

# Student Attendance Policy



## Rationale

*'Improving attendance is everyone's business. The barriers to accessing education are wide and complex, both within and beyond the school gates, and are often specific to individual pupils and families. The foundation of securing good attendance is that school is a calm, orderly, safe, and supportive environment where all pupils want to be and are keen and ready to learn.'*

(Working Together to Improve School

Attendance, 2024)

The attendance policy should not be viewed in isolation; attendance runs through all aspects of whole-college culture and ethos including teaching and learning, safeguarding, bullying, behaviour and SEND.

## Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- ▲ ensure parents and students understand attendance processes and procedures;
- ▲ ensure that excellent attendance has a high priority with students, parents/carers and College staff;
- ▲ demonstrate clearly the procedures when there is a concern about an absence;
- ▲ ensure understanding of the actions that can be taken by Torbay Council's Attendance Improvement Service to ensure excellent attendance.

## Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the [working together to improve school attendance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- ▲ Part 6 of [The Education Act 1996](#)
- ▲ Part 3 of [The Education Act 2002](#)
- ▲ Part 7 of [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- ▲ [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006 \(and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments\)](#)
- ▲ [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)

This policy also refers to the [DfE's guide to absence statistics](#), which explains the persistent absence threshold.

## Roles and responsibilities

### The College will:

- ▲ ensure that all relevant staff understand and apply the College registration process;
- ▲ record and monitor all absenteeism and lateness accurately;
- ▲ ensure that the attendance of all students is monitored on at least a fortnightly basis, in order to identify persistent and severe absence and those at risk of persistent and severe absence;
- ▲ have clear procedures to identify and follow up all absence and lateness, allocating individual staff roles and responsibilities;
- ▲ promote the importance of school attendance across the College's ethos and culture including ensuring that improving attendance is everyone's 'business';
- ▲ review the attendance policy and associated procedures annually in consultation with Torbay Council's Attendance Improvement Service.

### Parents/carers should:

- ▲ ensure that their child attends on time every day;
- ▲ recognise the legal responsibility to ensure that their child regularly attends College or any alternative provision in place. Failure to fulfill this duty may result in legal action being taken by Torbay Council;
- ▲ inform the College of the reason for their child's absence on the first morning of the absence and each morning thereafter;
- ▲ ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the College day;
- ▲ inform the College of any change to circumstances that may impact on their child's attendance;
- ▲ avoid taking term time holidays and understand the potential consequences of doing so without prior written permission from the College, including Penalty Notices or prosecution.

## Absence

All absences must be explained by parents/carers and the College will then decide whether the absence can be authorised.

Some examples of absences that may be authorised are as follows:

- ▲ Illness<sup>1</sup>
- ▲ Exceptional family circumstances such as a bereavement
- ▲ Days of religious observance
- ▲ Unavoidable medical/dental appointments<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the College may ask the student's parent/carer to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

<sup>2</sup>All routine (non-emergency) appointments should be made, whenever possible, outside of College hours. If an appointment during College hours is unavoidable, evidence of this appointment will need to be provided and the student should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary. Failure to provide evidence may result in the absence being recorded as unauthorised.

## **Authorised and unauthorised absence**

### **Leave of absence during term time**

The College works in accordance with legislation made clear in the Education (Student Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, whereby leave of absence may not be granted during term time, unless there are exceptional circumstances, and that the number of days a student can be absent from college when leave is granted will be determined by the Principal or Senior Vice Principal to whom that responsibility is delegated.

Requests for leave of absence must be submitted by parents/carers using an Absence Request Form available from the College reception office at least half a term in advance of the proposed absence. Requests for leave of absence will be decided on a case by case basis and granted only where it is determined that there are exceptional circumstances.

Parents/Carers requesting leave of absence will be advised of the outcome in writing. If the absence is not authorised and the student is removed from College anyway, the College may refer the case to Torbay Council's Attendance Improvement Service to consider issuing a Penalty Notice to the parents/carers for the unauthorised absence.

The Notices carry a financial penalty per parent/carer and per child:

- ▲ For the first offence within a 3-year period, the current penalty is £80 if paid in full within 21 days or £160 if paid in full between 22-28 days of receipt of the Penalty Notice.
- ▲ For the second offence within a 3-year period, the current penalty is £160 which must be paid within 28 days of the Penalty Notice. There is no option to pay a reduced amount.

If a Penalty Notice is not paid, Torbay Council may start prosecution proceedings.

No more than two Penalty Notices will be issued per parent/carer per child within a three year period. This means that if two Penalty Notices are issued and then a further offence is committed within three years, a summons to Court for the most recent offence is likely. If this results in a conviction, a fine of up to £1000 is likely.

