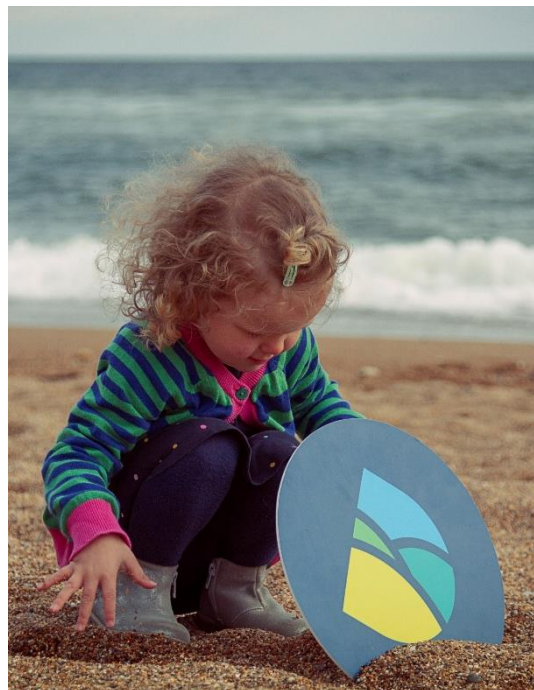




Dorset
Council

Promoting Educational Attendance in Dorset



2024-2025

Contents

1. Introduction
2. Guidance and Legislation: Helpful Links
3. Inclusion Lead and School Meeting Flow Chart
4. Dorset Education Board Attendance Task and Finish Group
5. Locality Attendance Network Meetings
6. Overview of Dorset's Steps for Improving Attendance
7. Dorset's Steps for Improving School Attendance
8. Attendance Legal Interventions
9. Children who Cannot Attend School due to Health Needs
10. AV1

Appendices

Appendix 1: Targeted Support Meeting (TSM) template

Appendix 2: Inclusion Panel Child Details Template

Appendix 3: Inclusion Panel Minutes Template

Appendix 4: Attendance Contract Template

Appendix 5: Letter Templates

- Letter 1 – New School Year
- Letter 2 – Half-Termly Letter
- Letter 3 – Initial Attendance Concerns
- Letter 4 – Attendance Improvement
- Letter 5 – Invitation to Attendance Meeting
- Letter 6 – Invitation to Inclusion Panel
- Letter 7 – Failure to Attend Inclusion Panel
- Letter 8 – Lateness

Appendix 6: Notice to Improve Template

Appendix 7: Penalty Notice Request Form and Check List

Appendix 8: Referral Template for Children who Cannot Attend School due to Health Needs

Appendix 9: PACE leaflet

Appendix 10: Locality Contact Information

1. Introduction

Our vision for attendance in Dorset

“We want attendance to be everyone’s business and a key feature of all frontline council services and partners’ work so that the children and young people of Dorset have the highest possible school attendance which enables them to be healthy, happy, safe and achieve the best possible outcomes. We want our children to go on to achieve their potential and to lead fulfilling lives.”

Working together to improve school attendance

This document has been written to reflect how Dorset will implement the DfE’s ‘*Working together to improve school attendance*’ guidance, which became statutory on the 19 August 2024.

In Dorset we believe that attendance is a key element of safety and wellbeing, as well as a key contributor to good educational attainment and life outcomes. We are clear that improving attendance is everyone’s business. We fully recognise that the barriers to accessing education are wide and complex. Relationships are at the heart of everything we do. We come alongside our children, young people, families and schools to understand these barriers, but we do not tolerate poor attendance and aspire to high standards of attendance from all of our children and young people.

We understand that improving attendance is part of wider school improvement such as curriculum, culture and ethos. We want our schools to be inclusive places where all our children and young people feel they belong, are safe, cared for and valued.

Our work is shaped by the following commitments. We will:

- Ensure that attendance is everyone’s business
- Ensure that attendance is a key feature of all frontline council and services and partners’ work
- Work in partnership with young people, parents, schools, health, youth justice service, police and other partners
- Embrace new ways of working to support and enable innovative practice
- Commit to identify and understand barriers to attendance in Dorset
- Commit to provide good quality services
- Commit to early identification and support

Our Dorset Attendance Strategy and Plan can be found at [Dorset Council Attendance Strategy and Plan 2023 - Dorset Council](#)

2. Guidance and Legislation: Helpful Links

Department for Education (DfE)

- The DfE's latest guidance on school attendance
[Working together to improve school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/131111/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance.pdf)
(publishing.service.gov.uk)
- CME Statutory Guidance for Schools
[Stat guidance template](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/131111/Statutory_Guidance_for_Schools.pdf) (publishing.service.gov.uk)
- Supporting Children and young people at School with Medical Conditions
[Supporting children and young people with medical conditions at school - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/131111/Supporting_children_and_young_people_with_medical_conditions_at_school.pdf)
(www.gov.uk)
- Children with health needs
[Education for children with health needs who cannot attend school - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/131111/Children_with_health_needs.pdf)
(www.gov.uk)
- Children with mental health needs
[Mental health issues affecting a child or young person's attendance: guidance for schools - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/131111/Mental_health_issues_affecting_a_child_or_young_persons_attendance_guidance_for_schools.pdf) (www.gov.uk)
- Improving attendance: good practice for schools and multi-academy trusts
<https://www.gov.uk/government/case-studies/improving-attendance-good-practice-for-schools-and-multi-academy-trusts>
- Securing Good Attendance and Tackling Persistent Absence
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/securing-good-attendance-and-tackling-persistent-absence/securing-good-attendance-and-tackling-persistent-absence>
- Remote education
[Providing remote education: guidance for schools - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/131111/Providing_remote_education_guidance_for_schools.pdf) (www.gov.uk)
- Reasonable adjustments
[What are reasonable adjustments and how do they help disabled children and young people at school? – The Education Hub](https://www.blog.gov.uk/2024/08/19/what-are-reasonable-adjustments-and-how-do-they-help-disabled-children-and-young-people-at-school/) ([blog.gov.uk](https://www.blog.gov.uk))
- Penalty notice information for parents
[Fines for parents for taking children out of school: What you need to know – The Education Hub](https://www.blog.gov.uk/2024/08/19/fines-for-parents-for-taking-children-out-of-school-what-you-need-to-know/) ([blog.gov.uk](https://www.blog.gov.uk))
- Keeping Children Safe in Education
[Keeping children safe in education - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/131111/Keeping_children_safe_in_education.pdf) (www.gov.uk)
- Suspension and permanent exclusion guidance
[Suspension and permanent exclusion guidance](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/131111/Suspension_and_permanent_exclusion_guidance.pdf) (publishing.service.gov.uk)

