



Dorset
Studio School
LAND & ENVIRONMENT

Children Absent from Education Policy

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Approved by Full Governing Body	
Last Review: February 2026	Next Review: February 2027

Key Principles & Purpose

Dorset Studio School believes that all students have the right to an education. Progress with learning and the development of prosocial skills requires good attendance at school. An effective school culture is underpinned by clear expectations of roles, procedures, and responsibilities.

The school wants to collaborate with parent(s)/carer(s) and families to ensure that all students attend school as often as they can. We recognise that some students face complex barriers to attendance and understand the importance of listening to the student and their parent(s)/carer(s) and families in order to formulate a plan of action to support their attendance. We firmly believe that 'everyday counts' and it is in the best interests of all students to be in school unless there are rare circumstances.

Persistent and severe absences are of national, local and institution level concerns. This policy explains the processes and procedures of how the school is attempting to tackle these issues within the resources it has available. The school considers persistent and severe unexplained absences as safeguarding risks.

Poor attendance at school can become a habit if it is sustained. This can lead to negative health and socio-economic effects such as poor mental health through social isolation, academic underachievement, and the risk of becoming NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) post-sixteen.

Attendance Concerns (including Sickness notifications)

Dorset Studio School will notify the **Local Authority of any student with attendance concerns**, to include:

- Students who are **severely absent (missing 50% of sessions)**.
- Students who have been absent from school, **where the absence has not been treated as authorised for a continuous period of not less than ten school days**.
- There is no attendance threshold for an attendance concern – it is at the discretion of the school. However, for some groups of vulnerable students, such as those with a Social Worker and/or those known to the Youth Offending Team it will inform the local authority of unexplained absence.

The Attendance Concern Reporting Form (ACRF) will be used where the local authority Inclusion Lead and school collaborate on attendance improvement actions at targeted support meetings for individual students.

- The school will make a sickness return to the local authority if a student is recorded in the attendance register as absent using code I (unable to attend because of sickness) and there are reasonable grounds to believe the student will have to miss 15 consecutive school days or more for illness or the student's total number of school days missed during the current school year because of illness (whether consecutive or cumulative) will reach or exceed 15 school days.

Any student attendance that falls below 90% is considered to be persistently absent. This is a significant concern because it can lead to a downward spiral of further absences.

Children Absent from Education, including those Children Missing from Education (CME)

Parents/Carers are legally responsible for ensuring their child or children receive a full-time suitable education until the last Friday in June in the school year they turn sixteen. School follows the regulations described in School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) 2024.

A child is absent from school if they are not physically present during the registration periods set in the morning and the afternoon of each day. School codes absences according to regulation 10 found in the aforementioned legalisation.

A child is termed as missing education if:

- The student has gone missing, and no contact can be made with the parent/carer to establish the reason for absence.
- The student ceased to attend the school and the forwarding address of the family is not known.
- The student has not returned from holiday within 10 school days of the expected date of return.
- The student fails to accept their place at the start of the academic year and the whereabouts of the young person is unknown.

If a student fails to attend school on the agreed starting day, the school is expected to follow this up and try to establish the reason for absence. If the school is unable to locate the student, the school will notify the local authority immediately.

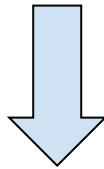
Where this is the case, in line with the duty under section 10 of the Children Act 2004, the school will conduct reasonable enquiries. This may include:

- Make contact with the parent, relatives and neighbours using known contact details.
- Contact siblings including those in other schools.
- Alert relevant school staff.
- Check/review the S2S website.
- Home visit(s) made by appropriate team, following local guidance concerning risk assessment and if appropriate make enquiries with neighbour(s) and relatives.
- If the above do not find the child, the school will inform the local authority by the ACE system no later than day 10 and record the child as CME.
- If the child is found after informing the local authority, the school will update the ACE system.
- If there are safeguarding concerns or if the child has a Child Protection Plan, then the notification should be immediate (day 1)

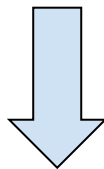
The school will always act in the best interests of the child or children and prioritise visits to those most vulnerable. The details of this can be seen in the following flowchart:

Flowchart of Attendance Intervention

Stage 1: All absences will be followed up on the first day of absence i.e. Day 1. This will be done by e-mail, text message, or telephone call.

