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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
1.4	26 June 2023	J Macdonald	New policy template introduced
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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 Working together to improve school attendance - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

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Introduction

Dartmoor Multi-Academy Trust (DMAT) recognises that it is everyone's responsibility to support and promote, excellent attendance and punctuality at school. DMAT are committed to providing the highest quality of education to our children, recognising the clear link between good attendance and the attainment of our children, alongside a strong, safe and happy culture of learning.

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The law recognises the right for every child of compulsory school age to a full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. Where parents/carers have decided to have their child registered at school, they have a legal responsibility to ensure their child attends that school regularly. This means their child must attend school every day the school is open, except for limited circumstances where the child is too ill to attend, or they have been given permission for an absence in advance from the school.

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This policy applies to all schools within DMAT, and details how schools work in partnership with children, parents, and relevant external support agencies, to remove any barriers to attendance. This is done through building strong relationships and working collaboratively.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to enable all schools to provide a consistent approach to improving attendance. Adopting a whole school approach ensures that all members of the school community understand the important contribution they make to:

- promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence, by effectively removing the barriers to attendance

- ensuring every child has access to full-time education to which they are entitled
- acting early to address patterns of absence
- minimising the disruption caused by late arrivals, or non-attendance, to the quality of the education and provision for all children

The Trust actively promotes and encourages 100 per cent attendance for all our children. 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 to celebrate positive patterns of attendance in an appropriate and sensitive manner, as well open communication when there is a concern about absence.

If there are challenges which affect a child's attendance, we will investigate, identify and strive in partnership with parents and the child to resolve those problems as quickly and efficiently as possible. We will support our families and use a focused approach to enable the child to achieve full attendance at all times.

Scope and application

This policy applies to all staff (including supply staff), trustees, governors and volunteers. It is designed to address the specific statutory obligations on schools as outlined in 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance' (DfE August 2024).

This policy applies to all schools within DMAT, including the Early Years (EYFS) and/or sixth form where applicable.

For the purposes of this policy and the procedures, we refer to Section 576 of the Education Act which defines the 'parent' of a pupil or young person as:

- both of their natural parents, whether they are married or not
- any person who, although they are not the natural parent, has parental responsibility for the pupil or young person, as defined in the Children Act (1989)
- any person who, although not the natural parent, has the care of the pupil or young person i.e., a person with whom the pupil lives, irrespective of their relationship to the pupil.

Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance' guidance from the Department for Education (DfE) and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on school attendance parental responsibility measures.

The Education Act 1996 requires parents/carers to ensure their child receives effective, fulltime education, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. Schools are responsible for and are expected to accurately record admission and attendance registers.

Appendix 1 of this Policy outlines the key legislation, guidance and advice that sets out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance.

Publication and availability

This policy is published on the school and trust website and is available in hard copy on request. A copy of the policy is available for inspection from the school office during the school day. This policy can be made available in large print or other accessible formats if required.

Definitions and interpretation

References to attendance includes punctuality and attendance for all or part of the timetabled school day.

References to parent or parents means the natural or adoptive parents of the pupil (irrespective of whether they are or have ever been married, with whom the pupil lives, or whether they have contact with the pupil), as well as any person who is not the natural or adoptive parent of the pupil, but who has care of, or parental responsibility for, the pupil (e.g., foster carer / legal guardian).

SLT Attendance Champion means the schools' designated senior lead for attendance.

References to compulsory school age refers to when a child is required to attend school. This is on or after their fifth birthday. If they turn 5 between 1 January and 31 March, then they are of compulsory school age on 31 March; if they turn 5 between 1 April and 31 August, then they are of compulsory school age on 31 August. If they turn 5 between 1 September and 31 December, then they are of compulsory school age on 31 December. A child continues to be of compulsory school age until the last Friday of June in the school year that they reach sixteen.

References to persistent absence (PA) means when a child has an absence rate of 10% or more (i.e., attends for less than 90% of the time) and will be defined as a 'persistent absentee'. These pupils are likely to be finding it difficult to be in school, or face significant barriers to their regular attendance, and therefore are likely to need more intensive support across a range of partners.

References to severe absence (SA) means when a child has an absence rate of 50% or more (i.e., attends for less than 50% of the time) and will be defined as a 'severe absentee'. 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.

Staff Training and Professional Development

To ensure consistent and effective attendance practice across the Trust, all staff will receive regular training as part of ongoing safeguarding training.

Training Will Include:

- Statutory duties under the Education Act and DfE guidance.
- Legal thresholds for intervention, including penalty notices and prosecution.

- Safeguarding implications of persistent absence and off-rolling.
- Use of data to identify patterns and inform interventions.

Delivery:

- Training will be delivered annually and as part of induction for new staff.
- Attendance Champions and Attendance Officers will receive enhanced training to lead practice in their settings.

