



Templemoor Infant and Nursery School Attendance and Punctuality Policy



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Important information

This policy has been written following the Department for Education (DfE) publications, 'School Attendance' (October 2014) and 'School Attendance Parental Responsibility Measures' (January 2015), and guidance from Trafford Local Authority.

Definition Of "Parent"

Section 576 of the Education Act 1996 defines 'parent' to include:

- All natural parents, whether they are married or not;
- Any person who has parental responsibility for a child or young person; and,
- Any person who has care of a child or young person i.e. lives with and looks after the child.

This policy and related documents include information and guidance for school staff including staff who work in our out of school provision and parents and carers.

The Law and School Attendance

School governors are bound by the statutory requirement under Section 538 of the Education Act 2006 which requires governing bodies to provide information requested by the Secretary of State. This includes absence data that will be collected every term through the School Census.

Attendance is recorded and data stored and analysed using the SIMS Attendance module. It is a **statutory duty** for class teachers to call 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 – the morning session and afternoon session.

Under the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 the governing body is responsible for making sure that admissions and attendance registers are kept. Unless stipulated each regulation applies to all schools in England.

The Education Act 1996 (Section 444) states:

'If a child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at school fails to attend regularly at the school, the parent is guilty of an offence'. The school reserves the right to consider taking legal action against any parents/carers who repeatedly fail in their responsibility to send their children to school on a regular basis.

Introduction

Regular school attendance is of vital importance. Children need to attend school regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities that are available to them. It is essential that children learn the importance of being punctual as part of their preparation

for adult life, therefore we aim to embed this good practice from an early age. We expect the school and parents to work together in order to achieve high standards of attendance and punctuality.

Aims

- To actively promote and encourage **100%** attendance for **all** children.
- To provide a positive and welcoming environment which encourages regular attendance and makes attendance and punctuality a priority for all those associated with the school, including children, parents, teachers and governors.
- To ensure that all children take full advantage of opportunities for learning in school.
- To ensure the well-being and safety of children at Templemoor Infant and Nursery School.
- To monitor and analyse attendance and challenge non-attendance ensuring a consistent approach throughout the school.
- To work effectively with other services and agencies to support these aims, e.g. Education Welfare.

Equality and Inclusion

All children will be dealt with in the same manner. Allowances within this policy will be made for children with severe disabilities or illnesses who require additional time off for administration or medication.

Types of Absence - Authorised

The parent of a child of compulsory school age is required by law to ensure that their child regularly attends the school at which they are registered. Should a parent fail to ensure that their child attends that school regularly then the parent is guilty of an offence.

Legally, every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school as either **authorised** or **unauthorised**.

Authorised absence is where the school has either given approval in advance for the child to be absent or where an explanation offered afterwards has been accepted as satisfactory justification for absence.

Absence may generally be authorised for the following reasons:

- Illness.
- Medical or dental appointments that cannot be made outside of school times.
- Hospital appointments.
- Accredited Exam – ballet/music (extra-curricular).
- Approved educational activity.
- An exceptional 'enrichment' opportunity (e.g. involvement in a public performance).
- Family Bereavement.
- Exclusion.
- Wedding – immediate family only – 1 day. Please note there are **no** exceptions for weddings abroad.
- Religious Observance.
- Other unusual/rare 'exceptional' occasions (the nature of such occasions will be determined by the headteacher on an individual basis).

Illness

In line with Health Protection Agency guidelines, a period of **48 hours** absence is required for any pupil with vomiting or diarrhoea. Such absence due to illness is authorised.

Medical and Dental Appointments

Absence from school due to a medical or dental appointment will be considered as an authorised absence. However, we would ask that all appointments be made outside of school hours. Where this is not possible, the child should only be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary for the appointment.

Absence for Religious Observance

Absence of a child on days that are exclusively set aside for religious observance in their particular faith will be coded as a religious absence and will be authorised, but only for the day(s) of observance, not for extended leave.

Family Bereavement

The school is sensitive to family requests for a child's attendance at funerals or associated events. The headteacher will offer the family advice over absence in this instance.

