



Attendance Policy

September 2025

(Review: September 2026)

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1. Introduction

Regular school attendance is essential if children are to achieve their full potential.

Downlands Community School (hereafter, referred to as 'School') believe that regular school attendance is the key to enabling children to maximise the educational opportunities available to them and become emotionally resilient, confident and competent adults who are able to realise their full potential and make a positive contribution to their community.

Our school values all pupils. As set out in this policy, we will work with families to identify the reasons for poor attendance and try to resolve any difficulties. We recognise that attendance is a matter for the whole school community. Our Attendance Policy should not be viewed in isolation; it is a strand that runs through all aspects of school improvement, supported by our policies on safeguarding, bullying and relationships. This policy also takes into account the Human Rights Act 1998, the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and the Race Relations Act 2000.

This school policy should be read alongside 'Promoting Attendance in Dorset' Dorset Council guidance (available on school website), considering that Downlands Community School is a Local Authority maintained school. Reference should also be made to the supportive advice presented on the [relevant page](#) of Dorset Council website. Furthermore, due regard should be given to the Department for Education guidance, '[Working together to improve school attendance](#)'.

2. Legal Framework

Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act states that parents must ensure that children of compulsory school age receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude to any special educational needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

A child is of Compulsory School Age at the beginning of the term following their 5th birthday. Under the Education Act 1996, the Local Authority has a statutory responsibility to ensure that parents secure education for children of compulsory school age and where necessary, use legal enforcement.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, require schools to take an attendance register twice a day, once at the start of the morning session and then again during the afternoon session.

The register must record whether the pupil was:

- present;
- absent;
- present at approved educational activity; or
- unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

What does the law say?

- This advice summarises the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance and explains how they apply to local authorities, head teachers, school staff, governing bodies, pupils and parents.
- These requirements are contained in:
 - The Education Act 1996 - sections 434(1)(3)(4)&(6) and 458(4)&(5)
 - The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006
 - The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2010
 - The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2011
 - The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

3. Categorising absence

Where pupils of compulsory school age are recorded as absent, the register must show whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised. Absence can only be authorised by the school and cannot be authorised by parents. **All absences will be treated as unauthorised unless a satisfactory explanation for the pupil's absence has been received.**

Parents should advise the school by telephone, before 8:50am, every day when a child is absent and provide the school with an expected date of return. This should be followed up in the form of a written note from the parent/carer, though verbal explanations may be acceptable where this is considered appropriate. Alternative arrangements will be agreed with non-English speaking parents/carers.

Absence will be categorised as follows:

Illness: In most cases a telephone call or a note from the parent informing the school that their child is ill will be acceptable. Parents may be asked to provide medical evidence where there are repeated absences due to reported illness. This will usually be in the form of an appointment card, prescription etc.

Medical/Dental Appointments: Parents are advised where possible to make medical and dental appointments outside of the school day. Where this is not possible, pupils should attend school for part of the day. Parents should show the appointment card to school.

Other Authorised Circumstances: This relates to occasions where there is cause for absence due to exceptional circumstances, for example family bereavement or part time timetable agreed as part of a reintegration package.

Excluded (No alternative provision made): Exclusion from attending school is counted as an authorised absence.

Family Holidays and Extended Leave: Parents are strongly advised to avoid taking their children on holiday during term time. Parents do not have an automatic right to remove their child from school during term time for the purpose of a holiday. Should a parent wish to apply for term time leave they must write to the Headteacher and they will consider if the leave is for **exceptional circumstances**. If parents take children on holiday for 5 days or more during term time (within 10 weeks) without authorisation, they may be subject to a Penalty Notice. Nevertheless, the school is very mindful of the MoD advice ([see link](#)) pertaining to services families as well as Dorset Council's code of conduct for issuing penalty notices.

Parents wishing to take their child on holiday during term time must send a written request to the Headteacher before holiday arrangements are made ([see editable form available on website](#)). Retrospective requests will not be considered and therefore will result in the absence being categorised as unauthorised. With the exception of reasoning in line with specific MoD guidance given above, authorisation of a term time holiday is rare. Along with assessing the exceptional circumstances described, the following factors will be taken into account:

- Length of the proposed leave
- Age of the pupil
- The pupil's recent attendance record
- Proximity of SATs and public examinations

All requests for term time leave will be treated confidentially and on a case-by-case basis, with responses given via email from the headteacher. Where a request has been granted, it will be expected that parents contact the school should any delays occur which could compromise the expected return date.

If the permission to take leave is not granted and the pupil still goes on holiday, the absence will be **unauthorised**. In such cases the school may issue a Penalty Notice or a fine.

Religious Observance: Downlands Community School acknowledges the multi-faith nature of British society and recognises that on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside school holiday periods or weekends and this necessitates a consideration of authorised absence or special leave for religious observance.

