



## Attendance Policy for Pupils

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(Chair of Governors/Chair of Responsible Committee)

\*County adopted policies only

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## **Aim**

Twyford C of E School aims to maximise attendance of pupils in order to ensure that they are able to take the fullest advantage of learning experiences available to them. Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind. Children with poor attendance tend to achieve less in both primary and secondary school.

## **Legal Requirements**

Under the 1996 Education Act, a pupil is required to attend regularly at the school where he/she is a registered pupil. Parents/Carers have the prime responsibility for ensuring this happens. If a child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school fails to attend regularly at the school, their parent(s)/carer(s) are guilty of an offence.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, require schools to take an attendance register twice a day, once at the start of the morning session and then again during the afternoon session. The register must record whether the pupil was:

- Present
- Absent
- Present at approved educational activity; or
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

Attendance and both school and parental obligations are detailed in the following:

- The Education Act 1996 – sections 434(1)(3)(4)&(6) and 458 (4)&(5)
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2010
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2011
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

Twyford C of E School believe that improved school attendance is the shared responsibility of the school staff, governors, parents, pupils and the wider school community.

### **The school will:**

- Promote the importance and value of good school attendance to pupils and their parents
- Form positive relationships with pupils and parents
- Implement a whole school approach which reinforces good school attendance; with good teaching and learning experiences that encourage pupils to attend and achieve
- Comply with the Registration Regulations, England, 2006 and other attendance related legislation
- Implement systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site
- Analyse attendance data to identify causes and patterns of absence
- Work with other agencies to improve attendance and support pupils and their families

### **Parents/Carers will:**

- Ensure that their child attends school regularly and punctually
- Instil the value of education and regular school attendance within the home environment
- Contact the school if their child is absent to let them know the reason why and the expected date of return
- Avoid unnecessary absences. Wherever possible appointments for the doctors, dentists, etc should be made out of school hours.

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- Inform the school of any change in circumstances that may impact on their child's attendance
- Support the school; take every opportunity to get involved in their child's education, form a positive relationship with school and acknowledge the importance of children receiving the same messages from both school and home
- Not keep their child away from school to go shopping, to help at home or to look after other family members, etc
- Avoid taking their child on holiday during term-time. Where this is unavoidable, a written leave request form must be completed and returned to the headteacher in advance

### **Categorising Absence**

Where pupils of compulsory school age are recorded as absent, the register must show whether their absence was authorised or unauthorised.

Absence can only be authorised by the school and cannot be authorised by parents. All absences will be treated as unauthorised unless a satisfactory explanation for the pupil's absence has been received.

Parents should advise the school by telephone, email or in person at the school office on the first day and each subsequent day of absence and provide the school with an expected date of return. If a child is absent and the school has not been notified by 9:30am, the school administrator will telephone the parents/carers and record the outcomes in the register.

Absence will be categorised as follows:

- **Illness:** Where a child is too unwell to attend school. A phone call, email or letter from the parents informing the school will be acceptable. Where there are repeated absences due to reported illness, parents may be asked to provide medical evidence e.g. a letter from the doctor.
- **Medical/Dental appointments:** Parents are advised where possible to make medical and dental appointments outside the school day. Where this is not possible, pupils should attend school for part of the day, before and/or after an appointment.
- **Other authorised absences:** Exceptional circumstances in which a pupil may be marked as unable to attend are where:
  - The school site, or part of it, is closed due to an unavoidable cause at a time when pupils are due to attend e.g. weather conditions, snow, flooding.
  - In the case of a pupil for whom transport to school is provided by the school or the local authority, and whose home is not within walking distance to the school, that transport is not available e.g. weather conditions, snow, flooding.
  - A local or national emergency has resulted in widespread disruption to travel which has prevented the pupil from attending school.
  - A family bereavement or the child and his family attending the funeral of a close relative/family member.
  - Specified religious observance (see below).
- Service families taking holidays in term time is also considered as exceptional.
- **Exclusion** (no alternative provision made): Exclusion from attending school is classified as authorised absence. The pupil's teacher will make arrangements for work to be made available for completion at home.

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- **Late arrival:** Registration begins at 8:55am. Pupils arriving after this time will be marked as present but having arrived late before register closes. The register will close at 9:10am. Pupils arriving after this time will be marked as having arrived late after register closes. This will not be authorised and will count as absence for that school session. The exception will be only if a satisfactory explanation for the late arrival can be provided and it will be recorded as authorised e.g. attendance at a medical appointment. The absence will be recorded as unauthorised if the pupil arrived late without justifiable cause e.g. woke up late or were waiting for their uniform to dry.
- **Unauthorised absence:** Absence will not be authorised unless parents have provided a satisfactory explanation that has been accepted as such by the school. Examples of unsatisfactory explanations include:
  - A pupil's/family member's birthday
  - A day out
  - Shopping
  - Having their hair cut
  - Holidays/long weekend breaks taken without the authorisation of the school
  - Illness where the child is considered well enough to attend school
  - "Couldn't get up"/overslept
  - Closure of a sibling's school for INSET or other purposes
- **Leave of absence and extended leave:** Twyford C of E School adopts a zero tolerance approach to holidays taken during term time. Parents are strongly encouraged to arrange their family holidays during the school holidays so that their child's education is not compromised.

Parents do not have the automatic right to remove their child from school during term time for the purpose of a holiday and are strongly advised not to do so. Parents should be aware that if their child is absent for 10 school days they will miss 5% of their education during that academic year.