Term time absence for specific purposes (e.g. external examinations, elite sports, performing arts)

For authorisation of a single absence to be considered, a written request must be made in advance.

Approved Educational Activity

This covers types of supervised educational activity undertaken offsite but with the approval of the school.

Procedure to follow when a pupil is absent

If a child is absent for any reason unknown to the school, parents or carers must contact the school office by telephone or email before 9:30am on the first day of absence and every subsequent day of absence thereafter. Parents must clearly state the reason for the absence and the expected duration of illness.

When a child is absent unexpectedly, the class teacher will record the absence on the electronic register, which will inform the school office. If the office has not already been informed of the reason for a child's absence, they will endeavour to contact a parent, carer or emergency contact by telephone during the morning of the first day of absence. Where the school has concerns about a pupil's safety the Education Welfare Officer will be contacted and a check will be carried out.

When the child returns to school, parents or carers **must** ensure that a note is provided to explain the reason for the absence. This **must** be on the child's first day of the child's return to school.

Types of Absence – Unauthorised

Unauthorised absence is where no explanation has been given for the child's absence or where the explanation offered is considered by the school to be unacceptable.

Absence **will not** be authorised in the following circumstances:

- If no explanation is offered by the parent/carer.
- The explanation provided is unsatisfactory (e.g. shopping, day off to celebrate a birthday, minding the house, day trip etc.)
- Family holidays in term time (unless granted under 'exceptional' circumstances).
- Where there are a number of sporadic absences and the attendance is declining.
- Where no medical evidence has been provided when requested.

If a child has an increasing number of authorised absences the school will make a referral to the Education Welfare Officer, as this is classed as 'persistent absence'. Contact will be made with the parents regarding the absences.

The school may also make a referral to the Education Welfare Officer if there is a concern about a pupil's welfare or safety. Parents will be contacted to ascertain if further action needs to be taken. Parents are expected to co-operate with the school and attend any meeting when requested to do so.

Persistent Absence

Persistent Absence is absence of 10% or more. An individual child is deemed to be a persistent absentee, therefore, if his/her attendance is less than 90% (regardless of whether or not the absences have been authorised). The school will then refer this matter to the Education Welfare Officer.

Leave of Absence during Term Time

Since 1st September 2013, all schools have been given strict guidelines from the Department for Education that there is **no entitlement in law for any leave of absence for a holiday during term time** and as a consequence, requests for leave of absence for reasons that are not considered to be 'exceptional' **will not** be approved.

Procedure for requesting a Leave of Absence during Term Time

Any applications for leave of absence **must** be made in advance using the 'Request for Exceptional Leave of Absence' form (Appendix 1) and any request can only be authorised where school accepts that there are 'exceptional circumstances'. The reason for the request should be given in detail.

Any parent requesting leave of absence may be asked to make an appointment to see the Headteacher to explain the circumstances. Where parents take children out of school without authorisation, parents leave themselves at risk of legal action.

The school will write back to the parent informing them of the decision that has been made by the Headteacher.

A copy of the request and school's reply will be kept in the child's file. Examples of circumstances that **will not** be authorised:

- Availability of cheaper holidays and cheaper travel arrangements.
- Days overlapping with the beginning or end of term.
- During the first term, when a child is just starting at school, as it is very important for the child to settle into their new class.
- During an assessment/test period – Phonic Screening Check, Key Stage 1 SATs.
- When a child's attendance record already includes any level of unauthorised absence.
- We will also take into account the current attendance for each child when making a decision.

'Exceptional Circumstances' Criteria

The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are 'rare, significant, unavoidable and short'. By 'unavoidable' we mean an event that could not be reasonably scheduled at another time. It is not possible to define all 'exceptional circumstances' therefore the circumstances of each leave of absence application will be taken into account on an individual basis. However, examples of what might be considered 'exceptional circumstances' for leave in term time, as agreed by Governors at Templemoor Infant and Nursery School are:

- Service personnel returning from or scheduled to embark upon a tour of duty abroad.
- Where it is company/organisational policy for an employee to take leave at a specified time in the year and there is no opportunity for a family holiday in school holidays i.e. in some cases a parent's employer might restrict holidays to a certain time period. This must be supported by documentary evidence from the employer.
- Where a holiday is recommended as part of a parent or child's rehabilitation from a medical or emotional issue. Evidence must be provided by qualified professionals such as a Doctor.
- An emergency situation that requires the child to be away from school.