Traveller Absence: The aim for the attendance of Traveller children, in common with all other children, is to attend school as regularly and as frequently as possible.

Late Arrival: Registration begins at 8:40am; pupils arriving after this time (but before 9:10am) will be marked as present but arriving late (late before register closed [L]). The register will close at 9:10am; pupils arriving after the close of register will be recorded as late (late after register closed [U]). This will likely be unauthorised and will count as an absence for that school session.

On arrival after the close of the register, pupils must immediately report to the school office to ensure that we can be responsible for their health and safety whilst they are in school.

The absence will only be authorised if a satisfactory explanation for the late arrival can be provided, for example, attendance at a medical appointment.

The absence will be recorded as **unauthorised** if the pupil has arrived late without justifiable cause; for example, if they woke up late or were waiting for their uniform to dry. Persistent lateness will trigger Letter 7 (Appendix J) and possible referral to the inclusion panel.

Unauthorised absence: Absence will not be authorised unless parents have provided a satisfactory explanation and that it has been accepted as such by the school.

Examples of unsatisfactory explanations include:

- A pupil's/family member's birthday
- Shopping for uniforms
- Having their hair cut
- Closure of a sibling's school for INSET (or other) purposes
- "Couldn't get up"
- Illness where the child is considered well enough to attend school
- Holidays taken without the authorisation of school.

4. Children Missing in Education

There are many reasons why a child may become missing in education. Although not exhaustive, the most common being:

- Pupils at risk of harm/ neglect – for children who are in immediate danger or at risk of harm, a referral should be made immediately to children's social care and the police, if appropriate
- Children of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families
- Children of Service Personnel
- Missing children and runaways

- Children who cease to attend school
- Children of new migrant families.

(Taken from CME 2016)

Schools' responsibility: Schools must enter pupils on the admission register at the beginning of the first day on which the school has agreed, or been notified, that the pupil will attend the school. If a pupil fails to attend on the agreed or notified date, the school should undertake reasonable enquiries to establish the child's whereabouts and consider notifying the local authority at the earliest opportunity. The school will return a form to the Local Authority, detailing information on the child. Schools have a safeguarding duty in respect of their pupils, therefore must closely monitor pupils' attendance through their daily register. As part of this, it is important that pupils' poor attendance is referred to the local authority. (CME 2016)

Deletions from the register: School will seek to make reasonable enquiries to establish the whereabouts of the child, jointly with the local authority. The local authority should be notified in advance of the deletion, when the school becomes aware that the deletion will be made. School must notify their local authority when they are about to remove a pupil's name from the school admission register under any of the grounds set out in the CME 2016 guidance – see Appendix C. When removing a pupil's name, the local authority must be notified of:

- a) The full name of the pupil
- b) The full name and address of the parent with whom the child normally resides
- c) At least one telephone number of the parent
- d) The pupil's future address and destination school (if known)
- e) The reason(s) why the pupil name has been removed from the admission register.

Under section 436A of the Education Act 1996, Local Authorities have a duty to put in place arrangements for identifying (as far as it is possible) those children of compulsory school age in their area who are not school registered or receiving education otherwise than at a school. Local authorities should trace those children and ensure that they receive full-time education.

Where a pupil has not returned to school for ten days following an authorised absence or is absent from school without authorisation for twenty consecutive school days, the pupil can be removed from the admission register when the school and local authority have jointly made reasonable enquiries to establish the whereabouts of the child. This only applies where the school does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil is unable to attend because of sickness or unavoidable cause.

School Policy: Following guidelines, School has a strict policy regarding absence when it has not been notified of absence and/or cannot contact parent/ guardian.

Policy

Day 1	Phone call to main contact held on SIMS
Day 3/4	Home visit, carried out by member of SLT or pastoral team
Day 5	Referral to Early Help Team or Garrison Welfare as appropriate
Day 10	Request Police Welfare check

5. Home Educated Children

Under Section 7 of the Education Act 1996, parents have a duty to ensure their child of compulsory school age receives suitable full time education but this does not have to be at a school. On receipt of written notification to home educate, school will inform the pupil's local authority that the pupil is to be deleted from the admission register. School will not seek to persuade parents to educate their children at home as a way of avoiding, excluding the pupil or because the pupil has a poor attendance

record. There is no requirement for parents to obtain the school or local authority's agreement to educate their child at home. However, if the parent/guardian fails/refuses to provide notification, a referral will be made to the Local Authority with immediate effect.

6. Child relocates

When a child moves, attempts will be made by School to contact local schools to provide a setting for the child where they will be educated. If no provision is available, support will be offered to complete a transfer request. The Local Authority will be notified to ensure suitable support can be offered to provide education. When a child transfers both into and out of School, parents must inform the school and Dorset Council admissions (Dorset for You website).

