



"Article 28 All children have the right to free Primary Education. Young people should be encouraged to go to school to the highest level they can" (UN Conventions on the rights of a child)

1.General principles

Attendance			V2.1
	Date	Name	Notes
Drafted			
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Reviewed			
This policy will be reviewed every 3 years			

The aim of this policy is to promote regular school attendance of pupils, enabling them to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them.

All pupils have the right to an efficient full-time education, regardless of age, aptitude, ability and any special needs they may have and the school has a responsibility to monitor and promote the regular attendance. Irregular attendance seriously disrupts continuity of learning, undermines educational progress, can lead to underachievement and low attainment and impedes the child's ability to develop friendship groups within school.

This policy details the responsibilities of individuals and groups involved and the procedures in place to promote and monitor pupil attendance.

2. The legal aspects

Absence from school is a legal matter. By law, all children of compulsory school age who are registered pupils at a school must attend full-time and be punctual. Only schools (not parents) can authorise pupil absence from school and can only do so if they are satisfied with the reason provided in writing by the parent. The role of the local education department is to encourage and enforce the law on school attendance. Ultimately, the local authority can instigate legal action. This can take the form of an application to the courts for the pupil to be made the subject of an Education Supervision Order. Parents can be taken to court for not fulfilling their legal responsibilities and this may result in a fine. The Headteacher cannot authorise absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.

3. Responsibilities

3.1 Parents or carers

Parents or carers have a legal responsibility to ensure that their children attend school regularly, and stay in school for every lesson after they have registered. If a child is in the care of foster parents or in a residential home, it is important that the carers recognise their parenting role where attendance to school is concerned.

Parents and carers are expected to:

- keep requests for their child to be absent to a minimum
- offer a reason for any period of absence, preferably before the absence or on the first day of absence and for ensuring that the absence is covered in writing by a note sent in on the child's return to school.
- ensure that their child arrives at school on time, properly dressed, with the right equipment and in a condition to learn. A reason should be offered for any lateness.
- work closely with the school and Locality Social Worker to resolve any problems that may impede a child's attendance
- take family holidays during school holiday periods.
- be aware of curriculum requirements and be especially vigilant with regards to attendance during important academic times such as periods of testing.

3.2 The School

The school has a statutory responsibility to record and monitor the punctuality and attendance of pupils for both the morning and afternoon sessions.

The school will:

- create a school ethos that pupils want to be part of
- meet the legal requirements set out by Government, including consistent recording of authorised and unauthorised absence
- give a high priority to management of punctuality and attendance
- identify, follow up and record unauthorised absence, patterns of absence and parent condoned absence with effective monitoring and intervention
- encourage open communication channels between home and school
- make timely formal referrals to the Locality Social Worker
- adequately provide for pupils with difficulties, within the bounds of resources available, and ensure the appropriate delivery of the curriculum.
- Regularly report on attendance data to the governing body, including analysis of absence reasons based on the standard coding schema.

3.3 The Local Authority

Dorset Local Authority has a responsibility to provide education and promote regular attendance of all statutory school age children.

Through the Locality Social Worker the Local Authority provides support to schools and parents to fulfil their legal duty. The ESWAS is the enforcement agency of the LA and, as well as providing guidance and support through its officers, may take a parent to court for not fulfilling their duty under section 444 of the Education Act 1996. The court may fine the parent and put in place a School Attendance Order (SAO), an Education Supervision Order (ESO) or a Parenting Order.

4. Policy implementation

4.1 Registers

The school will mark attendance registers at the beginning of each morning and afternoon. As part of Safeguarding procedures, attendance is monitored daily and the school will follow up any unreported absence during the morning of absence.

All parents must offer a reason for any period of absence, preferably before the absence or on the first day of absence and must confirm the same in writing by a note sent in on the child's return to school for any absence that exceeds one day. The school will then decide if it wishes to record the absence as authorised or unauthorised based on guidance set out in the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations. These regulations state that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during school time unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Departmental guidance makes it clear that:

Only exceptional circumstances warrant an authorised leave of absence. Schools should consider each request individually taking into account the circumstances, such as: the nature of the event for which leave is sought; the frequency of the request; whether the parent gave advance notice; and the pupil's attainment, attendance and ability to catch up on missed schooling.

Pupils who are not present at the start of the school day will be marked absent initially. If they arrive within 30 minutes of the start of the school day, this will be changed to 'present but late' using the recognised register coding. Lateness for any pupil arriving after this time will require either a letter or a verbal explanation to a member of the office team. All reasons for lateness will be recorded. Although the Headteachers will use their discretion, lateness of more than 30 minutes will usually to be recorded as unauthorised absence.

4.2 Monitoring attendance

The Headteacher will review the attendance of all the schools pupils on a weekly basis and:

- Parents of children with more than 4 days of unauthorised absence in any one half term will be contacted by the school by letter to alert parents to the educational risks resulting from poor attendance (*See Appendix 1 for standard letter*). Subsequent attendance will be monitored monthly for a period of 12 months to confirm that there is no recurrent attendance issue.
- Parents of children whose attendance falls below 90% (absence, recurrent sickness or recurrent lateness) in any one term will be notified by letter informing them of the school's concerns and offering support to resolve any problems that may be impeding a child from attending. This letter will request a

meeting with the Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher to develop an Individual Attendance Action Plan (IAAP) between the school, parents and pupil (*See Appendix 2 for standard letter*). The attendance of such children and the effectiveness of the IAAP will be then monitored on a monthly basis for the remainder of the academic year.

- Where there is ongoing concern after development of an IAAP, parents will be invited by letter to a further meeting to discuss the issue. (*See Appendix 3 for standard letter*).
- If the parent/s do not attend the meetings described above or, after such a meeting, the attendance of the pupil does not improve, a formal referral to the Purbeck Early Intervention Team (part of Dorset County Council) will be made.

Parents should be aware that we have been advised that:

"Dorset County Council Children's Services Directorate fully supports schools in expecting parents and carers to make sure that children and young people attend school on a regular basis. Any time away from school can have a significant impact on educational attainment, success in later life and longer term health and well-being.

Dorset County Council will be supporting all schools in ensuring the law is upheld. In law, parents and carers are committing an offence if they fail to ensure the regular and punctual attendance at school. Therefore, any unauthorised absence, such as taking holidays in term time can result in a Fixed Term Penalty Notice. Failure to pay a Fixed Term Penalty Notice may result in a criminal conviction and a fine in the Magistrates Court of up to £2500."

5. Strategies for promoting good attendance and punctuality

The school uses a variety of strategies to encourage attendance including:

- Class teacher will ensure that the curriculum is delivered within a culture of inclusion and in such a way that pupils feel that they have and can succeed.
- Individual pupils whose attendance has been a cause for concern will be encouraged to set and achieve personal attendance goals.
- Pupil attendance figures will be referenced at all parent consultation events and reported in annual parental reports.
- Pupil awareness of the importance of good attendance in helping them to access their right to education will be discussed regularly in class.
- Parents will be reminded regularly in newsletters about good attendance
- Incentives will be offered to encourage attendance.