

# **Attendance Policy**

## **Toft Hill Primary School**



**Academic Year**

**2023/24**

**Attendance Policy**  
**Toft Hill Primary School**

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<b>Author of document:</b>	Leanne Nesbitt	<b>Job role:</b>	Headteacher
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### Attendance key contact List

Name	Role	Contact details
Leanne Nesbitt	Head Teacher Designated senior leader with responsibility for attendance	01388 832393 <a href="mailto:tofthill@durhamlearning.net">tofthill@durhamlearning.net</a>
Lynne Tully	School Business Manager	01388 832393 <a href="mailto:tofthill@durhamlearning.net">tofthill@durhamlearning.net</a>
Mark Dickinson	Deputy Headteacher	01388 832393 <a href="mailto:tofthill@durhamlearning.net">tofthill@durhamlearning.net</a>

### Who in school can help if you are experiencing difficulty / require help and support:

Name	Role / type of help	Contact details
Leanne Nesbitt	Head Teacher Designated senior leader with responsibility for attendance	01388 832393 <a href="mailto:tofthill@durhamlearning.net">tofthill@durhamlearning.net</a>
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Contact the member of staff that you feel most comfortable/ confident talking to	Teachers/ Teaching Assistants	01388 832393 <a href="mailto:tofthill@durhamlearning.net">tofthill@durhamlearning.net</a>

## **Introduction to our school attendance vision and ethos**

Toft Hill Primary School seeks to ensure that all of its pupils receive an education which maximises opportunities for each pupil to realise his/her true potential. The school will strive to provide a calm, orderly, safe, and supportive environment where all pupils want to be and are keen and ready to learn within a culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance.

Regular school attendance plays a vital role in children's wellbeing and their education, ensuring that their current learning needs are being met but also building their future ability to learn.

As attendance is the essential foundation to positive outcomes for all pupils', improving attendance is everyone's business, a concerted effort across all teaching and nonteaching staff in school, the trust or governing body, the local authority, and other local partners.

Some pupils find it harder than others to attend school and therefore at all stages of improving attendance, the school and partners will work with pupils and parents to remove any barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships and working together to put the right support in place.

### **Why is regular attendance so important?**

Being in school every day that it is open, is important to your child's achievement, wellbeing, and their wider development. There is a renewed national focus on maximising pupils' time in the classroom, as evidence shows that the students with the highest attendance throughout their time in school, starting in primary School gain the best GCSE and A Level results.

Pupils with good attendance records generally achieve higher grades and enjoy school more. Having a good education will help to give your child the best possible start in life. Regular school attendance patterns encourage the development of other responsible patterns of behaviour.

Learning is a progressive activity; each day's lessons build upon those of the previous day(s). Reading the material and completing work independently does not compensate for direct interaction with the teacher. Classes use discussions, demonstrations, experiments and participation as part of the daily learning activities, and many of these cannot be made up by those who are absent.

### **Here's what the data shows:**

Pupils with higher attainment at KS2 and KS4 had lower levels of absence over the key stage compared to those with lower attainment.

Pupils who did not achieve the expected standard in reading, writing and maths in 2019 had an overall absence rate of 4.7% over the key stage, compared with 3.5%

among pupils who achieved the expected standard and 2.7% among those who achieved the higher standard.

Pupils who did not achieve grade 9 to 4 in English and maths GCSEs in 2019 had an overall absence rate of 8.8% over the key stage, compared with 5.2% among pupils who achieved a grade 4 and 3.7% among pupils who achieved grade 9 to 5 in both English and maths.

Generally, the higher the percentage of sessions missed across the key stage at KS2 and KS4, the lower the level of attainment at the end of the key stage.

Among pupils with no missed sessions over KS2, 83.9% achieved the expected standard compared to 40.2% of pupils who were persistently absent.

Among pupils with no missed sessions over KS4, 83.7% achieved grades 9 to 4 in English and maths compared to 35.6% of pupils who were persistently absent.