7. Suspension and Permanent Exclusion

School must arrange full-time education for excluded pupils from the sixth school day of a fixed term exclusion (suspension). If a permanent exclusion has been put in place, the Local Authority will be notified with immediate effect.

8. Roles and Responsibilities

School believe that improved attendance can only be achieved if it is viewed as a shared responsibility of the school staff, governors, parents, pupils and the wider school community. As such, the Governing Body will:

- Ensure that the importance and value of good attendance is promoted to pupils and their parents
- Annually review the school's Attendance Policy and ensure the required resources are available to fully implement the policy
- Identify a member of the governing body to lead on attendance matters
- Ensure that the Registration Regulations, England, 2006 and other attendance related legislation is complied with
- Monitor the school's attendance and related issues through termly reporting at Governing Body Meetings
- Ensure that there is a named senior manager to lead on attendance
- Ensure that the school has clear systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site
- Ensure that there are procedures for collecting and analysing attendance data frequently to identify causes and patterns of absence
- Ensure that data is understood and used to devise solutions and to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions

The Leadership Team will:

- Ensure that routine systems are in place for promoting attendance – see appendix B
- Actively promote the importance and value of good attendance to pupils and their parents
- Form positive relationships with pupils and parents
- Ensure that there is a whole school approach which reinforces good school attendance; with good teaching and learning experiences that encourage all pupils to attend and to achieve
- Monitor the implementation of the Attendance Policy and ensure that the policy is reviewed bi-annually
- Ensure that all staff are aware of the Attendance Policy and adequately trained to address attendance issues
- Ensure that the Registration Regulations, England, 2006 and other attendance related legislation is complied with
- Ensure that there is a named senior leader to lead on attendance and allocate sufficient time and resource
- Return school attendance data to the Local Authority and the Department for Children, Schools and Families as required and on time

- Report the school's attendance and related issues through termly reporting to the Governing Body and on a half termly basis to the lead governor for attendance
- Ensure that systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site are implemented
- Ensure that attendance data is collected and analysed frequently to identify causes and patterns of absence
- Interpret the data to devise solutions and to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions
- Develop a multi-agency response to improve attendance and support pupils and their families
- Document interventions used to a standard required by the local authority should legal proceedings be instigated
- Make home visits where there is unexplained and unauthorised absence.

Teachers and support staff will:

- Actively promote the importance and value of good attendance to pupils and their parents
- Form positive relationships with pupils and parents
- Contribute to a whole school approach which reinforces good school attendance; with good teaching and learning experiences that encourage all pupils to attend and to achieve
- Comply with the Registration Regulations, England, 2006 and other attendance related legislation
- Implement systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site
- Analyse attendance data to identify causes and patterns of absence
- Contribute to the evaluation of school strategies and interventions
- Work with other agencies to improve attendance and support pupils and their families
- Document interventions used to a standard required by the local authority should legal proceedings be instigated.

The Office Team will:

Daily Procedures –

- Checking class registers
- Updating marks & comments on SIMS (a central record)
- First day contact with parents
- Challenge lateness

Monitoring –

- Produce pupil attendance reports and identify patterns
- Produce and dispatch letters for persistent absentees and late concerns
- Referrals to outside agencies.

We request that Parents will:

- Talk to their child about school and what goes on there. Take a positive interest in their child's work and educational progress
- Instil the value of education and regular school attendance within the home environment
- Encourage their child to look to the future and have aspirations
- Contact the school if their child is absent to let them know the reason why and the expected date of return. Follow this up with a note where possible
- Try to avoid unnecessary absences. Wherever possible make appointments for the Doctors, Dentists etc. outside of school hours
- Ask the school for help if their child is experiencing difficulties
- Inform the school of any change in circumstances that may impact on their child's attendance

- Support the school; take every opportunity to get involved in their child's education, form a positive relationship with school and acknowledge the importance of children receiving the same messages from both school and home
- Encourage routine at home, for example, bed times, homework, preparing school bag and uniform the evening before
- Not keep their child off school to go shopping, to help at home or to look after other members of the family
- Avoid taking their child on holiday during term-time. Where this is unavoidable, send a written leave request to the Head Teacher in advance of booking the holiday, including requisite evidence from chain of command if term time absence is due to family members serving in the armed forces and the subsequent operational needs preventing holidays during school holidays.

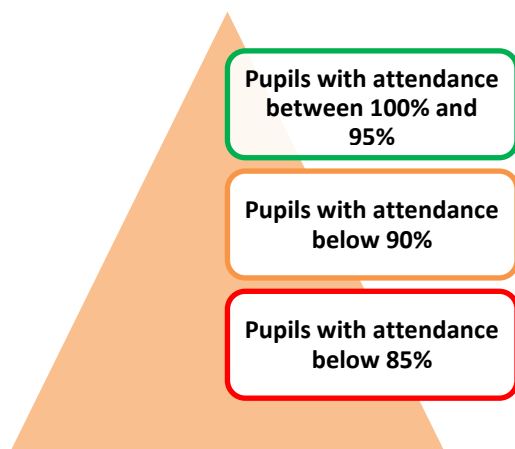
Promoting Attendance and Support

We believe that working together with parents is the best way to result in positive attendance outcomes for our children. We will use existing rewards systems in school to promote good attendance and punctuality with the children.

