



Tower Hill Primary School Attendance Policy 2017 -2018

Name of school:

Tower Hill Primary School

Policy approved and adopted:

At the Full Governing Body Meeting of 14th September 2017

Person(s) responsible for implementing and monitoring the policy:

Christine Cartlidge, Special Educational Needs and Disability Co-ordinator (SENCo)

Due for review:

In readiness for approval at the first Full Governing Body meeting of each academic year, and thus at this point, September 2018

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National Guidance

Statutory:

It is not statutory for schools to have an attendance policy.

However, **it is statutory to have a Home/School Agreement** as set down in Section 110 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, which parents/carers must sign following their child's admission to a school (statutory).

Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 places a duty on governing bodies to have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State with regard to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and students under the age of 18.

School attendance is subject to various education laws and this school attendance policy is written to reflect these laws and the guidance produced by the Department for Education and Hampshire County Council. This attendance policy is also consistent with the following school policies:

- Admissions
- Child Protection
- Safeguarding
- Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities
- Teaching for Learning
- Behaviour

It is very important that you make sure your child attends regularly and this policy sets out how together we will achieve this. This policy will be annually publicised in writing for all staff, parents/carers and pupils via

<http://www.towerhill.hants.sch.uk/website/policies>

DfE Guidance School Attendance (November 2016):

Schools should:

- 1 Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence
- 2 Ensure every child has access to full time education
- 3 Act early to address patterns of absence

Parents/carers must perform their legal duty by ensuring children of compulsory school age who are registered to a school attend regularly. All pupils must be punctual to their lessons.

Section 1:

Rationale

For a child to reach their full educational achievement a high level of school attendance is essential.

Tower Hill Primary School is committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all our pupils and endeavours to provide an environment where all pupils feel valued and welcome. Parents/carers and pupils play a part in making our school so successful. Every child has a right to access the education to which he/she is entitled. Parents/carers and teachers share the responsibility for supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and punctuality for all.

It is our duty to consistently strive to achieve **a goal of 100% attendance for all children**. Every opportunity will be used to convey to pupils and their parents or carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance.

For our children to take full advantage of the educational opportunities offered it is vital your child is at school, on time, every day the school is open ***unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable***.

The routines children develop around attendance and punctuality at school are the same as the expectations of any future employer in the world of work. High attainment, confidence with peers and staff and future aspirations depend on good attendance.

Good attendance is important because:

- Statistics show a direct link between under-achievement and absence **below 95%**
- Regular attenders make better progress, both socially and academically
- Regular attenders find school routines, school work and friendships easier to cope with
- Regular attenders find learning more satisfying
- Regular attenders are more successful in transferring between primary school, secondary school, and higher education, employment or training

Section 2:

Promoting Good Attendance & Punctuality

The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the school, parents/carers and the child. The Home/School agreement will contain details of how we will work with parents/carers and our expectations of what parents/carers will need to do to ensure their child achieves good attendance.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Provide information on all matters related to attendance in our regular '**Reward Receivers**' bulletin, including the publishing of the previous week's attendance for each class, which is sent home each week and also published on our website;
- Report to you on how your child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainments, at least termly but *more frequently should this be becoming a cause for concern*;
- Celebrate good attendance by recognising individual and class achievements, including through our half-termly whole school **100% Harry Awards**;
- Reward good or improving attendance through its contribution to class **Golden Pebble** rewards which lead to additional class 'treats' such as extra in-school rewards and also off-site visits;
- Set targets for the school, progress against which will be shared with parents in the regular '**Reward Receivers**' bulletin and also in the termly **Newsletter Specials**.

Roles and Responsibilities:

Responsibilities of the School's Attendance Leader:

Our SENCo will oversee, direct and co-ordinate the school's work in promoting regular and improved attendance and will ensure the Attendance Policy is consistently applied throughout the school. The SENCo will also ensure that attendance is both recorded accurately and analysed. She will ensure that attendance issues are identified at an early stage and that support is put in place to deal with any difficulties.

