



ATTENDANCE POLICY

The law on school attendance and right to a full-time education

The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school.

Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school.

Working together to improve school attendance:

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Purposes

1. To have clear, relevant guidelines for register keeping which are carefully and routinely carried out by staff as well as monitoring of attendance levels.
2. To ensure that good attendance has a high priority with pupils, parents and teachers.
3. To demonstrate clearly stated procedures for swift follow-up when there is a concern about an absence.
4. To recognise that matters relating to the quality of the curriculum and teaching and to the school's ethos and relationships are most significant in encouraging good attendance.
5. To understand the action that can be taken by the Local Authority's Attendance Improvement Service to ensure good attendance.

Rights, responsibilities and roles

Main School

1. All staff will recognise that matters relating to the quality of the curriculum and teaching and to the school's ethos and relationships are significant in encouraging good attendance.
2. All staff will understand the registration process in the school.
3. All registers will be completed online through SIMS accurately at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session

4. The school will ensure that clear attendance information is regularly communicated to parent(s)/carer(s) through a variety of media: the school's website, newsletters, school prospectus and parents' meetings.
5. The school will inform parents/carers of attendance figures via the school newsletter.
6. All pupils with attendance below 90% will be monitored on a fortnightly basis by the school, in order to identify persistent absentees and those pupils at risk of becoming persistent absentees.
7. The school will accurately record and monitor all absenteeism and lateness.
8. The school will have clear procedures to identify and follow up all absence and lateness allocating individual staff roles and responsibilities.
9. The school will annually review its attendance policy and associated procedures and set an attendance target of 92%+
10. The school will inform parents/carers of attendance issues.

NB: Incomplete or inaccurate registers are unacceptable; they provide a daily record of attendance which may be required in a Court of Law.

Sixth Form attendance

We also encourage good attendance in the sixth form and monitor attendance patterns on a weekly basis. If there are any attendance concerns, the Sixth Form Manager invites the parents and student to an attendance meeting, where a personalised support plan is created so that the student and parents are taking ownership of the absence and understand the implications of not attending. The support plan is then sent home, along with an attendance leaflet and cover letter explaining the process.

The attendance leaflet is included in the Induction Pack each year.

Parents/Carers

1. Parents/Carers have a legal responsibility to ensure their child regularly attends the school at which they are registered (and are punctual). Failure to fulfill this duty may result in the Local Authority taking legal action.
2. Parents/Carers are responsible for immediately informing school of the reason for any absence by phone call on the first morning of any absence and keeping the school informed about the absence.
3. Parents/Carers should not take their child on holiday in term time without the school's prior written permission and are to be made aware of the potential consequences of a Penalty Notice being issued or a Court summons. .

4. Parents/Carers can expect the school to keep them fully informed if there are any attendance issues.
5. Parents/carers are responsible for ensuring that their child attends school regularly, punctually, properly dressed and equipped and in a fit condition to learn.

Term time absence

From the 1st September 2013 amendments to the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 came into force. These amendments remove references to family holiday and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days.

The amendments make clear that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.

All absence requests forms will be considered on a case by case basis and only authorised where there are exceptional circumstances. The Headteacher will determine the number of school days a pupil can be away from school if the leave is granted. The child's attendance rate will be taken on the day the request form is handed in to the school office. One of the Headteacher's considerations will be the child's current attendance rate.

All absences must be explained by a parent/carer. The school will then decide whether or not it will authorise the absence. Where a decision is made not to authorise a request for leave of absence, the school will write to the parent(s)/carer(s), notifying them of that decision

Acceptable reasons for the authorisation of absences are: (this list is not exhaustive)

- Illness (*See note 1 on page 3*)
- Exceptional circumstances
- Days of religious observance
- Unavoidable medical/dental appointments (*See note 2 on page 3*)

(1) Illness

Medical evidence may be requested where a child has been absent for 5 days or more due to illness OR where a child's attendance is below 90% and/or is regularly away from school due to illness. Failure to provide evidence when requested may result in the absences being unauthorised.

Medical evidence can be in the form of a copy of a prescription, medication or an appointment card showing name of child and date they visited. If a child is diagnosed with a medical condition, evidence should be provided.

(2) Unavoidable medical/dental appointments

All routine (non-emergency) appointments should be made, whenever possible, outside of school hours. Should a pupil need to have an appointment during school

hours, evidence of this appointment will need to be provided. Failure to provide evidence may result in the school unauthorising the absence.

Legal Action

Parent(s)/Carer(s) will be informed in writing if the decision has been made not to authorise a request for leave of absence.

The school may refer the matter to the Local Authority to consider either issuing a Penalty Notice or a Court Summons to the parents/carers.

If no absence request is made

If a child is absent from school during term time and no prior absence request has been made, the school will write to the parent(s)/carer(s) to inform them that the absence has not been authorized.

If the parent(s)/carer(s) can demonstrate that the child's absence during this time was due to an **exceptional circumstance** and that an absence request could not have been made in advance of the said absence, then a referral to the Local Authority will not be made.

Please be aware:

Parents who take their child out of school without prior written authorisation from the school could be subject to a £60 penalty notice per child, per parent from the Local Authority (£60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days), or the subject of court proceedings which could result in a fine of up to £2,500 and/or a term of imprisonment of up to 3 months.

Parents should note that in normal circumstances, current practice is that only one penalty notice will be issued to a parent relating to the absence of a particular child within a two year period. Should a further period of unauthorised absence be recorded, then the parent(s) will normally be summonsed to appear at a Magistrates Court.

Procedures for following up absence/lateness

Unforeseen absences

On the first day of absence the parent/carers should ring school before 09:30am to inform the office that their child will be away and give a reason for the absence. An indication of the likely period of absence is requested and a date and time agreed for the parent/carers to update school if the child has not returned.