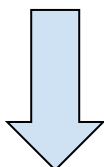


Stage 2: If a child is absent for a second consecutive day, this absence will be followed up by a phone call to the priority contact within our Management Information System, ARBOR. If direct contact cannot be made, a voicemail will be left if this is permissible.



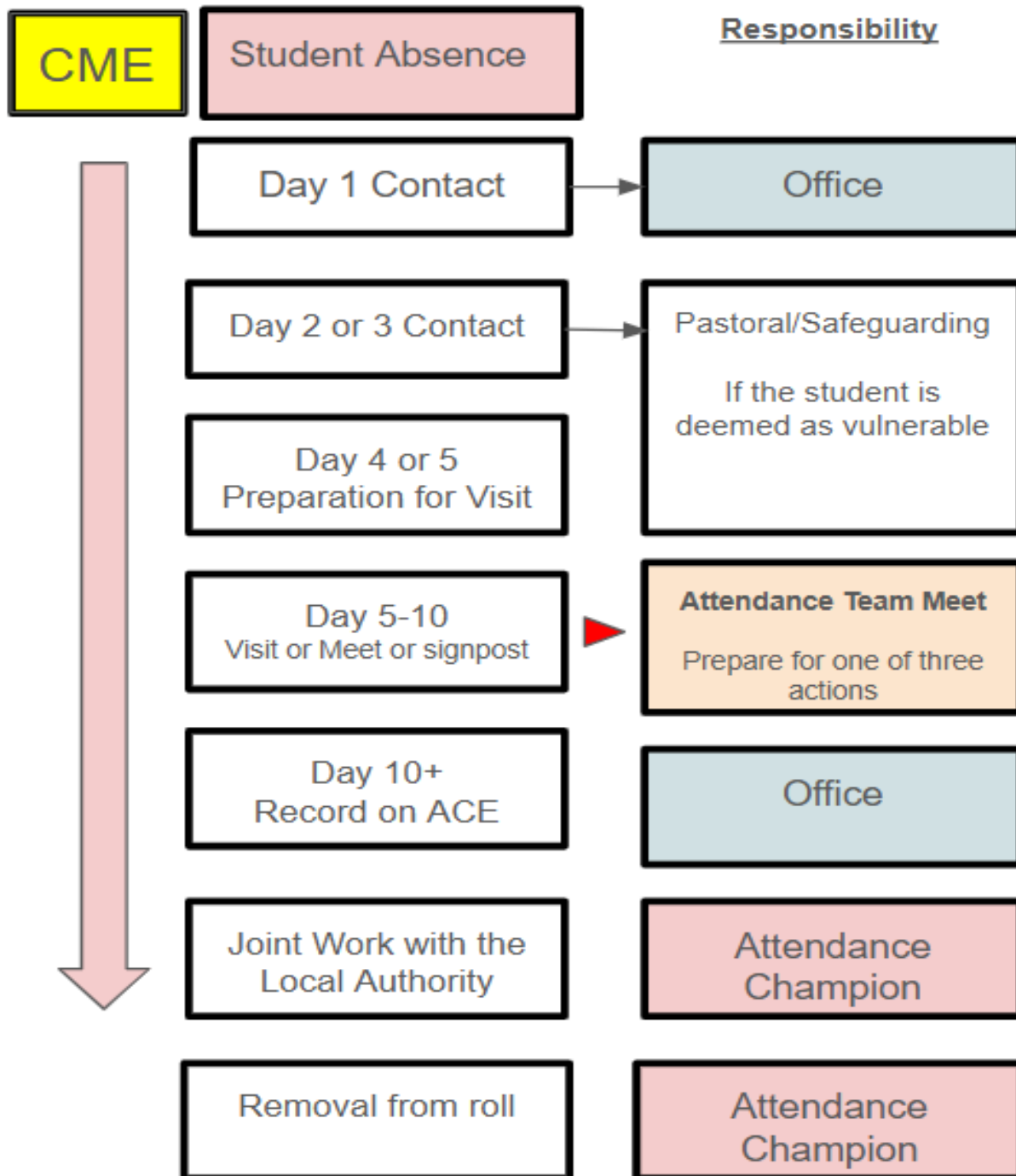
Stage 3: If continuous absence reaches four school days, the Attendance Team will determine the most appropriate and efficient course of action. These actions can broadly be divided into three categories which, on occasion, may overlap:

1. Secure a **planned attendance conversation with parent(s)/carer(s)**. These can either be in -person or online. If an online meeting is arranged, it is our expectation that the child will be seen online and is able to speak if staff ask any questions.
2. **Plan a home visit within five days**. These visits may be planned or 'cold calls.' However, a note of the visit will always be left at the address should there be no response.
3. **Refer to external agencies**. This may occur if the child and family are already working with external support. Otherwise, advice may be sought, or a referral may be made, if staff are concerned about the safety of the child.



Stage 4: At the continuous absence threshold of ten school days, The school will record a child's absence on the DORSET ACE platform. At this stage, the school may ask the Local Authority to intervene.

Internally, each member of the **attendance team** has a **specific responsibility** when a student is missing from education from the first day of absence. The following flow chart shows this:



Attendance Legal Intervention

The school will collaborate with the local authority to ensure that an appropriate range of legal interventions are used if there is a requirement to enforce attendance. Any legal intervention that may be used must be effective in changing the behaviour of the parent(s)/carer(s)/family to ensure their child or children attend school. Possible interventions include:

- Attendance Contracts
- Notice To Improve
- Education Supervision Orders (ESOs)
- Attendance Prosecution
- Parenting Orders
- Fixed Penalty Notices

Reduced (or part time) Timetables.

All students of compulsory school age are entitled to a full-time education. In very exceptional circumstances there may be a need for a temporary part-time timetable to meet a student's individual needs. For example, where a medical condition prevents a student from attending full-time education and a part-time timetable is considered as part of a re-integration package.

A part-time timetable will **not** be used to manage a student's behaviour and will only be in place for the shortest time necessary. Any pastoral support programme or other agreement will have a time limit by which point the student is expected to attend full-time education, either at school or alternative provision.

Students on a part-time timetable are, by definition, not present at school for part of the week or day. They are also not attending approved educational activities and must therefore be absent. In agreeing to the part-time timetable, the school has agreed to the absence and will record it as authorised (see below).

In agreeing to a part-time timetable, Dorset Studio School will:

- Ensure parental consent.
- Inform the local authority using the All Children in Education (ACE) system.
- Record details including start date, reasons for part-time table, objectives, and details of hours. The school will set a date when the student is expected to return to full time education and set regular review dates.
- Record attendance sessions as **'C2' - Leave of absence for a compulsory school age student subject to a part time timetable.**
- Following reviews, the school will record details of the review and whether the part time timetable has been extended or ended.
- If the part time timetable ends due to the child moving to another local authority or school (outside of normal transition points) then the school will record this with the local authority in the Off-Roll form.

Flexi Schooling

Flexi-schooling is the term used for a system whereby children are partly educated at school and partly educated elsewhere, usually at home. Unlike full-time home education, any agreement between a student's parents and the school for the child to be "flexi-schooled" is at the Principal's discretion. **Flexi-schooling should not be confused with a part-time timetable; the child must be in full-time education throughout the school year.**

On extremely rare occasions, the school will carefully consider a proposal for flexi-schooling made by a parent(s)/carer(s). Integral to this process will be the consideration of whether the legal duty to ensure that the child is in full-time education is met. In addition, the school must be satisfied that the flexi-schooling agreement is supported with milestones to make checks on progress, with an agreement to taper down the amount of time spent away from school. The school will not seek to persuade parents to educate their children in order to avoid exclusion or action for poor attendance.

