

# Dormansland Primary School



## Attendance Policy

Date adopted	Autumn 2022	Next review due	Autumn 2024
Review period	Bi-Annual	Status	Statutory
Written by	Sarah Stokes	Governor review	Governing Body

## **Statement of Intent**

Dormansland Primary School is committed to the continuous raising of achievement of all children. Regular attendance is critical if our children are to be successful and benefit from the opportunities presented to them.

One of our basic principles is to celebrate success. Good attendance is fundamental to a successful and fulfilling school experience. We actively promote 100% attendance for all our children, and we use a variety of weekly, termly and annual awards to promote good attendance and punctuality.

The Governors, Headteacher and Staff, in partnership with parents, have a duty to promote full attendance at Dormansland.

## **Parental Responsibility**

Parents have a legal duty to ensure that their children attend school regularly and arrive on time. Regular attendance is essential to the all-round development of every child and they should be allowed to take full advantage of educational opportunities available to them in order to make good progress in their learning. Poor attendance undermines their educational attainment and progress and sometimes can put children at risk by encouraging anti-social behaviour.

**It is the parents' responsibility to contact the school on the first day their child is absent. This is a safeguarding issue requirement so that all parties know that your child is safe and their whereabouts is known. Parents should update the school each day that the child is absent and inform the school when their child is returning.**

Children are expected to arrive by 8:40am. All children who arrive late must report, with their parent, to the school office where the reason for lateness is recorded.

## **The Role of the School Staff**

At Dormansland Primary School there is a whole school approach for improving school attendance, with specific staff taking individual responsibilities.

The Head Teacher has overall responsibility for monitoring attendance issues.

Class teachers complete a register at the beginning of each morning and once during the afternoon session. Marking the attendance registers twice daily is a legal requirement (The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006). Teachers mark children as present, absent or late. The class teacher notifies the Head Teacher of any children whose attendance is causing concern.

It is the responsibility of the office team to ensure:

- Attendance and lateness records are up to date

- If no reason for absence has been provided via any of the school's dedicated channels: absence email, voicemail, parents are contacted on the first day of absence by phone.
- Where there has been no communication, letters are sent to parents requesting reasons for absence.
- The appropriate attendance code is entered in the register (see National Attendance Codes).
- Parents are informed termly of their child's attendance figure.

### **Timeline for Managing Poor Attendance**

- 95 - 100% attendance – the class teacher to investigate and notify the Head Teacher of concerns. The Head Teacher will contact parent if appropriate.
- 90 - 95% attendance - school intervention letters/meeting with parents.
- Where the level of absence has not improved and there are unauthorised absences, the school will make a referral to the Surrey Inclusion Service. If it is not clear whether a referral to the Service is appropriate, the school will consult with the Local Authority Inclusion Officer for advice.
- For the cases that require intensive family support or Early Help, the school may make a request for support via Surrey C-SPA.

### **Children Missing Education**

No child should be removed from the school roll without consultation between the Head Teacher and the Inclusion Service when appropriate. Please see the circumstances below:

Where a child is missing from education, Local Authority guidance will be followed, by completing a Child Missing Education referral for the following circumstances:

- If the whereabouts of the child is unknown and the school has failed to locate him/her.
- The family has notified the school that they are leaving the area but no Common Transfer Form (pupil file) has been requested by another school.

### **Lateness**

At Dormansland, the register is taken at 8:50am and 1:20pm. Children arriving after these times must enter school by the main entrance and report to the school office where their name and the reason for lateness will be recorded. The child will be marked as late before registration has closed (Code 'L').

The register will close at 9:00am and 1:25pm. Children arriving after the register has closed will be marked as late after registration (Code 'U') and this will count as an unauthorised absence.

Frequent lateness after the register has closed (U) will be discussed with parents and could provide grounds for prosecution or a Penalty Notice.

## **Authorising Absence**

Only the Head Teacher can authorise absence using a consistent approach. The Head Teacher is not obliged to accept a parent's explanation. A letter or telephone message from a parent does not in itself authorise an absence. If absences are not authorised, parents will be notified.