9. Using Attendance Data

Pupil attendance will be monitored and may be shared with the Local Authority and other agencies if a pupil's attendance is a cause for concern.

Every week the office team will add class attendance data to the briefing doc. This information will be shared via whole school assemblies and newsletters where appropriate. These are also shared with parents (for their child) at twice-yearly parents' evenings and with end of year reports.



Pupils with attendance between 100% and 95%

Children have the best opportunity to reach their full potential in school.

Pupils with attendance below 90%

If children stay at this level, they will have missed between 1-2 weeks of lessons by the end of the school year.

Pupils with attendance below 85%

If children stay at this level, they will have missed at least 4 weeks of lessons by the end of the school year.

This pupil level data will be used to trigger school action as set out in the escalation of intervention (Appendix B). Attendance data will also be used to identify emerging patterns and trends to inform whole school strategies to improve attendance and attainment. School will share attendance data with the Department for Children, Schools and Families and the local authority as required. All information shared will be done so in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

10. Support Systems

School recognises that poor attendance is often an indication of difficulties in a child's life. This may be related to problems at home and or in school. Parents should make school aware of any difficulties or changes in circumstances that may affect their child's attendance and or behaviour in school; for example, bereavement, divorce/separation, incidents of domestic abuse. This will help the school identify any additional support that may be required.

The school will implement a range of strategies to support improved attendance. Strategies used will include:

- Discussion with parents and pupils
- Attendance letters to parents
- Supportive meetings with school leaders
- Attendance Action Plan
- Emotional based school avoidance (EBSA) strategies and workshops
- Friendship interventions
- Reward systems
- Re-engagement services
- Inclusion panel referrals
- Support from DC Inclusion Lead
- Parenting contracts for attendance
- Referrals to other support agencies.

Support offered to families will be child centred and planned in discussion and agreement with both parents and pupils. Where parents fail or refuse to engage with the support offered and further unauthorised absence occurs, School will consider the use of legal sanctions.

Pupils who have more than 4 affected weeks of illness during one term will be required to provide medical proof of illness before any further illness absence can be authorised. Medical proof can be in the form of a medical appointment card or a prescription in the child's name.

11. Attendance Rewards

We celebrate attendance every two weeks via our newsletter, where the House with the best attendance is celebrated. We will also reward children who improve their attendance at points during the year with letters written to the home. At the end of the year, pupils and houses will be rewarded for excellent and improved attendance.

12. Legal Sanctions

The national threshold has been met when a pupil has been recorded as absent for 10 sessions (in accordance with the school's attendance policy and usually equivalent to 5 school days) and within 10 school weeks, with one of, or a combination of the following codes:

- code G (the pupil is absent without leave for the purpose of a holiday)
- code N (the circumstances of the pupil's absence have not yet been established)
- code O (Unauthorised absence) (none of the other rows of Table 3 in regulation 10(3) of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 applies)
- code U (the pupil attended after the taking of the register ended but before the end of the session, where no other code applies)

Working together to improve school attendance (applies from 19 August 2024) provides further information on absence codes.

When a school becomes aware that the national threshold has been met, they must consider whether a penalty notice can and should be issued or not. If repeated penalty notices are being issued and they are not working to change behaviour they are unlikely to be the most appropriate tool. The national framework for penalty notices sets out that a maximum of 2 penalty notices per child, per parent can be issued within a rolling 3-year period (for holidays taken after the 18 August 2024). If the national threshold is met for a third time (or subsequent times) within 3 years, Dorset Council will utilise other legal interventions available to Local Authorities, such as Education Supervision Orders and criminal prosecution.

How much could I be fined if my child misses school?

In the majority of cases, schools and local authorities will try and provide support to help you improve your child's attendance first, but if this isn't effective or the absence is for unauthorised term time holiday, parents may face paying a fine.

It's the responsibility of the local authority to decide when to issue fines to parents, meaning the process varies from council to council. However, under the national rules, all schools are required to consider a fine when a child has missed 10 or more sessions (5 days) for unauthorised reasons. From August 2024, the fine for school absences across the country will be **£80 if paid within 21 days**, or **£160 if paid within 28 days**. This rate is in line with inflation and is the first increase since 2012.

In the case of repeated fines, if a parent receives a second fine for the same child within any three-year period, this will be charged at the higher rate of £160.

