



ATTENDANCE POLICY

Review Date	Reviewer	Approved by	Date Approved	Implementation
September 2023	J Bissicks/K Finnigan	Head of School	July 2023	September 2023
September 2025				

Revision History

Issue No.	Date	Description
5	Sept 2021	No changes
6	Sept 2023	Updated sanctions for absconding from lessons. Amended relevant job titles. Updated sections 'Persistently and severely absent students', 'Leave of absence in term time', 'Punctuality', 'Failure to attend registration/Lateness to lessons', Included the times of the school day.

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1. Introduction

As part of the North East Learning Trust, Teesdale School and Sixth Form seeks to ensure that all students receive an education which maximises opportunities and enables them to realise their true potential. The school will strive to provide a welcoming, caring environment, whereby each member of the school community feels wanted and secure.

We believe that all students benefit from the education we provide, and therefore from regular attendance. The aim of our attendance policy is to provide a consistent practice that encourages and facilitates the regular attendance of all students.

This policy has been reviewed and rewritten in line with DFE 'working together to improve attendance' Guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools, and local authorities September 2022 and the 'School attendance parental responsibility measures' (January 2015)

Mrs Bissicks, Senior Strategic Advisor has overall responsibility for championing and improving attendance and can be contacted via telephone on 01833 638 166 or email at enquiries@teesdaleschool.co.uk. Ms Finnigan, Attendance Manager will ensure the accurate completion of registers at the start of each morning and afternoon session, and at the beginning of each teaching class. Attendance figures will be reported to parents in annual reports. All staff will work with students and their families to support parents/carers in helping them to meet their legal duty; to ensure that their child/children attend school regularly and on time. A whole school attendance target of 96% has been set for this academic year and various measures will be put in place to help work towards this.

The school has incentives and rewards to acknowledge those students with outstanding and improved attendance and will support those students and parents/carers who are finding school attendance and punctuality difficult.

To identify patterns of absence the school will analyse weekly attendance data and inform parents/carers where attendance falls below the school target. If there are further absences the school will work with students and parents/carers to identify and remove barriers to attending school.

2. Aims

- To maintain high standards of attendance of students registered at the school.
- To make attendance and punctuality a priority for all those associated with the Trust and school including students, parents/carers, staff, Governors, and Trustees.
- To develop a framework which defines agreed roles and responsibilities and promotes consistency in carrying out designated tasks.
- To provide support, advice and guidance to parents/carers and students.
- To develop a systematic approach to gathering and analysing attendance related data.
- To further develop positive and consistent communication between home and the school.

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- To promote effective partnerships with the Local Authority's (LA) Attendance Team and local partners working together to re-engage students.
- To recognise the needs of the individual student when planning reintegration following periods of absence.
- To target support for persistent absence (those whose attendance falls below 90% 19 days of absence) and severe absence (those whose absence falls below 50% 95 days of absence) to remove any barriers to attendance by working with students, parent/carers and across a range of local partners.
- To ensure that all stakeholders understand the importance and also value outstanding attendance.
- To recognise and reward outstanding attendance.

3. Links with Other Policies

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following Trust and school policies:

- Behaviour Management
- Children Missing in Education
- Exclusion Policy
- Home Visit Policy
- Safeguarding Policy
- Supporting Pupils/Students with Medical Conditions

4. Attendance and Attainment

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

Regular school attendance is crucial to maximise student progress and enjoyment of learning, and for this reason the school is dedicated to ensuring its attendance policy is adhered to.

5. Types of Absence

Every half-day (1 session) absence from school must be classified as either authorised or unauthorised. It is not the responsibility of parents to classify an absence, only the Head of School is able to authorise an absence from school.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason such as illness or medical appointments which unavoidably fall in school time. Other exceptional circumstances that warrant an authorised leave of absence will be considered on an individual basis considering the specific facts and circumstances.

Unauthorised absence are mornings or afternoons away from school for reasons which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been given. This type of absence can lead to the LA using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. Absence codes are entered in line with statutory guidance.

6. Absence Procedures

If a child is ill or is absent for any reason, parents/carers should, on the first day of absence and subsequent days, phone the school and speak with the Attendance Manager, giving a

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reason for the child's absence. Should a parent/carer not contact school, the appropriate Learning Manager or Attendance Manager will contact parents/carers to confirm that the child is not in school and to obtain the reason for the absence.

Doctor and dentist 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 should return.