If no explanation is received, absences will not be authorised.

Absence (for example leave for holidays) during term time can only be approved in "exceptional circumstances". The following reasons are examples of absence that will not be authorised:

- Persistent nonspecific illness e.g. poorly/unwell
- Absence of siblings if one child is ill
- Oversleeping
- Inadequate clothing/uniform
- Confusion over school dates
- Medical/dental appointments of more than half a day without very good reasons
- Child's/family birthday
- Shopping trip
- Family Holidays (with some rare exceptions)

Persistent unauthorised absence (10% or more of the school year) may result in a referral to the Local Authority Inclusion Officer. The school will follow procedures prior to referral and parents will be notified in writing.

When a referral is made, the child's Registration Certificate, copies of all letters sent to parents and minutes of any meetings **need to** be attached to the completed referral form with any other relevant information.

### **Local Authority Action may include: -**

- Attendance Improvement Meeting
- Home visits
- Liaison with other agencies
- Fast Track to Prosecution

## **Penalty Notices**

The Inclusion Service, acting on behalf of Surrey County Council may issue a Penalty Notice as an alternative to the prosecution of a parent/carer for their child's unauthorised absence from school and requires the recipient to pay a fixed amount.

The amount payable on issue of a Penalty Notice is £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice, rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days.

If the Penalty Notice is not paid within 28 days, the Local Authority must consider a prosecution for failing to ensure regular school attendance under Section 444 Education Act 1996.

### **Circumstances when a Penalty Notice may be issued**

- Children identified by police and education welfare officers engaged on Truancy Patrols and who have incurred unauthorised absences.
- The Education (Pupil Registration)(England)(Amendment) Regulations 2013, state that Head Teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. The Head Teacher is required to determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if leave is granted.

Where a child is taken out of school for ten sessions or more and the 'leave of absence' is without the authority of the Head Teacher, **each parent** is liable to receive a penalty notice for **each child** who is absent. These ten sessions do not have to be concurrent but will be tallied across the course of an academic year.

In these circumstances, a warning will not be given where it can be shown that parents had previously been warned that such absences would not be authorised and that they will be liable to receive a Penalty Notice if the leave of absence is taken.

- The issue of a Penalty Notice will also be considered where a child has incurred seven or more unauthorised sessions during the preceding six school weeks. The parents' failure to engage with supportive measures proposed by the school or Inclusion Service will be a factor when considering the issue of a Penalty Notice. Unauthorised absence will include late arrival after the close of registration without good reason.

**With the exception of unauthorised leave of absence taken in term time, parents will be sent a formal warning of their liability to receive such a notice before it is issued.**

**Appendix 1 Late letter (Code L)**

**Appendix 2 Late letter (Code U)**

**Appendix 3 Absence Letter**

**Appendix 4 School Attendance Meeting Letter**

**Appendix 5 Traveller Attendance letter**

**Appendix 6 Traveller Absence due to travelling**

**Appendix 7 School Referral Pathway**

**Appendix 8 Penalty Notice FAQs**



## Appendix 1



«address\_block»

«date\_of\_printing»

Dear «salutation»

**Re «forename» «surname»**

I am writing to express my concern over the number of occasions that «forename» has been arriving late at school. Below for your information is a summary of attendance indicating the days «forename» was late (Code L):

«dates\_of\_lates\_before»

Total lates before registration closed: «total\_lates\_before» half day sessions

At our school the register is taken at **8:50am** and at **1:20pm**.

A child's lateness will seriously disrupt their learning and can be embarrassing for your child.

I am sure you share my concern and would wish to work with the school to improve punctuality. If we can help in any way please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher

## Appendix 2



«address\_block»

«date\_of\_printing»

Dear «salutation»

**Re «forename» «surname»**

I am writing to express my concern over the number of occasions that «forename» has arrived after the register has been closed. Below for your information is a summary of attendance indicating the days «forename» was late (Code U):

«dates\_of\_lates\_after»

Total lates after registration closed: «total\_lates\_after» half day sessions

At our school the register is taken at **8:50am** and is closed at **9:00am** for the morning session and taken again at **1:20pm** and closed at **1:25pm** for the afternoon session. Children arriving after the register has closed will be marked 'U' which records the absence as unauthorised for that session.