If absence is frequent or continuous, except where a child is clearly unwell, staff will discuss with parents/carers the need and reasons for their child's absence and will encourage them to keep absences to a minimum. A note or explanation from a pupil's home **does not mean an absence becomes authorised**. The decision whether or not to authorise an absence **will always rest with the school**.

Responsibilities of Classroom Staff:

Are to ensure that all students are registered accurately and:

- Promote & reward good attendance at all appropriate opportunities;
- Liaise with the Attendance Leader on matters of attendance and punctuality; and
- Communicate any concerns or underlying problems that may account for a child's absence.

Responsibilities of Pupils:

- Attend every day unless they are ill or have an authorised absence;
- Arrive in school on time;
- Adhere to their Home School Agreement;

- Make sure that they inform the School Office Reception if they are late or need to leave the school site for an appointment e.g. medical during school hours.

Responsibilities of Parents and Carers:

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is a parent/carer's **legal responsibility** (section 444 of the 1996 Education Act) and permitting absence from school that is not authorised by the school creates an offence in law.

Parents/Carers will:

- Support the school with their child in aiming for 100% attendance each year;
- Adhere to their Home School Agreement;
- Inform the school on the first day of absence, **via voice message** to the school's telephone answering system, or by phone on the first and subsequent days of absence, or by letter if a phone is unavailable;
- Discuss with the Headteacher any **planned** absences well in advance;
- Avoid taking their child out of school for non-urgent medical or dental appointments;
- Only request for leave of absence if it is for an **exceptional circumstance**.

Section 3:

Recording Attendance:

Legally, the register must be marked *twice daily*. This is once at the start of the school day at 9.00am and again for the afternoon session at 12.45pm for Year R and Year1; 1.00pm for Year 2 & KSII classes Mornings and afternoons each count as ONE SESSION.

****If a pupil is absent for ONE DAY this is TWO SESSIONS****

Lateness /Punctuality

It is important to be on time at the start of the morning and afternoon school sessions. The start of each school day is used to begin daily activities which can include consolidation exercises from previous learning or introducing a new theme for the day/week. If your child is late they can miss this opportunity, cause disruption to the session for others, and also, most critically with younger children, feel embarrassed or afraid to enter the classroom when everyone else has settled to learning whilst answering the register. This can then lead to possible further absence.

- The school day begins at 9.00am and all pupils are expected to be in school at the time.
- After that, all children **MUST** report to the School Office Reception for their attendance to be logged on the school - and thus county - system.

- All lateness is recorded daily. Lateness before registers close will be marked using code 'L'. This information will be required by the courts, should a prosecution for non-attendance or lateness be necessary
- Registers close 10 minutes after the session start times (see above). Arrival after the close of registration will be marked as unauthorised absence code 'U' in line with county and Department for Education (DfE) guidance. This mark shows them to be on site, but is legally recorded as an absence.
- If a pupil is late due to a medical appointment, they will receive an authorised absence coded 'M'. Please be advised that where possible doctors and dentists appointments are to be made outside of school hours or during school holidays.
- A doctors or dental appointment card/letter must be shown to the school office team for verification of lateness/absence in order for the absence to be marked 'M' in the register.
- Pupils who are consistently late are disrupting not only their own education but also that of the other pupils. On-going and repeated lateness is considered as unauthorised absence and will be subject to legal action (see section 6 for further detail).

Parents or carers of pupils who have patterns of lateness will be contacted to discuss the importance of good time keeping and how this might be achieved.

If lateness persists, parents or carers will be invited to attend the school to discuss the problem and support will be offered. If support is not appropriate or is declined and a child has **10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence due to lateness recorded in any 10 week period**, the school or Hampshire County Council will be required to issue parents with a **penalty notice** in accordance with Hampshire's Code of Conduct for issuing penalty notices for non-attendance (See section 6 of this policy for further detail).

