

# TUNBURY PRIMARY SCHOOL

## Pupil Attendance Policy

### **Statement of Intent**

- Tunbury School is committed to the continuous raising of achievement of all of our pupils. Regular attendance is critical if our pupils are to be successful and benefit from the opportunities presented to them.
- One of our basic principles is to celebrate success. Good attendance is fundamental to a successful and fulfilling school experience. Tunbury School actively promotes 100% attendance for all of our pupils and we use a variety of termly and annual rewards to promote good attendance and punctuality.
- We recognise that parents/carers have a vital role, and a legal responsibility, to ensure good attendance and we identify, investigate and work in partnership with parents/carers, pupils and other agencies to resolve attendance problems.

### **Good attendance is important because:**

- Statistics show a direct link between under-achievement and poor attendance
- Regular attenders make better progress, both socially and academically
- Regular attenders find school routines and school work easier to cope with
- Regular attenders find learning more satisfying
- Regular attenders have an easier transfer to secondary school

Regular attendance at school is essential to ensure uninterrupted progress and to enable children to extend their potential. The attendance pattern for all children is monitored weekly with the school seeking to work actively with parents to ensure a regular pattern is maintained.

Non-attendance is an important issue that is treated seriously. However each case is different and the school acknowledges that no one standard response will be appropriate in every case. Consideration is given to all factors affecting attendance before deciding what intervention strategies to apply.

In every case, early intervention is essential to prevent the problem from worsening. It is essential that parents keep the school fully informed of any matters that may affect their child's attendance. Further details regarding roles and responsibilities are identified in the appendix to this policy.

### **Parental Responsibility**

Throughout this policy the term 'parent' represents one parent, both parents, and carer with whom the child resides. Parents are informed of their responsibility to ensure their children attend regularly, in the home school agreement. Punctuality is also stressed as lateness impacts on learning not only for the individual, but the class as a whole. Concerns regarding attendance are discussed with each parent at consultation evenings, with the current

percentage attendance being reported. **Parents have a legal obligation to ensure their children receive a full time education.** For EYFS and Key Stage 1 children, full time means 21 hours per week. For Key Stage 2 children, full time means 23.5 hours per week. This is achieved by regular attendance at school.

When a child is unwell, parents should contact the school before 8.55am on each day of absence informing the school of the reason for absence.

At Tunbury School pupils are expected to arrive by 8.55am. All pupils arriving after 8.55am should report to the school office where they present themselves to the office staff.

Any pupils arriving after 9.30 am will be recorded as an unauthorised absence which may result in the issuing of a Penalty Notice (unless the office has been previously notified).

Attendance below 95% is considered to be unsatisfactory and as such parents may receive a letter from the school raising a concern.

Attendance below 90% is considered to be a serious cause for concern. In such cases no further absences will be authorised unless medical evidence is provided to the school confirming illness on the part of the pupil. In such cases parents will be notified by letter.

## **School Responsibility**

The Senior Leadership Team and all teaching staff work to ensure a high level of enjoyment and commitment to learning as a means of ensuring regular attendance.

Specific responsibilities for attendance matters are identified in the appendix. Where school attendance problems occur, the school will endeavour to work with parents in the interests of the child to achieve a resolution.

Attendance is recorded and data stored and analysed. It is a statutory duty for class teachers to complete and maintain accurate registers; these are legal documents and may be called for as evidence by the court. Class Teachers are legally responsible for marking their class attendance register twice per day at the start of each session.

## **Authorisation of absences**

Frequent absence is a cause for concern. School Medical Officers are very helpful and can normally clarify whether on-going absence is justified. **It is the school who authorises absence, not the parent/carer.**

Term times are for education. This is the priority. Children and families have 175 days off school to spend time together, including weekends and school holidays. Absences will not be granted during term time and will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances. **Absence during term time for holiday is not considered an exceptional circumstance.**

Absence for a bereavement of a close family member (sibling, parent, grandparent of pupil) is usually considered an exceptional circumstance but for the funeral service only, not extended leave.

It is important to note that Headteachers can determine the length of the authorised absence as well as whether absence is authorised at all.

The Headteacher authorises absence; and Tunbury Primary School adheres to the DfE guidelines in authorising absence. Absence for any reason during term time is discouraged. Absence known to be for the following reasons may be authorised:

- Illness
- Religious observance
- Attendance at medical appointments which can not be made outside of school hours

The legal responsibility for ensuring pupils attend school regularly and punctually rests with parents/carers. It is essential that parents/carers should be the first line of contact whenever the pupil is absent from school.