Arriving after the register has closed is seriously disrupting your child's learning and is impacting on their overall attendance.

Persistent late arrival may lead to the Local Authority Inclusion Officer for further action and possible issuing of a penalty notice or prosecution.

If «forename» continues to arrive late after the register has closed we will contact you to arrange a meeting at the school.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher



## Appendix 3



«address\_block»

«date\_of\_printing»

Dear «salutation»

**Re «forename» «surname»**

I am writing to express my concern over the number of occasions that «forename» has been absent from school. I attach for your information a summary of attendance indicating the days «forename» was absent.

A child's absence can seriously disrupt their learning. Not only do they miss out on teaching while they are away but they are less prepared for future lessons when they return. This can also impact negatively on a child's self-esteem and social skills if it continues over any length of time.

I am sure you share my concern and would wish to work with the school to improve «forename»'s attendance. If we can help in any way please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher

## Appendix 4



«address\_block»

«date\_of\_printing»

Dear «salutation»

**Re: «forename» «surname»**

Despite previous warnings, I note with concern that your child's attendance at school has made no significant improvement. «forename»'s attendance at school is currently «percentage\_attendance»% which means «he\_she» has missed «total\_authorized\_absences» half day sessions for authorised absence and «total\_unauthorised\_absences» half day sessions for unauthorised absence. This will have an impact on your child's education which we cannot ignore.

As there has been no improvement in «forename»'s attendance, I must advise you that further absences from school as a result of illness may require medical evidence (e.g. copy of a prescription, Doctors/Dentist appointment card). If medical evidence is not provided when required, further absences will be marked as unauthorised.

I am now inviting you to attend a meeting to discuss this further. The time and date have been set for ?? at ?? It is important that you and «forename» attend this meeting for us to explore the issues around poor attendance. The meeting will be attended by:

??

If this appointment is inconvenient, I would be grateful if you could contact me so that an alternative time can be arranged.

If you do not attend this meeting and «forename»'s absence continues to deteriorate, a referral may be made to the Local Authority Inclusion Officer for further action and possible prosecution.

Thank you for your co-operation.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher

## Appendix 5



«addressee»  
«address\_block»

«date\_of\_printing»

Dear «salutation»

### **Traveller Absence**

«forename» «surname»

I am writing to say how concerned I am over the number of times «forename» has been absent from school. This academic year «forename» has missed «total\_authorized\_absences» authorised half day sessions and «total\_unauthorised\_absences» unauthorised half day sessions achieving an overall attendance rate of «percentage\_attendance»%.

Traveller children have to attend school for 380 sessions (190 days) each year, which is the same for all children and you are at risk of being referred to the Local Authority Inclusion Officer if «forename»'s attendance falls below 90%. I am unable to authorise any absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances or if you will be travelling for occupational purposes and agree this with the school in advance.

If you would like to speak to me about «forename»'s attendance, please telephone the school to make an appointment.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher

## Appendix 6



«address\_block»

«date\_of\_printing»

Dear «salutation»

**Traveller Absence**  
**«forename» «surname»**

Thank you for contacting me to say that «forename» will be absent from school from ??**Date** as you will be travelling due to your work.

The law allows me to authorise «forename»'s absence if your trade or business means that you have to travel from place to place. However, you have not let me know when «forename» is likely to return to school. Unless you contact me during the next 10 school days to confirm a date, I will refer «forename» to the Local Authority as a Child Missing Education.

After 20 days' absence, there may be grounds to take «forename»'s name off the school roll and you will have to re-apply for a school place when you return.