Fines per parent will be capped to two fines within any three-year period. Once this limit has been reached, other actions like a parenting order or prosecution will be considered.

Please note that Downlands Community School is maintained by the Local Authority and so aligns with the additional legal framework outlined in the Promoting Educational Attendance in Dorset guidance, available on the school website. Also, the supportive advice presented on the [relevant page](#) of Dorset Council website.

13. Safeguarding

Your child may be at risk of harm if they do not attend school regularly. Safeguarding the interests of each child is everyone's responsibility and within the context of this school, promoting the welfare and life opportunities for your child encompasses: -

- Attendance
- Behaviour Management
- Health & Safety
- Access to the Curriculum
- Anti-bullying

Failing to attend school on a regular basis will be considered as a safeguarding matter.

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

Appendix A: Calendar of actions linked to promoting good attendance

Autumn Term

Initial letter to all parents (Appendix D) at the start of term

Excellent and improved attendance is recognised via assemblies and newsletters

School meets with DC inclusion lead to discuss attendance

Letters (Letter 2 - Appendix E) of concern issued as appropriate in December

Spring Term

Letter 3 (Appendix F) sent to parents of children where there is tangible improvement (after 6 school weeks)

Letter 4 (Appendix G) sent parents already in receipt of letter 2 and where there is no tangible improvement (after 6 school weeks)

School meets with DC inclusion lead to discuss attendance and arrange bespoke meetings with parents as required

Summer Term

Excellent and improved attendance is recognised via assemblies and newsletters

Letters 2/3/4 issued as appropriate

School meets with DC inclusion lead to discuss attendance and arrange bespoke meetings with parents as required

School liaises with other schools as part of transition, including attendance issues where relevant

Excellent and improved attendance is recognised via assemblies and newsletters

Attendance Improvement Procedure Summary

	ACTION	WHEN
STAGE 1	Attendance is everyone's business	All year
STAGE 2	School's curriculum, ethos, behaviour and inclusivity ensure pupils are able to achieve the best possible attendance	All year
STAGE 3	Robust transition processes in which schools deliver clear messages about the importance of attendance	Prior to the start of the academic year
STAGE 4	- Ensure the school attendance policy is up-to-date and clear to all pupils, parents and staff - Send attendance letter 1	Start of the academic year
STAGE 5	Monitor attendance	All year
STAGE 6	- Send attendance letter 2 - Listen to pupils and families to understand barriers to attendance - Ensure appropriate support is in place - Liaise with relevant agencies and partners - Record and contact with pupils and parents - Agree review period	When attendance becomes a concern
STAGE 7	Facilitate support	When attendance becomes a concern
STAGE 8	- Where there is an improvement in attendance, carefully manage and support the pupil - Provide praise and encouragement - Send attendance letter 3	When there is an improvement in attendance
STAGE 9	- Meet with pupil and family - Send attendance letter 4 – Attendance meeting - Support put in place - Consider using a parenting contract	Where following support, attendance has not improved

	• Discuss at termly/half-termly inclusion meeting with link Inclusion Lead	
STAGE 10	• Where there is an improvement in attendance, carefully manage and support the pupil • Provide praise and encouragement • Send attendance letter 3	When there is an improvement in attendance
STAGE 11	• School arranges an Inclusion Panel meeting where there is no improvement using attendance letter 5 – Invite to Inclusion Panel	Where following support, attendance has not improved
LEGAL	• Attendance legal intervention (parenting contract, Education Supervision Order, attendance prosecution, parenting orders, fixed penalty notices) • Penalty Notice Protocol 2025 (dorsetcouncil)	When all supportive avenues have been exhausted and legal intervention is likely to lead to a behavioural change that improves attendance

Appendix C: Grounds for deleting a pupil from the school admission register (CME 2016)

