



Tomlinscote School

Attendance Policy

Policy Type:	Mandatory
Approved By:	AQC
Effective From:	February 2018 (Reviewed April 2020)
Revision Date:	June 2020

Tomlinscote School

Whole School Attendance Policy

Introduction

Tomlinscote School is committed to providing a full and efficient education to all students and embraces the concept of equal opportunities for all.

We will endeavour to provide an environment where all students feel valued and welcome.

For a child to reach their full educational achievement a regular school attendance is essential. We will consistently work with parents and students to aim to achieve a goal of 100% attendance for all children. Every opportunity will be used to convey to students and their parents, or carers, the importance of regular and punctual attendance. Each year the school will examine its attendance figures and set attendance/absence targets. Students are expected to attend 100% of the time. The school will review its systems for improving attendance at regular intervals to ensure that it is achieving the goals set.

This policy will contain within it the procedures that the school will use to meet its attendance targets.

School Procedures

Any child who is absent from school at the morning or afternoon registration must have their absence recorded as being authorised, unauthorised or as an approved educational activity [attendance out of school] Only the Principal or Head of Year acting on their behalf can authorise absence. If there is no known reason for the absence at registration, then the absence must be recorded in the first instance as unauthorised.

Responsibilities of classroom staff

Ensure that all students are registered accurately.

- Promote and reward good attendance with students at all appropriate opportunities.
- Liaise with the attendance leader on matters of attendance and punctuality.
- Communicate any concerns or underlying problems that may account for a child's absence.
- Support students with absence to engage with their learning once they are back in school.

Responsibilities of students

Attend every day unless they are ill or have an authorised absence.

- Arrive in school on time.
- Go to all their registrations and lessons on time.
- Take responsibility for registering with the main office if they are late or are leaving the school site during school hours.

Responsibilities of parents/carers

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is a parent/carer's legal responsibility (Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act) and permitting absence from school that is not authorised by the school creates an offence in law.

Parents will:

- inform the school on the first day of absence
- discuss with the form tutor any planned absences/medical procedures well in advance
- support the school with their child in achieving 100% attendance each year
- make sure that any absence is clearly accounted for by telephone, email or text message on the first and subsequent days of absence
- avoid taking their child out of school for non-urgent medical or dental appointments
- only request leave of absence if it is for an exceptional circumstance.

Lateness

Morning registration will take place at the start of school at 8.35am. The first bell rings at 8.30am where students should be making their way to their form room. Any student arriving after 9.00am will be marked as having an unauthorised absence unless there is an acceptable explanation i.e. school transport was delayed. In cases for example, where the absence at registration was for attending an early morning medical appointment, the appropriate authorised absence code will be entered. Students arriving late are required to sign in at the main school office.

Students arriving after the start of school but before the end of registration will be treated for statistical purposes as present but will be coded as late before registers close. A detention will be issued for any student who is recorded as late twice in five days.

First Day Absence

Parents are expected to contact the school via the automated telephone system, email (attendance@tomlinscoteschool.com) or text message leaving an appropriate message. This information will be collated, and the registers adjusted to reflect the information.

Absence Text

An absence text will be sent if a student does not appear in school and a message has not been received.

Continuing Absence

A courtesy phone call will be made if your child continues to be absent.

Ten Days' Absence

Any student who is absent without an explanation for 10 consecutive days will be notified to the Local Authority, by submitting a referral to the Inclusion Officer. The school will include details of the action that they have taken.

Frequent Absence

It is the responsibility of the Head of Year to be aware of, and bring attention to, any emerging attendance concerns.

In cases where a student begins to develop a pattern of absences, the school will try to resolve the problem with the parent(s). The school will seek advice from the school's Inclusion Officer.

Persistent Absence

If your child's attendance falls below 90% or more schooling across the school year, for whatever reason, they are defined as *persistent absentees*. Absence for whatever reason disadvantages a child by creating gaps in his or her learning. Research shows these gaps affect attainment when attendance falls below 95%. As such, we monitor all absence thoroughly and all attendance data is shared with the local authority and the Department for Education. If your child has had absence and their attendance level is falling towards 90% after the first half term, we will contact you and, depending on the reasons for the absence, may ask for medical evidence or suggest a meeting with the relevant Head of Year.

Absence notes

Notes received from parents explaining absence should be kept for the remainder of the academic year. If there are attendance concerns about the student that may require further investigation, then the notes may need to be retained for a longer period.

Promoting attendance

The school will use opportunities as they arise to remind parents/carers that it is their responsibility to ensure that their children receive their education. The Home/School Agreement recognises the importance of good attendance. The school will be particularly sensitive to the need to support families where attendance issues are related to a student's special needs.

Request for Leave of Absence in term time

Requests for leave of absence during term time are actively discouraged. Parents will be reminded of the effect that absence can have on a student's potential achievement. The school will not authorise term time absences, except in very exceptional circumstances.

Understanding types of absence

Students are expected to attend school every day for the entire duration of the academic year unless there is an exceptional reason for the absence. There are two main categories of absences:

authorised absence is when the school has accepted the explanation offered as satisfactory (see Appendix 1):

- justification for the absence or given approval in advance for such an absence. If no explanation is received, absences cannot be authorised

unauthorised absence is when the school has not received a reason for absence or has not approved a child's leave absence from school after a parent's request. This includes:

- parents giving their children permission to be off school unnecessarily, such as for shopping, birthdays, to look after siblings, truancy before or during the school day
- absences which have not been explained.

If you do not ask for or get permission to take your child out of school and do so regardless, your child's absence will be recorded as unauthorised and will be truancy.