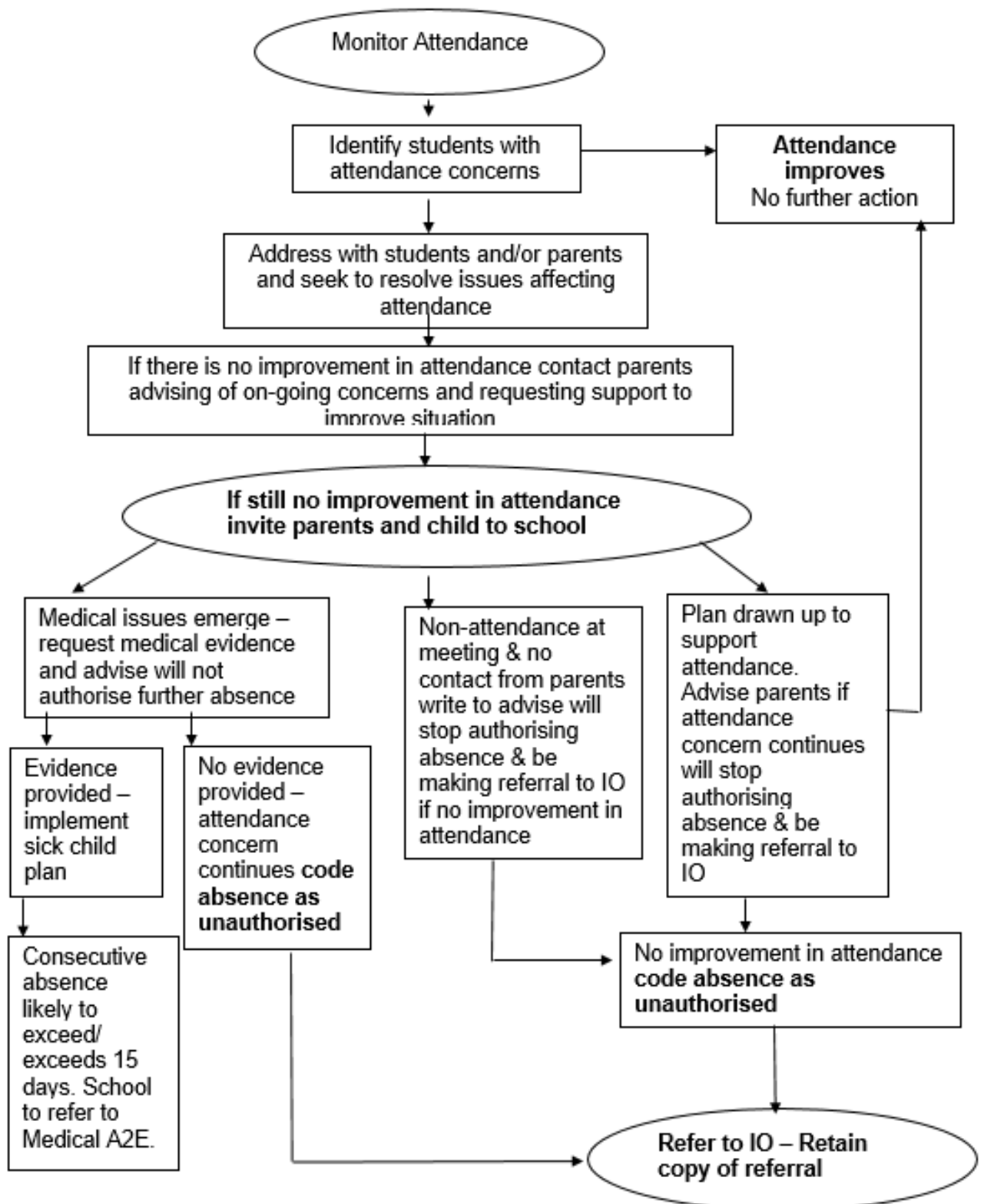
Yours sincerely

Head Teacher

## **Appendix 7**

## Expectations of School prior to Referral to Inclusion Service

### Expectations of School prior to Referral to Inclusion Service



## Appendix 8

### ATTENDANCE PENALTY NOTICE FAQs

In addition to Penalty Notices being issued for unauthorised leave of absence, the issue of a Penalty Notice will be applied where there are more than 10 unauthorised sessions during the preceding 6 school weeks. The parents' failure to engage with supportive measures proposed by the school or Surrey Inclusion Service will be a factor when considering the issue of a Penalty Notice. Unauthorised absence will include late arrival after the close of registration without good reason. Unauthorised leave of absence taken in term time could result in parents being sent a formal warning of their liability to receive such a notice before it is issued.