## Absence Procedures

At the beginning of each academic year, the College will remind parents/carers of the procedure for reporting absence as follows:

- ▲ On the first day of absence, parents/carers must inform the College as early as possible that their child will be absent. This can be done most efficiently via [Class Charts](#). Messages may also be left on the 24 hour absence line: **01803 408841**. Sixth Form absences should be reported via [Class Charts](#) or a phone call to **01803 408852**. A reason for the absence must be given, including the nature of any illness, as well as an indication of the expected duration. Unless otherwise stated, for instance if the student will be hospitalised for a known amount of time, the parent/carer must make contact each morning of every subsequent day of absence. A record of all reports of absence will be kept by the College and details will be entered into the student database accordingly.
- ▲ Registers will be taken by College staff and details entered into the student database accordingly.
- ▲ On each morning of an unexplained absence, parents/ carers of the absent student will be sent an automated message asking them to contact the College. Non-response to this message will result in the absence being recorded as unauthorised. Further action may be taken, such as contact with other family members and persons named as contacts for the student or a home visit, which may include speaking with neighbours. Concerns may be shared with appropriate agencies such as safeguarding and child protection officers to ensure the safety of the student. Parents/carers are responsible for keeping their contact details up to date.
- ▲ If a member of staff is concerned about the absence of a student for any reason, they will raise their concerns with an appropriate colleague such as the Head of Year, Student Support Team, Designated Safeguarding Lead or a member of the Senior Leadership Team.
- ▲ Any child of compulsory school age who is not currently attending school is a 'Child Missing Education' (CME). If a student has unexplained absence for ten consecutive days, or sooner in some cases, the College will notify the School Attendance Team at Torbay Local Authority. The School Attendance Team will liaise with relevant agencies. More information is available on their website: <https://www.torbay.gov.uk/schools-and-learning/attendance/missing-education/>. If a student leaves Torbay, it is important that their parents/carers advise the College of the intended new school or, if a school place has not yet been allocated, the Local Authority area of their new address.
- ▲ If a student with an unexplained absence is subject to a child protection plan or if the College has particular safeguarding concerns, the College will immediately notify the Safeguarding Hub and the Attendance Improvement Service.

## Lateness

Registers close at 9 am. A student who arrives late:

- ▲ before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code;
- ▲ after the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code which will count as an unauthorised absence for the morning session. The absence will only be authorised if a satisfactory explanation for the late arrival can be provided, e.g. attendance at a medical appointment.

Arriving to College late results in loss of learning which, when persistent, can add up to a significant proportion of a student's time at College. Disruption is also caused to classes when students arrive late. The College therefore employs strategies to improve punctuality.

## Lateness Procedures

- ▲ Students must arrive at College before the first bell sounds at 8.25 am and students must be in their tutor base by 8.30 am.
- ▲ Students who arrive at College after 8.25 am are considered to be late and this is recorded as such with the use of an 'L' mark. These students must sign in with a designated member of staff on duty at reception, stating the reason for their lateness. Students who arrive after 8.25 am are issued a tutor point and lunchtime detention for that day. Failure to attend the detention will result in escalation to an after-school detention.
- ▲ The morning register closes at 9 am. Students who arrive after 9 am are considered as late and this is recorded as unauthorised absence. The absence will only be authorised if a satisfactory explanation for the late arrival can be provided by the parent or carer, e.g. attendance at a medical appointment. Students who arrive after 9 am are issued an after-school detention for that day.
- ▲ Late marks are monitored daily and addressed with students where concerns arise. Persistent lateness will be addressed by the Head of Year and further actions may be applied.

## Promoting attendance

The College will promote a culture which recognises and celebrates regular and punctual attendance. This includes:

- ▲ Offering an environment for students in which they feel valued and safe.
- ▲ Encouraging students to take full advantage of all opportunities available to them by attending College regularly.
- ▲ High quality teaching and learning experiences that encourage students to attend and achieve.
- ▲ Activities to promote attendance including assemblies, displays, one-to-one tutor discussions, tutor phone calls home, leader boards, 97% attendance certificates, postcards and prize draws.

## Managing poor attendance

Parents/carers will be informed about their child's attendance and absence levels via the Class Charts app which reports data on individual lesson attendance and overall attendance data.

Student attendance is monitored by the Attendance Team who will monitor attendance on at least a fortnightly basis, in order to identify those at risk of poor attendance:

1. If a student's attendance level falls to below 96%, parents/carers are likely to be advised by letter that their child's attendance has dropped below the acceptable level.
2. If the student's attendance does not improve, an Attendance Support Plan will be implemented by the appropriate head of year and a second letter may be sent.
3. If the student's attendance does not improve, an Attendance Improvement Plan will be implemented by the appropriate head of year and a third letter may be sent. This will advise parents/carers that any future absences relating to illness and/or medical reasons may not be authorised without medical evidence.
4. If the student's attendance does not improve and the student and parent/carer does not engage with support offered, a fourth letter will be sent referring the student to the Attendance Improvement Service.

## Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence is where a student misses 10% or more of time at school, and severe absence is where a student misses 50% or more of time school.

In these cases, the College will:

- ▲ Hold regular meetings with the parents/carers of students who the College (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at College.
- ▲ Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance.
- ▲ Offer strategies to support students and their families to improve attendance, e.g. part-time timetable, multi-agency response, action plans and close monitoring by the Head of Year.
- ▲ Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence.
- ▲ Work closely with Torbay Council's Attendance Improvement Service and will refer to them for guidance where persistent absence occurs and there is no response to measures taken by the College or improvement in attendance. This could result in legal action including Penalty Notices, Education Supervision Orders, School Attendance Orders and Prosecution.

Please see Torbay Council's website for further details: <https://www.torbay.gov.uk/schools-and-learning/attendance/interventions>