Expectations

Dartmoor Multi Academy Trust will:

- Take an active role in attendance improvement, support schools to prioritise attendance, and work with leaders to fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- Regularly review attendance data and help school leaders focus support on the children who need it.
- Present data to Local Stakeholder boards and Trust boards at least termly
- Report regularly to Trustees to ensure they know where improving attendance is a priority across the Trust, so they can monitor this effectively.

Governors and Trustees will:

- Receive and scrutinise attendance data, including persistent and severe absence, exclusions, and pupil movements.
- Ensure that attendance policies and practices are compliant with statutory guidance and promote equity.
- Challenge leaders where attendance concerns persist or where pupil removals are not clearly justified.
- Monitor the implementation of Attendance Support Plans and the impact of interventions.
- Be trained to understand attendance thresholds, legal duties, and safeguarding implications.

All schools will:

- Build strong relationships with families: work with identified children and their parents to understand and address reasons for absence.
- 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 community partners to support the child and family
- Communicate regularly with parents regarding the attendance of their child by way of phone calls, letters, meetings and possible home visits.
- Where absence becomes persistent (90% and under), put additional targeted support in place to remove any barriers and develop a robust, supportive, time-limited attendance support plan

- Where there is a lack of engagement, hold more formal conversations with parents and be clear about the potential possibility of legal intervention in future, reminding families of their legal duty in regard to their school attendance. An Attendance contract may be developed between the school and parent/carer.
- Where there are safeguarding concerns, intensify support through statutory services.
- Have a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of good attendance
- Publish an attendance policy on the school website which all staff, children and parents understand.
- Have a dedicated senior leader with overall responsibility for championing and improving attendance.
- Employ robust daily processes to follow up absence
- Proactively use data to identify children at risk of poor attendance.
- Work with other schools in the local area, such as schools previously attended and the schools of any siblings.
- Agree a joint approach for all severely absent (50% and under) children with the local authority.
- Report attendance data regularly to local governors.
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We ask Children to:

- Do all they can to attend school and all of their lessons every day and on time, except when a statutory reason applies.
- Be ready to learn.
- Play a positive role in the life of the school and make the most of the educational opportunities available to them.
- Ask a member of staff for support if they are experiencing difficulties either at home or in school, and engage in the support provided.

We ask Parents/carers to:

- Ensure their child attends every day the school is open except when a statutory reason applies
- Ensure their child attends punctually, dressed in full uniform and equipped to learn.
- Notify the school as soon as possible when their child has to be unexpectedly absent
- Only request leave of absence in exceptional circumstances and to do so in advance.
- Avoid making medical or dental appointments during school time as far as possible - 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.
- Proactively engage with the support offered – including any attendance support action plans, voluntary early help plan or attendance contracts to prevent the need for legal intervention.

Data

Attendance data informs action planning and supports the identification of key priorities in our school development plan and future revisions of this policy. The attendance data will be reported to the Principal/Headteacher and all other relevant staff. Data will also be used by the school to monitor the impact of any interventions and inform future strategies.

Child-level absence data is collected regularly and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. We compare our attendance data to the national average and use the following ways of monitoring data to inform practice;

- Monitor session, daily, and weekly attendance data.
- Analyse attendance data for individual children, groups and cohorts across the school to identify patterns, trends and anomalies. Use this analysis to provide regular attendance reports to class teachers or tutors to facilitate discussions.
- Identify the children who need support and focus efforts on developing targeted actions.
- All individual student attendance and identified cohort data will be collected weekly and recorded on the Trust tracker. This will be available to the Central Trust team for review and to support action planning for groups and individuals.
- Conduct a thorough analysis of half-termly, termly and whole-year data to identify patterns and trends.
- Benchmark data at whole school, year group, and cohort level against local, regional, and national levels.
- Devise specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data.

Information Sharing and Multi-Agency Collaboration

Effective attendance management requires timely and appropriate information sharing.

Schools will share attendance concerns with relevant professionals, including the Local Authority, Early Help, CAMHS, and safeguarding teams.

- All information sharing will comply with GDPR and safeguarding legislation.
- Attendance Support Plans will be shared with parents and relevant professionals to ensure coordinated support.
- Weekly attendance review meetings will include discussion of children with persistent or severe absence.
- Each school will maintain an attendance tracker to monitor interventions and outcomes.
  Schools will contribute to multi-agency meetings and Targeted Support Panels as required

Children 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.

Some children face greater barriers to attendance than their peers. These can include children 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 child and therefore the attendance ambition for these children is the same as they are for any other child. That said, in working with parents/carers to improve attendance, we will be mindful of the barriers these children 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 children with physical or mental health conditions. For example, making reasonable adjustments where a child 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 promptly and working together with those services to deliver any subsequent support. Implementing an Individual Healthcare plan so all relevant staff are aware of difficulties and support needed.
- Working with parents to develop specific support approaches for attendance for children with special educational needs and disabilities including, where applicable, ensuring the provision outlined in the child'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 children 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.

Children with long-term illnesses or other health needs may need additional support to continue their education, such as alternative provisions 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 children with medical conditions at school.