#### **What is Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003?**

Section 23 of the Act gives powers to the Local Education Authority and other designated bodies to issue Penalty Notices where a parent/carer is considered capable of but unwilling to secure an improvement in their child's school attendance. The powers came into force on the 27th February 2004.

#### **Why has it been introduced?**

Reducing absence from school is a key priority nationally and locally as missing school affects a student's attainment levels, disrupts school routines and the learning of others and can leave a student vulnerable to anti-social behaviour and youth crime. Above all, missing school seriously affects children's longer-term life opportunities.

#### **What is a Penalty Notice?**

Under existing legislation, parents/carers commit an offence if a child fails to attend regularly and the absences are classed as unauthorised (those for which the school cannot or has not given permission). Depending on circumstances such cases may result in prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996. A Penalty Notice is an alternative to prosecution, which does not require an appearance in Court whilst still securing an improvement in a student's attendance. If the Penalty Notice is paid in full on time, then you will not be prosecuted for this particular offence.

#### **What are the costs?**

The amount payable on issue of a Penalty Notice is £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt of notice, rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days. If the Penalty Notice is not paid within 28 days the Local Authority must prosecute the parent/carer for failing to ensure regular school attendance under Section 444 Education Act 1996

Please be aware that each parent is liable to receive a Penalty Notice for each child who incurs unauthorised absences. For example, if there are two parents and one child, each parent will receive one Penalty Notice. If there are two parents and two children incurring unauthorised absences, each parent will receive two Penalty Notices, which in this case would amount to £120 each if paid within 21 days.

#### **How are they issued?**

By post to your home.

### **When are they used?**

Surrey Local Authority (LA) considers that regular attendance at school is of such importance that Penalty Notices may be used in a range of situations where unauthorised absence occurs.

- Overt truancy (pupils found during truancy patrols)
- Unauthorised leave of absence in term time
- 10 or more unauthorised sessions during the preceding 6 school weeks

### **Is there an Appeal process?**

There is no statutory right of appeal once a notice has been issued, but on receipt of a warning you can make representation should you wish to the Headteacher.

### **How do I pay?**

Details of payment arrangements will be included on the Penalty Notice. You need to be aware that payment in part or by instalments is not an option with Penalty Notices.

### **What happens if I do not pay?**

You have up to 28 days from receipt to pay the Penalty Notice in full, after which the Authority is required under the Act to consider commencing proceedings in the Magistrates Court for the original offence of poor attendance by your child. If proven, this can attract a fine of up to £2,500 and/or three months imprisonment, or a range of disposals such as Parenting Orders or Community Sentences.

### **Can I be prosecuted if I pay the Penalty Notice, but my child is still missing school?**

Not for the period included in the Penalty Notice as payment discharges your liability in this respect. However, it may be the case that a prosecution might be considered for further periods of poor attendance not covered by the Notice, depending upon the circumstances. If this is an issue, it is vital that you work closely with your child's school and support agencies such as Surrey Inclusion Service.

### **Can I get help if my child is not attending regularly?**

Yes, Surrey Local Authority (LA) and your child's school will give you advice and support if you need to secure an improvement in your child's attendance. It is very important that you speak with the school or with the LA's Inclusion Officer at the earliest opportunity if you have any worries at all about securing your child's attendance.

For more information on Inclusion Service issues, please contact the Local Area Office.

### **Legal Proceedings**

The Inclusion Service, on behalf of the Local Education Authority, has authority to commence proceedings either in the Magistrates' Court or in the Family Proceedings Court when a student fails without justification to attend the school on a regular full-time basis. Lateness after close of registration constitutes unauthorised absence and where a pupil continually arrives late under these circumstances legal proceedings may be considered. When considering legal proceedings, the Inclusion



Officer will consult with the Head teacher who would be asked to complete a Certificate of Attendance for the pupil to be used in the prosecution process or in the application for an Education Supervision Order.