End of the School Day or Following After-School Clubs

Please collect your child promptly at the end of the school day. Where late collection is persistent and/or significantly late, the school is obliged to take any uncollected pupil to a place of safety and share concerns as necessary with other agencies.

What to do if my child is absent?

A child not attending school is considered a **safeguarding** matter. This is the key reason why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

If your child is absent you must:

- Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence; AND
- Send a note in on the first day they return with an explanation of the absence - you must do this even if you have already telephoned us;

Or, you can call into school and report to reception on the first day of absence, with a confirmation note of absence for the school records.

If your child is absent we will:

- Telephone you on the first day of absence if we have not seen you or your 'known-to-school' representative - **EVEN IF WE HAVE RECEIVED A TELEPHONE MESSAGE FROM YOU TO VERIFY THAT YOU KNOW YOUR CHILD HAS NOT REACHED THE SCHOOL.**
- Text you to seek contact and ensure that your child is safe - and the reason for their absence - if we cannot reach you by telephone.
- ***This is because we have a duty to ensure your child's safety as well as their regular school attendance.*
- Invite you in to discuss the situation with our Family Support Link Worker and/or our Attendance Officer, the SENCo, **if absences persist;**
- **Refer the matter to the Hampshire's Attendance Legal Panels if absence is unauthorised and falls below 90%.**

Third Day Absence

Please Note: If your child is not seen and contact has not been established with you or any of the named parents/carers after three days of absence, the school is required to start 'Child Missing in Education' procedures as set down by Hampshire County Council Guidance. We will make all reasonable enquiries to establish contact with parents/carers and the 'missing' child including making enquiries to known friends and the wider family. *Our Family Support Link Worker will support families who are encountering difficulties with school attendance and punctuality.*

Ten Days Absence

We have a legal duty to report the absence of any pupil who is absent without an explanation for **10 consecutive days**. If the child is not seen and contact has not been established with the named parent/carer then the Local Authority is notified that the child is '**at risk of missing**'. Children's Services Staff will visit the last known address and alert key services to locate the child. To help us to help you and your child, you must ensure that we always have an **up-to-date contact number**. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year.

Continued or Ongoing Absence

Absence for whatever reason disadvantages a child by creating gaps in his or her learning. Research shows **these gaps affect attainment when attendance falls below 95%**. As such we monitor all absence thoroughly and all attendance data is shared with the Local Authority and the Department for Education. If your child has had absence and **their attendance level is falling towards 90%** we will contact you through a series

of '**Rainbow Letters**' (so called because of their colours – see **Appendix 1**) and depending on the reasons for the absence may introduce an **Attendance Plan** which could ultimately lead to legal measures for tackling persistent absence or lateness.

If your child misses **10% (three weeks)** or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason they are defined as **Persistent Absentees**.

Where this absence is **authorised** e.g. confirmed protracted illness, the school will support you and your child to get back to school as soon possible and ensure that every support is in place to help them to re-engage with their learning and their friends.

Where this absence is **unauthorised**, we will need to discuss what strategies should be put in place to avoid absence recurring unnecessarily which would result in a Penalty Notice procedure being initiated.

Section 4:

Request for Leave of Absence:

Amendments to school attendance regulations were updated and enforced from September 2016: **(Pupil registration) (England) regulations state that:**

Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. 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 fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are rare, significant, or unavoidable which means the event could not reasonably be scheduled at another time.

There are no rules on this as circumstances vary from school to school and family to family. There is however, no legal entitlement for time off in school time to go on holiday and in the majority of cases holiday will not be authorised.

Parents/Carers wishing to apply for leave of absence need to fill in an application form (available from the School Office) in advance and before making any travel arrangements.

If term time leave is taken without prior permission from the school, the absence will be unauthorised and if the number of sessions absent hits the thresholds set down in Hampshire's Code of Conduct, parents/carers will be issued with a fixed-penalty fine, or other legal action in accordance the code (see section 6 for detail).