When Attendance causes concern

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

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 school and absence processes will be followed. We would appreciate a collaborative approach with parents to eliminate any truancy issues identified.

It is important to note that unauthorised absence could mean that parents/carers may be guilty of an offence and can be prosecuted by the local authority. In order to avoid this, we encourage partnership working at all times.

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 A one minute guide to Early Help in Devon - Devon Safeguarding Children Partnership (devonscp.org.uk)

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

- Below 96% attendance (Letter 1)
- Below 92% attendance (Letter 2)
- Below 90% attendance (Letter 3)
- Medical information letter, only where the school has reasonable doubt about the authenticity of the illness

Persistent and severe absence

- Persistent Absence is defined as: 10% or more of sessions missed (based on each child's possible sessions). Absences may be authorised or unauthorised.
- Severe Absence is defined as: 50% or more of sessions missed (based on each child's possible sessions). Absences may be authorised or unauthorised.

Where absence escalates and children miss 10% or more of school (equivalent to 1 day or more a fortnight across a full school year), schools and local authorities will work together to put additional targeted support in place to remove any barriers to attendance and re-engage these children. In doing so, the DMAT schools will take into consideration the reasons for absence and reinforce the importance of school as a place of safety and support for children who might be facing difficulties. Where appropriate, when a child within the Trust falls below 90% attendance (persistently absent – PA), an Attendance Support plan will be developed in partnership with the parent and any other professionals who may be able to help, to improve attendance and prevent it from falling further.

Children who are PA will be discussed as a potential concern at weekly or fortnightly attendance review meetings. Where children have an identified special educational need, the school SENCO will also provide support, so that the impact of needs are clearly understood and appropriate, supportive actions are taken.

Particular focus will be given by all partners to children who are absent from school more than they are present (those missing 50% or more of school). These severely absent children 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.

If all avenues of support have been facilitated by schools, local authorities, and other partners, and the appropriate educational support or placements have been provided but persistent or severe absence for unauthorised reasons continues, the school will consider whether this constitutes a safeguarding concern. Any safeguarding concerns will be discussed with the DSL to consider appropriate next steps. Further information is available in the statutory guidance on Keeping Children Safe in Education - Keeping children safe in education - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

There are 190 school days each year, this means that there are 175 non-school days a year. Children attend school for 9% of their waking hours.

Attendance %	Rating	As a guide (number of days missed)	Description
100%	Perfect Attendance	0	This is the best chance of success for your child
97%	Good Attendance	5	
95%	Improvement Required	9	Less chance of your child succeeding as it is harder for them to make progress – Support will be offered to remove any barriers to attendance
92%	Concern	15	

Below 90% (persistent absence)	**Serious Concern ****	**19**	Serious Concern **Missing this much education can cause a significant disadvantage to your child. An attendance support plan will be put in place to ensure your child's attendance can improve. Without improvement to attendance the consequence could be legal action.**

Referral to the LA Attendance Improvement Team

Children who are persistently absent from school will be monitored by the Local Authority School Attendance Improvement Team. Where concerning patterns of absence have been identified, these children will be discussed during regular meetings between the school and Local Authority team and actions will be agreed upon, including potential legal procedures.

Policy Circulation

- This Policy will be published on the Trust's website and included in the Trust's Policy Monitoring Schedule.
- This Policy will be published on each school's website and circulated to all parents.
- 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.
- The Trust Executive Team, is responsible for overseeing, reviewing and organising the revision of this Policy.
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The Trust is committed to providing a full and effective educational experience for all children. We believe that if children are to benefit from education, punctual, daily attendance is crucial. National and international research shows that irregular or low attendance undermines the educational process and can lead to educational and social disadvantage.

Glossary of Key terms

DMAT: Dartmoor Multi-Academy Trust

EBSA: Emotionally Based School Avoidance

EHA: Early Help Assessment

DSL: Designated Safeguarding Lead

SEND: Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

PA: Persistent Absence (attendance below 90%)

SA: Severe Absence (attendance below 50%)

LA: Local Authority

Penalty Notice: A fine issued to parents for their child's unauthorised absence from school

Attendance Support Plan: A plan developed with the school and parents to improve a child's attendance

Unauthorised Absence: An absence not approved by the school

Authorised Absence: An absence approved by the school for valid reasons such as illness or religious observance

Relevant legislation and guidance

Working together to improve school attendance
Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance
The Education Act 1996
Education Act 2002 (legislation.gov.uk)
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 School Attendance (Child Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 (legislation.gov.uk)
The Education (Child Registration) (England) Regulations 2006
The Education (Parenting Contracts and Parenting Orders) (England) Regulations 2007
The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007 (legislation.gov.uk)
Parental responsibility measures for attendance and behaviour
Children and Young Persons Act 1933 (legislation.gov.uk)
Children and Young Persons Act 1963 (legislation.gov.uk)
Equality Act 2010 (legislation.gov.uk)
SEND code of practice: 0 to 25 years - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
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 child referral units in England
Supporting childs at school with medical conditions
Education for children with health needs who cannot attend school - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
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
Providing remote education: guidance for schools - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
Approaches to preventing and tackling bullying
Voices of England's missing children

Appendix 1 – Legal Framework and Attendance prosecution

Legislation

The Education Act 1996 requires parents/carers to ensure their child receives effective, fulltime education, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. Schools are responsible for and are expected to accurately record admission and attendance register

Purpose of prosecution and when it may be appropriate

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.