In agreeing to a flexi-school arrangement, Dorset Studio School will:

- Ensure parental consent.
- Inform the local authority using the **All Children in Education (ACE) system**.
- Record details including start date and reasons for flexi-schooling, a date when the student is expected to return to full time education and a review date.
- The school will review flexi-schooling arrangements twice every half-term. These reviews may take place in-person or online. It will be incumbent on the parent(s)/carer(s) to demonstrate what their child/children have been doing to satisfy school that they have been involved in meaningful education.
- Following reviews, the school will record details of the review and the status of the plan to reintegrate the child back into school.
- Flexi-schooling will last **no longer than one school term** unless there are exceptional circumstances. In this case, an exceptional circumstances can be defined as:
 1. The child is involved with other external professionals, and they recommend a continuation of the current plan.
 2. The child is undergoing assessment related to complex medical conditions which prevent a return to school.
 3. The school has received advice and guidance from other professionals that states the child is unable to return to school on a more regular basis.
 4. The child is undergoing assessment that is likely to result in the naming of specialist provision on an EHCP.

Off Site Direction (Alternative Provision)

Off-site direction (Alternative Provision) is when a student is directed to attend another education setting to improve their behaviour. Where interventions or targeted support have not been successful in improving a student's behaviour, off-site direction can be used to arrange time limited placements at an alternative provision. Alternative provision includes PRUs, alternative provision, and hospital schools, as well as a variety of independent, registered, unregistered and further education providers.

As a key safeguarding measure, the school will ensure that it has written confirmation that the provider has undertaken DBS checks for all of its staff.

Depending on the individual needs and circumstances of the student, off-site direction into alternative provision can be full-time or a combination of part-time support in alternative provision and continued mainstream education.

- Dorset Studio School will inform the local authority of all students subject to Off-Site Direction to Alternative Provision. The school will regularly update the local authority regarding review dates and ending of the direction.
- The nature of the intervention, its objectives, and the timeline to achieve these objectives will be clearly defined and agreed by Dorset Studio School with the alternative provision upfront.
- **The plan will then be frequently monitored and reviewed on a half termly basis** to assure that the provision is achieving its objectives, that the child is regularly attending and that the placement continues to be safe and meets the child's needs. Students need to continue to receive a broad and balanced education, and this will support reintegration into mainstream schooling.
- A proposed maximum period of time will be discussed and agreed upon as part of the planning phase for an off-site direction. As part of planning, alternative options should be considered once the time limit has been reached.
- Where Dorset Studio School commissions alternative provision, the school retains safeguarding duties towards the student and will collect appropriate information from the provider to ensure the provision **remains a safe environment** as well as meeting the student's pastoral and educational needs. This data will be collected using the Alternative Provision Safeguarding Checklist (see Appendix 2).
- Dorset Studio School will obtain written confirmation from the alternative provider that appropriate safeguarding checks have been conducted on individuals working at the establishment, i.e. those checks that schools would otherwise perform in respect of their own staff.
- Dorset Studio School will ensure that they have arrangements in place whereby the provider of the educational activity notifies them of any absences by the student promptly, particularly any unexpected and unexplained absence.
- Where safeguarding concerns arise, the placement will be immediately reviewed and terminated, if necessary, unless or until those concerns have been satisfactorily addressed.

Off Site Direction (to Mainstream Schools /Academy Schools)

Off-site direction is when a student is directed to attend another school for a period of time on a temporary basis. Depending on the individual needs and circumstances of the student, this can be either a full-time or part-time arrangement.

- Dorset Studio School will inform the local authority of all Students subject to Off-Site Direction to another Mainstream/Academy School. The school will regularly update the local authority with regard to review dates and ending of the direction.
- The nature of the intervention, its objectives, and the timeline to achieve these objectives will be clearly defined and agreed upfront. A proposed maximum period of time should be discussed and agreed upon as part of the planning phase for an off-site direction. As part of planning, alternative options should be considered once the time limit has been reached.
- The plan will then be frequently monitored and reviewed. Students must continue to receive a broad and balanced education, and this will support reintegration.
- The length of time a student spends under off site direction and the reintegration plan will be kept under review by the governing body, who must hold review meetings at such intervals as they, having regard to the needs of the student, consider appropriate, for as long as the requirement remains in effect.