Parents will need to complete a 'leave of absence request form' before any arrangements are made and at least one month before the proposed period of absence. Any request will be considered and leave will only be granted in exceptional circumstances. Each request will be considered individually and will take the following factors into account:

- Length of the proposed leave
- Age of the pupil
- Circumstances of the request
- Purpose of the leave
- Previous term time holidays taken
- The pupil's general attendance record
- Proximity to statutory assessments
- Pupil's ability to catch up on the work that will be missed
- Pupil's educational needs
- When the request was made

**If the permission to take leave is not granted and the pupil is absent, the absence will be unauthorised. In such cases the school may refer the matter to the County Attendance Team who may issue a penalty notice.**

Parents should be aware that repeated abuse of the regulations may make them in breach of Section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act (May 2004) and as such they may be fined by the Local Education Authority.

- **Religious Observance:** Twyford C of E School acknowledges the multi-faith nature of British society and recognises that on occasions, religious festivals may fall outside school holiday periods or

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weekends and that this necessitates a consideration of authorise absence or special leave for religious observance.

It is reasonable for a parent to allow their children not to attend school on any day of religious observance if recognised by the parent's religious body.

Parents are requested to give advance notice to the school if they intend their child to be absent. It is identified as reasonable that no more than one day be designated for any individual occasion of religious observance/festival and no more than three days in total in any academic year. Absence in excess of this will be categorised as unauthorised.

- **Traveller absence:** The aim for the attendance of Traveller children, in common with all other children is to attend school as regularly and as frequently as possible. To protect Traveller parents from unreasonable prosecution for non-attendance, the Education Act 1944, section 86, states that a Traveller parent is safe from prosecution if their child accrues 200 attendances (i.e. 200 half days) in a year. Traveller absence is acceptable only when the family is engaged in trade or business that requires them to travel and when the child is attending school as regularly as that trade permits. It does not mean that part-time education for Traveller children is legally acceptable, nor does it relieve parents of their duties to ensure that their children are receiving suitable education when not at school.

If a Traveller family can reasonably travel back to their base school, then the expectation is that their child will attend full-time.

Twyford C of E School will be regarded as the base school if it is the school where the child normally attends when they are not travelling. However, the pupil must have attended in the last 18 months. Traveller children can register at other schools temporarily whilst away from their base school. In such cases, the pupil's school place at Twyford C of E School will be kept open for them whilst travelling.

Twyford C of E School can operate effectively as the child's base school only if we are engaged in on-going dialogue with Traveller families. This means parents must:

- Advise of their forthcoming travelling patterns before they happen; and
- Inform the school regarding proposed return dates

Absence of Traveller children will be authorised if we are satisfied that the family is travelling and has given indication that they intend to return. Where Traveller children are registered pupils at a school and are known to be present either at a site (official or otherwise) or in a house and are not attending school, the absence will be investigated in the same way as for any other pupil.

## **Recording Attendance**

Attendance is recorded daily on SIMS by the class teachers.

The administrator is responsible for monitoring absences and lateness from week to week. They will ensure that the correct codes have been inputted where there are absences. Any emerging patterns are notified to the Headteacher. The school will then contact parents to discuss attendance concerns.

## **Using Attendance Data**

All pupil's attendance will be monitored and will be shared with the Local Authority and other agencies if a pupil's attendance is a cause for concern.

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Every half-term the administrator will provide the Headteacher with attendance data for the previous term for each pupil on roll. This list will be presented in numerical descending order with the highest attendees at the top;

- This pupil data will be used to trigger school action if needed. Letters will be sent home to those children with less than 90% attendance.

Attendance data will be also used to identify emerging patterns and trends to inform whole school strategies to improve attendance.

Twyford C of E School will share attendance data with the Local Authority as required. All information shared will be done so in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

## Support Systems

Twyford C of E School recognise that poor attendance is often an indication of difficulties in a child's life. This may be related to problems at home and/or school. Parents should make school aware of any difficulties or changes in circumstances that may affect their child's attendance and/or behaviour in school e.g. bereavement, divorce/separation. This will help the school identify additional support that may be required.

We also recognise that some pupils are more likely to require additional support to attain good attendance e.g. those with special educational needs, those with physical or mental health needs, migrant and refugee pupils, looked after children.

The school will implement a range of strategies to support improve attendance. Strategies used will include:

- Discussion with parents and pupils
- Referrals to support agencies
- Learning mentors/friendship groups
- Reward systems
- Reduced timetables
- Additional learning support
- Behaviour support

Support offered to families will be child-centred and planned in discussion and agreement with both parents and pupils.

## Legal Sanctions

Where intervention fails to bring about an improvement in attendance, the school will notify the County Attendance Team.

The County Attendance Team or school may invite the parents to attend a Parenting Contract Meeting and issue a formal warning of a Penalty Notice.

- **Parenting Contracts:** (Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003) A parenting contract is a voluntary agreement between the Local Authority, school and the parent. It can be extended to include the child and any other agencies offering support to resolve any difficulties leading to improved attendance. The contract will outline attendance targets and will detail agreed actions that will help to achieve the target. The contract will be reviewed regularly. The contract can be used as evidence in a prosecution should irregular attendance continue.
- **Penalty Notices:** (Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003) Penalty Notices will be considered when:

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- Intervention has failed to bring about improvement and further unauthorised absence has occurred following a written warning to improve.
- A pupil has taken leave of absence e.g. for the purpose of holiday in term time, and the absence has not been authorised by the school.

A Penalty Notice give the parent the opportunity to avoid prosecution. A £60 fine per parent/carers, per child must be paid within 21 days. The fine increases to £120 per parent/carers, per child if paid after 21 days but within 28 days of the date the Notice was issued. Failure to pay the Penalty Notice may result in a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

- **Prosecution:** The school will provide the Local Authority with the evidence required for a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996. This is to ensure that parents realise their own responsibilities in ensuring attendance at school and most importantly about returning children to education.

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