

**Tanfield Lea Community Primary School**

**Attendance Policy**



**Opening Doors, Enriching Lives**

***Head Teacher – Kay Hemmings***

***Chair of Governors – Carole Dillon***

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## **Introduction**

Tanfield Lea Community Primary School seeks to ensure that all of its pupils receive an education which maximises opportunities for each pupil to learn. The school will strive to provide a welcoming, caring environment, whereby each member of the school community feels wanted and secure.

We believe that all children benefit from the education we provide, and therefore from regular attendance. Regular school attendance plays a vital role in children's wellbeing and their education, ensuring that their current learning needs are being met but also building their future ability to learn.

From September 2020, it will once again become parent's legal duty; to ensure their children attend school regularly and on time. As a school we will work with pupils and their families to support parents to meet these legal duties and to ensure children can benefit from attending school regularly.

The school has established an effective system of incentives and rewards which acknowledges the efforts of pupils to improve their attendance and timekeeping and will challenge the behaviour of those pupils and parents who give low priority to attendance and punctuality.

This policy has been reviewed and rewritten in line with the DfE 'School attendance Departmental advice for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities' (October 2014), 'School attendance parental responsibility measures' (January 2015) and DfE 'Guidance for full opening of school' 31 July 2020.

This policy is supported by our policies on safeguarding, bullying, behaviour and inclusive learning.

## **1. Attendance and Attainment**

We recognise that the relationship between attendance and achievement of our pupils is inextricably linked.

Regular school attendance is crucial to maximise pupil progress and enjoyment of learning, and for this reason the school is dedicated to ensuring its attendance policy is adhered to.

We will ensure that:

- All children have an equal right, and access to, an education in accordance with the national curriculum, or agreed alternative.
- Children will not be deprived of their education opportunities by, either their own absence or lateness, or that of parents.
- Action is taken where necessary to secure an improvement in attendance.

## **2. The Law**

You need to make sure your child attends school regularly and on time. Because parents are responsible for this duty in law, you will be breaking the law if you do not do this and there are no good reasons for missing school.

The School and Local Authority want to help you if you have a problem. If attendance does not get better or you do not accept help and support offered, the Council may issue you with a warning notice, Penalty Notice or ask you to attend an interview to ask you questions about whether you have broken the law.

If you go to court and are found guilty of an offence, you could be fined up to £1,000 for a less serious offence or up to £2,500 if the law breaking is more serious. In very serious cases, the court may involve the probation service or consider up to 3 months in prison.

### 3. Attendance Procedures

a) On the first day off

**If a child is absent for any reason, parent/carer must follow these procedures:**

- Telephone the School Office before 9.30am. giving a reason for the child's absence. If a child is absent from school and there is no phone call from home then school will phone home to inform parents that the child is not in school and enquire about a reason why.
- A text or message via another parent or sibling **is not** acceptable.

Doctors and dentists' appointments should be made outside of school time. If this is not possible, your child should miss the minimum amount of school time necessary. If they are well enough to come back to school following the appointment they need to.

#### **b) Coronavirus symptoms**

If your child, or a member of your household, has any of the following symptoms; new and persistent cough, a high temperature or loss of, or change in, their normal sense of taste or smell then you must **immediately take the following actions:**

- Report the reason for absence to school
- Self-isolate
- Arrange a coronavirus test
- Provide school with the results of that test

**Self-isolating** - the person with symptoms must self-isolate for 10 days and other members of their household (including any siblings) should self-isolate for 14 days from when the symptomatic person first had symptoms. If you have tested positive whilst not experiencing symptoms but develop symptoms during the isolation period, you should restart the 10 day isolation period from the day symptoms develop.

If you are self-isolating you should not leave your home. This includes going to work/school, going shopping even for medication, going for exercise (this can be done in your garden). You should also not have any visitors.

#### **How we will support you as a school:**

- We will be asking why your child is off and ask for test results to be provided, so that we can protect all of our pupils, staff and families.
- We will make sure the reasons for absence are correctly recorded on the register. Where parents have done all that has been asked in reporting absences and providing test results, these absences will be authorised by the school.
- We will follow all safety measures set out by the government.
- If pupils are self-isolating but do not have symptoms, we will provide work for them to do at home, stay in touch and monitor the work that they are doing.
- If any additional support is needed please contact school.

#### **Periods of extended absence (not related to coronavirus)**

If a child's absence continues beyond 3 days then parents are requested to notify the school to update them. If a phone call is not received then the school will contact home to verify the absence.

If the school receives no reason for any absence then an unauthorised absence will be recorded. Continued absenteeism and unauthorised absences could result in further action such as referral to the Attendance Improvement Team to consider enforcement action and possibly a fixed penalty notice (this includes unauthorised absences accrued through leave of absence taken during term time).

**c) Help & Support:**

If you need help with attendance, it is important that you contact school about the issues as soon as possible. The quicker we know what the problem is, the quicker that we can work together to solve it and put a plan together which will meet your child's needs and ensure your child can benefit from all that school has to offer. Where needed we can also involve other services to make sure that your child and your family gets the right support, at the right time from the right people.

