically possible.

We ask where possible that students miss no more than two hours of school for appointments.

Identification & Monitoring

- parents/carers of students not in school are contacted on the first day of absence;
- if no contact is made a home visit may be undertaken; ^[L]_[SEP]
- all verbal messages from parents are recorded centrally; ^[L]_[SEP]
- all verbal messages and notes from parents/carers are retained in the register;
- all parents/carers may be sent a letter if no reason is given for the absence; ^[L]_[SEP]
- after two weeks if no reason is supplied for the absence, it will be noted as "unauthorised".

Leadership monitoring:

- the Headteacher, Assistant Head over attendance will check registration procedures at least once per calendar month to ensure consistency by all staff;
- attendance data for the whole school is presented to the Governing Body regularly;
- Governors are given an overview of strategies used and future action to be implemented for raising attendance. ^[L]_[SEP] ***It is the responsibility of school Governors to challenge and support the school regarding overall attendance, regular reports will be presented to this body. The governors will therefore examine closely the information provided for them and seek to ensure that our attendance figures are as high as can be.***

Using attendance data

Student's attendance will be monitored and shared with other agencies and the Department for Education.

- fortnightly attendance meetings will be held between the Attendance Leader and the Pastoral Team. Meetings will focus on agreed actions for those children of concern. The purpose of each meeting will be to understand the progress the school is making when supporting identified individuals or groups of children;
- attendance data will be used to identify emerging patterns and trends to inform whole school strategies to improve attendance and attainment.

Escalation System ^[L]_[SEP]

We will always support children during each stage of our Attendance Escalation System. If there is lack of engagement, or concerns regarding the reason for absence, we will follow the Escalation System to ensure we prioritise a child's learning and right to education.

We may be obliged to refer cases when the absence threshold is met for further investigation by the Local Authority. This could result in a fixed penalty notice being issued.

For continued attendance concerns, support will be offered to encourage the child to raise their attendance to above the school target using our staged escalation system.

- **stage one** – parents/carers communication made to discuss the issues that are preventing the pupil from attending school regularly. Parents/carers made aware of our systems and how we can support to try to solve the problem;
- **stage two** – Attendance has not improved - a formal letter is sent to the parents/carers to outline the school's major concerns in relation to the absence of the child. Advice will be given at this point that further absences will result in further interventions;
- **stage three** – a second letter is sent to the home address informing the parents/carers that medical evidence will now be needed for us to authorise any absences. We will also offer Early Help at this stage. A home visit to conduct the meeting may take place if parents fail to attend without notice;
- **stage four** – Attendance has continued to decline and therefore a referral to the Local Authority will be completed by the school.

Parents/carers are made aware that the Headteacher or Assistant Head Teacher over attendance may escalate the process and/or make a referral to the Local Authority during any point of the escalation process if they feel attendance is deteriorating at a pace which may harm continuity of learning.

Where long-term sickness absence takes place, we will work with parents/carers to source education otherwise to support the child's continuity of learning.

Rewards

The school invests heavily in rewards and incentives to raise the profile and encourage high attendance. This includes inter-form activities, ballots, raffles, Attendance Champions League

Competitions and celebration assemblies. A detailed list of our rewards schedule is available upon request.

Exclusion

If a child is excluded from school, they will be coded as E (excluded). This is an authorised absence.

If a child is identified within a public place, the parent/carer may be issued with a fixed penalty notice via the Education Investigation Service.

Further information can be found on the Dudley local authority website – ‘penalty notice code of conduct’.

Removal from school roll

Where an elective home education request is received, or where a child is absent from our school for 20 days or more, we will work with the Education Support Service (ESS) to identify further details. As a result, a decision may be made by local authority to remove a child from school roll. It would be the parent/carers responsibility to contact admissions to seek readmission should the need arise.

Referrals for additional support

The school works closely with the Education Investigation Service and may complete referrals for additional support to the Local Authority’s specialist teams in the following circumstances:

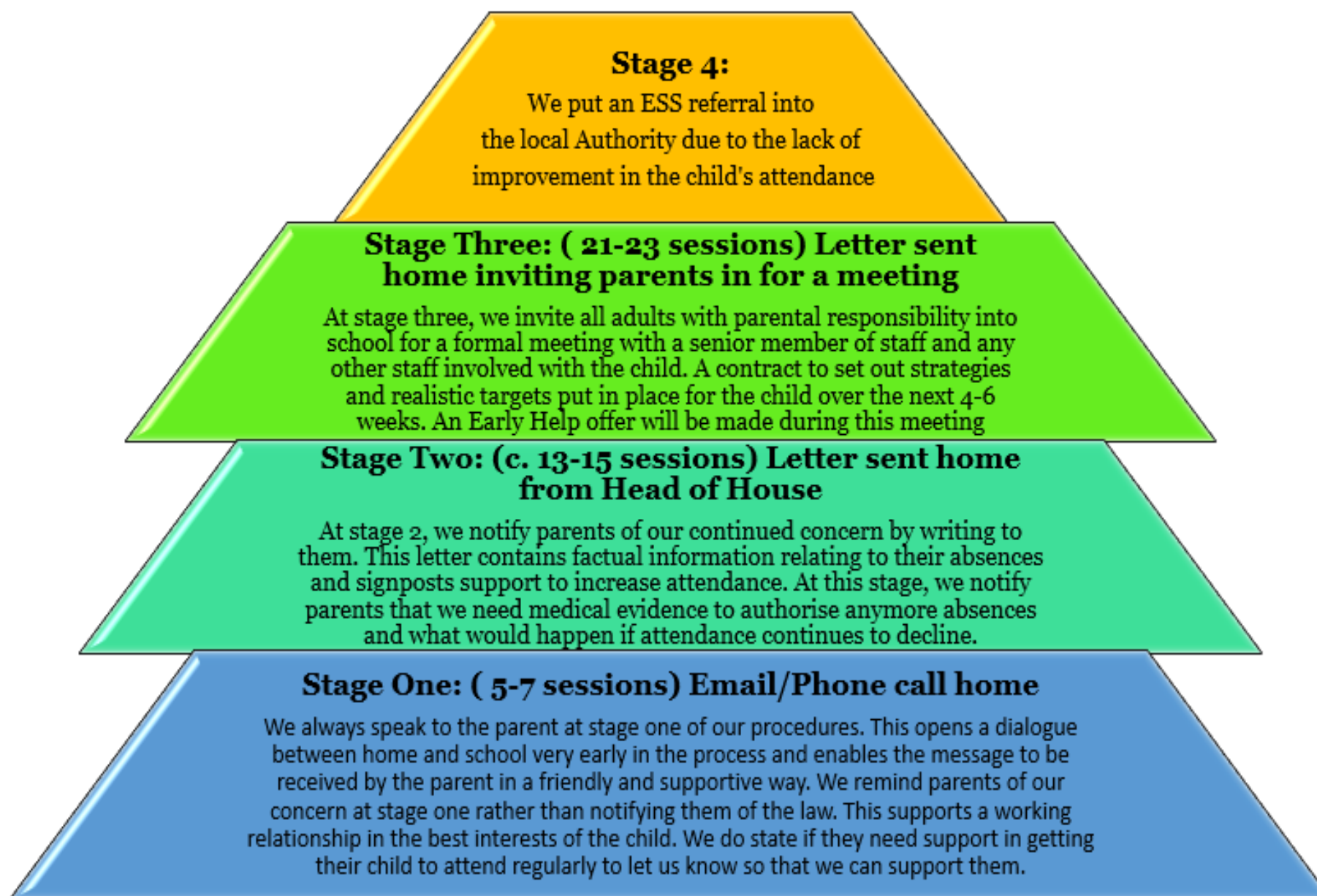
- the school has concerns in relation to safeguarding;
- where a concern is raised relating to FGM;
- the absence threshold in a given period has been reached;
- the school requires additional support in securing regular attendance of a child;
- the escalation process has failed, and targets haven’t been met;
- the child is missing in education with no contact for up to 10 school days;
- the school is in receipt of a request for elective home education;
- any other concerns which the Headteacher deems a referral will support the child’s learning.

Addendum 1: Codes

Code	Meaning	Type
/ \	Present AM/PM	Present
B	Off-site educational activity (see terms*)	Approved educational activity (AEA)
C	Authorised leave	Absent
D	Dual registered	Data discounted code
E	Excluded (with no alternative provision made)	Absent
G	Unauthorised holiday	Absent
H	Authorised holiday	Absent

I	Illness (not medical or dental)	Absent
J	Interview with prospective employers or another educational establishment	Approved educational activity (AEA)
L	Late (before registers have closed)	Present
M	Medical or dental appointments	Absent
N	No reason provided for attendance	Absent
O	Unauthorised absence	Absent
P	Supervised sporting activity	Approved educational activity (AEA)
R	Religious observance	Absent
S	Study leave (see terms*)	Absent
T	Traveller absence (see terms*)	Absent
U	Late (after registers have closed)	Absent
V	Educational trip	Approved educational activity (AEA)
W	Work experience	Approved educational activity (AEA)
X	Non statutory school age (see terms*) COVID-19 Absence	Data discounted code
Y	Exceptional circumstances (see terms*)	Data discounted code
Z	Not on admission register	Data discounted code

Dormston School Escalation Stages for Attendance Concerns



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