Taking holidays in term time will affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents or carers to help us by not taking children out during school time.

Section 5:

Understanding Types of Absence - Authorised & Unauthorised:

Pupils are expected to attend school every day for the entire duration of the academic year, unless there is an **exceptional reason** for the absence. There are two main categories of absences:

- **Authorised Absence:** is when the school has accepted the explanation offered as satisfactory justification for the absence, or given approval in advance for such an absence. If no explanation is received, absences cannot be authorised.
- **Unauthorised Absence:** is when the school has not received a reason for absence or has not approved a child's leave from school after a parent's/carer's request. This includes:
 - Parents/carers giving their children permission to be off school unnecessarily such as for shopping, birthdays, to look after siblings;
 - truancy before or during the school day;
 - absences which have not been explained.;
 - *See **Appendix 3** for examples on unacceptable parentally condoned absences.*

A school can, if needed, change an authorised absence to an unauthorised absence and vice versa if new information is presented. Any changes will be communicated to parents/carers.

An example of this would be where a parent/carer states a child is unwell but on return to school there is evidence they have been on holiday.

Section 6:

Penalty Notices for Non Attendance and other Legal Measures:

In Education Law, parents/carers are committing an offence if they fail to ensure the regular attendance of their child of compulsory school age at the school at which the child is registered, unless the absence has been authorised by the school.

Legal Measures for tackling persistent absence or lateness

Hampshire Schools and Hampshire County Council will use the full range of legal measures to secure good attendance. Legal measures will only be considered through a referral to Hampshire's Attendance Legal Panels where:

- 1 The child or family do not require the support from any agency to improve the attendance.
- 2 The child has 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence in any continuous 100 session period, and parents are complicit in the child's absence.

The following legal measures are for pupils of compulsory school age who are registered at a school:

- Parenting contracts set at Education Planning Meetings
- Parenting orders
- Penalty notices
- Education Supervision Orders
- Prosecution

Where a child has **unauthorised absence** the school must enforce Hampshire's Code of Conduct for issuing Penalty Notices or follow its guidance on other Legal Measures for Non-Attendance.

The Code of Conduct is a statutory document that ensures that powers for legal sanctions are applied consistently and fairly across all schools and their families within the authority.

A copy is available from <http://www3.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/attendance-guidance-for-parents/possible-penalties.htm>

Penalty Notices for Non-Attendance - Hampshire's Code of Conduct

The code of conduct states that:

Schools or Hampshire Local Authority will issue a Penalty Notice for any unauthorised absence where the pupil has been:

- absent for 10 or more half-day sessions (five school days) of unauthorised absence during any 100 possible school sessions - these do not need to be consecutive
- persistently late (coded **U**) for up to **10 sessions (five days)** after the register has closed
- persistently late before the close of the register (coded **L**), but the school has met with parents and has clearly communicated that they will categorise as unauthorised any further lateness (code **O**), and where the **threshold of 10 sessions (five days) has been met**
- absent for any public examinations of which dates are published in advance
- absent for any formal school assessments, tests or examinations where the dates have been published in advance

unless the issuing of a Penalty Notice would conflict with other intervention strategies in place or other sanctions already being processed.

If a child's unauthorised absence meets any of the above criteria and the family or child do not require any agency support to improve the attendance then a single Penalty Notice is issued for either:

- 1 10 sessions (5days) of unauthorised absence or lateness in any 100 possible school sessions/10 week school period
- 2 1 or more sessions of unauthorised absence during a public exam, formal school assessment or testing where dates are published in advance.

This includes where a pupil has unauthorised absence due to either:

- non-approval of a parent's/carer's request for a leave of absence, or
- a holiday that has been taken without permission

Parents and Carers will be warned of the likelihood of a Penalty Notice being issued for unauthorised absence either via a letter, through the leave of absence request form, or through the schools Attendance Policy and school website. The Penalty Notice is a fine that is issued to **EACH** parent/carer who condoned (or was responsible for the child) during the period of unauthorised absence for which the fine has been issued. For each case of unauthorised absence the school or Hampshire County Council will decide whether a Penalty Notice is issued to **one or more parent/carers** for each child.