1	Where the pupil is registered at the school in accordance with the requirements of a school attendance order, that another school is substituted by the local authority for that named in the order or the order is revoked by the local authority on the ground that arrangements have been made for the child to receive efficient full-time education suitable to his/her age, ability and aptitude otherwise than at school.
2	That the child has been registered as a pupil at another school - except where it has been agreed by the proprietor that the pupil should be registered at more than one school.
3	Where a pupil is registered at more than one school that he/she has ceased to attend the school and the proprietor of any other school at which he is registered has given consent to the deletion.
4	Where the child has ceased to attend the school and the proprietor has received written notification from the parent that the pupil is receiving education otherwise than at school.
5	That child has ceased to attend the school and no longer ordinarily resides at a place which is a reasonable distance from the school at which he/she is registered.
6	In the case of a pupil granted leave of absence in accordance with regulation that (i) the pupil has failed to attend the school within the ten school days immediately following the expiry of the period for which such leave was granted (ii) the proprietor does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil is unable to attend the school by reason of sickness or any unavoidable cause - and (iii) the proprietor and the local authority have failed, after jointly making reasonable enquiries, to ascertain where the pupil is.
7	Where the child is certified by the school medical officer as unlikely to be in a fit state of health to attend school before ceasing to be of compulsory school age, and neither he/she nor his parent has indicated to the school the intention to continue to attend the school after ceasing to be of compulsory school age.
8	Where the child has been continuously absent from the school for a period of not less than twenty school days and, (i) at no time was his/her absence during that period authorised by the proprietor (ii) the proprietor does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil is unable to attend the school by reason of sickness or any unavoidable cause; and (iii) the proprietor of the school and the local authority have failed, after jointly making reasonable enquiries, to ascertain where the pupil is.
9	That the child is detained in pursuance of a final order made by a court or of an order of recall made by a court or the Secretary of State, that order being for a period of not less than four months, and the proprietor does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil will return to the school at the end of that period.
10	The pupil has died.
11	That the pupil will cease to be of compulsory school age before the school next meets
12	That the child has been permanently excluded from the school.
13	Where the pupil has been admitted to the school to receive nursery education, that he/she has not on completing such education transferred to a reception, or higher class at the school.

Appendix D: Letter 1 about Attendance sent to all parents at the start of the year

Dear Parents and Carers,

Downlands Community School are committed to ensuring that our pupils achieve the best possible outcomes and good school attendance is key to achieving this aim. Our school policy on attendance can be found on our website [here](#). We will work hard to provide a safe and welcoming environment for your child and will monitor attendance closely.

Good school attendance improves your child's chances of success in life. There is clear evidence of the link between good attendance at school and high levels of achievement. Pupils who did not achieve the expected standard in reading, writing and maths in 2019 had an overall absence rate of 4.7% over the key stage, compared with 3.5% among pupils who achieved the expected standard and 2.7% among those who achieved the higher standard.

We would really appreciate your help in ensuring that your child has good school attendance. We would encourage you to make contact with the school as soon as school attendance becomes a problem or if your child is at all anxious about attending school. We are here to help you and your families.

After a period of 10 weeks in school, we will write to any parent whose child's attendance has dipped below 90%. If there are further concerns beyond this initial period, we will contact you again so that we can work together to identify any barriers that may be preventing your child from attending school and ensuring that support is put in place. We may also contact the Inclusion Team at Dorset Council for advice and support, or other organisations that may be able to help. It is hoped that this will be successful in improving attendance, which will be recognised formally by the school. We will also contact parents before the first 10 weeks if there is an urgent and significant attendance issue.

Here at Downlands, we are determined to ensure that all our students have the opportunity to achieve success and have an excellent record of attendance. If following additional support attendance does not improve sufficiently, you will be invited to meet with the school and an Inclusion Lead from Dorset Council. This meeting is an opportunity to meet and discuss why your child has a high absence rate and seek solutions to any problems, putting in place an improving attendance contract in the process.

A **notice to improve** is a final opportunity for a parent to engage with support offered and improve attendance. Such notices result from an agreed action plan decided at a Local Authority Inclusion Panel meeting with school representation.

Penalty notices should only be used in conjunction with Dorset's latest code of conduct on this matter which reflects national expectations for all schools. This code of conduct is available on the school's website. A penalty notice can be considered when the national threshold has been met: a pupil has been recorded as absent for 10 sessions (5 days) of unauthorised absence within 10 school weeks. Nevertheless, due regard will be given to whether this is the best course of action to change parental attitudes and behaviours, considering whether further support is appropriate and whether it is in the public interest to ask the LA to apply a penalty. All decisions are confidential and made on a case-by-case basis. It is hoped that such measures will not be needed and that your child will have a good record of attendance, is happy and achieves the best possible outcomes.

The school has a form which parents should complete if they would like to request that a period of term-time leave is authorised. It can be found on the website [here](#) or by asking the school office. Term-time leave will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances. Furthermore, the school does take note of the additional MOD guidance to headteachers on these matters, presented [here](#). However, it is

very important to communicate clearly on these matters so that a mutual understanding can be reached well in advance.

Yours sincerely

Mr J Rielly

Headteacher

Appendix E: Letter 2 about initial attendance concerns sent to all parents of children with <90% attendance after 10 weeks of school

Absences Matter and You Can Help

Dear Parents,

Child's name has missed more school than their classmates.

Pupils fall behind when they miss school – whether students are absent for authorised or unauthorised reasons.

You can have a big effect on **Child's name** absences this term, and we appreciate your help.

Child's name has had ? session absences or late marks(after the register has closed), which means their attendance is%.