- Alternative Provision
[Alternative provision - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)
- Elective Home Education (EHE)
[Elective home education - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

Dorset Council

- Dorset Council's penalty notice code of conduct
[Children's Services code of conduct for the issue of fixed penalty notices - Dorset Council](#)
- Dorset's All Children in Education (ACE) system
[Home - ACE \(dorsetcc.local\)](http://dorsetcc.local)
- Dorset Council's Physical and Medical Needs Service (PMNS)
[Physical and medical needs service \(PMNS\) | Dorset Nexus](#)

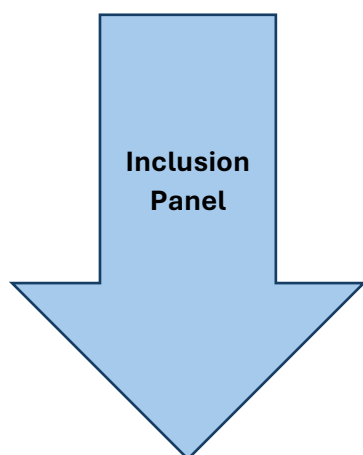
Other

- Education Act
[Education Act 2011 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](http://legislation.gov.uk)
- Public Health Dorset – Information for schools
[Public health information for schools - Public Health Dorset - Dorset Council](#)
- Attendance Interventions and Rapid Evidence Assessment
[Attendance interventions rapid evidence assessment | EEF \(educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk\)](http://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk)
- Working with parents to support children's learning
https://d2tic4wvo1iusb.cloudfront.net/eef-guidance-reports/supporting-parents/EEF_Parental_Engagement_Guidance_Report.pdf?v=1635355222
- Reasonable adjustments
[guidance-reasonable-adjustments-for-disabled-children and young people-in-england_0.docx \(live.com\)](#)

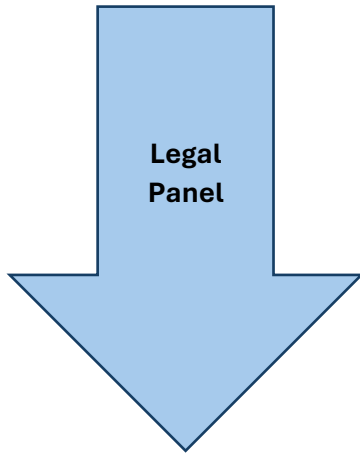
3. Inclusion Lead and School Meeting Flow Chart



- Each school has a link Inclusion Lead who they will meet at least termly (this can be virtual or face-to-face).
- The school representative should be someone with responsibility for attendance who has the authority to agree to actions for children who are severely or persistently absent.
- Other professionals may also attend the meeting if this will make it more efficient and effective, such as the school's link Family Worker, Specialist Teacher, Educational Psychologist or SEND Team Manager.
- The purpose of the meeting is set out in the DfE's 'Working together to improve school attendance' guidance and includes: Build strong relationships and work collaboratively; identify and agree actions for severely absent children and young people, agree approaches for persistently absent children and young people where they have barriers to attendance that require a multi-agency response; agree which agency will act as the lead practitioner and conduct data analysis.
- Appendix one contains the template that Inclusion Leads will use for the meeting and they will share the completed one with you within 14 days of the meeting.



- Each school will hold an Inclusion Panel termly (where appropriate).
- The school should invite the parents of child being discussed, the child (if appropriate) as well as any other relevant professionals.
- The school representative should be someone with responsibility for attendance who has the authority to agree to actions for children who are severely or persistently absent.
- The purpose of the meeting will be to discuss barriers to attendance and agree actions to put in place to overcome them.
- Schools should inform Inclusion Leads of the children to be discussed using the proforma in appendix 2. This will enable Inclusion Leads to be fully prepared for the meeting.
- Minutes of the meeting should be recorded by the school using the template in appendix 3.
- The agreed actions should be recorded in an attendance contract which is signed by all those with actions and circulated to all attendees (along with the minutes) within 14 days of the meeting by the school. The template for the contract can be found in appendix 3.
- A child may be discussed at Inclusion Panel more than once.



- When all supportive avenues have been exhausted and legal intervention is likely to lead to a behavioural change that improves attendance, an Inclusion Panel may request that a child is discussed at Dorset Council's legal panel.
- Dorset Council's Legal Panel will meet fortnightly.
- Attendees will include a paralegal, Service Manager for Learning and Belonging, Team Manager for Learning and Belonging and Inclusion Leads.
- SEND colleagues and social care colleagues will be invited where appropriate.
- The school's link Inclusion Lead will inform the school of the outcome of legal panel's discussion within 48 hours.

4. Dorset Education Board Attendance Task and Finish Group

Attendance is a standing item on Dorset Education Board's agenda. The Attendance Task and Finish Group is a sub-group of the Dorset Education Board. It will:

- Monitor the implementation of the DfE's 'Working together to improve school attendance' statutory guidance
- Monitor the implementation of Dorset's attendance strategy, plan, guidance and processes
- Provide an opportunity to discuss whether the intention of Dorset's attendance strategy is being implemented in practice and give attendees an opportunity to give feedback on how processes are working
- Be an opportunity to share what is happening in localities and any support that is becoming available

There will also be opportunities for a question-and-answer session between school representatives and LA representatives. This will then lead to actions to ensure implementation is efficient and effective and having an impact on improving attendance.