The Headteacher may take advice from the Local Authority when there are other factors which the Headteacher may consider constitute exceptional circumstances.

The school reserves the right to ask parents for written evidence where it feels this is required.

Legal Action for Unauthorised Leave of Absence

Taken from Trafford Local Authority guidance:

'Following the outcome of the recent case in the Isle of Wight, Legal advice is that courts will not take into account absence which is authorised by the Head teacher when looking at a prosecution for failing to secure regular attendance at school. After consideration, and until further guidance is issued by the DfE, Trafford will issue Penalty Notices for failing to secure regular attendance when unauthorised absence accounts for more than 10% of possible attendances. (i.e. attendance is less than 90% due to unauthorised absence). For unauthorised absences in the autumn term, Head teachers should continue to work with the Education Welfare Service and make them aware if they would like a Penalty Notice to be issued, but this will only be issued at the point that the pupil cannot achieve 90% attendance for the year and taking into account any improvement in attendance since the issue of the Penalty Notice. The Department for Education (DfE) guidance has not changed regarding children taking leave during term time. Head teachers may only authorise leave in exceptional circumstances, this cannot be done retrospectively and must be recorded as an unauthorised absence if it is not an exceptional circumstance. Our Legal team are waiting for the outcome from the recent case in the Isle of Wight and will advise us accordingly. Proposed DfE changes will mean that we will have to review our code of conduct in the near future, but in the meantime, we will follow our current code. Head teachers can request that the LA issues a Penalty Notice for 'failing to secure regular attendance at school'. We advise Head teachers, as always, to ensure that any Penalty Notice issued is robust and will withstand prosecution if unpaid'.

A penalty notice currently stands at £60 which must be paid within a 21 day period. Failure to pay the penalty notice within this timescale, will result in the fines being doubled to £120, which will need to be paid within 28 days of the original notice being issued. If the fine(s) remain unpaid after the full period of 28 days has expired, parents may face legal action under section 444 of the Education Act 1996. If found guilty of an offence under this Act, parents will receive a criminal record and could be fined up to £1000.

A Penalty Notice can only be issued in cases of unauthorised absence.

FOR FURTHER DETAILS PLEASE REFER TO 'FIXED PENALTY NOTICES IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR PARENTS' (Appendix 2)

Exclusions

If a child is excluded from school, parents have a duty to ensure that their child is not in a public place without justifiable cause during school hours when they are excluded from school. Failure to do so will render the parent liable to a visit from the Education Welfare Officer.

Punctuality

Children are expected to arrive punctually, ready for registration at 8:55 a.m. The classroom doors are opened at 8:50am and locked from 9am and any children arriving after this time must enter school through the main entrance and be 'signed in' by a parent/carer.

Registers close at 9 a.m. and children arriving after this time will be marked as 'Late' on the class register.

Children who arrive after 9.30am will be marked in the register as absent (unauthorised) for the whole of the morning session.

Parents/carers of children who are persistently late will be contacted by the Headteacher and will be asked to address the problem. School may also make a referral to the Education Welfare Officer.

Promoting regular attendance through good practice

It is essential that everyone involved in promoting attendance is clear about the important role that must be carried out in order to raise standards. Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility – parents/carers, children and **all** members of school staff.