N.B This could mean **four Penalty Notices** for a family with **two siblings** both with unauthorised absence for holiday i.e. **one PN for each child to each parent**.

Each Penalty Notice carries a **fine of £60 if paid within 21 days** of the Penalty Notice being posted. If the fine is not paid within 21 days the penalty is automatically **increased to £120 if paid within 28 days**. If the fine **remains unpaid** the Hampshire County Council will **consider prosecution for the non-attendance**. Payment methods are detailed on the Penalty Notices themselves. Penalties are to be paid to Hampshire County Council and revenue resulting from payment of Penalties is used by the County Council to help cover the costs of issuing Penalty Notices and/or the cost of prosecuting recipients who do not pay.

Please note: If you pay the Penalty Notice and your child has further unauthorised absences additional legal action will be taken. For example, in the event that a Penalty Notice has previously been served to you due to unauthorised holiday, should your child have any future unauthorised leave this will result in further legal action for you, such as prosecution or an Education Supervision Order.

For further information parents/carers can request a leaflet from their school and should visit Hampshire County Councils website at:

<http://www3.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/attendance-guidance-for-parents/possible-penalties.htm>

Section 7:

My child is trying to avoid coming school; what should I do?

Children are sometimes reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents/carers and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and may make things worse.

Contact your child's class teacher immediately and openly discuss your worries. Your child could be avoiding school for a number of reasons - difficulties with school work, friendship problems, 'bullying', family difficulties. It is important that we identify the reason for your child's reluctance to attend school and work together to tackle the problem. In some cases you may find it helpful to discuss the circumstances of your child's difficulties with another professional.

What can I do to encourage my child to attend school?

Make sure your child gets enough sleep and gets up in plenty of time each morning. Ensure that he/she leaves home in the correct clothes (which might involve being in MUFTi so they don't feel 'different' to everyone else) and properly equipped e.g. P.E. kit; musical instrument/music; Homework etc...

Key: Show your child, by your interest, that you value education.

Have a look through your child's bag to check for 'stray letters' in case they include information about things that your child is involved with at school and which could be causing them anxiety e.g. rehearsals for a performance/assembly (learning lines); bringing in a permission slip for a school visit which they are worried that you might not be 'able to afford' (this is *never* a problem - please do come in to discuss any such concerns) etc.

Be interested in what your child is doing in school, chat to them about the things they have learnt, what friends they have made and even what they had for lunch!

For many parents/carers, your child attending school may be your first experience of being separated from them. This can seem daunting at first for both of you but consistency and a caring supportive home and school life will make the transition a quick and easy experience for you both.

Leavers

If your child is leaving our school other than at the end of Year 6, parents/carers are asked to:

- 1 Inform the Headteacher in writing about your plans including the date of the move, your new address and telephone numbers.
- 2 Your child's new school (VITALLY IMPORTANT) and the start date, when known.

If your child leaves and we do not have the above information, then your child is considered to be a '*Child Missing in Education*'. This requires schools and Local Authorities to then carry out investigations to try and locate your child, which includes liaising with Children's Services, the Police and other agencies. By giving us the above information, these investigations can be avoided.

Absence through child participation in Public Performances, including theatre, film or TV work

Parents/carers of a child performer can seek leave of absence from school for their child to take part in a performance. They must contact the Headteacher to discuss the nature and frequency of the work, whether the child has a valid performance licence and whether education will be provided by the employer during any future leave of absence. Any absence recorded as part of a child's participation in a public performance is recorded as '**C**' – an authorised absence – as long as it is approved in advance.