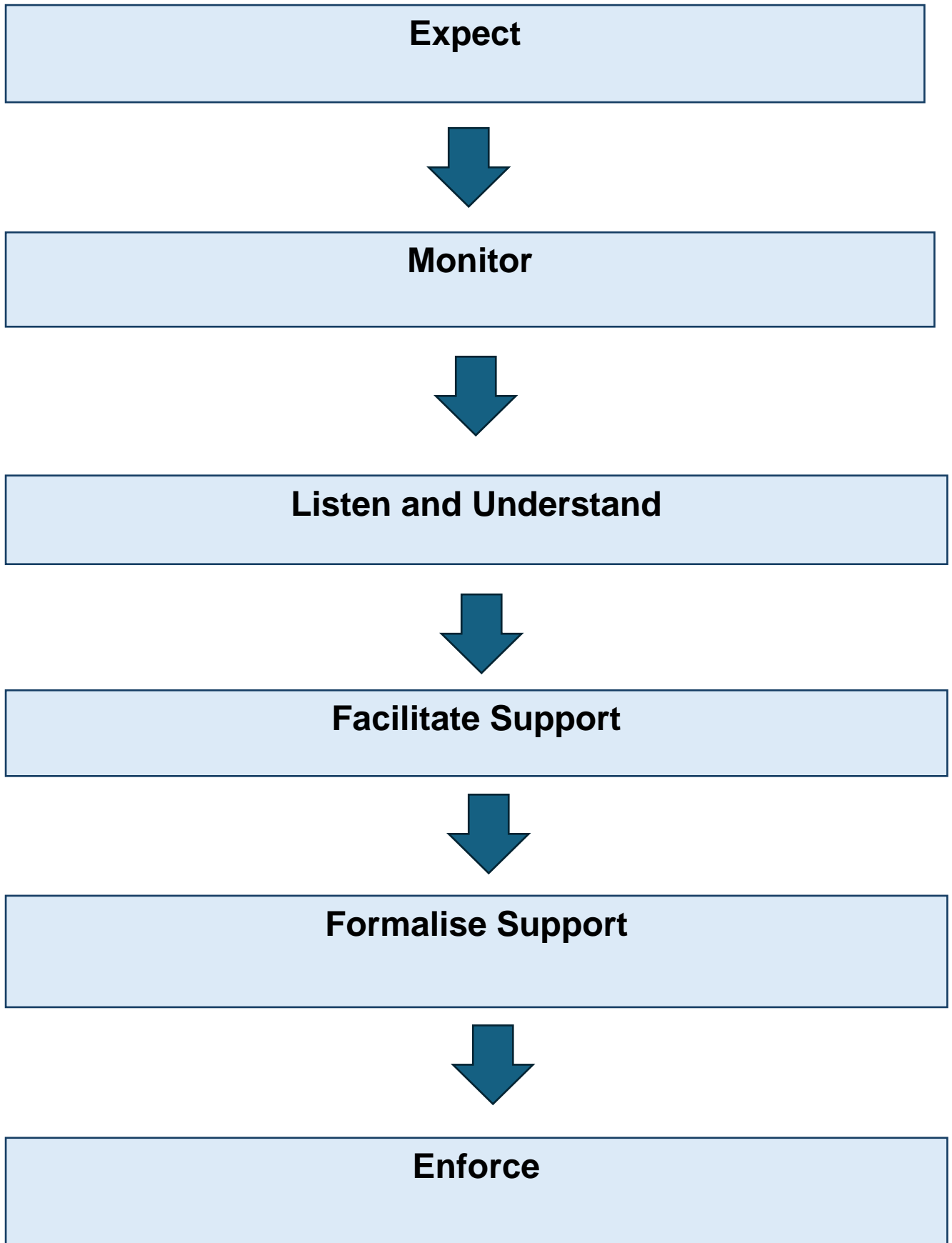
Representatives from multi-academy trusts, schools, health, Dorset-Parent Carer Council and Dorset's Learning and Belonging Teams will be part of the attendance task and finish group. Meetings will be half-termly.

5. Locality Attendance Network Meetings

The DfE's 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance (August 2024)' states that Local Authorities should provide opportunities for all schools (regardless of type) to regularly come together to share effective attendance practice.

Dorset Council will facilitate termly locality attendance network meetings. These will be organised by Education Challenge Leads with the support of Learning and Belonging Team Managers. They should be attended by senior leaders in schools with responsibility for attendance (who are welcome to bring other members of staff with them).

6. Overview of Dorset's steps for improving school attendance



7. Dorset’s steps for improving school attendance

	AREA	ACTIONS	WHEN
STEP 1a	EXPECT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School leaders understand that good attendance does not happen in isolation – there is an inter-relationship between attendance and the quality of the school’s curriculum, ethos, behaviour and inclusivity (Securing Good Attendance and Tackling Persistent Absence, OFSTED, February 2022) • Schools build respectful relationships with staff, children and young people, families and other stakeholders in order to secure their trust and engagement. They make sure there is a welcoming and positive culture across the school (Improving School Attendance: Support for Schools and Local Authorities, DfE, March 2022) • School leaders regularly communicate expectations for attendance and punctuality and school performance through their regular channels of communication with staff, children and young people and parents (Improving School Attendance: Support for Schools and Local Authorities, DfE, March 2022) • Aspire to high standards of attendance from all children and young people and parents and build a culture where all can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across the school (Working together to improve school attendance, DfE, August 2024) 	All year

STEP 1b	EXPECT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools engage with feeder schools or organisations to access absence information to identify target cohorts prior to transfer (Improving School Attendance: Support for Schools and Local Authorities, DfE, March 2022) • Schools deliver clear messages about the benefits of regular attendance on educational and well-being outcomes to new children and young people and families through their prospectus and transition events • Ensure the school attendance policy is up-to-date and clear to all children and young people, parents and staff. The policy should be based on the expectation set out in '<i>Working together to improve school attendance</i>' (DfE, August 2024) • Send Attendance Letter 1 – New School Year (appendix 5) 	<p>Prior to the start of the academic year/start of the academic year</p>
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STEP 2	MONITOR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched (Working together to improve school attendance, DfE, August 2024) • Discuss at termly Targeted Support Meeting (TSM) with Inclusion Lead • Send Attendance Letter 2 – Half-termly Attendance Letter (appendix 5) 	All year
STEP 3	LISTEN AND UNDERSTAND	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When a pattern is spotted, discuss with children and young people and parents to listen to understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them (Working together to improve school attendance, DfE, August 2024) • Listen to children and young people and parents carefully to find out why they are not attending well enough. Listen, understand, empathise and support – but do not tolerate (Securing Good Attendance and Tackling Persistent Absence, OFSTED, February 2022) • Ensure appropriate support which considers individual needs is put in place for children and young people who are experiencing difficulties attending school – take into consideration the vulnerability of some children and young people and the ways in which this might contribute to absence • Liaise with the schools that the children and young people’ siblings attend - ‘Primary and secondary school leaders working together can be powerful in finding out why issues are arising when children and young people from the same family have poor attendance.’ (Securing Good Attendance and Tackling Persistent Absence, OFSTED, February 2022) 	Attendance is becoming a concern

