



ATTENDANCE POLICY

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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

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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.

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 attends school regularly and on time. A whole school attendance target of 96% has been set for the academic year and various measures will be put in place to help work towards this.

The school has established an effective system of incentives and rewards which acknowledges the efforts of students to improve their attendance and timekeeping and will challenge the behaviour of those students and parents/carers who give low priority to attendance and punctuality.

This policy has been written in line with the DFE 'School attendance Departmental advice for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities' (November 2016) and 'School attendance parental responsibility measures' (January 2015).

2. Aims

- To maintain high standards of attendance of students registered at school.
- To make attendance and punctuality a priority for all those associated with both 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 school.
- To promote effective partnerships with the Local Authority's (LA) Attendance Team and with other services and agencies.
- To recognise the needs of the individual student when planning reintegration following significant periods of absence.
- To reduce the number of students who have more than 4% overall absence.
- To reduce the number of persistent absentees, that is those whose attendance falls below 90%.

3. Attendance and Attainment

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

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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.

4. Promoting Regular Attendance

To ensure that parents/carers are aware of school attendance procedures and their parental responsibility for their child's attendance and punctuality the school will:

- Give information on attendance and punctuality on the school's website and the Parental Guides 'Fixed Penalty Notices' and 'Holidays in School Time'.
- Involve parents/carers from the earliest stage of poor attendance.
- Ensure the Attendance Officer contacts parents on the first day of absence if contact has not been made by parents/carers.

To ensure that students are aware of the importance of good attendance and punctuality the school will:

- Establish and maintain a high profile for attendance and punctuality.
- Relate attendance issues directly to the school's values, ethos, and curriculum.
- Reward good attendance.

5. The Law

In law, it is the responsibility of parents/carers to ensure that their child attends school regularly. You will be breaking the law if your child does not attend school without good reason.

The school will offer help and support if there is a problem with attendance. If attendance does not get better or you do not accept help and support offered, the LA may issue you with a warning notice, Penalty Notice or ask you to attend an interview to ask you questions about whether you have broken the law.

If you go to court and are found guilty of an offence, you could be fined up to £1,000 for a less serious offence or up to £2,500 if the law breaking is more serious. In very serious cases, the court may involve the probation service or consider up to 3 months in prison.

6. Types of Absence

Every half-day absence from the school must be classified as either authorised or unauthorised by the Executive Headteacher/Head of School or staff acting on behalf of the Executive Headteacher/Head of School. It is not the responsibility of parents/carers to classify an absence.

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.

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Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Local Authority (LA) using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. Absence codes are entered in line with statutory guidance.

7. Absence Procedures

If a child is ill or is absent for any reason, parents/carers should on the first day of and further absence phone the Attendance Officer giving a reason for the child's absence. Should a parent/carer not contact the school, the Attendance Officer will contact parents/carers to confirm that the child is not in school and to confirm 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 need to. Parents must provide an explanatory note for all absences.

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 Officer will contact parents/carers to verify the absence.

If the school receives no reason for any absence, then an unauthorised absence will be recorded. Continued absenteeism and unauthorised absences could result in further action such as referral to the Attendance Improvement Team to consider enforcement action and possibly a fixed penalty notice (this includes unauthorised absences accrued through leave of absence (holiday) taken during term time).

8. 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 Assistant Headteacher and Attendance Officer will act as key workers for students where attendance is a cause for concern.
- The Assistant Headteacher and Attendance Officer will meet weekly to discuss students whose attendance falls below 96%.
- The Assistant Headteacher and Attendance Officer 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 Officer 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 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.

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- 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 Officer. 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.

9. Enforcement Action

If, following the school's attempts to intervene there is no significant improvement and no good reasons for absences (i.e., absences are not supported by relevant evidence), or parents/carers have not co-operated with attempts to improve the situation the school are required to consider referring the matter to the LA for enforcement action.

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

10. 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.

11. 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. A warning bell rings 5 minutes before registration and a second bell to signify the beginning of the day. Students arriving after the second bell are late and this will be marked as such on the register. (This applies for each lesson period throughout the day). Students arriving after 8.50am will be marked L (late before register closed). Morning registers will be closed at 8.55am. All students who arrive after 8.55am will be marked using the U code unless a satisfactory reason is given. If no explanation

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- is provided the morning session will be recorded as an unauthorised absence
- Afternoon registration takes place at 12.55pm. Students arriving after 12.55pm will be marked L (late before register closed). PM registers close at 1.10pm.
- Students arriving after the registers are closed 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 Officer 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.

12. 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 Assistant Headteacher. From that point onwards the Assistant Headteacher 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.

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 Officer and Assistant Headteacher 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.

13. Lateness to Lessons

A class register is taken at the beginning of each lesson. A bell rings at the end of each lesson and then there are three minutes for movement to the next lesson. Students arriving after the late bell will be marked late.

Those students who are repeatedly late to lessons will be identified by the Attendance Officer using the late list printout. Once this is done, sanctions will be used to address the problem. These sanctions will include parental contact, detentions and, in the worst cases, internal exclusions.

14. 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

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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.

15. Leaving the Classroom without Permission

Any student leaving a classroom without permission will be spoken to by the Assistant Headteacher and could be given a one hour after school detention (C4).

16. 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.

Executive Headteacher/Head of School are no longer able to grant leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. The school will consider each request individually; taking into account circumstances, such as the nature of the event for which leave is sought, the student's prior attendance and any important events taking place in school at that time e.g., termly tests.

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 Executive Headteacher/Head of School will determine the number of days a pupil can be away from school. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the Executive Headteacher/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.

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

17. Student 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.

18. Roles and Responsibilities

Local Academy Council:

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

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will:

- Ensure that the importance of attendance is made clear by promoting the relevant Trust and Academy policies and guidance directed to parents/carers and staff.
- Annually review the Academy'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 Academy 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 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 Assistant Headteacher 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

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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
- 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 Officer:

- Assist in the implementation of school policy on attendance.
- Liaise with the Assistant Headteacher 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

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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 Assistant Headteacher on matters relating to attendance and monitoring of all subgroups.
- Meet weekly with the Assistant Headteacher 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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