



## Attendance Policy

**Audience:** Pupils, Parents/Carers, Staff, Governors

**Owner:** Home School Link Worker (Attendance Lead) / Headteacher

**Attendance Lead / first contact:** Julie Enright (Home School Link Worker)

**Statutory basis:** Education Act 1996; Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006; Working Together to Improve School Attendance (DfE, 2024); Sutton LA Attendance Support Team (AST) procedures

**Approval:** Governing Body

**Review cycle:** Annually

**Last reviewed:** September 2025

**Next review due:** September 2026

---

### 1. Purpose

Regular attendance at school is vital for pupils to achieve their full potential. This policy sets out how Dorchester Primary School, in partnership with parents/carers, governors and Sutton LA, will promote and secure regular attendance. Our school expectation is 96% attendance. Attendance below 90% is defined as persistent absence and will trigger intervention and, if required, referral to Sutton's Attendance Support Team (AST).

### 2. Roles and Responsibilities

Children will be supported to:

- Arrive at school on time with the help of their parents/carers.
- Develop good routines around attendance and punctuality as they grow.
- Share, with adult support, any worries or barriers that may affect their ability to attend.

Parents/carers will:

- Ensure their child attends school regularly and punctually, recognising their legal duty.
- Contact school by 9:00am on the first day of absence and provide clear reasons.
- Provide medical evidence when requested.
- Avoid term-time holidays.

The school will:

- Maintain accurate registers (morning and afternoon).
- Contact parents promptly if no explanation for absence is received.
- Monitor attendance data and follow up persistent absence.
- Refer cases to AST in line with Sutton LA thresholds.
- Reward and celebrate good attendance.

Home School Link Worker (Attendance Lead):

- Acts as the first point of contact for parents who are seeking advice or support to ensure their children attend school regularly and punctually.
- Works in partnership with families and external agencies to remove barriers to good attendance.

Governors will:

- Monitor whole-school attendance daily, weekly, half-termly and termly, including vulnerable groups.
- Support and challenge the school's attendance improvement strategies.

### **3. Lateness**

- Registration: 8:45am (doors open 8:30am). Pupils arriving after 8:45am are marked late.
- Arrival after 9:15am without valid reason is recorded as unauthorised absence.
- Five unauthorised late arrivals in a half term may result in a Penalty Notice issued by Sutton LA.

### **Collection After School**

- The school day ends at 3:15pm. Pupils should be collected promptly from their classroom door unless attending an after-school club.
- If parents/carers know they will be delayed, they must contact the school office with the reason and expected arrival time.
- Persistent late collection (more than 10 minutes after the end of the day) may result in the child being placed into the school's after-school provision, and the parent/carer may be charged the appropriate fee.
- Repeated late collection will be discussed with parents and may be treated as a safeguarding concern, with referrals made to the Attendance Support Team (AST) or Children's Services if necessary.

#### **4. Early Years Attendance (Nursery/Reception)**

Attendance is not compulsory before statutory school age; in line with the EYFS statutory framework (2025), regular attendance in the Early Years supports safeguarding and children's wellbeing, attachment and readiness to learn. In line with EYFS expectations:

- Providers must follow up on absences in a timely manner. If a child is absent for a prolonged period of time, or if a child is absent without notification from the parent or carer, attempts must be made to contact the child's parents and/or carers and alternative emergency contacts.
- Providers must consider patterns and trends in a child's absences and their personal circumstances and use their professional judgement when deciding if the child's absence should be considered as prolonged.
- Consideration must be given to the child's vulnerability, parent's and/or carer's vulnerability and their home life.
- Any concerns must be referred to local children's social care services and/or a police welfare check requested.

At Dorchester Primary School we apply these principles to Nursery and Reception, working with families to ensure children are safe and engaging with their learning. Therefore we ask parents of children in Early Years to follow the same procedure as the rest of the school outlined in the Absence Procedures section below.

#### **5. Medical Appointments**

- Parents/carers should make routine medical and dental appointments outside school hours wherever possible.
- Where an appointment during the school day is unavoidable, parents/carers should inform the office in advance and provide evidence (e.g. appointment card/text/email).
- Pupils should attend school before and/or after the appointment where feasible; a whole-day absence will not normally be authorised for a single appointment.
- Arrival after/return from an appointment will be coded appropriately; repeated or prolonged appointments may require medical evidence.
- Hospital/urgent care appointments will be authorised with appropriate evidence; the school may request updated evidence for long-term medical conditions.
- For medication during the school day, please refer to the Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy.

#### **6. Absence Procedures**

- Parents must phone school on the first day of absence by 9:00am.
- If no contact is received, school will attempt to reach parents by phone; safeguarding protocols may include a home visit if concerns persist.
- Absence due to illness over 3 consecutive days may require medical evidence (appointment card, prescription, medication).

## **7. Leave of Absence in Term Time**

A 'Leave of Absence Request Form' must be completed for any term-time leave request. The form is provided at Appendix A and is available from the school office.

- Children are not entitled to leave during term time.
- Headteacher may only grant leave in exceptional circumstances.
- Requests must be made on a Leave of Absence form at least 2 weeks in advance with evidence.
- Unauthorised leave may result in a Penalty Notice.

## **8. Encouraging Attendance**

- Positive recognition (certificates, newsletters).
- Clear communication of expectations.
- Support plans for families facing barriers, with AST involvement where necessary.

## **9. Responding to Non-Attendance**

- Attendance is monitored daily for children who are often absent, as well as over each week, half term and full term.
- Pupils <92%: parents informed, medical evidence may be required.
- Persistent absence <90%: action plan agreed with parents; referral to AST if not improving.
- Failure to engage may result in Penalty Notice or court action.

## **10. Circumstances for Penalty Notices (Sutton LA)**

We follow the National Framework for Penalty Notices (August 2024): a Penalty Notice may be considered when a pupil has 10 unauthorised sessions (5 school days) within any 10-school-week period.

- Holiday in term time of 5 days or more without authorisation.
- Absence for 5 consecutive days without medical evidence.
- Attendance below 90% without good reason.
- Five late arrivals after register closes in a half term.
- Child found in public place during first 5 days of exclusion.

## **11. Safeguarding and Poor Attendance**

- Persistent poor attendance may indicate neglect.
- Concerns will be referred to Sutton Children's Services.

## **12. Changing Schools**

Parents must notify the Headteacher if transferring schools. Records will only be released once a confirmed start date and new school details are received.

### **13. Monitoring, Evaluation and Review**

- Reviewed annually by Governors.
- Data presented termly (whole school and by group).
- Impact of interventions assessed.

## Appendix A: Leave of Absence Request Form

Parents/carers should complete this form and return it to the school office at least two weeks before the requested absence. Authorisation can only be granted by the Headteacher in exceptional circumstances. Please attach any supporting evidence.

**Pupil name**

**Date of birth**

**Class**

**Parent/carer name**

**Address**

**Telephone / Email**

**First day requested**

**Last day requested**

**Total number of school days requested**

**Reason for leave (include details of any exceptional circumstances)**

**Evidence attached (if applicable)**

**Siblings (name/school)**

**Parent/carer declaration**

I confirm the information given is accurate. I understand leave may only be authorised in exceptional circumstances and that unauthorised leave may result in a Penalty Notice.

**Parent/carer signature / date**

**School use only – decision**

Authorised / Unauthorised

**Reason for decision**

**Headteacher signature / date**

**Notes**

Note: The school follows the National Framework for Penalty Notices (August 2024). A Penalty Notice may be considered when a pupil has 10 unauthorised sessions (5 school days) within any 10-school-week period.