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call parents and send Attendance Letter 3 – Initial Attendance Concerns (appendix 5) • Record any contact with child or young person/parent/carers and log details of communication • Agree review period - The school should determine the review period at the start of the process (recommendation is 20 days) 	
STEP 4	FACILITATE SUPPORT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove barriers in school and help children and young people and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. This might include an early help or whole family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues (Working together to improve school attendance, DfE, August 2024) • Carefully manage the return of a child or young person, particularly if they have been absent for a long period of time, provide good catch-up support to build confidence and bridge gaps (Improving School Attendance: Support for Schools and Local Authorities, DfE, March 2022) • Provide tailored praise and encouragement when children and young people attend (Improving School Attendance: Support for Schools and Local Authorities, DfE, March 2022) <p>➤ Send parents Attendance Letter 4 – Attendance Improvement (appendix 5).</p>	<p>Support is required</p> <p>Where there is improvement</p>
STEP 5a	FORMALISE SUPPORT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners should work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances, this may include formalising support through 	Where there is no improvement

		<p>an attendance contract or education supervision order (Working together to improve school attendance, DfE, August 2024)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenge parents who do not make sure that their children attend, but also offer support where needed (Improving School Attendance: Support for Schools and Local Authorities, DfE, March 2022) • Where interventions fail to address attendance issues, identify the reasons why and where appropriate, change or adjust the intervention (Improving School Attendance: Support for Schools and Local Authorities, DfE, March 2022) • School to arrange a meeting with parents/carers and child or young person to discuss attendance concerns/needs. • Send parents Attendance Letter 5 – Invitation to Attendance Meeting • Child or young person, parent and school agree on appropriate support or intervention at the meeting. School could use an attendance contract (appendix 4). Those present will need to know that information may be used as evidence if legal intervention is pursued • Agree review period with child or young person and parents - The school should determine the review period at the start of the process (recommended review period is 20 school days but the school should monitor at least weekly) • School to follow up with parents if they fail to attend • School to make a record of all contact with parents/interventions 	
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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School to bring the information about the child/young person for discussion at the half termly (upper/secondary and middle schools) termly (first and primary schools) targeted support meeting that takes place with the Inclusion Lead • Provide tailored praise and encouragement when children and young people attend (Improving School Attendance: Support for Schools and Local Authorities, DfE, March 2022) • Send parents Attendance Letter 4 – Attendance Improvement (appendix 5) 	Where there is improvement
STEP 5b	FORMALISE SUPPORT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where there is no improvement following the Attendance Meeting, the school should arrange an Inclusion Panel (usually held at school) including the following attendees: school staff, Inclusion Lead, parents, child or young person, other professionals if relevant • Send parents Attendance Letter 6 – Invitation to Inclusion Panel. Also send a PACE warning leaflet (appendix 9) if appropriate (school to discuss with Inclusion Lead if required) • School to inform the Inclusion Lead of the children and young people they wish to bring to Inclusion Panel (1 week before the date of the panel) and complete the Inclusion Panel Information Check List (appendix 2) • School to take minutes and distribute them to all panel members including parents/carers • Agree review period with child or young person and parents - (recommended review period is 20 school days but the school should monitor at least weekly) 	Where there is no improvement following a meeting with the school

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools are responsible for the arranging, chairing, and minute/note taking for all meetings • NB. If parents/carers fail to attend the Inclusion Panel, the discussion and decisions on next steps will still take place. Outcomes will be communicated to parents/carers by letter. • Send Attendance Letter 7 – Failure to Attend Inclusion Panel (appendix 5) • Provide tailored praise and encouragement when children and young people attend (Improving School Attendance: Support for Schools and Local Authorities, DfE, March 2022) • Send parents Attendance Letter 4 – Attendance Improvement (appendix 5) 	Where there is improvement
STEP 6	ENFORCE	<p>Depending on previous meetings/discussions/support there are four possible routes for the panel:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Discussion about any new information and any additional support that will be put in place, giving a time frame for improvement and schedule a further Inclusion Panel if necessary 2. Recommend further discussion at In Year Fair Access (IYFA) in order to access further support 3. Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, enforce attendance through statutory intervention: a penalty notice in line with the National Framework or prosecution to protect the child or young person’s right to an education (Working together to improve school attendance, DfE, August 2024) 4. Where there are safeguarding concerns, and an Education Supervision Order is not appropriate or has not been successful the case should be considered for s.17 or s.47 statutory social care involvement 	Where an inclusion panel does not lead to improvement

8. Attendance Legal intervention

Schools, trusts and local authorities are expected to work together and make use of the full range of legal interventions rather than relying solely on fixed penalty notices or prosecution. It is for individual schools and local authorities to decide whether to use them in an individual case after considering the individual circumstances of a family. Where they are used, it should be clear that it will change parental behaviour and in making the decision to use an intervention, headteachers and local authority officers should have regard to their safeguarding duties as set out in the statutory guidance on Keeping Children Safe in Education (Working together to improve school attendance, August 2024).

Possible interventions include:

- Attendance Contracts
- Education Supervision Orders (ESOs)
- Attendance Prosecution
- Parenting Orders
- Fixed penalty notices

More information on attendance legal interventions can be found in the DfE's ['Working together to improve school attendance'](#) guidance.

Issuing of penalty notices:

The new national framework for issuing penalty notices came into effect on the 19 August 2024.

If the national threshold has been met and offers of appropriate support have not been engaged with by the parent or have not worked, a notice to improve should usually be sent to give parents a final chance to engage in support (This does not apply to holiday related absences).

The issuing of a notice to improve will need to be an agreed action at an inclusion panel which is attended by the school's link Inclusion Lead. Once the issuing of a notice to improve has been agreed, the school will complete Dorset Council's notice to improve template and will require their link Inclusion Lead's signature before sending to families.