If a child's absence continues, then parents/carers are requested to notify the school daily. If a phone call is not received, then the Attendance Manager or Learning Manager will contact parents/carers to verify the absence. It is the responsibility of parents/carers to provide school with up-to-date contact details. If the school receives no reason for any absence, or the reason provided is not deemed to be a valid reason for absence, then an unauthorised absence will be recorded. If absence continues without satisfactory explanation, a safeguarding home visit will be made. See Children Missing in Education and Safeguarding Policy

The High Court has confirmed that the Headteacher authorises absences. If your child is absent from school a lot because of illness, or if the school do not know of any serious health issue that would mean your child could miss school frequently, the school may ask you to provide medical evidence to authorise absences.

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

Attendance data is used to identify patterns of poor attendance as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched. Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, the Attendance Manager will explain the consequences. Depending on the circumstances this may include formalising support through a parenting contract established at an Attendance Planning Meeting

7. School Procedures

Attendance Below 96%

When a student's attendance falls below 96% the school will:

- Enter the student's name on the SIMS database and monitor their attendance on a weekly basis.
- The SLT Link and Attendance Manager will act as key workers for students where attendance is a cause for concern.
- The SLT Link and Attendance Manager will meet weekly to discuss students whose attendance falls below 96%.
- The SLT Link and Attendance Manager will consider a range of strategies to address the poor attendance of students in this category, including school attendance meetings with both parents/carers and student to agree strategies to improve attendance, Attendance Manager visits, telephone calls and letters are other strategies that will be used. When necessary, referrals will be made to the LA Attendance Improvement Team. The school may also request that a

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parent/carer provides the school with supporting medical evidence to verify prolonged or frequent absences and will refuse to authorise absences unless this proof is provided.

- Attendance figures will be reported to parents/carers in annual reports.

If parents/carers and/or students need help with attendance, you can contact the Attendance Manager. You may be asked to attend a meeting in school to talk about the problems and to put a plan in place. Sometimes, the school may need to involve other services to help; referrals will be made to outside agencies if the school feels such action is warranted.

The school will always try to communicate with you regarding your child's attendance if it declines. This communication may involve explaining that attendance is a cause for concerns by letter, making telephone calls to you, and inviting you to attend a meeting in school depending on the circumstances. The school will work with you to discuss ways that we can offer support in finding a way to improve the situation.

8. Persistently and severely absent students

Persistent Absence (those whose attendance falls below 90%, 19 days absence) and Severe Absence (those whose absence falls below 50%, 95 days absence).

The school will adopt a whole school approach to help and support students and parent/carers to remove barriers. This will include support from the Attendance Manager, and when needed the School Pastoral Team. The school will help students and parents/carers to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. This might include a referral to local support services where absence is a symptom of wider issues. Students will become part of a Support Monitoring Group depending on the needs of the student this will be led by; the student's Learning Manager, Attendance Manager, and/or SENDCO and will be supported by SLT. The school may also request that a parent/carer provides the school with supporting medical evidence to verify prolonged or frequent absences and will refuse to authorise absences unless this proof is provided.

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, a referral will be made to the LA Attendance Improvement Team to consider enforcement action through statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the student's right to an education.

9. The Law

The Education Act 1996 places a duty on parents to ensure that their child of compulsory school age receives a suitable education either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

In April 2017, the Supreme Court held that attending school 'regularly' means attending in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school and not 'sufficiently frequent attendance'. This means that a child must attend school on every day that the school requires them to do so and failure to do this may lead to the committing of an offence.

Legal action to enforce school attendance includes a Parenting Order, an Education Supervision Order, a School Attendance Order or a fine.

In accordance with Section 444 of The Education Act 1996. If a child is absent without authorisation, then the parent is guilty of an offence. This is a strict liability offence i.e., all

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that needs to be shown is a lack of regular attendance. Sanctions can include a fine of up to £1000. If the child is absent without authorisation and the parent knew about the child's absence and failed to act, then the parent is guilty of an aggravated offence. Sanctions can include a fine of up to £2500 and a prison sentence of up to three months.

10. Leave of Absence in Term Time

The law states that parents/carers do not have the right to take their child out of school for holidays during term time other than in exceptional circumstances.

Headteacher's are no longer able to grant leave of absence during term time **unless there are exceptional circumstances**. The school will consider each request of absence individually; considering the circumstances, such as the nature of the event for which leave is sought and any key events taking place in school at that time e.g., termly tests. Please note that absence will not be authorised under any circumstances during any period of public examinations or internal assessments.