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.

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 my 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).

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 the Notice to Improve and/or 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.

The 1996 Act also sets out the circumstances in which a child 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 child was prevented from attending by their ill health or any unavoidable cause, including exclusion.
- The child 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 child'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 child'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 statefunded 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.

National framework for penalty notices

Purpose of penalty notices

Penalty notices are issued to parents as an alternative to prosecution where they have failed to ensure that their child of compulsory school age regularly attends the school where they are registered or, in certain cases, at a place where alternative provision is provided. Penalty notices can be used by all schools (with the exception of independent schools) where the child's absence has been recorded with one or more of the unauthorised codes and that absence(s) constitutes an offence. A penalty notice can be issued to each parent liable for the offence or offences. They should usually only be issued to the parent or parents who have allowed the absence (regardless of which parent has applied for a leave of absence).

Penalty notices are intended to prevent the need for court action and should only be used where it is deemed likely to change parental behaviour and support to secure regular attendance has

been provided and has not worked or been engaged with, or would not have been appropriate in the circumstances of the offence (e.g. an unauthorised holiday in term time).

Penalty notices must be issued in line with the Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007, as amended and can only be issued by a headteacher or someone authorised by them (a deputy or assistant head), a local authority officer or the police. They must also be issued in line with Local Codes of Conduct which are drawn up and maintained by each local authority.

Where a penalty notice is issued by someone other than a local authority officer, the person issuing the penalty notice is expected to check with the local authority before doing so and must also send them copies of any penalty notices issued.

A penalty notice may also be issued where parents allow their child to be present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification during the first 5 days of a fixed period or permanent exclusion. The school must have notified the parents of the days the child must not be present in a public place. This type of penalty notice is not included in the National Framework and therefore not subject to the same considerations about support being provided or count towards the limit as part of the escalation process in the case of repeat offences for non-attendance.

National threshold when it is appropriate to issue a penalty notice

All state funded schools must consider whether a penalty notice is appropriate in each individual case where one of their pupil's reaches the national threshold for considering a penalty notice. The threshold is 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks. A school week means any week in which there is at least one school session. This can be met with any combination of unauthorised absence (e.g. 4 sessions of holiday taken in term time plus 6 sessions of arriving late after the register closes all within 10 school weeks). These sessions can be consecutive (e.g. 10 sessions of holiday in one week) or not (e.g. 6 sessions of unauthorised absence taken in 1 week and 1 per week for the next 4 weeks). The period of 10 school weeks can also span different terms or school years (e.g. 2 sessions of unauthorised absence in the Summer Term and a further 8 within the Autumn Term).

When the Local Authority becomes aware that the threshold has been met, they are expected to make the following considerations to decide whether to issue a penalty notice in each individual case:

- Is support appropriate in this case?
    - If yes, schools are expected to continue with the existing support without a penalty notice or issue a Notice to Improve if that support is not working or is not being engaged with. A penalty notice can be issued if either has not worked.
    - If no, for example a holiday in term time, a penalty notice should be issued subject to the other conditions below.
- Is a penalty notice the best available tool to improve attendance and change parental behaviour for this particular family or would further support or one of the other legal interventions be more appropriate?
- Is issuing a penalty notice in this case appropriate after considering any obligations under the Equality Act 2010 such as where a child has a disability?
- (For local authorities only) Is it in the public interest to issue a penalty notice in this case given the local authority would be responsible for any resulting prosecution for the original offence

in cases of non-payment? If the answer to those questions is yes, then a penalty notice should be issued. If not, another tool or legal intervention should be used to improve attendance.

Support is defined as any activity intended to improve the child's attendance, not including issuing a penalty notice or prosecution. As part of this consideration, schools and local authorities should consider what suitable forms of support are currently available in school and where necessary from other services and agencies in the area. They should then decide whether any of those things are appropriate in the individual cases and for those that are appropriate, whether they have been provided previously or could be provided now instead of taking legal action. The local authority's decision on whether sufficient support has been provided before issuing a penalty notice should be treated as final.

Whatever action is taken after the national threshold has been met, schools, and local authorities where appropriate, should monitor the impact of the action, and if it does not lead to attendance improvement review the case and consider alternative actions.

The National Framework does not prevent a penalty notice from being used in other cases where an offence has been committed but before doing so authorised officers are expected to make the same considerations as set out above. If in an individual case the local authority (or other authorised officer) believes a penalty notice would be appropriate, they retain the discretion to issue one before the threshold is met. This might apply for example, 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. If local authorities wish to exercise this discretion to issue a penalty notice earlier in such circumstances, they should make this clear in their Local Code of Conduct.