The school and Inclusion Lead will monitor the attendance over the monitoring period and the Inclusion Lead will discuss the attendance at the Dorset Council Legal Attendance Panel. The decision to issue a penalty notice will be made at this panel following the Inclusion Lead's liaison with the school.

More information about Dorset's process for issuing school attendance penalty notices is set out in our code of conduct [Children's Services code of conduct for the issue of fixed penalty notices - Dorset Council](#)

9. Children who Cannot Attend School due to Health Needs

Schools should complete a referral form (appendix 8) for children and young people who cannot attend school for health needs. Schools should e-mail the referral to their Link Inclusion Lead.

Referrals will be discussed at a weekly medical panel. The medical panel will include Learning and Belonging Service Managers, Learning and Belonging Team Managers, the Physical and Medical Disabilities Manager and a Designated Clinical Officer (DCO). Inclusion Leads will inform schools of the panel's decision.

10. AV1

Dorset has a number of AV1s available for your school to help improve attendance.

AV1s are distance learning robots. Children and young people can partake in the vital education and social aspects of school from home or even a hospital bed.

They have been used successfully in a range of Dorset schools, including first, primary, middle and secondary provision.



St Ives Primary School, Dorset

AV1s sit in the classroom in place of the child, and the child can then join in lessons by listening, watching the teacher, asking questions, and participating in discussions. The child or young person can operate the AV1 from a phone or tablet, wherever they might be. It also officially counts as attendance. Increasingly schools are using them with children who are suffering with anxiety and looking for a way of enabling them to return to classroom. The AV1 can provide a step towards this.

Live streaming

AV1 transmits a live stream, from the AV1 to the AV1 user's tablet. This means that no data is recorded. The live stream is end-to-end encrypted, meaning it is impossible for any external party to access the video/audio sent from the AV1. It is not possible to record or screenshot when using the AV1 app on an Android device.

Knowing who is accessing AV1

Only one user can be connected to the AV1 at any time. You will know the user is connected when the eyes light up. The AV1 user must enter this 4-digit code each time they wish to use their AV1. In addition, the AV1 user/their guardian are required to digitally accept terms and conditions, which state that only the AV1 user will be using the AV1.

Want to know more?

All the information on how to book one out for your school can be found [here](#). We can also offer a free trial. Any queries please contact us at AV1@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk You can also speak to your Inclusion Lead.

Appendix 1: Targeted Support Meeting Template



Targeted Support Meeting		Date:	
School:		Inclusion Lead:	
School representative:		Role of school representative:	
Other attendees:		Role of other attendees:	

Area for discussion	Discussion points	Notes from the meeting	Agreed actions
School attendance: trends and emerging issues	What is the school's current attendance? How does it compare to national and Dorset averages?		
	Are there any issues with a particular cohort?		
	Are there any strengths that could be shared with other schools?		
Severe absence	What is the school's current rate of severe absence?		

	How does this compare to the Dorset average?		
	Are there any trends or reasons for absence within the group?		
	Agree new joint action plans for severely absent children and young people since the last meeting.		
	Review progress and/or agree additional actions since the last meeting on existing plans.		
	Do any of the children and young people need to be discussed at YAR?		
Persistent absence	What is the school's current rate of persistent absence? How does this compare to national and Dorset comparators?		
	Are there any trends or reasons for absence within the group?		

	Which persistently absent children and young people have out of school barriers to attendance that require support from Dorset Council or other partners?		
	Agree any actions (where needed) for any new persistently absent children and young people.		
	Review progress and/ or agree additional actions since the last meeting for existing persistently absent children.		
	Do any of the children need to be discussed at YAR?		
Part-time timetables	Have all children and young people on part-time tables been reported via ACE?		
	Have all part-time timetables recorded on ACE been reviewed and has ACE been updated?		

	Have any children been on part-time tables longer than three terms? What plans are in place for them to be full-time?		
	Do any of the children need to be discussed at YAR?		

Appendix 2: Inclusion panel information template (to be shared with Inclusion Lead ahead of the meeting)



School		School Representative	
Date of meeting		Time of Meeting	
Inclusion Lead			
Other invitees		Role of other invitees	

Child or young person	Child or young person Surname	Attendance	DOB	NCY	Home address	Name of parent 1	Name of parent 2	SEND Support/ EHCP	If SEND, primary area of	Medical needs	Social care status	Child or young person Armed Forces	Sibling Information

Appendix 3: Inclusion panel minutes template



Please allow 45 minutes for each child to be discussed. Schools will chair the inclusion panels and complete the minute template below for each child discussed at an inclusion panel. Please send them to the Inclusion Lead within two weeks of the meeting. It is important that the member of school staff present at the inclusion panel has the authority to make decisions regarding a child's attendance. Those present need to be made aware that discussions in this meeting may be used as evidence if legal intervention is pursued. If appropriate therefore, please read out the following PACE caution: You do not have to say anything, but it may harm your defence if you do not mention when questioned something you later rely on in court, anything you do say may be given in evidence'.

Tick to confirm the caution has been given, if appropriate

School	
Name of child/young person	
Date of panel	
Invited:	
Present:	

Attendance % at time of panel	
Number of unauthorised absences at time of panel	
Number of sessions lateness L and U at time of inclusion panel	
Number of sessions of suspensions at time of inclusion panel	
Any other issues to be discussed (if applicable)	

Child/young person view (if appropriate)
Family view
School view

Inclusion Lead (Dorset Council officer) view
Other professional views

Please minute any further discussion here

Agreed Actions		
Action	By whom?	By when?

Agree review date	
--------------------------	--

Appendix 4: Attendance contract template



We are going to work together in making sure that **NAME OF CHILD/YOUNG PERSON** improves their attendance at school over the next **TIME PERIOD**.