The average attendance for their year group is%

What does the attendance percentage really mean?		
Attendance %	Days Lost	Lessons Missed
100%	0 Days	0 lessons
97%	1 Week	20 lessons
94%	2 Weeks	40 lessons
90%	4 weeks	80 lessons
85%	6 Weeks	120 lessons
80%	8 Weeks	160 lessons

The graph above is based on a full academic year. If you have any concerns or if there is information which we as a school do not know about, then please get in touch with the office to make an appointment on a Friday morning during the Headteacher drop in sessions.

Yours sincerely,

Headteacher
Downlands School

Appendix F: Letter 3 about attendance improvement sent to parents receiving letter 2, after a further 6 weeks of school where there is tangible improvement.

Absences Matter and You Can Help

Dear Parents,

Thank you.

We are pleased to say that *child's name* attendance has improved and is currently%

Thank you so much for your support in this. We really do appreciate your help as there is clear evidence that good school attendance improves a child's chance of success in life.

Please do contact me if you would like to discuss anything further.

Yours sincerely,

Headteacher
Downlands School

Letter 4 - Invitation to Attendance Meeting

Absences Matter and You Can Help

Invitation to Attendance Meeting.

Dear Parents,

Downlands School is committed to ensuring our pupils achieve the best possible outcomes and good school attendance is key to achieving this aim.

Unfortunately, following our letter **Child's name** attendance has not sufficiently improved. They have missed the equivalent of **number** days including late sessions and so their attendance is currently **.....**%. We would really appreciate your help in improving this and are therefore inviting you to an attendance meeting in school on **enter date**.

It is really important that you attend this meeting so that any issues or concerns which may be contributing to **Child's name** non-attendance can be discussed and support put in place. You are welcome to bring someone along with you.

Please confirm receipt of this letter, and your intention to attend the meeting by contacting the office on 01258453348, or by email at office@downlandsschool.org

Please be aware that Dorset Council's Inclusion Team may be informed of **Child's name** current attendance.

Yours sincerely,

Headteacher
Downlands School

Appendix H: Letter 5 is issued after letter 4 and where further support from Dorset Council inclusion lead is requested.

Letter 5 - Invitation to Inclusion Panel

Date:

Absences Matter and You Can Help

Dear Parent/carer's name

School names are committed to ensuring our pupils achieve the best possible outcomes and good school attendance is key to achieving this aim.

Unfortunately, following our meeting, the child's name attendance has not sufficiently improved. They have a number of absences and so their attendance is currently %.

Parents/carers have a legal responsibility to ensure that their child is receiving an education and attends regularly at the school at which he/she is registered.

The next step is to attend an Inclusion Panel on date, time and venue. You are welcome to bring someone along to support you.

This meeting will also be attended by insert name from the school and insert name, Inclusion Lead, Dorset Council. We value the working partnership we have with parents, and it is important that you attend this meeting so that any issues or concerns which may be contributing to child's name's non-attendance can be discussed. If you do not attend the meeting, we will discuss the child's name's school attendance and a decision will be made, in your absence, on the appropriate action.

Please telephone school name on xxxxxxxx or email address to confirm receipt of this letter, and your intention to attend the meeting by contacting name and phone number/email. Dorset Council has already been made aware of the child's name's current attendance.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher's signature

Name

School

Letter 6 - Failure to attend Inclusion Panel Meeting

Date:

Dear **Parent/carer's name**

Failure to Attend – Name of Child – DOB

Following the Inclusion Panel on **Date** which you did not attend, please find enclosed the minutes of the meeting which include the actions and decisions of the panel.

Insert Minutes Inclusion Panel outlining the agreed actions.

Parents/carers have a legal responsibility to ensure that their child is receiving an education and attends regularly at the school at which **he/she** is registered. Parents/carers may be liable to prosecution under (s) 444 Education Act 1996 (as amended) if they fail to ensure that a child of compulsory school age attends regularly at the school at which the child is registered. You also have a responsibility to contact the school each day should the child be unable to attend for any reason.

PLEASE NOTE: All further absences may be marked as unauthorised and sickness absences should be supported with evidence such as a GP's appointment card or prescription, or hospital letter.

We will continue to monitor a child's **name's** school attendance closely, including arriving on time for school.

At **name of school**, we are determined to ensure that all our pupils have the opportunity to achieve their best and we want all our pupils to have an excellent record of regular punctual attendance. We value the working partnership we have with parents. If you would like to discuss the Inclusion Panel minutes, please contact **name of the person and contact details**.

We hope to see a significant improvement in school attendance. It is only through excellent attendance that your child will achieve all that they are capable of achieving and have the best opportunity for a rewarding and prosperous adult life.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher's signature

Name

School

Letter 7 - Lateness Letter

Lateness Matters and You Can Help

Date:

Dear Parent/Carer's name

At name of school, we are determined to ensure that name of the pupil has the opportunity to achieve their best and we want him/her to have an excellent record of regular punctual attendance.

Pupil name has been late on a number of days so far this school year.

