



THE DORMSTON SCHOOL

Attendance Policy

Date	Review date	Lead	Nominated Governor or Committee
30.07.2025	30.07.2026	Assistant Headteacher for Attendance	Chair of Governors / Safeguarding Governor
			Ratified:
			Date: 30.07.2025
			Website: Yes

Introduction

This policy adheres to the principles under data protection law. For further information please review our data protection policy published on our website.

The Governors and staff at The 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.

The 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. 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 The 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.

Revised DfE Guidance (19th August 2024)

From August 2024, the DfE's guidance on attendance will become statutory.

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65f1b048133c22b8eecd38f7/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance_applies_from_19_August_2024 .pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65f1b048133c22b8eecd38f7/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance_applies_from_19_August_2024.pdf)

This means that schools, multi-academy trusts, governing bodies, and local authorities must all have regard to it as part of their efforts to maintain high levels of school attendance. The guidance should be read alongside the statutory guidance documents on children missing education, supporting pupils with medical conditions at school, education for children with health needs who cannot attend school, suspensions and exclusions, alternative provision, and Keeping Children Safe in Education. The DfE have also announced that from September 2024 all schools must provide the DfE and their local authority with daily attendance and absence data. The main Changes are:

1. £80 fines and 'improvement notices

Absence fines charged to parents will rise from £60 to £80, or £160 if not paid within 21 days. Schools decide whether to issue fines, but councils administer them.

From the autumn, only two fines can be issued to the same parent for the same child within a three-year rolling period. Any second notice will automatically be charged at £160. New "notices to improve" will also be the "final opportunity for a parent to engage in support and improve attendance before a penalty notice is issued".

2. National fine thresholds

From September, schools will have to consider a fine if a pupil misses 10 sessions (half days) of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks. They should "not have a blanket position of issuing or not issuing penalty notices".

The threshold can be met with "any combination of unauthorised absence". For example, four sessions in term time plus six instances of arriving late.

The period of 10 weeks can also span "different terms or school years".

Councils will "retain the discretion to issue one before the threshold is met". This could include where parents "are deliberately avoiding the national threshold by taking several term time holidays below threshold, or for repeated absence for birthdays or other family events".

3. Mandatory daily data sharing

Schools must share daily attendance data with the government from September. The easiest way to do this is by having an electronic management information system which DfE can access and allows an automated flow of data. Nearly nine in 10 schools already have this in place.

The "View Your Education Data" dashboard will allow schools to monitor attendance and access "near real time data to understand trends in attendance patterns".

4. Don't give pupils leave for protests

It is up to schools whether they grant absences, but the updated guidance lists the scenarios this should be restricted to – including study leave or interviews.

The guidance also states that "leave of absence should not be granted for a pupil to take part in protest activity during school hours", which is a new addition to the guidance.

5. Flag long-term sick leave with Local Authorities

Schools will have to give councils the name and address of sick pupils who they believe will miss 15 consecutive or cumulative days. Schools will also be "expected to inform a pupil's social worker and/or youth offending team worker if there are unexplained absences from school".

7. Be mindful of mental health

Schools should now be "particularly mindful of pupils absent from school due to mental or physical ill health or their special educational needs and/or disabilities and provide them with additional support".

The guidance acknowledges “many children will experience normal but difficult emotions that make them nervous about attending school, such as worries about friendships, schoolwork, examinations or variable moods”, but it is “important to note that these pupils are still expected to attend school regularly”. Doing so “may serve to help with the underlying issue”.

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;
- contact the school as soon as possible about any concerns they have about their child's attendance.

In return, we will:

- 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;
- 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

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. 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.

Punctuality

With regards to punctuality, we also want to make you aware of the change in guidelines. Our AM register must close at 9.15am. This means that any child that arrives after this time will be marked as unauthorised, unless we receive notification from a parent/carer. 10 unauthorised absence may result in a fixed penalty fine.

Our new Am registration process:

- 8.40am - School day starts: all students are expected to be in their tutor groups at this time for registration.
- 8.40am till 9.15am - Late mark and BEH event issued: 2 BEH events in a day = 30 min detention
- 9.15am onwards – Immediate 30-minute detention and an Unauthorised absence mark: Time of arrival marked on register

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;
- all verbal messages from parents are recorded centrally;
- 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;
- 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. ***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

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 Changes to attendance Codes

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.

Changes to attendance Codes

Codes C and Y split up

The government has also created additional "C" absence codes. While C will be for "exceptional circumstances", C1 will be for absence for a regulated performance or employment abroad. C2 will be for pupils on part-time timetables.

A new code Q will be for pupils "unable to attend the school because of a lack of access arrangements".

The current code Y will be split up, as follows:

- Y1: Absence due to transport normally provided not being available
- Y2: Widespread disruption to travel
- Y3: For when part of a school is closed
- Y4: Unexpected whole school closure (different from code # for planned closures)
- Y5: For pupils in the criminal justice system
- Y6: Absence due to public health guidance or law
- Y7: Any other unavoidable cause

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

Addendum 2: Absence and Safeguarding Protocol

Day 1: Initial Absence Call

- The Attendance team/Pastoral Staff will make the first-day absence call to parents/carers – reason given update G4S
- If no communication, groupcall text sent to parent/carers for reason of absence.

Day 2: Follow-Up Absence Call

- The Attendance team/Pastoral Staff will make another absence call on the second day – Reason given update G4S
- They will use all available contact numbers in the system.
- If no communication, groupcall text sent to parent/carers for reason of absence.

Day 3: Home Visit

- The Attendance team will make another absence call on the third day – Reason given update G4S
- If there is still no contact from parents/carers, the attendance team/Pastoral Staff will conduct a home visit.
- Attendance slip put through door asking for them to contact school explaining reason for absence

Day 4: Year Leader Informed

- Year Leader/Deputy Lead Leader to try to make contact through email/phone call – reason given update G4S

Day 5: Safeguarding Safe and Wellbeing Home Visit

- Safeguarding and wellbeing home visit. Completed by DSL/Pastoral Staff – Reason given update G4S

Day 6: Senior Safeguarding Officer Involvement

- refer to DSL morning meeting to discuss next steps - Another Home visit? Sibling School contacted? Feedback from Home visits of likely occupancy at house? – reason given update G4S

Day 7: Final Home Visit

- final home visit takes place where correspondence is put through door to say a referral to Children's Services and Police will be made, requesting a wellbeing visit. Child missing Education (CME) reporting will also occur – reason given update G4S

Day 8: Referrals completed

- Referrals to Children's Services and the Police will be completed for a wellbeing check.
- A CME referral will be made to the Local Authority – reason given update G4S

Dormston School Escalation Stages for Attendance Concerns



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