School	
Date of birth	
Year group	
Address	
Name(s) of parent(s)	
Contact Number	
Address(es)	

Senior school staff member with overall responsibility
Member of school staff with day-to-day responsibility
Contact number (and when is the best time to call?)
Dorset Council Officer (if applicable)
Contact details

Current attendance % and other information, including number of absences, family views, child/young person views (if appropriate) and what has been tried before

--

The specific targets of our plan and when we aim to do this by (date)

--

Achieving these targets

I/we (the family) agree to:

--

I (child/young person) agree to (if appropriate):

--

We (the school) agree to:

--

Officers of Dorset Council agree to (if applicable):

--

Others agree to (if applicable):

--

Agreeing to the contract:

Name	Role	Signature

Date:

Copies to be circulated to all parties

Appendix 5:

Letter 1 – New school year

Dear [name of parent(s)/carer(s)]

RE: In this Together

I hope that your child has had a lovely summer break, and we are pleased to welcome them back to school.

Good attendance and punctuality remain a top priority for us at [insert name of school] this academic year. This is because regular school attendance is the key to enabling children and young people to maximise the educational opportunities available to them and become emotionally resilient, confident adults who are able to realise their full potential and make a positive contribution to their community.

We work hard to ensure that your child is supported in school to feel safe, to be the best they can be, and to develop a sense of belonging both with their peers and as part of their wider school community. Regular attendance really does matter.

As a parent it is your responsibility that your child attends school each day. We recognise that at times some children and young people can find attending school less easy than others. We are here to help. If your child is experiencing difficulties, please do get in touch as soon as you are able [insert contact details]. We welcome you taking the lead on starting conversations at any point about supporting your child as we want what is best for them too.

As parents/carers you can best support your children to secure regular attendance and punctuality by:

- Ensuring they arrive at school on time every day by [insert expected time]
- Arranging dental and medical appointments outside of school hours where possible
- Informing the school if your child is too unwell to attend [insert details of how this should be done] (To assist parents in deciding whether their child is too ill to attend school, the NHS have produced a weblink you might find useful: [Is my child too ill for school? - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk/health/a-z/is-my-child-too-ill-for-school/))
- Taking holidays during school holiday periods only
- Attending parents' evenings and school events
- Discussing any problems or difficulties with the school as soon as they arise – staff are here to help

Our attendance policy is available to read on our school website [insert link]. This explains how we monitor attendance and follow up absence. If you have any difficulties accessing our policy, please let us know so that we can provide it in an alternative format.

Thank you for working with us and continuing to support us in maximising your child's attendance to help their learning, well-being and future success. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions or concerns.

Yours sincerely

[Headteacher's signature]

Name

Letter 2 – Half-termly attendance letter example

In This Together

[date]

Dear [name of parent(s)/carer(s)]

Each half term, you will receive a letter to update you on your child's attendance. We know that there are many reasons for a child's absence, and we want to **work together** to support your child's attendance if it should fall below 90% or be near 90%.

This letter is for attendance from [date] up to [date]

Name of child:

We know that 's attendance has been affected by

.....

e.g. medical needs.

	End Autumn 1 st half	End Autumn 2 nd half	End Spring 1 st half	End Spring 2 nd half	End Summer 1 st half	End Summer 2 nd half
Attendance for this year to date:						

Attendance for Year 3:	
Attendance for Year 2:	
Attendance for Year 1:	
Attendance for Reception:	

Signature

Name and role

Letter 3- Initial Attendance Concerns

In This Together

[date]

Dear [name of parent(s)/carer(s)]

Regular school attendance is not only the key to enabling children and young people to maximise their academic progress, educational and extra-curricular opportunities available to them also helps to develop friendships, well-being and a sense of belonging.

We noticed that [name] has missed more school than their classmates. [name] has been absent for [number] days so far this school year. We thought that this might be worrying for you and wanted you to know that we are here to support you and [name], so we rang you on [insert date].

I am writing to thank you for the useful conversation about [name]'s attendance and to provide you with a summary of our discussion:

Insert summary

Please do contact me if you would like a further conversation.

Yours sincerely,

Signature

Name and role

Letter 4 - Attendance Improvement

In This Together

[date]

Dear [name of parent(s)/carer(s)]

RE: Attendance Improvement

Thank you for your continued support. We are pleased to say that [name]'s attendance has improved.

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 [add details].

Yours sincerely

Signature
Name and role

Letter 5 - Invitation to Attendance Meeting

In This Together

[date]

Dear [name of parent(s)/carer(s)]

RE: Invitation to Attendance Meeting

Thank you for your support so far in trying to improve [name]'s attendance. Unfortunately, it is not yet at the level that we were all hoping to achieve. [name] has missed [number of days] since our last conversation.

We are aware that absences due to illness cannot be avoided, however there may be other difficulties that are making attendance a challenge and like you, we want to give [name] the very best chance of success.

Regular school attendance is not only the key to enabling children and young people to maximise their academic progress, educational and extra-curricular opportunities available to them. it also helps to develop friendships, well-being and a sense of belonging.

Our attendance policy is available to read on our school website [insert link]. This explains how we monitor attendance and follow up absence. If you have any difficulties accessing our policy, please let us know so that we can provide it in an alternative format.

We would like to form positive, strong relationships with families and work together to help improve [name]'s attendance and are therefore inviting you to an attendance meeting in school on:

[date]
[time]
[venue]

This meeting will be attended by: [insert details].

You are more than welcome to bring someone along with you too.

Please e-mail us or telephone to confirm receipt of this letter and your intention to attend the meeting by contacting [name, e-mail address and telephone number]

Yours sincerely

Signature
Name and role

Letter 6 - Invitation to Inclusion Panel

In This Together

[date]

Dear [name of parent(s)/carer(s)]

RE: Invitation to Inclusion Panel

Thank you for your meeting with us on [date] to discuss [name]'s attendance. Unfortunately, [name]'s attendance has not yet improved.

Number of days missed since last meeting	
Number of days missed this academic year	

Regular school attendance is not only the key to enabling children and young people to maximise their academic progress, educational and extra-curricular opportunities available to them. it also helps to develop friendships, well-being and a sense of belonging.

We want to continue to work with you and so are inviting you to an Inclusion Panel on:

[date]
[time]
[venue]

You are more than welcome to bring someone along with you too.

This meeting will be attended by [name] from our school, and [name] - who is our Inclusion Lead from Dorset Council. We have invited them as they may be able to offer further advice, support and guidance. We will also invite [add the names of any other professionals].

[Name of school] values 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 [name]'s difficulties with attendance can be discussed.