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 of School will determine the number of days a student can be away from school. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the Head of School's discretion. As stated in the most recent DFE guidance on attendance, 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.

If the school refuses a request for term-time leave and the child is still taken out of school, this will be recorded as unauthorised absence and a Penalty Notice may be issued by the Local Authority. The Local Authority criteria for issuing a Penalty Notice is 7 days or more of unauthorised absence in a minimum 12 rolling school week period. A separate notice will be issued to each parent for each child. A Penalty Notice is a fine of £60 if paid between 1 – 21 days after issue, increasing to £120 if paid between 22 – 28 days.

In exceptional circumstances, however, the school may be prepared to authorise a holiday during term-time. Proof of exceptional circumstances must be provided at the time of submitting the Leave of Absence Request form. If a leave of absence is taken during term-time without the school's permission, the student's absence will be recorded as unauthorised. In the event of a student not returning to the school on the agreed date, any absences after this date will be recorded as unauthorised.

11. Rewarding Good Attendance

The school will look for every opportunity to reward high attendance. Each term the school will celebrate outstanding attendance in achievement assemblies. Rewarding students with certificates, house points, postcards and 'mint attendance' each week. Entry into prize draw, celebration station and verbal congratulations from SLT.

12. The School Day

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Monday to Friday
 On school site by 8.30
 8.40 – 9.05 - Form time and PSHE
 9.05-10.05 Period 1
 10.05-11.05 Period 2
 11.05-11.20 Break time
 11.20-12.20 Period 3
 12.20-1.05 Lunch
 1.05-2.05 Period 4
 2.05-3.05 Period 5

13. Punctuality

All students arriving late will be asked the reason for their lateness and this will be recorded on the school's attendance database (SIMs).

- Registration takes place at the beginning of morning and afternoon sessions. Morning registration begins at 8.40am. Students arriving after 8.50am will be marked L (late before register closed). Morning registers will be closed at 9.05am. All students who arrive after 9.05am will be marked using the U code unless a satisfactory reason is given. If no explanation is provided the morning session will be recorded as an unauthorised absence. All students arriving after 8.50am will be given a sanction for that same day.
- Afternoon registration takes place at 1.05pm during period 4. Students arriving after 1.05pm will be marked L (late before register closed). PM registers close at 1.10pm. All students arriving after 1.10pm will be marked with a U code unless a satisfactory reason is given. If no explanation is provided the morning session will be recorded as an unauthorised absence
- The Attendance Manager will monitor the late book and letters will be sent to the student's parents/carers to inform them of their child's level of lateness.

14. Failure to Attend Registration/Lateness to School

Where a student is repeatedly late for registration, or fails to attend registration on a regular basis, the tutor should pass the student's name on to the SLT Link. From that point onwards the SLT Link will employ a range of sanctions to ensure that the student attends registration on time. Parents/carers will be contacted, and sanctions may include detentions, internal exclusions and in the worst cases, a fixed term exclusion or fixed penalty notice.

A letter will be sent home from school to parents/carers to say their child's punctuality is causing some concern. An appointment with the Attendance Manager and SLT Link will be offered to discuss ways that the school can offer support in finding a way to improve this. Incentives to improve punctuality may also be offered to students e.g., through the school's rewards system. If there is no improvement, then a referral may be made to the Attendance Improvement Team to consider if enforcement action is required.

15. Lateness to Lessons

A class register is taken at the beginning of each lesson. Students arriving late will be sanctioned accordingly.

Those students who are repeatedly late to lessons will be identified by the Attendance Manager using the late list printout. Once this is done, sanctions will be used to address the

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problem. These sanctions will include parental contact, detentions and, in the worst cases, internal exclusions.

16. Truancy from lessons and/or school

The first time a student is caught truanting from school and/or lessons, the parents/carers of the student will be contacted by telephone by their Head of Year, and the student will be given an after-school detention. Regular spot checks will be carried out to make sure the student is in lessons.

The second time a student is found truanting, they will be given a two-hour detention after school. The student will then be placed on a step report and parents/carers will again be informed by telephone and a letter. Regular spot checks will take place to make sure the student is in lessons.

The third time a student is found to be truanting, the student's parents/carers will be contacted and invited to attend a meeting with a senior member of staff. The student will be moved up a step and placed on report for a period of approximately one school term.

17. Leaving the Classroom without Permission

Any student leaving a classroom without permission will be spoken to by the SLT Link and a sanction will be applied.