For further advice see <http://www.3.hants.gov.uk/childrens-services/childrenandyoungpeople/child-employment.htm>

Absence through competing at regional, county or national level for sport

Parents/carers of able sportsmen and women can seek leave of absence from school for their child to take part in regional, county, national and international events and competitions. It is, however, down to the Headteacher's discretion as to whether to authorise this and they will wish to discuss with you the nature and frequency of the absence and how learning will continue if absence occurs. Permission for your child to leave early or arrive late to attend coaching and training sessions is also at the discretion of the Headteacher and is not likely to be approved if it is a regular event, unless the sports club or association is providing an education tutor as part of their coaching.

Gypsy Roma Traveller Showman and Showman Families

Absence of a child from a traveller family that has left the area may be authorised if the absence is for work purposes only and it is believed that the family intends to return. To ensure the continuity of learning for Traveller children, dual registration is allowed. That means that a school cannot remove a Traveller child from the school roll

while they are travelling. When the Traveller is away the home school holds the place open and records the absence as authorised through the 'T' code. Distance Learning packs for traveller children are not an alternative to attendance at school.

For further information see <http://documents.hants.gov.uk/childrens-services/HIAS/Promotingpupilattendanceandrecordingabsence-Section6.pdf>

Section 8

Record Preservation

School registers are legal documents. We will ensure compliance with attendance regulations by keeping attendance records for at least 3 years.

Computer registers will be preserved as electronic back-ups.

Review and Evaluation of Policy

The evaluation process will serve the basis for planning programmes of action and targeting time, support and resources. The Headteacher will report to the Governing Body on a termly basis in order to monitor the effectiveness of the procedures set out within the policy. The policy will be reviewed on a three year basis or sooner dependent on statutory requirements.

This policy should be read alongside the *Behaviour, Equality and Child Protection Policies*.

Appendix 1

Tower Hill Rainbow System

If attendance hits **95%** an initial **Green Letter** will be sent explaining how important it is for children to attend school. Parents/carers will be offered an appointment with the Family Support Link Worker. If attendance improves a standard 'congratulatory' letter will be sent!

If attendance continues to drop to below **93%** a Yellow Letter will be sent in order to make an appointment with the Pastoral Care Manager (SENCo) to discuss what support might be helpful in improving the child's attendance.

If attendance drops below **91%** a Red Letter will be sent requesting the parents meet with the Headteacher as the Persistent Absentee threshold will have been hit.

Appendix 2

The Law

The Education Act 1996 Part 1, Section 7 states:

The parent/carer of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him/her to receive efficient full-time education suitable-

- A. To his/her age, ability and aptitude and
- B. To any special needs he/she may have either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

For educational purposes the term 'parent' is used to include those that have parental responsibility and/or those that have the day to day care of the child.

The legislation that appertains to children who are of compulsory school age and are registered at school is contained within this Act.

Part V1 Section 444 contains the details of when an offence is committed if a child fails to attend school.

Register and Admission Roll Keeping

The legal requirements are found in: The Education [Pupil Registration] (England) Regulations 2006

Guidance documents on attendance.

The following DfE documents are used to guide attendance recording:

Absence and Attendance codes (Guidance for Schools and Local Authorities)
Keeping Pupil Registers (Guidance on applying the Education Pupil Registration Regulations)

These and other guidance documents are available on the DfE website.

Hampshire County Council Guidance is available on Hantsweb at

<http://www3.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/lba-resources-for-schools/atten-guidance/attendance-guidance-for-schools.htm>

Appendix 3

Examples of Unacceptable Parentally Condoned Absences

- a parent gives in to a pupil who wants to stay at home
- a parent is ill
- a parent is using the pupil as a childminder
- a pupil is supporting other members of the family
- work patterns, for example shift work, make it difficult for the family to ensure the child attends school
- a parent wants company
- it is the pupil's birthday
- a parent does not care whether the pupil attends school

- a parent has taken the pupil shopping
- a parent cannot control the pupil
- a parent has taken the pupil to the hairdresser
- a pupil is in paid work
- a parent is hostile towards the school or towards education in general
- a parent distrusts authority
- a parent is using the pupil as an interpreter