

Attendance Policy

Toft Hill Primary School



Academic Year

2024/25

Attendance Policy

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Author of document:	Leanne Nesbitt	Job role:	Headteacher
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Updates from working together to improve attendance	Sept 24	Information received from DfE and LA	3	Governing Board

Attendance Key Contacts

Please find the details of those with overall responsibility for attendance, attendance support and attendance improvement within our school below.

Name	Role	Contact details
Leanne Nesbitt	Head Teacher Designated senior leader with responsibility for attendance	01388 832393 tofhill@durhamlearning.net
Lynne Tully	School Business Manager	01388 832393 tofhill@durhamlearning.net
Mark Dickinson	Deputy Headteacher	01388 832393 tofhill@durhamlearning.net
K Reynolds	Governor with responsibility for attendance	

If a pupil is going to be absent from school the person who should be informed is: Mrs Lynne Tully, School Business Manager & Office Admin, 01388 832393

If a pupil, parent or family is having difficulty with attending school and requires advice, help or support then they can contact:

Name	Role / type of help	Contact details
Leanne Nesbitt	Head Teacher Designated senior leader with responsibility for attendance	01388 832393 tofhill@durhamlearning.net
Mark Dickinson	Deputy Headteacher	01388 832393 tofhill@durhamlearning.net
Class Teachers through Dojo		

Help & Support

Where help or support is needed with attendance the sooner school know about this, the quicker people can work together to support with this. Where needed this can involve other services to make sure that pupils and their families get the right support, at the right time from the right people.

Children Missing from Education

If pupils whereabouts are not known following enquiries schools can legally remove pupils from the admission register (the school roll) after 20 school days of unauthorised absence. It is **vital that parents keep school informed of any change of details** and regularly update them if details change. Pupils place in schools are at risk if whereabouts are not known. Children Missing from Education must be reported to the Local Authority and the matter may be treat as a safeguarding issue.

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.

Specific roles and responsibilities have been published in the [Working Together to improve school attendance statutory](#) guidance.

We recognise the link between regular attendance and the well-being, development and achievement of our students / pupils. We expect everyone to attend every session they are able to, to benefit from the learning and pastoral opportunities and support we offer.

Communication is vital to ensure we are able to work with our parents and pupils and support attendance.

We ask that parents check the contact details, address and emergency contact information held by the school are up-to-date are communicated to school as soon as possible as it is extremely important school can contact parents in an emergency, keep parents informed of events and progress or discuss any concerns at the earliest opportunity.

The school day

The school day is **8.55am** but children can arrive from 8.45am. Children enter at the pupil gate, which is supervised by a member of staff, and make their way to their classes.

Registration is **8.55am to 9.05am**. Pupils must be in school to be marked present, otherwise another appropriate code will be used (Attendance codes appended).

Pupils arriving late for registration, but before the register has closed will be recorded as late (L code).

In line with government guidance the registers will close at **9.25am** (no more than 30 minutes after the registration period ends).

Pupils who are not present before the register closes but attend during the session will be recorded as a U code unless the reason means another code is more appropriate. The U code is an unauthorised absence.

Arriving late to school can be disruptive and unsettling to the child and the rest of their class. Parents should contact their class teacher and/or Mrs Leanne Nesbitt if there are any issues which are affecting a pupils ability to attend school on time.

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 Arbor, our electronic registration system.

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

Mrs Nesbitt will contact parents to discuss reasons for lateness and attempt to work together to find possible solutions.

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

Mrs Nesbitt will discuss how school can offer further support for example, using breakfast club, early bird sessions, meet and greets for support or possible referral to the local authority for action if unauthorised

Term dates and planned Inset days

Details of where parents can find term dates, Inset days etc are on the school website and reminders will be made through class Dojo.

Leave of Absence in Term Time

Head teachers are expected to restrict leave of absence in term-time to the specific circumstances in [regulation 11 of the School Attendance \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2024](#). There is discretion to consider exceptional circumstances based on the individual facts, circumstances and background behind the request. Permission should be (academies)/ must be (maintained schools and non-maintained special schools) requested in advance by a parent the pupil normally lives with completing the form available from the main office or on the school website on the attendance page.

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 is not made for leave, then the absence will be recorded as unauthorised regardless of circumstances.

The DfE have stated that generally they do not consider the need or desire for a holiday or other absence for leisure or recreation to be an exceptional circumstance.

On the first day of absence

If a pupil is to be absent for any reason, parents or carers are asked to contact the School by telephone on 01388 832393 by 9.05am providing a reason for the absence. If a pupil is absent from school and there is no contact from parents/carers then school will contact home to find out why the pupil not in school. A telephone call will be made from 9.25am when the register closes. If the phone call is not picked up then a message will be left. Further attempts to contact by telephone may be made throughout the day if contact is not established.

Appointments should be made outside of school time where possible. 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 should do so.

Periods of extended absence

Parents are expected to contact school for each day of absence unless there has been an agreed isolation period for the illness, in line with NHS guidelines, between parents and school.