18. Roles and Responsibilities

Local Academy Council:

As part of our approach to maintaining high attendance, the Local Academy Council will:

- Ensure that the importance of attendance is made clear by promoting the relevant Trust and school policies and guidance directed to parents/carers and staff.
- Annually review the school's attendance policy and ensure that all provisions are in place to allow staff, parents/carers, and students to implement the policy effectively.
- At their termly meetings they will review and discuss attendance issues that have arisen to be fully aware and supportive of expected attendance targets for the year.
- Ensure that the school is implementing effective means of recording attendance and organising that data, including for students who are educated off site.

Senior Leadership Team:

- Be active in their approach to promoting good attendance with students and their parents.
- Ensure the school's teaching and learning experiences encourage regular attendance and that students are taught the value of high attendance for their own progression and achievement.
- Coordinate with the Trust to monitor the implementation of the policy and its effectiveness, with annual review of full policy.
- Ensure that all staff are up to date with the Attendance Policy and that staff are fully trained to recognise and deal with attendance issues.
- Ensure government legislation on attendance is complied with and that the leadership team are up to date with any legislation changes and how to implement

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them.

- Nominate or appoint a member of SLT to take responsibility for overseeing and monitoring attendance provision and that this person has sufficient time and resources to give to the job.
- Report to the Governors each term on attendance records, data, and provision.
- Ensure that systems to record and report attendance data are in place and working effectively.

Staff:

- Be active in their approach to promoting good attendance with students and their parents/carers.
- Ensure the school's teaching and learning experiences encourage regular attendance and that students are taught the value of high attendance for their own progression and achievement.
- Ensure the SLT Link responsible for overseeing attendance and any other relevant personnel are kept fully aware of and up to date with any concerns relating to students that may impact on their attendance.
- Ensure compliance with regulation and guidance on attendance.
- Work professionally with parents/carers, students, and relevant agencies to secure improvements in attendance via appropriate support or enforcement measures.
- Ensure understanding and are following the correct systems for recording attendance and that attendance is taken each lesson and session.

Parents/Carers:

- Engage with their child's education – support their learning and take an interest in what they have been doing at school.
- Promote the value of good education and the importance of regular school attendance at home.
- Follow the procedures outlined in this policy regarding absences, ill health, medical or dental appointments, leave of absence in term time and punctuality.
- Do everything they can to prevent unnecessary school absences.
- Keep the school informed of any circumstances which may affect their child's attendance and work with staff in resolving any issues that may be having an impact on their child.
- Encourage support and motivate their child to attend school every day, as it is vital that your child receives the same messages at home as they do at school about the importance of attendance.

Students:

- Will ensure that they are ready for school and are prepared for their journey to school at the correct time.
- Will ensure that they have prepared their equipment required for school and have packed their bags in readiness for the day ahead.
- Will ensure that once they arrive at school, they proceed directly to the school entrance and do NOT take any diversions that their parents have not authorised.
- Will ensure that when the first bell goes, they proceed without delay to registration.

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- If a bus is late and after registration, they sign in at reception. They will not be marked late, if the bus is late.
- Do everything they can to prevent unnecessary school absences.
- If absent from school, then students will proactively catch up on work that has been missed.

Attendance Manager:

- Assist in the implementation of school policy on attendance.
- Liaise with the SLT Link on matters relating to attendance.
- Distribute attendance data to tutor groups.
- Assist in the organising of rewards for good attendance.
- Monitor levels of unauthorised absence in a designated year group and, if necessary, to contact parents/carers regarding unexplained absences.
- Implement the school's policy on lateness to lessons.
- Implement the school policy on punctuality at registration.
- Monitor the Late Register and send letters to parents/carers informing them of their child's level of lateness every half term.
- Contact parents/carers on the first day of a student's absence.
- Act as a contact between home, school and the LA on matters related to school attendance.
- Offer advice, assistance and support to parents/carers and students on school attendance issues.
- Assess reasons for non-attendance and initiate and support appropriate action to improve it.
- Initiate and refer cases for legal action as appropriate to the LA Attendance Improvement Team.
- Provide information and reports which may be used in court when necessary.
- Liaise with the SLT Link on matters relating to attendance and monitoring of all subgroups.
- Meet weekly with the SLT Link to discuss students whose attendance falls below 96%.
- To consider a range of strategies to address the problem of poor attendance, including:
 - School attendance meetings with both the parents/carers and student; to make arrangements as to how all parties can work together to improve the student's attendance.
 - Home visits, telephone calls and letters to parents/carers relating to their child's attendance.
- Refer all appropriate cases to the LA Attendance Improvement Team.

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