Appendix 2 – Admission register and off-rolling

In accordance with the requirements of the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (as amended), the school will:

• maintain an admission register of pupils admitted to the school (also known as the school roll); and

• inform the local authority of any pupil who is going to be added to or deleted from the schools' admission register at non-standard transition points.

The admissions register contains specific personal details of every pupil in the school, including their date of admission, information regarding parents and carers and details of the school they last attended.

Preventing Off-Rolling and Unlawful Removal from Roll

Dartmoor Multi-Academy Trust is committed to ensuring that no child is unlawfully removed from the school roll. Off-rolling is defined as the practice of removing a pupil from the school roll without a formal, permanent exclusion or without following the proper transfer procedures, particularly when the removal is in the best interests of the school rather than the pupil.

Key Principles:

- All pupil removals must comply with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 and 2024 amendments.

- Schools must maintain accurate records of pupil movements and reasons for removal.

- Any decision to remove a pupil from roll must be approved by the Principal and reported to the Trust's Education Welfare and Inclusion Lead.

- All removals must be documented and shared with the Local Authority in line with Children Missing Education (CME) guidance.

Monitoring:

- The Trust will regularly audit pupil roll data to identify and investigate any patterns that may indicate off-rolling.

- Governors will receive termly reports on pupil movements and exclusions.

Appendix 3 – School level Appendix and Local Arrangements

Contents

1. Managing Attendance
2. Communication
3. Authorised and Unauthorised Absences
4. School attendance resgister codes
5. How the school is promoting and incentivising good attendance
6. Holiday Warning Letter
7. Letter 1 – below 96%
8. Letter 2 – Below 92%
9. Letter 3 – Invite to Attendance Support meeting
10. Letter 4 – Invite to formal meeting
11. Medical Request letter

Attendance is everyone's business, and everyone involved with the care of children is equally responsible for ensuring children's attendance. We encourage and assist all pupils to achieve excellent levels of attendance and punctuality so that they are able to access the curriculum and take full advantage of the opportunities available to them.

Managing Attendance:

The start of the school day is 08.40am Pupils are expected to arrive at the school site at 08.40am. The register opens at 08.50am and closes at 09.00am. 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'. The school day ends at 03.30pm Afternoon register is taken at 13.15pm, after the lunch break.

Each child will receive an AM session mark and a PM session mark. PM registers will be taken AFTER the lunch break.

Parents are expected to inform the school by 8am if their child is absent by calling 01409 231262 or by emailing admin@blacktorringtonprimary.org.uk - giving the reason for absence.

If there is no contact, school intelligence regarding the child/family will be considered to decide possible next steps (this could include a home visit welfare check or a referral to children's services and statutory partners where appropriate)

If a child is absent for more than one day, the school should be kept informed daily.

Communication

Schools have a duty to regularly keep parents/carers informed of their child's attendance. At DMAT, each school will report attendance once each half term to the parents/carers of the child.

Letters will be sent to parents if attendance falls below a certain level, to offer support and arrange meetings to develop Attendance Support Plans. We do expect parents to engage with this process so that we can work collaboratively to ensure every child accesses the education they deserve.

Initial letters will be sent at the following points;

- Attendance below 96% and 92%- Letters to offer support, identify barriers and invite parents to make contact if there is anything they feel school can support with
- Below 90% - A meeting will be arranged in school to develop an Attendance Support Plan, a letter will be sent informing parents of the date and time of the meeting.
- Subsequent letters will follow depending on support plan review dates, progress made, and engagement.

If there has been no engagement from parents or no improvement following support, the school will meet with the Trust Education Welfare and Inclusion Lead to discuss possible next steps and arrange a more formal meeting, which may subsequently lead to referral to the Local Authority Attendance Improvement Team.

Authorised and Unauthorised absences

Authorised Absences

An authorised absence is when approval has been given in advance for a child of compulsory school age to be absent for a specific (legal) purpose, or we have accepted an explanation offered afterwards as justification for absence from a parent or carer. This may include:

- An absence for illness for which we have granted leave
- Medical or dental appointments may be granted leave where every attempt has been made to arrange outside of school hours, has been unsuccessful and so cannot be avoided, or where the appointment is a genuine emergency
- Religious or cultural observances for which we have granted leave. The day must be exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parents or child belong. Where necessary, we will seek advice from the parents' religious body about whether it has set the day apart for religious observance
- An absence due to a change to exceptional circumstances
- All children who are in receipt of an educational offer *different* to full time education in their home school, will be recorded on the Trust Wide 'Flexible Offer' tracker. Authorised absences for such arrangements will be coded accordingly. Central Trust staff will have access to the 'Flexible Offer' Tracker to ensure they are aware of any child not in school for a pre-agreed reason at any given time.