The school will recognise the importance of good practice by:

- Making the curriculum as exciting as possible.
- Providing and promoting a welcoming and positive atmosphere so that children feel safe and their presence is valued.
- Keeping and maintaining registers accurately.
- Ensuring prompt follow-up action in cases of non-school attendance e.g. by telephoning parents after the registers have been closed and no explanation given, on the first day and subsequent days of absence, to establish a reason for a child's absence.
- Ensuring that parents understand the school's attendance policy and procedures for reporting absence by issuing links in the newsletter promoting good attendance to all parents at least annually.
- Raising awareness of the importance of full attendance and punctuality using newsletters, parents' evenings and other communications to parents.
- Approaching individual parents where there is concern about their child's attendance and/or punctuality.
- Issuing a termly letter to parents whose child's attendance falls below the school's target or whose punctuality is a cause for concern.
- Encouraging the children to have a positive attitude towards attendance and punctuality so that they can retain this into adult life.
- Regularly analysing attendance data and setting an annual attendance target.
- Rewarding and celebrating good and improving attendance through newsletters and certificates.
- Providing parents with attendance grades for their child as part of the annual report.
- Constructively working with children and their families to ensure each child attends school regularly and punctually by establish an effective and efficient system of communication with parents and appropriate agencies to provide mutual information, advice and support.

- Securing the services of an Education Welfare Officer to work with the school to secure high attendance.
- Ensuring that all staff comply with the school policy and deal consistently with absence and punctuality.
- Ensuring good liaison where a change of school occurs.
- Working in partnership with Trafford Local Authority who have a statutory duty to enforce the law in relation to absence from school. This could include penalty notices or parental prosecution.
- Making this policy available on the school's website and provide paper copies on request.

School Attendance Strategies

- Class teachers will ensure that the curriculum is delivered within a culture of inclusion and in such a way that all children feel that they can succeed.
- The importance of good attendance will be discussed at the meeting for new parents.
- A clear statement is in the school handbook about the high profile given to the issue of attendance.
- The Attendance and Punctuality Policy is available on the school's website.
- Newsletters used to remind parents about school policy and the rules about leave of absence in term time.
- Monitoring absence and punctuality each half term, to establish regular patterns of absence and to act on any findings by reporting to parents or to the Local Authority as appropriate. Particular attention is paid to vulnerable groups of children e.g. Looked after Children.
- Prompt investigation of any issues that may be affecting a child's well-being and attendance.
- Set challenging but achievable targets on an individual attendance plan (related to what is achievable for the individual child).

Reporting to Parents

All children's attendance is monitored every half term and letters are sent on a half termly basis to parents of any children falling below the school's target. All absences, both authorised and unauthorised, and lateness will be reported to parents at the end of the academic year as part of their child's annual report. Class teachers will report any concerns about a child's attendance to the child's parents at Parents' Evenings, which take place twice a year.

We expect parents to:

- Agree to the main principles of the school's Attendance and Punctuality Policy.
- Understand the importance of good attendance and punctuality and promote this with their child.
- Provide up-to-date contact numbers and change of address.
- Notify the school by telephone or email before 9:30am on the first day of absence and every subsequent day of absence thereafter. Parents must clearly state the reason for the absence and the expected duration of illness. Provide a note (this can be an email) when the child returns from an absence. This should be on the child's first day of the child's return to school.
- Discuss any worries that their child might have about coming to school and informing the class teacher.
- Not let their child take time off school for very minor ailments.
- Arrange medical and dental appointments after school hours or at weekends or school holidays.
- Ensure that their child arrives at school **on time every day.**

- Let the school know if their child is going to be late, e.g. if a car breaks down, if an urgent appointment has been made or if an emergency has arisen.
- Ensure that family holidays are booked during school holiday time and **not** during term time (children and families have 175 days off school to spend time together, including weekends and school holidays).

Data Analysis

The data which is extracted from accurate and up-to-date attendance registers will be used to support the more effective management of whole-school attendance matters. Such data can be used to:

- support and underpin the target-setting process (for individual pupils, year groups, identified cohorts, the whole school) in relation to overall attendance and unauthorised absence on a half termly and yearly basis
- identify individual children and particular groups of children who are or may be at risk of becoming persistent absentees
- facilitate and encourage early intervention
- identify particular types or patterns of absenteeism (for example, time lost to term-time holidays, regular absences on Mondays and/or Fridays, etc.)
- match attendance trends with attainment trends
- identify possible inconsistencies in the implementation of school policy
- report attendance matters to parents

Monitoring

Attendance is monitored half-termly for any emerging patterns below 96%. Parents will be routinely contacted if attendance falls below 90% at the end of every full term. Referral will be made to the Educational Welfare Officer (EWO) where a pupil's attendance has repeatedly fallen below 90% and there has been no explanation from parents.