No reason for absence provided

If there is no contact from home, this may be need to be escalated if there are welfare/safeguarding concerns. Attempts will be made to contact other emergency contacts, it may be necessary to carry out a home visit or in the most serious cases, a welfare check may be requested from Children's Services or the police.

If the school do not receive a reason for any absence it will be recorded as unauthorised. Regular absence and unauthorised absences could result in more formal action.

Where 10 or more unauthorised absences are recorded in any 10 school week period the school must consider whether a penalty notice may be appropriate and if so will refer the matter to the local authority.

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 want to support all our pupils to ensure they can access their education and will take a support first approach. This will sometimes require communications and conversations to better understand the circumstances which may lead to absence.

Promoting good attendance and punctuality

We actively promote good attendance and punctuality in our school by;

- Build strong relationships and work jointly with families;
- Give parents/carers details on attendance on our website and through Class Dojo
- Parents have ongoing information regarding their child's attendance through the Arbor App
- Promote the benefits of high attendance to pupils by discussing with pupils, parents/ carers and posts on Class Dojo and dedicated discussions about attendance in parent consultaion meetings termly.
- A weekly class attendance award with a dedicated Trophy
- Celebrate excellent attendance by displaying and reporting individual and class achievements;
- Accurately complete admission and attendance registers and have effective day to day processes in place to follow-up absences
- Reward good or improving attendance;
- Submit a daily attendance return to the Department of Education, in line with the legal expectations placed on all schools;

Attendance data

We look carefully at our school attendance data both daily and weekly to identify issues. This helps us to target attendance improvement efforts to the pupils or pupil cohorts who need it most. The school attendance data is reported, at least, termly to the Governing Board. The school data is compared against local and national data to provide a context for our efforts. We aim 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.

We will use data we have such as whole school, year group, form/class and individual pupil level to analyse for patterns of absence which may require some support to improve.

We will also consider different pupil cohorts such as all pupils, those who have free school meals, those with special educational needs or disabilities, pupil premium, children who have a social worker or are looked after etc to identify where additional support may be required.

We will use the information to inform what we do to support and aid discussions between staff, pupils and families.

We will monitor the data to understand the impact of what we do.

We will communicate information to parents, staff and other professionals such as early help, Social Workers and other professionals working with families.

Absence concerns

Parents may identify concerns about school attendance early if there is a change in child's attitude to school or in their willingness to attend. If this is the case, concerns should be shared with school so people can work together to ensure that school attendance does not decline. The earlier concerns are identified and shared, the quicker they may be resolved.

Persistent absence

Pupils who miss 10% or more of their sessions at school are persistently absent. We will notify parents if we believe their child is at risk of being persistently absent and offer support to work together to make improvements.

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.

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.

Severe absence

Pupils who miss 50% or more of their sessions at school are severely absent

School will carefully monitor pupils who are severely absent, or at risk of being severely absent. 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.

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 more formal support in place.

National framework for penalty notices and other legal intervention

To improve consistency of practice across the country there is a national framework for penalty notices.

At the point where there are 10 unauthorised absence sessions recorded in any 10 school-week period, schools must consider if:

- further support is appropriate.
- support is appropriate but is not being engaged with.
- support is appropriate but is not improving attendance.
- support is not needed, such as in cases of term-time leave of absence.

If support is appropriate, this should continue.

If support is appropriate but is not improving attendance or is not being engaged with, then a referral for consideration of legal intervention should be made to the local authority. This can include, but is not limited to a Notice to Improve, an application for an Education Supervision Order, Penalty Notice or Offence investigation Interview (PACE caution).

If support is not appropriate, such as where a holiday in term-time has taken place, a referral for a penalty notice will be made. ([DCC - Penalty Notice Code of Conduct](#))

Penalty notices offer the opportunity to deal with an irregular attendance offence without the need to go to court. Penalty notices are issued at a rate of £160, reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days.

There is an escalation policy which means that if a second notice is issued within a three-year period, the second notice will only be payable at the rate of £160. Further offences will not be eligible for the offer of a penalty notice and parents may be prosecuted in court. ([DCC - Penalty Notice Leaflet](#))

If penalty notices are not paid then a prosecution for the original irregular attendance offence will take place.

If convicted at court under section 444 of the Education Act for failing to secure the regular attendance of a registered pupil at school, a parent may be fined up to £1000 for each offence. If there is evidence that a parent knowingly failed to secure the attendance and there is no reasonable justification for this, they can be fined up to £2500 and/or face up to 3 months in prison, be subject to probation supervision or have a curfew imposed as maximum sentences.

Pupils with specific needs

This Policy takes account for the specific needs of individual pupils and pupil cohorts and will be applied fairly and consistently, considering the individual needs of pupils/ families who have specific barriers to attendance.

In development and implementation of the policy, obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child have been considered.

This policy is supported by our policies on:

Safeguarding, Behaviour, SEND, Equality, Accessibility

APPENDIX 1

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 circumstances this may include formalising support through a parenting contract or education supervision order.



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.

Expect

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.

Monitor

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.