Unauthorised Absences

An unauthorised absence is defined as one where we are not satisfied with the reasons given for the absence. Reasons may include:

Parents keeping children from attending unnecessarily or without reason
Missing sessions before or during the school day
Absences which have never been properly explained
Arrival after the register has closed
Day trips and holidays in term time
Leaving the school without authorisation during the day

Absences during Term Time

- Permission must be sought in advance to take a child 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.
- If the circumstances relating to this request are considered exceptional and the absence is authorised by the school, 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.
- 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.
- 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.

School Attendance Register Codes

Present Codes	
/ \	Present during registration
B	Educated off site and for taster days and do not fit K, V,P or W codes
K	Attending provision arranged by the local authority under Section 19 of the Education Act 1996
L	Arrived after the registration has started but before it has closed
P	Participation in a sporting activity with prior agreement from the school
V	Educational visit or trip supervised by a member of school staff
W	Attending work experience under arrangements by the school or local authority
AUTHORISED ABSENT CODES	
C	Absence due to exceptional circumstances, agreed by the headteacher/principal
C1	In a regulated performance/undertaking regulated employment abroad
C2	Absent due to a part-time timetable, agreed by the headteacher/principal and parent(s)/carer(s)
D	Dual registered with an OFSTED registered provider
E	Suspended or permanently excluded with no alternative provision made
I	Illness (both physical and mental health related, not medical or dental appointments)
J1	Job/school/college interview
M	Medical or dental appointment
Q	unable to attend because of a lack of access arrangements
R	religious observance (only 1 day allowed; any more coded as C if agreed)

S	Study Leave
T	Parent travelling for occupational purposes
X	Non-compulsory school age pupil not required to attend school
Y1	unable to attend due to transport provided not being available
Y2	unable to attend due to widespread transport disruption
Y3	unable to attend due to part of the school premises being unexpectedly closed
Y4	unable to attend due to unexpected whole school closure
Y5	unable to attend as pupil is in criminal justice detention
Y6	unable to attend in accordance with public health guidance or law
Y7	unable to attend due to other avoidable cause (must affect the pupil NOT the parent)
UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE CODES	
G	Unauthorised Holiday
N	Reason for absence not yet established (cannot remain on register for longer than 5 days)
O	Absent in other or unknown circumstances
U	Late after register has closed
ADMINISTRATIVE CODES	
Z	Prospective pupil not yet on register
#	planned whole school closure (e.g., holidays, Insets and polling station days)

How the school is promoting and incentivising good attendance

- During our fortnightly assemblies we celebrate good attendance including praising any pupils who have improved attendance over a period or achieved 100% attendance.
- Dojo points are awarded for positive attendance.

Holiday Warning Letter

«address_block» «date_of_sending to parent »

Dear «salutation»

Re: «chosen_forename» «chosen_surname» - Holidays and Avoidable Absences in Term Time

Dartmoor Multi-Academy Trust promotes good attendance through our positive and welcoming ethos. Within all of our settings each individual is valued and encouraged to do their best. As we hope you will appreciate, we always seek to work transparently, collaboratively and supportively with all our parents , families and carers to ensure that pupil attendance is excellent.

We urge all parents to contact us whenever they need to in order to discuss how best we can liaise to ensure that the needs of all our families and children can be met. However, the Department for Education takes a particular stance on term time holidays, and therefore it is important that we share some key messages with all parents. These messages are contained in the remainder of the body of this letter. Once again, we want to reassure you that we want to work with our families and carers and I thank you, in anticipation, for your understanding and engagement.

As of September 2013, an amendment to the Education (Pupil Registration)(England) Regulations 2006 came in to force and greater clarity was introduced to the issue of schools authorising absence requests. These changes reinforced the Government's view that every minute of every school day is vital and that pupils should only be granted authorised absences by the school in 'exceptional circumstances'.

A family holiday is not normally considered by the Government to be an 'exceptional circumstance' and therefore will not be authorised by this school, and therefore, should you choose to take your child out of school without the authorisation of the school, then Parental Responsibility Measures could be instigated. This could mean receiving any of the following;

- A Penalty Notice
- A summons to the Magistrate Court which could result in a fine of up to £2,500 and/or a term of imprisonment for up to 3 months.

Schools are required to notify the Local Authority if a pupil has a number of unauthorised absences. Unauthorised absences can be acquired when;

1) Leave has been requested, but the circumstances are such that the school is unable to authorise the leave and it is taken anyway.
2) Leave is not requested and/or the school has grounds to believe that the child has been taken out of school for an avoidable reason (example – a family holiday). Only the Head teacher can authorise an absence. This year there have been occasions when schools have been notified that the pupil is sick, but the school later discovers and reasonably believes that the reason given for the absence is not genuine.

3) A child continually arrives late after the registration period has closed.
This school will be notifying the Local Authority in all of the circumstances listed above.