Please e-mail us or telephone to confirm receipt of this letter and to confirm your attendance by contacting [name, e-mail address and telephone number]

We would like to make you aware that even if you are unable attend the meeting, we will still discuss [name]'s school attendance and make a decision about the next appropriate action.

Yours sincerely

Signature

Name and role

Enclose PACE leaflet (appendix 9) if appropriate (discuss with Inclusion Lead if required)

Letter 7 - Failure to attend Inclusion Panel Meeting

In This Together

[date]

Dear [name of parent(s)/carer(s)]

RE: Failure to Attend Inclusion Panel Meeting

You did not attend the inclusion panel meeting on the insert date. Please find enclosed the minutes of the meeting which include the actions and decisions of the panel.

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.

We will continue to monitor **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 children and young people have the opportunity to achieve their best. We want them to be able to take advantage of all the wider opportunities schools can offer, and to become emotionally resilient, confident adults who are able to realise their full potential.

We value the working partnership we have with parents. If you would like to discuss the Inclusion Panel minutes, please contact **[name, e-mail address and telephone number]**.

We expect to see a significant improvement in school attendance.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher's signature

Name and role

Enclose: PACE leaflet

Letter 8 - Lateness Letter

In This Together

[date]

Dear [name of parent(s)/carer(s)]

RE: Punctuality concern

We want to work alongside families to ensure our children arrive at school on time.

Being on time for school is important for [name] because:

- Social interaction with peers before school can help with forming friendships.
- When they arrive on time, children and young people can settle more easily. This makes it more likely that teachers can maintain a calm learning environment for [name] and their classmates
- If they are on time, [name] is able to be part of all the important learning and hear all the instructions on how to complete a piece of work
- Arriving late may be embarrassing for [name].

The school site is open for children and young people to arrive from [time] and children and young people are expected to be in class ready to register and begin learning by [time].

Unfortunately, [name] has been late on [number] days so far this school year.

We appreciate that this may be because of challenges of which we are unaware. If your child is experiencing difficulties, please do get in touch so that we can discuss how we can help. You can contact [name] by e-mail [address] or telephone [number].

Yours sincerely

Signature
Name and role

Appendix 6: Notice to Improve Template

School Attendance Notice to Improve

[date]

Dear [name of parent(s)/carer(s)]

School attendance is hugely important. For your child to gain the full benefit from their education, for their learning, wellbeing, and wider development, they need to attend on time, every day possible.

If a child of compulsory school age who is a registered child or young person at a school fails to attend regularly at the school or fails to attend regularly the child's parent may be guilty of an offence under s.444 Education Act 1996

You, [name of parent(s)/carer(s)] are a parent/carer of [name], who is a registered child or young person at our school - [school name].

We have offered support to you and your family to try and help improve [name] attendance, including:

1. **Telephone calls.** We called you to discuss concerns about [name] attendance and barriers to attendance; and to offer support.
2. **An Attendance Letter.** We wrote you a letter to summarise the telephone conversation and to confirm the support in place which included: [List the support that was agreed and actioned].
3. **An Attendance Support Meeting Invite.** We invited you to a meeting to discuss your child's attendance and to offer support to ensure that their attendance improved. You were notified of the consequences should your child continue to have unauthorised absence and you did not effectively engage with the support offered.
4. **Attendance Contract.** Support for your child's attendance was agreed in an attendance contract with yourself, the school and [include any other relevant professionals]. You did not effectively engage with the actions agreed in the attendance contract.
5. **Inclusion Panel.** We invited you to an Inclusion Panel with an Inclusion Lead from Dorset Council's Learning and Belonging Team to discuss your child's attendance and offer further support. You were notified of the consequences should your child continue to have unauthorised absence and you did not effectively engage with the support offered.
6. **Family Help.** You have been offered support from Dorset Council's Family Help Team to help improve [name] attendance and you did not engage effectively with this support.
7. **Targeted Youth Work.** You have been offered support from Dorset Council's Targeted Youth Work Team to help improve [name] attendance and you did not engage effectively with this support.

Unfortunately, despite the support that was offered to your family, attendance remains a cause for concern. Between and [warning start date] and [warning end date] the child or young person failed to attend regularly at [school name] which resulted in 10 sessions (half days) or more of unauthorised absences being recorded. Please see the attached registration certificate for details.

You now have twenty school days (4 weeks) in which to improve your child's attendance. During this time, your child must show significant improvements in attendance and avoid having any unauthorised absences from school during this period. Should we not see sufficient improvement and further unauthorised absences take place during this period, a Penalty Notice may be issued. A penalty notice is charged at £160 if paid within 28 days. There is usually the opportunity to pay a reduced amount of £80 if paid within 21 days.

If you wish to discuss this notice, or discuss what further support is available, please contact [name] as soon as possible ([number]).

Alternatively, you can contact [Inclusion Lead name] at Dorset Council ([add telephone number and e-mail address]).

Yours sincerely

[Name]

[Head Teacher]

[School Name]

[Name]

[Inclusion Lead]

[Learning and Belonging Team, Children's Services, Dorset Council]

Appendix 7: Penalty Notice Request Form and Checklist



PLEASE SUBMIT THIS FORM WITHIN TWO WEEKS OF COMPLETION OF HOLIDAY ABSENCE.

Please send the following supporting documents with this request: - **Current Attendance certificate (mandatory)**, Holiday request form if completed by parent(s) & Communication from school to parent(s) advising holiday not authorised.

WE WILL ONLY PROCEED IF WE HAVE THESE DOCUMENTS.

