



Tatworth

Primary School

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Ratified by:	SLT
Date:	Autumn Term 2020
Next Review:	Autumn Term 2021 or before should Government guidance change.

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POLICY REVIEW RECORD

Date	Amendments
Spring 2019	Major review
Autumn 2020	Updated to reflect plans for all students return to school September 2020

TATWORTH PRIMARY SCHOOL

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Aims

The aim of our attendance policy is to enable the school to provide a consistent practice that encourages and facilitates regular attendance of all pupils.

Our vision and ethos – Love Learning, Work Together, Achieve and Shine can only be achieved by regular attendance at school, we are therefore dedicated to ensuring this policy is adhered to as far as is reasonably practical.

COVID-19

Government guidance will be followed at all times and may result in changes to this policy. From September 2020 present guidance is that attendance will return to being mandatory. For those children who remain under the care of a specialist health professional, parents will need to discuss their care with that professional before the child returns to school. Where children are not able to attend due to parent shielding, attendance will not be penalised. Evidence will be required to justify intended non-attendance.

Expected 96% Attendance

Attendance of less than 96% is considered to be of concern and will initiate a review and investigation into a child's attendance. Attendance below 96% could trigger a series of letters which are based on County examples, and/or a request for a meeting between parents/carers and the school in order to establish the possible causes and agree a way forward.

We have a whole school approach to maintaining excellent attendance and expect parents, pupils and all staff members to have joint responsibility to ensure that children are at school when they should be. We do our best to work with families to make sure that any problems or circumstances which may lead, or are leading, to poor attendance are given due attention and support where necessary.

Please also refer to our following policies:

Child Protection and Safeguarding
Behaviour
Home/School Agreement

Legal Framework

The Education Act 1996 states:

The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause them to receive efficient full-time education suitable –

- (a) To their age, ability and aptitude and,
- (b) To any special educational needs they may have

Either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

A person begins to be of compulsory school age –

- (a) When they attain the age of five, if they attain that age on a prescribed day, and
- (b) Otherwise at the beginning of the prescribed day next following their attaining that age.

Prescribed days are – 31 August, 31 December and 31 March

We are dedicated to complying with attendance laws set out by the legal framework.

Roles and Responsibilities

Board of Directors

Members of the Board will:

- Ensure that the importance of attendance is made clear by actively promoting the relevant school policies and guidance to parents and staff
- Receive annual reports on attendance

School Leadership Team

The School Leadership Team will:

- Ensure that the importance of attendance is made clear by actively promoting the relevant school policies and guidance to parents and staff
- Promote and reward attendance in whole school newsletters and celebration assemblies
- Form positive relationships with families in order to obtain best results
- Annually review this policy and ensure that all provisions are in place to enable staff, parents and children to implement it effectively
- Ensure that all legislation regarding attendance is complied with and that guidelines communicated to children, parents and staff are up-to-date.
- Allow enough time at meetings to regularly review and discuss any attendance issues
- Ensure that the school operates an effective recording process for attendance and efficiently organises that data, including for children who are educated off-site.
- Ensure that they clearly understand how to analyse attendance data and how to communicate the data effectively to parents and staff
- Share attendance data and targets appropriately
- Make necessary referrals to the local authority, and other relevant agencies, in individual cases of non-attendance to help with poor attendance and to support families who are having difficulties getting their child to school
- Document any specific interventions or steps taken to work with families to improve their child's attendance in case of future legal proceedings
- Use the data gathered to develop solutions to problems, make adjustments to attendance co-ordination and set targets for the future.
- Ensure that children are taught the value of high attendance for their own progression and that the school's teaching and learning experiences encourage regular attendance
- Nominate a member to take responsibility for overseeing and monitoring attendance provision and that this person has enough time and resources to conduct this work
- Report to the Board of Directors annually on attendance.