Safeguarding

Any attendance issues which may be related to safeguarding and child protection issues will be followed up in accordance with the schools Safeguarding Policy.

Conclusion

It is essential that everyone involved in promoting attendance is clear about the important role that must be carried out in order to raise standards. Promoting good attendance is the responsibility of the whole school community.

Any unauthorised absence is damaging to a child's education as well as reflecting badly on the school. It also gives children the wrong messages about the importance of education which may lead to problems later in schooling. Good attendance and punctuality are important values for later in life.

Links to other Policies

The Attendance and Punctuality Policy is written in conjunction to and linked with the following:

- Safeguarding Policy
- S.E.N Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Anti-bullying Policy
- Equal Opportunities and Inclusion Policy

Request for **Exceptional** Leave of Absence



Children should be in school during term time.

As a result of the change to the law the Governors' policy is **not** to authorise any absence for holidays. This form may be used to request absence but it must only be for **exceptional circumstances**. The guidance from the Department for Education states:

"Headteachers have the discretion to grant leave, but they should only do so in exceptional circumstances. If a headteacher grants a leave request, it will be for them to determine the length of time that the child can be away from school. This leave is unlikely, however, to be granted for the purposes of a family holiday.

Parents can be fined for taking their child out of school during term time without consent from the school."

Name of child		Class	
First day of absence		Returning to school	
Total number of school days requested for absence			
Reason for absence. Please give as much information as possible explain why the request is an exceptional one.			

I understand that:

- absence affects academic progress, which may prevent achievement of expected standards and targets.
- The law allows for absence to be granted only in exceptional circumstances.
- Any absence longer than that agreed will be classed by the school as unauthorised.
- This may result in a fixed penalty notice being issued by the Education Welfare Service for an unauthorised absence.

Signed (parent/carer)		Name		Date	
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For Office Use Only			
Pupil's current attendance (%)		Punctuality – number of lates this year	
Headteacher decision:	<input type="checkbox"/> Authorised <input type="checkbox"/> Not Authorised		Signed
If absence still taken:	<input type="checkbox"/> Referral to Education Welfare Officer		



FIXED PENALTY NOTICES IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

What is a Fixed Penalty Notice?

The Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 introduced legislation that made provision for a Local Authority to issue Fixed Penalty Notices. These notices require a fine to be paid by parents of pupils who have unauthorised absence from school.

A separate Penalty Notice will be issued to each parent for each child who has unauthorised absence.

In what circumstances will Fixed Penalty Notices be issued?

Trafford will issue Penalty Notices for failing to secure regular attendance when unauthorised absence accounts for more than 10% of possible attendances. (i.e. attendance is less than 90% due to unauthorised absence). For unauthorised absences in the autumn term, Head teachers should continue to work with the Education Welfare Service and make them aware if they would like a Penalty Notice to be issued, but this will only be issued at the point that the pupil cannot achieve 90% attendance for the year and taking into account any improvement in attendance since the issue of the Penalty Notice.

What are the Penalties?

If a Fixed Penalty Notice is issued the penalty is £60 when the payment is made within 21 days and £120 when the payment is made after 21 days but prior to 28 days. Failure to pay within 28 days will result in a summons to appear before the Magistrates Court on the grounds that you have failed to secure your child's regular attendance at school.

Why has the government introduced this legislation?

The message of this new legislation is that it is really very important that every child attends school for as many of the 380 half day sessions of the school year as possible. It is the responsibility of parents to ensure that their children do not take unnecessary time off school.

What must I do?

You should get in touch with the Education Welfare Officer as soon as possible, to discuss the reason for your child's absence from school. This may avoid the risk of a Fixed Penalty Notice being issued to you.

Can I get help if my child is not attending school regularly?

The Education Welfare Officers support schools, parents and pupils so that high levels of attendance can be achieved. The Education Welfare Officer can be contacted through school.

Every school in Trafford is supporting the message that school attendance is a high priority. We hope that parents will help us to ensure that all children at Templemoor achieve the very highest levels of attendance at school.