

Attendance/Punctuality Policy

Introduction and Background

Tonge Moor Primary Academy recognises that positive behaviour and good attendance and punctuality are central to raising standards and pupil attainment.

This policy is written with the above statement in mind and ensures that, as a school, we:

- Promote children's welfare and safeguarding;
- Ensure every pupil has access to full time education to which they are entitled;
- Ensure that pupils exceed whilst at school;
- Ensure that pupils have access to the widest range of opportunities when they leave school.

For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend school every day that the school is open, on time, unless the reason for absence is unavoidable.

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will affect their learning. A pupil's absence or late arrival disrupts teaching routines and so may affect the learning of others in the same class. Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is a parent's legal responsibility and permitting absence from school, without good reason, creates an offence in the law and may result in prosecution.

Promoting Regular Attendance

Helping to create patterns of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility – parents, pupils and all members of staff. To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Give parents/carers details on attendance in our newsletters;
- report to parents/carers termly and annually on their child's attendance;
- celebrate good attendance weekly and display achievements;
- Reward good or improving attendance by awarding certificates. Children achieving 100% attendance and zero lates for the year also receive a 100% badge.

Understanding Types of Absence

Every half day absence (session) has to be classified by the school (not the parent/carer) as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of absence is always required.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good cause like illness, medical/dental appointments which fall unavoidably in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable causes. Parents/carers are requested to provide written confirmation for these appointments.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave of absence' has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Local Authority (LA) using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children off unnecessarily;
- Truancy before or during the school day;
- Absences which have never been explained properly;
- Children who arrive late to school, after 9:45am;
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays;
- Day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed.

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parent/carer and the child. If a parent/carer thinks their child is reluctant to attend school then we will work with the family to understand the root of the problem.

Persistent Absenteeism (PA)

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when their attendance falls below 90%, for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to a child's education and we need parents' fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence and the reasons given thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark, or is at risk of moving towards that mark, is given priority and we will inform parents/carers immediately.

PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully. We also combine this with the academic tracking where absence affects attainment. All our PA pupils and their parents are requested to attend an Attendance Support meeting which may include allocation of additional support through the school Attendance Officer. We may use circle time, individual incentive programmes, individual targets and participation in group activities around raising attendance.

Persistent Absenteeism can also lead to legal proceedings and the issuing of Fixed Penalty Notices (fines).

From 1st September 2018, the criteria for issuing a penalty notice will be reduced and a fine will be considered where a pupil has had 10 sessions (equivalent of five days - consecutive or otherwise) of unauthorised absence over the period of two consecutive half terms. More information about penalty notices can be found on the Bolton Council's website: www.bolton.gov.uk/website/pages/Truancy.aspx.

Children Missing Education

Academies must monitor pupils' attendance through their daily register. We are in agreement with the LA the intervals in which we will inform them of the details of pupils who are regularly absent from school or have missed ten days or more without permission. We also understand that we must also notify the LA if a pupil is to be deleted from the admission register in certain circumstances. Pupils who remain on school roll may not necessarily be missing education but we should monitor attendance and address it when it is poor. Schools also have safeguarding duties under Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 in respect of their pupils, and as part of this should investigate any unexplained absences. Academies and independent schools have a similar safeguarding duty for their pupils. Schools must also arrange full-time education for

excluded pupils from the sixth day of a fixed period exclusion. This information can be found in the school exclusions guidance.

If families move away from the area, or wish to transfer their child to another school, the Head of School must be informed in writing. Children cannot be removed from the school roll until we have been notified by another school that a place has been offered and accepted. Children who stop attending and who cannot be traced cannot be removed from the school roll. They are reported to the LA attendance service. Where a child is missing from education, LA guidance will be followed.

Children in Care

Early intervention from the school can often prevent a pupil's non-attendance becoming established. We aim to resolve any concerns regarding attendance and punctuality rates as soon as a problem arises. We seek the co-operation of the pupil's parents/carers, children's home, key worker/social worker, residential unit etc. in resolving the pupil's attendance problems.

Good practice is that we would notify the social worker when a looked after child has reached ten consecutive sessions' absence. The Attendance Officer will initially try to contact the pupil's parents/carers, either by telephone or letter, to arrange a home visit. The AO will normally speak to the child's family to assess the situation to initiate the Early Help process. On most occasions this contact will result in an action plan being prepared by the AO or class teacher. This plan will include proposed actions, timescales and intended outcomes, and will include details of what is expected from the pupil, the parents/carers, the school and any other agencies involved. It will contain an agreed plan of action and dates by which improvement in attendance is expected in the form of an Early Help Assessment. The AO will try to secure everybody's commitment to adhere to the action plan. In order to measure the effectiveness of the AO intervention, the pupil's attendance and levels of authorised and unauthorised absence will be closely monitored by the AO and will be reviewed using the Early Help process. If, after AO intervention, the pupil's level of unauthorised absence reduces to a satisfactory level compared to the level prior to the intervention, and this level of attendance is maintained, the AO will liaise with the school and continue to monitor the pupil's attendance for as long as necessary.

Absence Procedures

If a child is absent the parent/carer must follow the following procedures:

Contact the school as soon as possible on the first day of absence, before 9:15am.

If a child is absent we will:

- Telephone the parents/carers on the first day of absence if we have not heard from them;
- invite parents/carers to discuss the situation with the Attendance Officer;

The Attendance Officer (AO)

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the child to the AO. He/she will also try to resolve the situation by agreement, but if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed and unauthorised absences persist, these officers can use sanctions such as Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court. Full details of the options open to enforce attendance at school are available from the school or Local Authority.

Alternatively, parents or children may wish to contact the AO themselves to ask for help and information. This can be arranged through the school office.

If a child's attendance gives cause for concern and sickness is continually reported, support will be offered.

Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If the child misses the start of day they can miss work and do not spend time with their class getting vital information and news for the day. Late-arriving pupils also disrupt lessons, it can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage absence. Good time keeping is a vital life skill which will help our children as they progress through their school life and out into the wider world.

How we manage lateness:

School starts at 8:55am and we expect children to be lined up in the playground and ready to come in at 8:50am. Entrances to the school close at 9:00am and children who arrive after this time need to sign in at the school office and will receive a late mark.

In accordance with the regulations, if a child arrives after 9:45am they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will not count as a present mark and it will mean that they have an unauthorised absence for the session. This could mean that a parent/carer will receive a Penalty Notice if the problem persists. If a child has a persistent late record, parents/carers will be asked to meet the Attendance Officer or Head of School to resolve the problem but school can be approached at any time if there are problems with getting a child to school on time. We will encourage good punctuality by being good role models to our children and celebrate good class punctuality.

Late collection of children at home time

Please see appendix 1.

Leave of Absence

Amendments to the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 make clear that from September 2013 Head of Schools may not grant leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Examples would be:

- Where it is company/organisational policy for an employee to take leave at a specific time in the year and there is no opportunity for a family holiday in any of the school holidays. This must be evidenced by the production of the policy document of the organisation;
- service personnel returning from/scheduled to embark on a tour abroad;

Leave of absence forms must be completed four weeks before the proposed holiday and before it is booked.

Any period of leave taken without agreement of the school, or in excess of that agreed, will be classed as unauthorised and may attract a Fixed Penalty Notice by the Local Authority.

Summary

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend school. All school staff members are committed to working with parents and pupils in the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.