Managed Moves

A managed move is used to initiate a process which leads to the transfer of a student to another mainstream school permanently. **Schools should not use a 'trial period' or 'trial admission' for managed moves, as a managed move is a permanent move to another school. A managed move is permanent from the first day.**

- Dorset Studio School will inform the local authority of all students subject to a managed move. The school will update the local authority regarding review dates and ending of the managed move.
- Managed moves will be voluntary and agreed with all parties involved, including the parents, the young person, and the admission authority of the new school. They will only occur when it is in the student's best interests.
- The managed move will be preceded by information sharing between Dorset Studio School and the new school, including data on prior and current attainment, academic potential, and where appropriate a risk assessment and advice on effective risk management strategies.
- Dorset Studio School will collaborate with the new school to ensure that the student is provided with an effective integration strategy.
- When the student has ceased to attend Dorset Studio School, we will, with the agreement of the other school, delete the student from the register.

Permanent Exclusion

A Permanent Exclusion is always a '**last resort**' and is used to safeguard members of the school community from harm in all its forms. In the majority of cases, the school will inform the local authority if a student is at risk of a permanent exclusion. The school will attempt to collaborate with the local authority to determine whether there are any suitable alternatives. Under normal circumstances, in the case of students with an EHCP, the school will seek to convene an emergency review before a decision is made to permanently exclude. However, the Principal retains the right to permanently exclude if circumstances demand it.

- If the student is a Dorset resident, the school will inform the school Inclusion Lead and Dorset Council via the **All Children in Education (ACE) system** immediately. Otherwise, the school will contact the student's home Local Authority.
- Dorset Studio School will:
 - Provide child, parent or guardian contact details, exclusion date, and reason for the exclusion.
 - Add any notes concerning issues such as safeguarding or SEN concerns.

- Following the meeting of the governors, confirm the status of the permanent exclusion as either upheld or rescinded and enter the reason.
- Return any child funding details requested by the Local Authority.
- The attendance register will be marked as follows: E (excluded) from the start of the first session following the Principal's decision to permanently exclude the student, until the commencement of full-time provision provided by the student's local authority.
- Dorset Studio School will ensure that any open ACE cases (such as attendance concerns or reduced timetables) are ended for the child prior to going off roll.

Elective Home Education

Dorset Studio School believes that Elective Home Education (EHE) is not in the best interests of any child. Whilst educating children at home can work well when it is a positive, informed, and dedicated choice, there is growing evidence to illustrate that the education children receive is unsuitable for their needs.

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 provides that:

The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause them to receive efficient full-time education suitable-(a) to his age, ability, and aptitude, and (b) to any special educational needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

In other words, the education of the child/children lies solely on the parent/carer if they make this choice. This may have serious implications when it comes to seeking a centre for terminal, formal examinations.

If parents/carers elect to educate at home, then:

- Dorset Studio School will notify the local authority immediately where a parent has stated they intend to electively home educate their child.
- Dorset Studio School will remove the child from roll on the day requested by the parent.
- Dorset Studio School will raise any safeguarding concerns relating to a child directly with the student's local authority as soon as possible.

Off Roll

- Dorset Studio School will use the All Children in Education (ACE) system to notify the local authority immediately when a student is removed from roll.
- If the school is informed by another school or the parent/carer that the student is changing provision, the school will seek to obtain written confirmation from the new school that the student has been given a place and a start date has been agreed.
- Dorset Studio School will obtain written confirmation from the new school that the student has been placed on the new school's roll before removing the student from roll. Once received, the student will be deleted from roll. Off roll dates will not be backdated in student records.
- Dorset Studio School will ensure that any open ACE cases (such as attendance concerns or reduced timetables) are ended for the child prior to going off roll.

Related guidance

- [Elective Home Education: Departmental guidance for parents, April 2019](#)
- [Elective Home Education: Draft guidance for parents, October 2023.](#)
- [Elective Home Education: Departmental guidance for local authorities, April 2019.](#)
- [Elective Home Education: Draft departmental guidance for local authorities, October 2023.](#)
- [Working together to improve school attendance applies from 19 August 2024](#)
- [Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance applies from 19 August 2024](#)
- [Children missing education: Statutory guidance for local authorities, September 2016](#)
- [Keeping children safe in education 2025: Statutory guidance for schools and colleges](#)
- [Keeping children safe in education 2025: for school and college staff \(part 1\)](#)
- [Regulated activity in relation to children: scope](#)
- [Suspension and Permanent Exclusion from maintained schools, academies, and student referral units in England, including student movement, September 2023](#)