If contact has not been made by the parent/carers by 9.30am then first day contact will be made by the admin staff. If there is no response from the telephone call a text message will be sent requesting the parent to phone into school. If there is no contact by 10.30 am, the other named contacts may be telephoned. Admin staff will continue to try to make contact throughout the day. If there is no satisfactory explanation for the child's absence, or there are other concerns, in order to ensure

the child is safe, someone employed by the school may visit the home on the same day. On occasions where there is nobody at home this will be risk assessed on a case by case basis and referred to Children's Services as appropriate.

Admin staff keep a log of absence calls on SIMS and reasons received each day.

If any member of staff is concerned about an absence they should liaise with the admin staff to clarify any reasons or knowledge for the absence. If still concerned they should inform the Head Teacher.

- If a child remains absent for a second day without any notification as to why, the school will call any other contacts that have been provided, including grandparents and work.
- If a child remains absent for three days without any notification, a member of staff will visit the home address and contact the Social Worker (if applicable)
- If the school has concerns about the child's whereabouts and wellbeing, the school will contact the Torbay Education Safeguarding Service (TESS) for advice, normally this would be after three days.
- It remains the schools responsibility to try to contact the parent and visit the home if necessary.
- If after 10 days, the child has continued unauthorised absence, a Child Missing Education (CME) referral will be made to the Attendance Improvement Service.
- Any 'vulnerable' pupils that are absent with no reason established will be referred to the Pastoral Team on Day 1. The Pastoral Team will make contact through the Social Worker/Safeguarding/ other agencies or a home visit is made

If the child is subject to a child protection plan or if the school has particular safeguarding concerns and feel the child is at risk of immediate harm, the school will immediately notify the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) without waiting for 10 schools days.

A child may be referred to the MASH if it is considered that they have totally disengaged from learning and/or the parent is subject to statutory intervention.

Parents are reminded of the first day contact procedure each term via the school newsletter and the school website

A letter will be sent home if no reason is given for a child being absent. If a response is not received then as stated in the letter the absence will be unauthorised. (Letter A)

Where a child is absent due to moving schools they will stay on the school roll until notification of arrival from the new school.

If a child has unexplained absences and is subject to a child protection plan or if the school has particular safeguarding concerns, the school will immediately notify the Safeguarding Hub and the Attendance Improvement Service

Lateness

There are many negative results caused by pupils who constantly arrive late including:

- The loss of education suffered by the pupil which over a year can add up to a significant proportion of their time at school.
- The disruption to other children in their class as the teacher's attention is taken from the task at hand.
- Damage to pupils' emotional well-being.

The strategies that the school will use to tackle lateness will include:

Any children arriving between 8.55am and 9am are considered 'Late' (L) unless they have travelled to school by LA transport and the transport arrives after this time. They will be required to enter the school via reception where their name will be recorded as late in SIMS. Any children arriving after 9am will be recorded as a U code unless they have travelled to school by LA transport and the transport arrives after this time.

All children's attendance records will be checked regularly for late marks. Where late arrivals reach six or more in a half term the school will write to the parents. If there is no improvement Pastoral Support will arrange to meet with the family in order to work together towards improving punctuality (Letter C)

Occasions of being late after registers close ('U' code) contribute towards the overall number of unauthorised absences.

Attendance letters

All pupils with attendance below 90% will be analysed on a fortnightly basis by the school, in order to identify persistent absentees and those pupils at risk of becoming persistent absentees.

All absences will be unauthorised by the school where no reason has been provided by the parent/carer or where the school feels the reason is unacceptable. The school will endeavour to find out the reason for absence by sending a letter home offering parents the opportunity to provide us with the reason for absence, if we do not have a response the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. Letters will be sent to parents on a fortnightly basis if their child has accrued over 6 unauthorised absences.

Letters home will include attendance by percentage as well as the number of days

If, at any time, a pupil has 10 or more unauthorised absences within a 6 months period, the school may refer the matter to the Local Authority for them to consider the legal options available. Legal options include: Penalty Notices, Education Supervision Orders, School Attendance Orders and Prosecution. Further details can be found on the Local Authority website <http://www.torbay.gov.uk/schools-and-learning/attendance/>

Where a pupil's attendance is below 90% and there are no mitigating circumstances, the following actions may be taken:

Attendance letter 1 - Where a pupil's attendance is below 90% and the majority of absences are due to illness, other authorised, or unauthorised circumstances a letter will be sent to parents to keep them updated on the recorded absences.

Attendance letter 2 will be sent 2 weeks after letter 1 (or later in the academic year), if attendance has not improved, and parents will be invited in to meet with Mrs. Jane McEwan (Family Support & Attendance), Mr. Matt Davey (Assistant Head Teacher) or phase lead.

Attendance letter 3 - Will be sent if parents/carers do not attend the meeting, and/or there is still no improvement following letters 1 and 2, inviting parent(s)/carer(s) into a meeting with Mrs. Jane McEwan (Family Support & Attendance), Mrs McVeigh (Deputy Head Teacher) or Mr. Mike Lock (Head Teacher).

Strategies to improve attendance will be discussed and agreed. These could include a parenting contract, a period of work with the School Key Worker, a legal consultation with the Local Authority or a referral to Children's Services.

Rewards for promoting attendance

- A termly certificate is given to every child who has 100% attendance for that particular term (and been on time every day)
- A £10 voucher is given at the end of the school year to every child who is on 100% attendance for the whole school year.
- We reward pupils and offer other incentives for pupils throughout the year to encourage them to improve their attendance

Collection of attendance data

Attendance data is reported to the SMT on a monthly basis.

Each term the Head Teacher reports and discusses attendance data with Governors

Review: Autumn 2024