You can have a big effect on pupil name's punctuality this term, and we appreciate your help.

We are sure that you are aware of the importance of punctual school attendance for pupil's name.

- When they are on time, Pupil's name will be part of all the important learning and hear all the instructions on how to complete a piece of work
- Social interaction with peers before school is important if pupil's name is to form friendship groups
- Arriving on time may be less embarrassing for pupil's name
- When pupil's name arrives on time they can settle more easily, this more likely to maintain a calm learning environment for them and their classmates

The school site is open for pupils to arrive from time and the children are expected to be in class ready to begin the school day by time.

We value the working partnership we have with parents. If you would like to discuss any aspect of your child's attendance or punctuality with us please contact the school office to arrange a meeting with the attendance officer/your child's class teacher.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher's signature

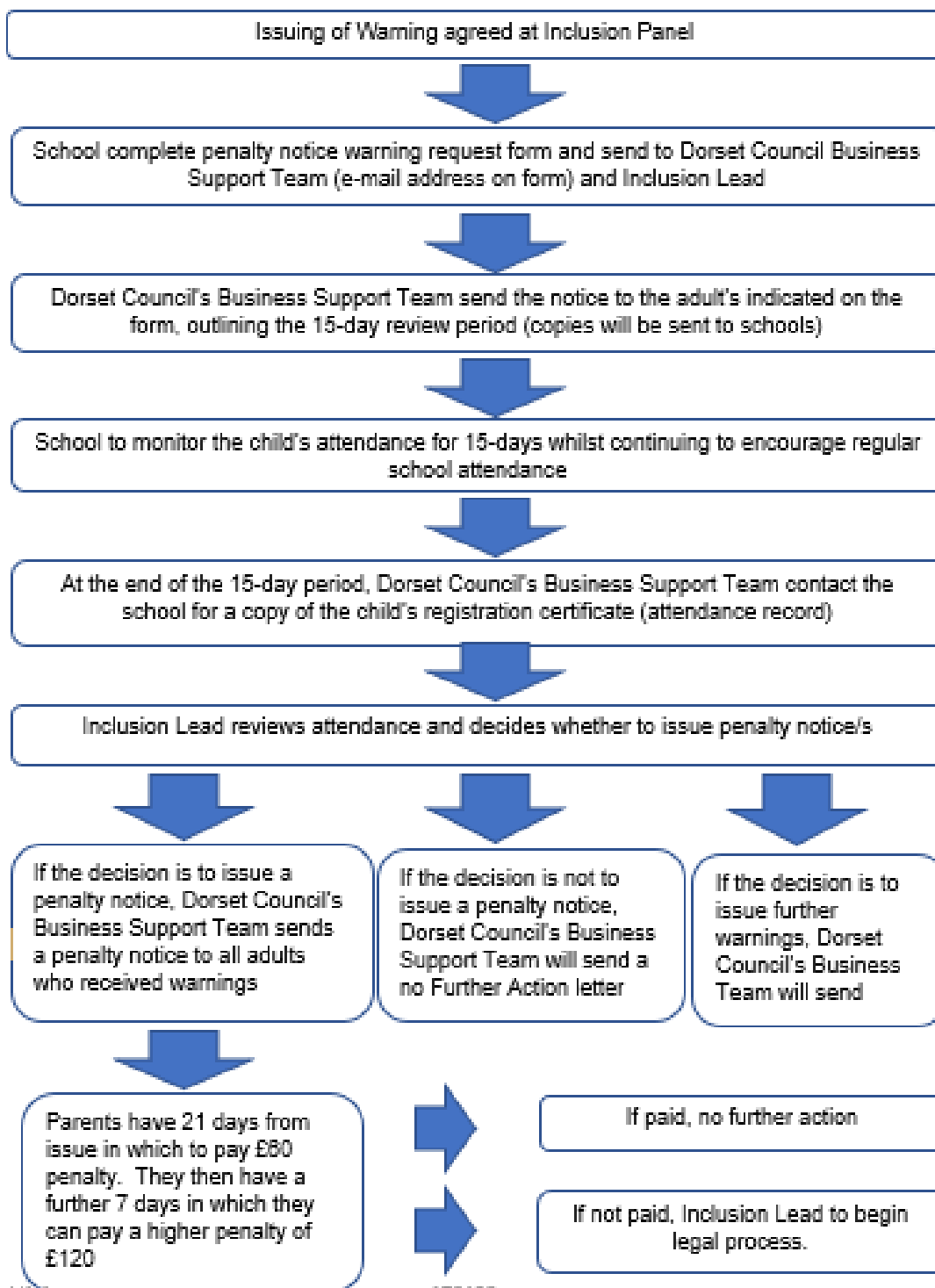
Name

School



Flow Chart for Issuing Penalty Notices

All Penalty Notices must be issued in accordance with this procedure



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