School:	
Name of Child or young person: Address:	
Has the child or young person recently moved into the Local Authority area? If so, where did they live previously?	
Date of Birth / Gender:	
Parent 1: Full name Address Tel No (if available)	
Parent 2: Full name Address Tel No (if available)	
<i>If there are two parents with parental responsibility who you wish the Penalty Notice to go to and they are not at the same address, please provide full details of both their addresses. Please also indicate which parent the child usually lives with.</i>	
School contact (Name & Tel Number)	

<p>Any other information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dates of absences. (please list each individual absence, plus if AM/PM lateness) • If a holiday, did both parents go on the holiday? 	
---	--

Email request to: penaltynotices@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk cc: Inclusion Lead

Please refer to checklist below before submitting form:

- Is this the most up to date address for the family? (Please check if unsure)
- If they have recently moved into the authority area, please let us know so we can check whether previous Penalty Notices have been issued
- Check personal information is correct i.e. DOB & surname spelt accurately
- Please attach an up-to-date attendance certificate showing when the holiday took place and when the child or young person returned to school or shows absences. This should be signed and dated by the Head Teacher. *(If the holiday falls either side of a school holiday please make sure to submit request once the child or young person has returned in the new term)*. All attendance certificates also need to show the child or young person's name.
- An absence penalty notice can only be issued if 10 or more session marked as one, or a combination of, the following codes: **G, N, O or U Codes** have been taken within a 10-week period. 10 sessions = 5 full school days.
- Please indicate clearly which parent you would like to issue the penalty notice to? If both parents have parental responsibility, then they can both be issued a penalty notice if both were in agreeance with the holiday that had taken place.
- Please can you send the request form, attendance certificate, parental request for leave, evidence of school's response unauthorising the request and any other information as separate PDF Documents on one email. Where the parents did not request a leave of absence, a letter from the Head Teacher to the parent informing them that their child has had a period of unauthorised absence.
- If sending in multiple requests, please ensure all documents are separated and named accordingly.
- A penalty notice cannot be issued to a child under statutory school age.

For further information please contact: penaltynotices@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk or alternatively phone us on 01305 221596

Appendix 8: Referral Template for Children who Cannot Attend School due to Health Needs



Name of child/ young person					
NC Year		D.O.B			
Home address					
School/ setting (including address)					
Contact at school/ setting		Role		Email & Tel	

Current attendance	
---------------------------	--

Provide details of the child or young person's medical condition and the barriers to the child or young person receiving a suitable education in school

What is the child or young person's view about their medical condition, the management of this and its impact upon their education?

What views have the parents or carers shared with the school about their child's medical condition and the impact it has on education?

Which health professionals are involved?

Name	Title	Contact details

Which other professionals are involved?

Name	Title	Contact details

**Does the child or young person have SEN? If so, please give a brief outline below.
Does the child have an EHCP?**

--

What has the school put in place to remove the barriers to the child or young person receiving a suitable education in school? Include how long the support has been in place, the financial cost and impact

--

Please add any other comments that you feel are relevant to this request

What is being requested?

Desired outcome from requested provision?

Outcome 1:

Outcome 2:

Outcome 3:

Anticipated length of time the provision will be required

Current attainment

Y1	Phonics				
KS1	Reading		Writing		Maths
KS2	Reading		Writing		Maths
	GPS				
Y4	Times tables				
KS3	English		Science		Maths
KS4	English		Science		Maths

Any other relevant scores e.g., CAT:

Please confirm that you have attached the following documents to this request. Requests without this information will be considered incomplete and returned to the school or setting.	
Required Information	Attached?
Relevant medical reports/correspondance evidencing the need for child/young person needing education in different setting	
Completed Individual Healthcare Plan (if relevant)	
Risk assessments (if applicable)	

Name of referrer	
Date of referral	
Referrer has permission of parent to make request	Yes/No
Head Teacher	
Head Teacher signature	

Please send this request and supporting documentation to your school link Inclusion Lead.

For Dorset Council use only	
Inclusion Team Manager	
Inclusion Team Manager comment	
Date	
Panel date	
Panel Discussion	
Panel Decision	
Actions for Inclusion Lead	
Panel Review Date	

Appendix 9: PACE Caution Leaflet



Learning & Belonging

Police and Criminal Evidence (PACE)

You and the law on School
Attendance
Children Act (1989)

Information is available on the Dorset Council website:
www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk and [Global Search | Dorset Nexus](#)

Locality	E-mail	Telephone
North Locality	northlocality@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk	01258474036
Dorchester Locality	dorchesterlocality@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk	01305224220
West Locality	westlocality@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk	01308425241
Chesil Locality	chesillocality@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk	01305762400
East Locality	eastlocality@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk	01202868224
Purbeck Locality	purbecklocality@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk	01929557000

Why have I been given this leaflet?

There are worries about your child's attendance. We understand that attending school is more challenging for some children and young people than others. This is why we will always try our best to work with families in a supportive way to understand and overcome barriers to school attendance.

However, in a very small minority of cases, we may need to utilise legal interventions if we believe this to be in the best interests of a child or young person.

Dorset Council's Inclusion Leads work with schools to support attendance. Anything you may say to an Inclusion Lead while they are working with you could be used in court as evidence. This is why you have received this PACE information.

What does PACE mean?

PACE is the abbreviation for:

Police
And
Criminal
Evidence Act

Will I have to go to court?

It does not automatically mean you will be taken to court because legal intervention is an absolute last resort but it is important that you are aware of it.

What happens next?

The process is as follows:-

1. You will be asked to attend a meeting with your child's school and an Inclusion Lead from Dorset Council. Other professionals may be invited where appropriate and you are welcome to bring someone along with you.
2. An action plan will be agreed.
3. There will then be a period of support and monitoring.

What happens if my child's attendance improves during this period?

There will be no further involvement from Dorset Council's Inclusion Leads if your child's attendance improves sufficiently and the plan appears to be working. Inclusion Leads will only become involved again if attendance becomes a worry.

What happens if I do not cooperate, and my child's attendance does not improve?

We understand that some children and young people find it harder than others to attend school. We will only use the following legal interventions as an absolute last resort and if we feel that legal intervention will help a child to attend school.

If your child still fails to attend school regularly, you could be prosecuted under Section 444(1) Education Act 1996.

A Final Warning letter will be issued and legal papers sent to Dorset Council's legal support. If you are found guilty, you could be fined up to £1000.

If you have failed to make reasonable efforts to ensure your child attends school, you may be prosecuted under Section 444(1A) Education Act 1996, which is a more serious offence and could result in a fine of up to £2,500, an Unpaid Work in the Community Order being made, or a custodial sentence being imposed.

Appendix 10: Locality Contact Information

Locality	E-mail	Telephone
North Locality	northlocality@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk	01258474036
Dorchester Locality	dorchesterlocality@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk	01305224220
West Locality	westlocality@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk	01308425241
Chesil Locality	chesillocality@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk	01305762400
East Locality	eastlocality@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk	01202868224
Purbeck Locality	purbecklocality@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk	01929557000