Teachers and Support Staff

Teachers and support staff will:

- Actively promote good attendance to pupils and their parents
- Ensure that the school's teaching and learning experiences encourage regular attendance
- Ensure that pupils understand the value of high attendance in order to progress and achieve
- Ensure that they are fully aware of the school's attendance policy, legislation and government guidance and that they will seek support if they do not feel confident to deal with an attendance issue
- Ensure that they are following the correct systems for recording attendance and that registers are taken both in the morning and afternoon
- Contribute to strategy meetings and interventions as required
- Work with external agencies to support pupils and their families who are struggling with regular attendance

Parents and Carers

We request that parents and carers:

- Engage with their children's education, and take an interest in their learning and what they are doing at school
- Promote the importance of good education and regular attendance at school
- Encourage and support their children's aspirations
- Ensure that their children arrive at school on time, dressed in appropriate school uniform and with the necessary equipment
- Report each day, if their child will be absent, including the reason, and if due to illness how long they are likely to be absent
- Avoid all unnecessary school absences by making medical and dental appointments outside of school hours
- Seek support from the school should they or their child be having difficulties
- Form positive relationships with school staff in order to ease communication should a problem arise
- Keep the school informed of any circumstances which may affect their child's attendance
- Have a regular routine at home in terms of homework, bedtime etc. so that their child is used to a consistent approach and that the school day becomes part of that routine.
- Do not take their children out of school for holidays during term time. If parents would like to make an exceptional request for this, forms are available from the school office.

Pupils

We request that pupils:

- Are aware of the school's attendance rules, when and what they are required to attend. This will be communicated to them by school staff, their parents and the school timetable
- Speak with a member of staff if they are experiencing difficulties at school, or at home, which may impact on their attendance
- Attend all lessons, on time and with appropriate equipment in order to learn

- Follow the correct signing in procedure should they be late. This is vital for health and safety in the event of a school evacuation and in order to monitor attendance.

Categories of Absence and Reporting Procedures

Satisfactory explanations for absences must be provided to the school in order to avoid unauthorised absences. Parents are not able to authorise absences.

Staff should indicate, when taking the register, if an absence has been authorised. If staff have concerns regarding absences, they should follow the school's safeguarding and attendance procedures.

When a child is absent from school without prior permission, parents/carers should inform the school by telephone on the first day of absence and let them know what date they expect the child to return. For a prolonged absence, this should be followed up with a written note from the parent/carer of the child. Alternative arrangements will be made separately with those who require assistance with the English language.

Illness

Parents should contact the school on the first day of the absence.

For prolonged absence due to illness, parents may be asked to provide further information and/or medical evidence such as a note from the child's doctor, an appointment card or a prescription paper. If these are not provided on request it may result in the absence being classed as unauthorised.

Medical or Dental Appointments

Parents should make every effort to ensure these appointments are made outside school hours. Where this cannot be avoided appointments should be made at a time so that children attend school for as much of the day as possible – for example, at the beginning or end of the school day.

Authorised Absences

There may be some exceptional circumstances where the school will authorise absence, a family bereavement for example.

Exclusion

Exclusion is treated as unauthorised absence. Work will be sent home.

Family Holidays and Extended Leave

Family holidays and extended leave should be taken outside of school term time. Parents may request a leave of absence during term time where there are exceptional circumstances. Requests for leave of this type must be made at least 4 weeks in advance. Forms are available from the school office. In the case of unforeseen circumstances such as a family bereavement that requires the child to travel to another country, this will be taken into consideration.

Retrospective applications will not be considered, and this time taken will be processed as unauthorised absence. The Headteacher may only grant such requests in exceptional circumstances and the Headteachers decision is final.

All requests for authorised absence will be responded to in writing and will outline the details of when the child is expected to return to school. Parents should contact the school immediately if there will be a change of date of return.

It is the Headteacher's decision whether to authorise any request for absence during term time.

If permission is not granted, but the child is still absent, the absence is classed as unauthorised and parents may be subject to further action by the school including the request for a Penalty Notice to be issued to each parent of each child, or prosecution by the Local Authority Welfare Service.

Legal Sanctions

Sanctions are used as a means of enforcing attendance where there are reasonable expectations that improvement will be secured with their use. Sanctions of any nature will only be used where parental co-operation is either absent or deemed insufficient to resolve an attendance problem.

Penalty Notices are an available sanction for a Local Authority as an alternative to prosecutions under section 444 of the Education Act 1996. They enable parents to discharge potential liability to a formal prosecution.

Penalty Notice Code of Conduct is considered in the following circumstances:

- There have been at least 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in the last 12 school weeks (including unauthorised lates) and the school, in consultation with the Education Welfare Service, believe this early intervention will resolve the poor attendance and stop the matter moving towards a prosecution under section 444 of the Education Act 1996.
- If a parent proceeds to take term time leave despite not being authorised by the Headteacher, there must be at least 10 continuous sessions of unauthorised term time leave taken
- An excluded pupil is found in a public place, without their parent, during the school day. (A school is not deemed a public place for this legislation).