Should a Penalty Notice be issued as a result of unauthorised absence then one notice will be issued to each parent/carer for each child involved. Currently, each Penalty Notice is for £160, which is reduced to £80 if paid within the first 21 days. If a Penalty Notice goes unpaid after 21 days, then court proceedings will be initiated. The second penalty notice will be issued at a flat rate of £160 if paid within 28 days.

We understand the disappointment that the refusal of a leave request may cause and we apologise, but as you can appreciate this policy represents the schools responsibility and commitment towards providing your child's education and supporting their future life opportunities. We hope you will support us by ensuring that your son/daughter obtains the maximum benefit from their time at school by attending punctually for every day that the school is open, as the law requires (unless prevented from doing so by an unavoidable circumstances).

Thank you for your anticipated support in this matter.

Yours Sincerely

Additional Information for families, from Devon County Council Local Authority, can be found on the links below;

DCC School attendance matters leaflet_A5_4pp.pdf

School attendance and legal proceedings – Education and Families (devon.gov.uk)

School absence penalty notices – Education and Families (devon.gov.uk)

School absence penalty notices: Code of conduct – Education and Families (devon.gov.uk)

Letter 1 – Below 96% Attendance

Dear [Parent Name]
[Date]

Re: (pupil Name) Attendance at School - Current attendance [%]

At [School Name], the wellbeing of every young person is at the heart of everything we do—including how we approach attendance. We are committed to supporting pupils who've missed time at school, whether those absences were authorised or not, because we know that being present makes a big difference in every child's learning and development.

Our goal across the Trust is 100% attendance. We understand that's ambitious, which is why we work closely with families and pupils, offering support as early as possible when challenges arise. Whether the issue stems from inside or outside school, we'll investigate it together and take practical steps to improve the situation—so that no child feels left behind.

We also recognise that every child's journey is unique. We understand that occasional absences are sometimes unavoidable, however, regular attendance is essential, and we believe in keeping families informed and involved. Enclosed is [Child's name]'s attendance certificate showing their record so far this year.

If you feel there are any concerns in school affecting your child's attendance, please don't hesitate to contact [form tutor/class teacher name], so we can understand what's happening and explore how we can offer the best possible support.

There may also be times when external factors impact school attendance. If you feel your family could benefit from some additional support, Early Help may be an option. We'd be happy to explore that with you. An Early Help Leaflet is included with this letter to explain what's available.

Yours sincerely,

Letter 2 – Below 92% attendance

Dear [Parent Name] [Date]

Re: (pupil Name) Attendance at School - Current attendance [%]

At [School Name], the wellbeing of every young person is at the heart of everything we do—including how we approach attendance. We are committed to supporting pupils who've missed time at school, whether those absences were authorised or not.

The Trust has a 100% attendance target for all pupils in school and we will work alongside parents/carers and pupils to achieve this by supporting at the earliest opportunity. If there are challenges which affect a pupil's attendance, we will investigate, identify and work in partnership with parents/carers and pupils to resolve those problems as quickly and efficiently as possible.

Our policy is to regularly communicate with parents/carers about their child's attendance so as any concerns can be addressed and supported at the earliest opportunity.

[Child's name] attendance has now dropped below 92 % which is a cause for concern, and we would like to discuss if there is anything we can support you and your child with to prevent the attendance from falling further. I enclose a copy of [Child's name] attendance certificate this year to date for your information.

If you feel there are any concerns in school affecting your child's attendance, please don't hesitate to contact [form tutor/class teacher name], so we can understand what's happening and explore how we can offer the best possible support.

There may also be times when external factors impact school attendance. If you feel your family could benefit from some additional support, Early Help may be an option. We'd be happy to explore that with you. An Early Help Leaflet is included with this letter to explain what's available.

Yours sincerely

There are 190 school days each year, this means that there are 175 non-school days a year.

Attendance %	Rating	Days absent over a school year	Description
100%	Perfect Attendance	0	This is the best chance of success for your child
97%	Good Attendance	5	
95%	Improvement Required	9	Less chance of your child succeeding as it is harder for them to make progress – Support will be offered to remove any barriers to attendance
92%	Concern	19	
90% (persistent absence)	**Serious Concern ****	**30**	**Serious Concern** **Missing this much education can cause a significant disadvantage to your child. An attendance support plan may be implemented to ensure your child's attendance can improve. Without improvement to attendance the consequence could be legal action.**

Letter 3 – Below 90% Attendance – Invitation to Attendance Support Plan

Date «date»
Dear [Name of parent]

Re: (pupil Name) Attendance at School - Current attendance [%]

At [School Name], every young person's well-being is our top priority. It's the foundation of our school community and sits at the heart of our attendance policy. When a pupil misses school—whether the absence is authorised or not—we're here to offer support.

While our Trust aims for 100% attendance, we know that life can present challenges. That's why we take a proactive and compassionate approach—working closely with parents and pupils at the earliest opportunity to understand what's going on and find practical solutions, together.