## **Term Time Leave of Absence**

We are always concerned about the amount of school time pupils miss as a result of family holidays. There is no entitlement to time off in term time. Leave of absence is only authorised at the discretion of the Headteacher in accordance with the school policy as agreed by the board of governors.

From 1<sup>st</sup> September 2013 the Department of Education (DfE) amended the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 1996 removing the Headteacher's ability to authorise leave of absence for a holiday during term time.

- **Requests for holidays during term time will not be authorised.**
- Absence taken and not authorised will be referred to Kent County Council and families may be liable for a Penalty Notice to each parent for each child that is taken out of school.
- Only in exceptional circumstances will absence be authorised.
- Leave will not be authorised retrospectively.
- In cases where leave is authorised, the school does not provide work for pupils to complete whilst absent from school. Teachers are not expected to plan learning in advance for absences.

## **Penalty Notices**

Penalty notices for absence from school can be issued by Kent County Council to each parent of any child who is a registered pupil at Tunbury Primary School. The following circumstances are considered as appropriate reasons for the issuing of Penalty Notices:

- Truancy, including truancy sweeps
- Parentally-condoned absences
- Holidays in term time
- Persistent lateness after the register has closed

For offences of non-school attendance, contrary to Sec.444(1) Education Act 1996, "failure to secure regular attendance at school of a registered pupil", a parent, if found guilty, can be fined up to £1000.

For the more serious offence of non-school attendance contrary to Sec. 444(1)(a) Education Act 1996, 1996 "failure without reasonable justification to secure regular attendance at school of a registered pupil", a parent, if found guilty, can be fined up to £2500 and ultimately, can receive a prison sentence of up to three months.

Penalty Notices were introduced in 2003 as an additional sanction to be used in cases of unauthorised absence from school. The County Council may then issue a Penalty Notice as an alternative to prosecution.

Standard information provided with each Penalty Notice states that penalty notices are issued to each parent of each child and the amount of the penalty will be £120 to be paid

within 28 days, reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days. Failure to pay the penalty in full at the end of the 28 day period may result in prosecution by the Attendance Service at KCC.

Policy reviewed January 2017

### OPERATIONAL MANAGEMENT OF THE POLICY

#### Roles and Responsibility

##### Head teacher

- Consider requests for authorised absence.
- Give approval in advance in appropriate circumstances, taking account of the child's attendance record to date, where appropriate.
- Consider the use of a Penalty Notice for unauthorised absence or lateness.
- Complete HT witness statements on pupil absence for court use.

##### Attendance Panel

- All applications for leave (excluding holidays) exceeding 3 days will each be considered on their own merit.
- Panel: Head teacher, 2 governors
- Name of child and parents will **not** be identified to panel.
- Decisions will be recorded.
- There will be consistency in the panel decisions.

##### Class Teachers

- Prepare and deliver stimulating and enjoyable work for all pupils.
- Registration of pupils at the start of morning and afternoon sessions.
- Alert the Inclusion Manager of any children who demonstrate an unsettled pattern of attendance or whose attendance pattern changes.
- Return registers to the designated place immediately after registration.
- Report percentage attendance at parent consultations; encourage regular punctual attendance; work to secure this
- Ensure all absence notes are passed to the attendance secretary via the class register folder.
- Work with the Inclusion Manager to agree and implement strategies to re-engage pupils with emerging attendance problems.

##### Administration Staff

- Collate daily and weekly registers.
- Record late arrival and reasons.
- Contact parents on the first day of absence (if parent has not informed the school already)
- Ensure reasons for absences are accurately recorded.
- Update records using agreed codes.
- Prepare standard letters requesting reasons for absence when this is unexplained.
- Prepare letters to inform parents when a child's attendance is giving cause for concern and is thus being monitored
- Collect absence notes and record reasons for absence.
- Provide attendance reports when requested.
- Complete the annual DfE attendance returns.

##### Parents

- Ensure their child attends daily and on time.
- Keep the school fully informed on all matters that might affect attendance and their child in school.
- Telephone school on the day of any absence to inform school of the reason

- Provide a note confirming the reason for absence on the child's return to school
- If attendance becomes a problem – work with the school to improve matters.
- Give serious consideration to whether it is appropriate or necessary to request term time absence.
- Inform Head Teacher of any term time leave of absence prior to proposed dates.