**This policy is supported by our policies on:**

- ✓ Safeguarding
- ✓ Behaviour and Bullying
- ✓ SEND and Inclusion
- ✓ Supporting pupils with medical conditions or disabilities
- ✓ Equalities

It also aligns with our:

- ✓ School Development Plan
- ✓ Pupil Premium & Recovery Premium Strategies
- ✓ Other whole school initiatives

**The school and all partners will work together to:**

**EXPECT**

Aspire to high standards of attendance from all pupils 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.



**MONITOR**

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.



**LISTEN AND UNDERSTAND**

When a pattern is spotted, discuss with pupils and parents to listen to understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.



**FACILITATE SUPPORT**

Remove barriers in school and help pupils 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.



**FORMALISE  
SUPPORT**

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



**ENFORCE**

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, enforce attendance through statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.

## **1. Expectations**

We recognise that the relationship between attendance and achievement of our students is inextricably linked.

Regular school attendance is crucial to maximise pupil progress, enjoyment of learning, social and emotional well-being, and for this reason the school is dedicated to ensuring its attendance policy is adhered to.

### **We will ensure that:**

- All students have an equal right, and access to, an education in accordance with the national curriculum, or agreed alternative.
- Attendance is a priority across the school.
- We aspire to high standards on attendance.
- Pupils will not be deprived of their education opportunities by, either their own absence or lateness, or that of other pupils.
- Action is taken where necessary to secure an improvement in attendance.

## **2. Attendance data**

A member of the attendance team will:

- Monitor and analyse weekly attendance patterns and trends to identify where support and intervention is needed.
- Look at individual pupils, cohorts and groups (including their punctuality)
- Use this analysis to provide regular attendance reports to class teachers to facilitate discussions with pupils and to leaders (including any special educational needs coordinators, designated safeguarding leads and pupil premium leads).
- Identify the pupils who need support and focus staff efforts on developing targeted actions for those cases
- Conduct thorough analysis of half-termly, termly, and full year data to identify patterns and trends including analysis of pupils and cohorts and identifying patterns in uses of certain codes, days of poor attendance and punctuality
- Benchmark our attendance data (at whole school, year group and cohort level) against local, regional, and national levels to identify areas of focus for improvement.
- Devise specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data.
- Through the Headteachers report to Governors, provide data and reports to support the work of the governing body.

## **3. Listening to and understanding barriers to attendance**

We treat pupils and parents with dignity and strive to maintain respectful and positive relationships between home and school. We clearly communicate the link between

attendance and attainment and wider wellbeing, and challenge parents' views where they have misconceptions about what 'good' attendance looks like. Attendance is monitored rigorously. Where a pupil or family needs support with attendance, we ensure that the best placed person in the school works with and supports the family and wherever possible keep that person consistent. Building on these effective working relationships, we will listen to and understand the barriers to attendance the pupil or family is experiencing. In doing so, we will take into consideration the sensitivity of some of the reasons for absence and understand the importance of school as a place of safety and support rather than reaching immediately for punitive approaches.

In the first instance, we will

- Support pupils and parents by working together to address any in-school barriers to attendance.
- Where barriers are outside of the school's control, school will engage with other services with the aim of working together to support pupils and parents to access any support they may need voluntarily. This will include meeting with pupils and parents at risk of persistent or severe absence to understand barriers to being in school and agreeing actions or interventions to address them. These actions will be regularly discussed and reviewed together with pupils and families.

#### **4. Facilitate support**

Where absence intensifies, so will the support provided. Staff responsible for attendance will work in tandem with the local authority and other relevant partners:

Where the needs are wider and a whole family response is more appropriate, this is likely to include a voluntary early help assessment. An appropriate member of staff will work with the family to complete an Early Help Assessment to facilitate the family in accessing the support that they require to improve attendance.

#### **5. Formalise support**

Where engagement in support is proving challenging and the desired improvement in attendance has not been made, we will hold more formal conversations with the parents (and pupil where they are old enough to understand). This will be led by the senior leader responsible for attendance and may include the school's point of contact in the local authority School Attendance Support Team. These meetings will clearly explain the consequences of persistent and severe absence to the pupil and family and the potential need for legal intervention in future. Central to these meetings, will continue to be a focus on continuing to listen to and understand the barriers to attendance and explain the help that is available to avoid those more formal consequences.