To help support [Child's name] more effectively, I've arranged a meeting where we can talk openly about any difficulties that may be affecting their attendance—both in and out of school. This conversation will give us the chance to co-create an Attendance Support Plan tailored to your child's needs.

Above all, please know that we're here to work with you. While this letter reflects our concern, it's also an invitation—to talk, to listen, and to explore how we can offer further support so that [Child's name] feels confident and able to attend school regularly. I have arranged a meeting in school on the following date and time;

Date:
Time:
With:

Please confirm you can attend this meeting by contacting the school Attendance Officer on [phone number]

I enclose a copy of [Child Name] attendance this year to date and an Early Help Leaflet for your information

Yours sincerely,

Tutor / Class Teacher

There are 190 school days each year, this means that there are 175 non-school days a year.

Attendance %	Rating	Days absent over a school year	Description
100%	Perfect Attendance	0	This is the best chance of success for your child
97%	Good Attendance	5	
95%	Improvement Required	9	Less chance of your child succeeding as it is harder for them to make progress – Support will be offered to remove any barriers to attendance
92%	Concern	19	
90% (persistent absence)	**Serious Concern ****	**30**	**Serious Concern** **Missing this much education can cause a significant disadvantage to your child. An attendance support plan will be put in place to ensure your child's attendance can improve. Without improvement to attendance the consequence could be legal action.**

Letter 4 – Invite to formal meeting

Dear [Name of parent] [Date]

Re: (pupil Name) Attendance at School - Current attendance [%]

We previously wrote to you to outline our worry that [Child's name] is not attending school regularly and to invite you to a meeting to explore any support we could offer.

Whilst we fully understand that you are trying hard to improve (student's name's) attendance, the overall picture is still causing the school and no doubt yourself, some considerable concern.

Following our previous communications, we would like to explore if there is anything additional we can do to support [student's name] in ensuring they can access school and take full advantage of the educational opportunities open to them.

A copy of [Child's Name] registration certificate is enclosed, showing a breakdown of sessions' absence, Between Enter date and Enter date, [student's name] has only attended Enter sessions ½ day sessions out of Enter total session possible ½ day sessions, resulting in an attendance level of Enter text %

Due to this, future absences we will now *only* be authorised if we are satisfied that the reasons for the absence are completely unavoidable. This means we may need medical evidence for any future illnesses. You are invited to provide the school with additional information or documentation to enable us to make an informed decision regarding authorisation for each absence.

We have arranged a final attendance meeting with the Trust Education Welfare and Inclusion lead to see if there is any additional support that can be put in place to avoid referring the concerns to the Local Authority.

The meeting will take place;

Date: Enter date of meeting.
Time: Enter time of meeting
With: Enter staff name

We look forward to seeing you at this meeting (please do bring a friend or support if this might be of benefit to you). The purpose of this meeting will be to explain your legal responsibilities and any action the local authority may take if name of child does not return to school in line with the targets set and support in place. We will also try to identify any barriers to attendance and create an action plan so that we can work together to ensure that attendance improves.

In cases where the child above has another parent who could/should be able to impact on their attendance, then that parent will also be invited to this meeting. If, however, you wish to have a private meeting, or you cannot attend this date and time, please notify me as soon as possible so as we can re-arrange. Should you fail to attend this meeting, an attendance plan will be made in your absence and sent to you outlining the targets and support available.

I hope that we can work together to ensure that name of child's attendance improves.

Many thanks, in anticipation, for your continued and much appreciated support.

I look forward to seeing you at the arranged meeting.

Yours sincerely

Request for medical evidence letter

Dear [Name of parent] [Date]

Re: (pupil Name) Attendance at School - Current attendance [%]

I hope this letter finds you well. I am writing to share some concerns regarding [Child's Name]'s recent attendance, particularly absences due to illness.

We fully appreciate that children do become unwell from time to time, and we want to support you in ensuring [Child's Name] is happy and healthy at school. However, [Child's Name] has now been absent for [insert number] sessions this academic year due to reported illness, which is significantly higher than expected.

In line with the **Department for Education's guidance in "Working Together to Improve School Attendance"**, we aim to work in partnership with families to support good attendance and ensure every child has the best opportunity to learn and thrive. When illness-related absences become frequent or prolonged, we are advised to ask for medical evidence to help us understand whether there is an ongoing medical issue affecting attendance and how we can help.

Going forward, I want to kindly let you know that we will only be able to authorise any further absences due to illness if we receive supporting medical evidence. This does **not** necessarily mean a doctor's note—examples of acceptable evidence include:

- An appointment card or text confirmation from a GP or health professional
- A prescription or medicine label clearly stating the date and name
- Hospital or clinic discharge notes

Please do not feel pressured to obtain evidence that would incur a cost, such as a private letter from your GP. If you are finding it difficult to access medical support, please let us know so we can help.

We are committed to supporting [Child's Name] to maintain regular attendance, and we would very much welcome the opportunity to discuss any concerns or needs you may have. If you would like to speak with me or arrange a meeting, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Yours sincerely,