We are committed to ensuring full school attendance and as such, we shall seek the use of statutory duties when required by liaison with the Local Authority.

If issued with a penalty notice, parents must each pay a fine within 21 days. If the fine is not paid within 21 days the amount payable increases greatly and must be paid within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the Local Authority, the school does not profit from penalty notices.

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the Local Authority can decide whether to prosecute the parent or withdraw the notice.

Religious Observance

Different faiths observe religious festivals which may fall outside of school holidays or weekends. We recognise this and will authorise absence for these. Parents should notify the school in writing in advance.

Registration Times and Late Arrivals

In line with Government guidance, to allow for fewer people to be moving through the gates at one time school times will be staggered. The table below gives drop off times and the start of the school day for each class.

Year Group	Morning Drop Off	Lessons Commence
Reception Class	8.40 – 8.50 am	8.50 am
Year 1	8.30 – 8.40 am	8.40 am
Year 2	8.40 – 8.50 am	8.50 am
Year 3	8.30 – 8.40 am	8.40 am
Year 4	8.30 – 8.40 am	8.40 am
Year 5	8.40 – 8.50 am	8.50 am
Year 6	8.40 – 8.50 am	8.50 am

The attendance register will be taken morning and afternoon. Pupils who arrive after their drop off slot will be marked as late.

Pupils who arrive after the drop off period has ended should go straight to the school office to sign in and give a reason for their lateness. It is vital that pupils sign in at the office to ensure that health and safety regulations are followed and that all pupils are accounted for.

Pupils who arrive after lessons commence will have their attendance record marked as unauthorised late.

Afternoon registration is as follows:

Year Group	Afternoon Registration
Reception Class	1.45 pm
Year 1	1.45 pm
Year 2	1.45 pm
Year 3	2.00 pm
Year 4	2.00 pm
Year 5	1.45 pm
Year 6	1.45 pm

Persistent lateness may result in a referral being made to the Local Authority Education Welfare Officer.

School Action: Verifying Absences

Attendance is registered electronically, via SIMS. Checks are carried out each morning and where there are unexplained or unauthorised absences, the school will contact the parents or carers. If a pattern of unauthorised absences emerges, the Headteacher will contact the parent or carer to discuss possible reasons and how the school could help.

Parents/carers will also be contacted if there is doubt about the truth of the reason provided for any unauthorised absence.

If not already provided, upon the child's return, the school will seek a written explanation from parents/carers for the child's absence. This is for the school records and is necessary no matter what the reason or length of the absence.

When the child returns to school, they will be supported to help them catch up on any work that they have missed.

In instances where the school has been unable to contact parents or carers after a period of 3 days, the school will make reasonable effort to establish the whereabouts of the child by alternative methods, for example by making a home visit or speaking to neighbours. Where these efforts prove unsuccessful, the school shall inform the Local Authority Education Welfare Service. If there is reason to believe a child is in immediate danger or at risk of harm, a referral will be made to childrens social care (and the police if appropriate).

If there are concerns around attendance that have not been resolved by implementing school support, the school may take further action against parents. This may include a referral to the Local Authority Education Welfare Service for additional support or investigation, which may also result in further action including the issuing of Penalty Notices, or legal proceedings.

In line with 'Children Missing Education 2016', where a child has not returned to school for ten days after an authorised absence, or is absent from school without authorisation for a period of more than 20 consecutive school days, and both the school and Local Authority have been unable to contact the parents, the school may remove the child from the school roll. This only applies if the school does not have reasonable grounds to believe that the pupil is unable to attend because of sickness or unavoidable cause. The school will notify the Local Authority Education Welfare Service when such action is taken.

Strategies for Promoting Attendance

- 100% attendance awards - certificates issued termly, medals at the end of year.
- Certificate issued, at end of year, for 98% attendance and no 'lates'
- Weekly whole class attendance award
- Awards publicised in school newsletters
- Very good attendance highlighted and celebrated in assemblies.

Where COVID-19 allows for an authorised absence from school children will not be penalised and attendance awards may still be attained.