Depending on the circumstances, where voluntary support has not been effective and/or has not been engaged with, we will work with the local authority to put formal support in place in the form of a parenting contract or an education supervision order.



## 6. Enforce

The school will endeavour to provide families with the support that they need to improve attendance. However, where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or being engaged with, attendance may be enforced where necessary through statutory intervention or prosecution to protect our pupil's rights to an education. This may be through:

- The issue of a fixed penalty notice where support would not be appropriate or has not been successful or engaged with and it is likely to change the parents' behaviour to achieve the desired outcome.
- Intensify support through statutory children's social care involvement where there are safeguarding concerns, especially where absence becomes severe (below 50% attendance).
- Prosecute parents where all other routes have failed or are not deemed appropriate. This could include making the case for a community or parenting order where the parent is convicted to secure engagement with support.

Throughout all levels, we will monitor the impact of any intervention(s) and make adjustments where necessary in discussion with the pupil, parents and any other partners involved as part of any whole family plan or team around the family. Where interventions are failing, all parties will work together to identify the reasons why and either adjust or change the approach to achieve the best outcomes possible for the child.

### **General / frequently asked questions**

#### **When can children be absent from school?**

When you register your child at school, you have a legal duty to ensure your child attends that school regularly.

This means that your child must attend every day that the school is open, unless:

- Your child is too ill to attend that day.
- You have asked in advance and been given permission by the school for your child to be absent on that day due to exceptional circumstances.
- Your child cannot attend school on that day because it is a day you are taking part in religious observance
- Your local authority is responsible for arranging your child's transport to school and it is not available on that day or has not been provided yet; or
- You are a gypsy/traveller family with no fixed abode, and you are required to travel for work that day meaning your child cannot attend their usual school. In most circumstances, however, your child is required to attend another school temporarily during such absences.

These are the only circumstances where schools can permit your child to be absent.

## **What do I need to do if my child needs to be absent from school for one of those reasons?**

You should contact the school as early as possible to explain why. If not, school will contact you on the first morning of their absence to find out why.

All parents can request a 'leave of absence' for their child which gives them permission to be absent from school. Leaves of absence must be applied for before your child will be absent and will only be granted in exceptional circumstances.

The headteacher has the final say over whether to approve the request and how long your child can be absent.

Their decision will be made after considering the specific facts and circumstances behind your request.

## **Can I take my child on holiday during term time?**

Parents should plan their holidays around school breaks and avoid requesting leaves of absence for holidays unless it is unavoidable.

As leave of absence is only granted in exceptional circumstances, it is unlikely that your child's headteacher will agree a leave of absence for a family holiday.

If permission is refused and you keep your child off school on the days requested, you are likely to be committing an offence and be issued a fixed penalty notice or be prosecuted by your local authority.

## **Attendance Procedures and Absence Processes**

### **Attendance and absence management**

**To help to promote and secure good attendance, we will:**

- Celebrate class attendance and punctuality weekly during praise assembly with a trophy to be displayed in the classroom of the class with the highest attendance
- Keep an up to date display board with weekly attendance figures, punctuality information and weekly winners identified.
- Termly individual attendance recognition and rewards
- Share attendance celebration information and display images with parents through Class Dojo.
- Post attendance updates and set incentives on Class Dojo
- Enable parents to view live attendance figures through their Arbor app.
- Keep regular contact with parents during periods of absence, including a first day phone call by 9.30am
- Work with parents in a positive way to promote good attendance

- In exceptional circumstances, where reasonably possible, staff will provide support for parents to get children to school by attending the family home and assisting getting the child to school.

## **Communication**

The school requests that all parents please remember to report and explain the reasons for absence to the main office and to make sure your contact and emergency contact details are up to date.

It is vital, that school can contact parents if their child becomes unwell during the school day or in order to discuss the reasons for absence.

The school will analyse absence across the school. As a result of this, some families will receive letters to inform them if their child's absence is lower than it should be if no prior discussion has taken place (unless this is due to, for example medical needs). If we have concerns regarding your child's attendance then we may contact you by phone, letter, invite you to a meeting or make a visit to your home.