A school can, if needed, change an authorised absence to an unauthorised absence and vice versa if new information is presented. Any changes will be communicated to parents/carers. An example of this would be where a parent states a child is unwell but on return to school, we suspect that they have been on holiday. The school therefore reserves the right to ask for medical evidence to prove an illness as stated by the parent/carers.

Penalty Notices

The Inclusion Service, acting on behalf of Surrey County Council, may issue a Penalty Notice as an alternative to the prosecution of a parent/carer for their child's unauthorised absence from school and requires the recipient to pay a fixed amount.

The amount payable on issue of a Penalty Notice is £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice, rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days. If the Penalty Notice is not paid within 28 days, the Local Authority must prosecute the parent/carer for failing to ensure regular school attendance under Section 444 Education Act 1996.

Circumstances when a penalty notice may be issued:

Students identified by police and inclusion officers engaged on Truancy Patrols and who have incurred unauthorised absences.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England)(Amendment) Regulations 2013, which became law on 1st September 2013 state that Head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. The Head teacher is required to determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if leave is granted.

Where a child is taken out of school for 5 days or more and the 'leave of absence' is without the authority of the head teacher, each parent is liable to receive a penalty notice for each child who is absent. In these circumstances, a warning will not be given where it can be shown that parents had previously been warned that such absences would not be authorised and that they will be liable to receive a Penalty Notice if the leave of absence is taken.

The Principal/AQC will request that the Local Authority issue a penalty notice for unauthorised leave of absence in term time (**5 days/10 sessions or more within a three month period, this need not be consecutive**) without the authorisation of the school. Warnings will not be given where it can be shown that parents have been notified that such absences will not be authorised. Each parent may be liable to receive a Penalty Notice for each child who is absent thereby failing to ensure their child's regular school attendance under Section 444 of the Education and Inspections Act 1996.

The issue of a Penalty Notice will also be considered where unauthorised absences or late arrival after the close of registration occur on seven occasions in any six-week period (not including school

closures). The parents' failure to engage with supportive measures proposed by the school or Inclusion Service will be a factor when considering the issue of a Penalty Notice. Unauthorised absence will include late arrival after the close of registration without good reason.

With the exception of unauthorised leave of absence taken in term time, parents will be sent a formal warning of their liability to receive such a notice before it is issued.

Penalty Notice relating to Exclusions

Section 103 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 places a duty on parents to ensure that their child is not in a public place without justifiable cause during school hours when they are excluded from school. This duty applies to the first five days of each exclusion. Failure to do so will render the parent liable to a Penalty Notice. The amount payable is £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt of the Penalty Notice, rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days. If the Penalty Notice is not paid, the recipient will be prosecuted for the offence under Section 103. Alternative education provision will be made from the sixth day of any exclusion and failure to attend such provision without good reason will be treated as unauthorised absence.

Inclusion Officer

To help make sure that every child goes to school regularly and gets an appropriate education, each school has an Inclusion Officer who can act on enquiries from schools, other organisations, parents, and members of the public. Where a child's absence from school gives cause for concern, the Inclusion Officer works with everyone involved to create an action plan supporting full-time attendance and will stay involved until this is achieved. Legal action may be taken to ensure your child attends school.

Absence through child participation in public performances, including theatre, film or television work and modelling

The legislation requires that all children, from babies until they cease to be of compulsory school age, be licensed by the local authority in which they live, when they take part in a performance on stage or in a broadcast.

A child remains subject to these regulations until the last Friday in June of the academic year in which they turn 16. The academic year runs from 1 September – 31 August inclusive.

Parents of a child performer can seek leave of absence from school for their child to take part in a performance. They must contact the Principal to discuss the nature and frequency of the work, whether the child has a valid performance licence and whether education will be provided by the employer during any future leave of absence. It is, however, down to the Principal's discretion as to whether to authorise this and they will wish to discuss with you the nature and frequency of the absence and how learning will continue if absence occurs.

Absence through competing at regional, county or national level for sport

Parents of able sportsmen and women can seek leave of absence from school for their child to take part in regional, county, national and international events and competitions. It is, however, down to the Principal's discretion as to whether to authorise this and they will wish to discuss with you the nature and frequency of the absence and how learning will continue if absence occurs. Permission for your child to leave early or arrive late to attend coaching and training sessions is also at the discretion of the Principal and is not likely to be approved if it is a regular event, unless the sports club or association is providing an education tutor as part of their coaching.

My child is trying to avoid coming to school. What should I do?

Children are sometimes reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents/carers and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and may make things worse.

Contact your child's form tutor immediately and openly discuss your worries. Your child could be avoiding school for a number of reasons: difficulties with schoolwork; bullying; friendship problems; family difficulties. It is important that the reason for your child's reluctance to attend school is identified early and we all work together to tackle the problem. For some students, the extra support of the Student Support Officer may be called upon. In addition, it may also be helpful to discuss the circumstances of your child's difficulties with another professional.

What can I do to encourage my child to attend school?

Make sure your child gets enough sleep and gets up in plenty of time each morning. Ensure that he/she leaves home in the correct clothes and properly equipped. Show your child, by your interest, that you value his/her education. Let them know that there is support in school, either through their form tutor, Student Support Officer, or Head of Year. Encourage them to seek out a member of staff who they feel comfortable with to talk through any worries or concerns that they have which may be preventing them from coming to school.

Your child will bring home a planner each evening. Please ensure you look at it with your child and sign it weekly. Be interested in what your child is doing in school, chat to them about the things they have learnt, what friends they have made and even what they had for lunch!

Links with other policies:

- Behaviour and Discipline

Reviewed by: AQC July 2019

Date of Next Review: June 2020