**d) Communication:**

We are asking all parents to please remember to report and explain the reasons for absence and to make sure your contact and emergency contact details are up to date.

It is vital, that school can contact parents if their child becomes unwell during the school day or in order to discuss the reasons for absence.

The school will analyse absence across the school. As a result of this, some families will receive letters to inform them if their child's absence is lower than it should be if no prior discussion has taken place (unless this is due to coronavirus/frequent hospital appointments and/or long term medical needs). If we have concerns regarding your child's attendance then we may contact you by phone, letter, invite you to a meeting or make a visit to your home.

As a parent you may identify concerns about school attendance early on if you have seen a change in your child's attitude to school or in their willingness to attend. If this is the case, please share your concerns with us and we can work together to ensure that school attendance doesn't ever need to decline. The quicker that concerns are shared, the quicker they can be resolved.

The school will work with you to discuss ways that we can offer support in finding a way to improve attendance.

**e) Enforcement Action:**

If, following the schools attempts to intervene there is no significant improvement and no good reasons for absences (i.e. absences are not supported by relevant evidence), or you have not co-operated with the school's attempts to improve the situation the school are required to consider referring the matter to the Local Authority for enforcement action.

The High Court has confirmed that the school's Head Teacher authorises absences. If your child misses school a lot because of illness, or if school do not know of any serious health issue that would mean your child could miss school a lot, the school may ask to you to provide medical evidence to authorise absences.

We are committed to supporting your child effectively, to ensure that they get the very best education possible and therefore have the best life chances. All challenges made concerning persistent absences, will be handled sensitively and in confidence.

**f) Punctuality:**

We are currently operating a staggered start to the school due to coronavirus.

**Reception, Y2, Y3, 56T and 6P start between 8:45 and 9:00. Registers are marked at 9:00 and then closed.**

**Pre-School, Y1, Y4 and 5M start between 9:00 and 9:15. Registers are marked at 9:15 and then closed.**

It is so important for all children to be on time, as missing the first few minutes of any lesson can be disruptive and unsettling, both for children and for the rest of the class. The current arrangements mean that children have a window of 15 minutes to arrive at school. When registers are closed, any children arriving after this will be recorded as (U) which is a late after register closes mark and this is classed as an unauthorised absence (a number of these marks can also contribute to a fixed penalty notice being issued).

If your child is late for school:

All children arriving late at school will be asked the reason for their lateness and this will be recorded on the school's attendance data base (SIMs).

1. If a child is late (after registers close) for school on a number of occasions;

A letter will be sent home from school to parents to say their child's punctuality is causing some concern. An appointment with the Head or Parent Support Advisor will be offered to discuss ways that the school can offer support in finding a way improve this. Incentives to improve punctuality may also be offered to pupils e.g. name being put into the prize draw to attend a visit to Waterstones. Due to coronavirus these visits will not be possible at the moment but instead the children may be put into a prize draw each half term to choose a new book for them to read and then be donated to the library

2. If lateness becomes persistent with no identifiable reason –

A letter will be sent home from school with a specific appointment given to meet with Head Teacher and or Parent Support Advisor for a 'planning meeting'. This will aim to address any issues which may be behind this pattern of poor punctuality.

3. If the school continues to have concerns about a child's punctuality;

Then a referral may be made to the Attendance Improvement Team to consider if enforcement action is required.

### **g) Leave of Absence in Term Time**

Head teachers are no longer able to grant leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. The school will consider each request of absence individually; taking into account the circumstances, such as; the nature of the event for which leave is sought, the pupil's prior attendance and any important events taking place in school at that time e.g. termly tests.

An application for leave of absence must be made well in advance via a form which is available from the school website or in person from the school office. Where a leave of absence is granted, the head teacher will determine the number of days a pupil can be away from school. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the head teacher's discretion and the vast majority are not authorised. As stated in the most recent DFE guidance on attendance, if an application for leave of absence is not made prior to the time of the required absence then the absence will be recorded as unauthorised regardless of circumstances.

Please note that absence will not be authorised under any circumstances during any period of public examinations or internal assessments.

## **5. Promoting good attendance and punctuality**

In order to promote attendance and punctuality the school will give out a weekly banner for the class with the best attendance. The attendance for each class is shared with the children and points are awarded (1 for 95% and above, 2 for 98% and above and 4 for 100%). These points convert to spaces on the race track. The winning class each half term receive £20 to spend as they wish e.g. class BBQ. In addition to this, children who have had 100% attendance for that week are put into a weekly prize draw.

At the end of each term all children who have 98% attendance or more are awarded a sticker and those with 100% attendance for the term receive a badge.

At the end of the summer term those children who have achieved 100% attendance for the whole year are awarded a small trophy celebrating this achievement.

Attendance percentages will be shared with parents on the school newsletter, at termly parents' meetings and also annual reports to parents will contain a record of individual pupils' attendance.