As a parent you may identify concerns about school attendance early on if you have seen a change in your child's attitude to school or in their willingness to attend. If this is the case, please share your concerns with us and we can work together to ensure that school attendance doesn't ever need to decline. The quicker that concerns are shared, the quicker they can be resolved.

The school will work with you to discuss ways that we can offer support in finding a way to improve attendance.

### **On the first day of absence**

If a child is absent for any reason, parents or carers are asked to phone the School Office giving a reason for the child's absence. If a child is absent from school and there is no phone call from home then school will phone home to inform parents that the child is not in school and enquire about a reason why.

Doctors and dentist's appointments should be made outside of school time. If this is not possible, your child should miss the minimum amount of school time necessary. If they are well enough to come back to school following the appointment they need to.

### **Periods of extended absence**

If a child's absence continues beyond 3 days then parents are requested to notify the school to update them. If a phone call is not received, the school will contact parents by telephone to verify the absence and take any relevant action in relation to assuring itself of the child's welfare.

If the school receives no reason for any absence then an unauthorised absence will be recorded. Continued absenteeism and unauthorised absences could result in more formal action.

## **Absence authorisation**

The High Court has confirmed that the school's Head Teacher authorises absences. In some circumstances, the school may request that parent's provide medical evidence to support absences.

We are committed to supporting your child effectively, to ensure that they get the very best education possible and therefore have the best life chances. All challenges made concerning persistent absences, will be handled sensitively and in confidence.

## **Punctuality:**

Registration time is **8.55-9 am**. Pupils should be in class for the start of registration and so to facilitate this the pupil entry gates will be locked at 8.55am and all pupils must then enter by the main entrance. Registers are taken between 8.55 and 9am. It is so important for all children to be on time, as missing the first few minutes of any lesson can be disruptive and unsettling, both for children and for the rest of the class. If a child arrives in school up to 15 minutes after this time then a late mark will be recorded in the register (L). Registers will be closed at this point and any children arriving more than 30 minutes late will be recorded as (U) which is a late after registers close mark and this is classed as an unauthorised absence (a number of these marks can also contribute to more formal action being considered).

### **If your child is late for school:**

All children arriving late at school will be asked the reason for their lateness and this will be recorded on the school's attendance data base (SIMs).

### **If a child is late (after registers close) for school on a number of occasions**

A member of the school attendance team will arrange a meeting with parents to facilitate a plan to improve punctuality.

### **If lateness becomes persistent** with no identifiable reason

If the issue persists then the school will encourage parents to work co-operatively with themselves and other professionals to secure an improvement. The school will facilitate additional support.

### **If the school continues to have concerns about a child's punctuality**

Should the support offered/ available not have the desired impact, then support will become more formalised and may result in enforcement being necessary.

## **Help & Support**

If you need help with attendance, it is important that you contact school about the issues as soon as possible. The quicker we know what the problem is, the quicker that we can work together to solve it and put a plan together which will meet your

child's needs and ensure your child can benefit from all that school has to offer. Where needed we can also involve other services to make sure that your child and your family gets the right support, at the right time from the right people.

### **Leave of Absence in Term Time**

Head teachers are only able to grant leave of absence during term time **unless there are exceptional circumstances**. The school will consider each request of absence individually; taking into account the circumstances, such as; the nature of the event for which leave is sought, the pupil's prior attendance and any important events taking place in school at that time.

An application for leave of absence must be made well in advance via a form which is available from the school website or in person from the school office. Where a leave of absence is granted, the head teacher will determine the number of days a pupil can be away from school.

A leave of absence is granted entirely at the head teacher's discretion. If an application for leave of absence is not made prior to the time of the required absence, then the absence will be recorded as unauthorised regardless of circumstances.

