



DORMSTON SCHOOL

Attendance & Punctuality Policy

Introduction

This is a successful school and your child plays their part in making it so. We aim for an environment which enables and encourages all members of the community to reach out for excellence. For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and your child should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

It is very important therefore that you make sure your child attends regularly and this Policy sets out how together we will achieve this.

Why Regular Attendance is so important and The Law

By law, all children of compulsory school age must receive a full time education. Section 444 1(a) of the Education Act 1966 says, "if a child of compulsory school age, who is a registered pupil at a school, fails to attend regularly, without reasonable justification, then his(her) parent is guilty of an offence and can be prosecuted".

Children are required to attend school for 190 days (380 sessions) in any single academic year. Any expectations to this can only be taken with the full agreement of the Head Teacher.

Over the course of an academic year a child's attendance that falls below 90% is categorised by the government as a persistent absentee (PA).

Promoting Regular Attendance

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility - parents, pupils and all members of school staff.

Understanding types of absence

Authorised absence means that Dormston School have either given an approval in advance for a pupil to be absent, or have accepted an explanation offered afterwards as justification for absence.

Unauthorised absence is where Dormston School are not satisfied with the reasons given for the absence.

Leave of Absence

Any request for “Leave of Absence”, must be made in writing using the “School’s Leave of Absence” request forms. These must be received by the Head Teacher no later than 15 working days before the first date of the proposed leave due to take place.

Due to the Education (Pupil Registration 2006 England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 that came into force on 1st September 2013, ‘Leave of Absence’ shall not be granted unless: (a) an application is made in advance to Dormston school, and (b) the Head Teacher considers the request to have exceptional circumstances relating to the application.

Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 places a duty on local authorities and governing bodies to have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State with regard to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and students under the age of 18.

If Leave of Absence is taken after the Head Teacher has considered it and deemed it NOT to be exceptional circumstances, or you do not make an application in advance, then the absence will be recorded as unauthorised absence and may be referred to the Education Investigation Service.

Penalty Notices

Penalty notices are imposed upon Parents per child and are fines of £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days. You as a Parent can only be prosecuted if 28 days have expired and full payment has not been made.

There is no right of appeal by you as a Parent against Penalty Notices. They are an alternative to the prosecution of Parents.

Dudley’s Local Authority’s Code of conduct states that Penalty Notices can be issued where your child’s absence has not been authorised by Dormston School. This includes: a number of unauthorised absences, within a rolling academic year; one off instances of irregular attendance without our permission; and where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours.

Children Missing Education:

If any pupil has 10 consecutive school days of absence and we have undertaken our own enquiries and it is established that the pupil is missing and not just absent from school. We can then make a referral to the Education Investigation Service, who will then undertake their own enquiries in trying to establish the pupil’s whereabouts. The Education investigation Service will then agree with us when to remove the pupil’s name from our school roll, under Regulation 8 of the Pupil Registration Regulations 2006. You will receive this in writing with a date this agreement is from.

Attendance and Attendance registers

We monitor all absence thoroughly. We take the attendance register at the start of the first sessions of each school day and once during the second session. On each occasion we record whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved educational activity
- Absent: or
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

Persistent Absence (PA) pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system and we also combine this with academic mentoring where absence affects attainment.

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parents' fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

Absence Procedures

If your child is absent you must:

- ✓ contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence;
- ✓ send a note in on the first day they return with an explanation of the absence – you must do this even if you have already telephoned us;

If your child is absent we will:

- ✓ telephone or text you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you;
- ✓ invite you in to discuss the situation with our Attendance Officer and/or a member of the senior management team if absences persist;
- ✓ refer the matter to the Education Investigation Service if attendance reaches a level of concern for us.

Telephone Numbers

There are times when we need to contact parents about lots of things, including absence. We need to have your contact numbers at all times. So help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have an up to date number – if we don't then something important may be missed. **You have a duty to notify school as soon as possible of any changes to contact details.**

Medical Evidence and Absence from School

Any medical appointments that can be made outside of school hours should be, but we accept that some appointments such as hospital visits are beyond parental control., However, we encourage parents where this is the case to ensure you child is only out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary for the appointment.

If your child has a serious medical complaint, you as the parent, will have the correspondence from a consultant, or other departments as to a diagnosis or appointments, etc., and it is for you the parent to produce such information to allow us to make an informed decision.

As for minor ailments we will make a decision based against what we already know about a child, e.g. patterns of attendance, or illness running through the school at any one time, or an epidemic illness etc.,

The School Attendance Officer

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer you to the Education Investigation Officer (EIO) from the Local Authority. He/she will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed and unauthorised absences persist, these Officers can use sanctions such as Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court. Alternatively, parents/carers may wish to contact the EIO themselves to ask for advice and information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice, in accordance with their statutory duties. Their telephone number is 01384 814317. School office number - 01384 816395. Attendance Officer - 01384 816401

Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. It is your responsibility to ensure your child attends school on time every day. If your child misses the start of the day they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons. This can be embarrassing for the child and can encourage absence.

How we manage Lateness

The school day starts at 8.40am and your child **MUST** be in registration at that time.

Registers will be marked at that time and your child will receive a late mark if they are not present in the class.

The register will be closed 5 minutes after school's start time. In accordance with the Regulations, if your child arrives after that time they will receive a late mark. If your child arrives after 9.30am then your child will be marked as a 'U' on the register which shows them to be on site, but will **not** count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. You could face the possibility of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists. If your child is late they will automatically receive a late detention. A sticker is placed in their planner showing the date and time of this detention. Failure to attend this detention will result in further sanctions.

If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with a member of school staff and to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

SAFEGUARDING IN EDUCATION

All staff at Dormston School are aware that “Safeguarding is everyone’s business”. We all play a crucial role in protecting children and young people and keeping them safe or helping them to feel safe. Ofsted under Section 5, make judgments in relation to the effectiveness of Safeguarding. Dormston School recognises its legal duty under Section 157 and 175 of the Education Act 2002, to work together with other agencies in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. Our school has a clear “Child Protection Policy” which takes into account the “Working Together to Safeguard Children” 2015 and is reviewed annually, and ensures all staff including Governors and Volunteers undertake appropriate training with regard to safeguarding. All staff are aware of their responsibilities to inform the designated Safeguarding Officer and the Local Authority of children who are persistently absent or missing or any children they intend to remove from the school’s roll.

The Education Investigation Service:

Once a referral is made from Dormston School for unauthorised absence, the EIS will carry out statutory duties on behalf of the Local Authority which may result in the following:

- A Warning Notice being issued for unauthorised absence
- A Fixed Penalty Notice being issued for unauthorised absence or if your child is seen in a Public Place during school hours whilst excluded
- Legal Proceedings being undertaken for non-school attendance
- Apply for a Parenting Order
- Advice and support given to school over Attendance Issues

Those people responsible for attendance matters in this school are:

- ✓ Mr B Stitchman Head Teacher;
- ✓ Mr S Dixon Deputy Head Teacher;
- ✓ Mrs F Mescam, Mr M Plant, Mr N Amos, Miss E Ward - Heads of House;
- ✓ Ms A Jones Attendance Officer.

Summary

All school staff are committed to working with parents and pupils as the best way to guarantee as high a level of attendance as possible and that through good attendance ensure every child’s welfare and life opportunities are promoted.