**Please note that absence will not be authorised under any circumstances during any period of public examinations or internal assessments.**

### **Pupils with specific needs**

Some pupils face greater barriers to attendance than their peers. These can include pupils who suffer from long term medical conditions or who have special educational needs and disabilities. Their right to an education is the same as any other pupil and therefore the attendance ambition for these pupils should be the same as they are for any other pupil. That said, in working with their parents to improve attendance, we will be mindful of the barriers these pupils face and put additional support in place where necessary to help them access their full-time education. This will include:

- Having sensitive conversations and developing good support for pupils with physical or mental health conditions. For example, making reasonable adjustments where a pupil has a disability or putting in place an individual healthcare plan where needed. Considering whether additional support from external partners (including the local authority or health services) would be appropriate, making referrals in a timely manner and working together with those services to deliver any subsequent support.
- Working with parents to develop specific support approaches for attendance for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities, including where applicable ensuring the provision outlined in the pupil's education, health and care plan is accessed. In addition, we will work with families and other partners to encourage the scheduling of additional support interventions or medical appointments outside of the main school day or provide flexibility in approaches where this is not possible.

- Establish strategies for removing the in-school barriers these pupils face, including considering support or reasonable adjustments for uniform, transport, routines, access to support in school and lunchtime arrangements.
- Ensuring joined up pastoral care is in place where needed and considering whether a time-limited phased return to school would be appropriate, for example for those affected by anxiety about school attendance.
- Ensuring data is regularly monitored for these groups including at governing body meetings and in Targeting Support Meetings with the local authority so that additional support from other partners is accessed where necessary.

Pupils with long term illnesses or other health needs may need additional support to continue their education, such as alternative provision provided by the local authority. The Local Authority is responsible for arranging suitable education for children of compulsory school age who, because of health reasons, would otherwise not receive suitable education.

All pupils of compulsory school age are entitled to a full-time education. In very exceptional circumstances, where it is in a pupil's best interests, there may be a need for a temporary part-time timetable to meet their individual needs. For example, where a medical condition prevents a pupil from attending full-time education and a part-time timetable is considered as part of a re-integration package. A part-time timetable should not be used to manage a pupil's behaviour.

A part-time timetable must only be in place for the shortest time necessary and not be treated as a long-term solution. Any pastoral support programme or other agreement should have a time limit by which point the pupil is expected to attend full-time, either at school or alternative provision. There should also be formal arrangements in place for regularly reviewing it with the pupil and their parents. In agreeing to a part-time timetable, a school has agreed to a pupil being absent from school for part of the week or day and therefore must treat absence as authorised.

### **Children Missing from Education**

If you move from the area and your whereabouts are unknown, the school can legally remove your child from the roll after 20 school days of unauthorised absence. It is **vital that if you keep school informed of any change of details** and regularly update them if details change. Your child may be at risk of losing their school place if your whereabouts are not known.

It is also important that emergency contact information is kept up to date and that if you are leaving the area, you provide details of where and how you can be contacted. If you do not do this and the school is unable to trace your child, this would be treated as a **safeguarding matter**.

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

### **➤ The Governing Body**

The governing board is responsible for:

- Promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school
- Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance
- Holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy

### **➤ The Headteacher**

The headteacher is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary

### **➤ The designated senior leader responsible for attendance**

The designated senior leader is responsible for:

- Leading attendance across the school
- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having an oversight of data analysis
- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data
- Arranging calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance is Mrs Nesbitt and can be contacted via telephone on 01388 832393, email [tofthill@durhamlearning.net](mailto:tofthill@durhamlearning.net) or a message on Class Dojo

### **➤ The attendance officer**

The school attendance officer is responsible for:

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance and the headteacher
- Working with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence
- Advising the headteacher/ Deputy headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices

The attendance officer is Kim Peacock and can be contacted through school.

### **➤ Class teachers**

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office from 9 - 9.10am and 1-1.10pm. Class teachers should also forward any messages that they receive regarding a child's attendance/ absence to the school office.

➤ **School office staff**

School office staff will:

- Take calls from parents about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system
- Transfer calls from parents to the Headteacher/ Deputy Headteacher in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance

➤ **Parents/carers**

Parents/carers are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day and arrives on time
- Call the school to report their child's absence before 9am on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence, and advise when they are expected to return
- Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day or where absolutely necessary create minimum disruption to learning time.

➤ **Pupils**

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school every day and arrive on time
- Be committed to having good attendance and punctuality