## **6. Children Missing from Education:**

If you move from the area and your whereabouts are unknown, the school can legally remove your child from the roll after 20 school days of unauthorised absence. It is **vital that you keep school informed of any change of details** and regularly update them if details change. Your child may be at risk of losing their school place if your whereabouts are not known.

It is also important that emergency contact information is kept up to date and that if you are leaving the area, you provide details of where and how you can be contacted. If you do not do this and the school is unable to trace your child, this would be treated as a safeguarding matter.

## **7. Roles and Responsibilities**

### **Governing Body:**

As part of our school approach to maintaining high attendance, the governing body will:

- Ensure that the importance of attendance is made clear by promoting the relevant school policies and guidance directed to parents and staff.
- Annually review the school's attendance policy and ensure that all provisions are in place to allow school staff, parents, and children to implement the policy effectively.
- Ensure regular meetings of the behaviour and attendance sub-committee take place and they will take the lead role in monitoring attendance and coordinating provision and policies for attendance. The governor's meetings will review and discuss attendance issues that have arisen in order to be fully aware and supportive of expected attendance targets for the year.
- Ensure that the school is implementing effective means of recording attendance and organising that data, including for children who are educated off site.

### **School Leadership Team:**

As part of our school approach to maintaining high attendance, the leadership team will:

- Be active in their approach to promoting good attendance with children and their parents.
- Ensure the school's teaching and learning experiences encourage regular attendance and that children are taught the value of high attendance for their own progression and achievement.
- Coordinate with the governing body to monitor the implementation of the policy and its effectiveness, with annual review of full policy.
- Ensure that all staff are up to date with the school's attendance policy and that staff are fully trained to recognise and deal with attendance issues.
- Ensure government legislation on attendance is complied with and that the leadership team are up to date with any legislation changes and how to implement them.
- Nominate or appoint a senior manager to take responsibility for overseeing and monitoring attendance provision and that this person has sufficient time and resources to give to the job.
- Report to the Achievement and Data Governors' Sub Committee meeting each term on attendance records, data and provision.
- Ensure that systems to record and report attendance data are in place and working effectively.

## **Teachers and support staff:**

As part of our school approach to maintaining high attendance, the teachers and support staff will:

- Be active in their approach to promoting good attendance with children and their parents.
- Ensure the school's teaching and learning experiences encourage regular attendance and that children are taught the value of high attendance for their own progression and achievement.
- Ensure the senior manager responsible for overseeing attendance and any other relevant personnel are kept fully aware of and up to date with any concerns relating to children that may impact on their attendance.
- Ensure compliance with regulation and guidance on attendance.
- Work professionally with parents, carers, children and relevant agencies to secure improvements in attendance via appropriate support or enforcement measures.
- Ensure understanding and are following the correct systems for recording attendance.

## **Parents / Carers:**

As part of our school approach to maintaining high attendance, we expect that parents / carers will:

- Engage with their children's education – support their learning and take an interest in what they have been doing at school.
- Promote the value of good education and the importance of regular school attendance at home.
- Follow the procedures outlined in this policy regarding absences, ill health, medical or dental appointments, leave of absence in term time and punctuality.
- Do everything they can to prevent unnecessary school absences.
- Keep the school informed of any circumstances which may affect their child's attendance and work with staff in resolving any issues that may be having an impact on their child.
- Enforce a regular routine at home in terms of homework, bedtime etc so that the child is used to consistency and the school becomes part of that routine. It is vital that the child receives the same messages at home as they do at school about the importance of attendance.

## **Summary**

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote Attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend school. All school staff are committed to working with parents and pupils as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

## **Appendix to Attendance Policy**

### **Attendance Promotion:**

**Newsletters** – regular reminders about importance of good attendance

**Weekly class attendance award** for best attending class – this makes children aware of their class attendance and that of others.

**Attendance Stickers, Badges and Trophies** – children who get 98% attendance or above in one term receive a sticker, children who get 100% attendance in one term receive an attendance badge – both are presented in the whole school assembly. Children who get 100% attendance for the whole year receive a small trophy to celebrate this achievement.

**The Road to Success Display** – Linked with the class award, any class with over 95% attendance gets to race their car round the racing track. 95% or more move 1 space, 98% or more they move 2 spaces and 100% moves 4 spaces. Children are encouraged to attend to move round the track. Individual half termly attendance totals are given to all children so they know how good their attendance is and record this in their Personal Organiser. There will be a reward for the winning class at the end of each half term.

**Tweets** – Staff share the attendance successes via regular tweets.

### **Action taken regarding lack of attendance:**

**First day call** – Parents are instructed to call school on the first and following days of absence. If no call is received then a call is made to parents to learn about their child's absence

**Monitoring of attendance** – governors recognise the importance of attendance and have paid for additional time to monitor this. The Head Teacher and Parents Support Advisor review attendance at the end of every half term. Where there are concerns a variety of approaches will be used including text, letter home, invite to attend a meeting in school.

Attendance of different groups is monitored to see if there is a pattern of poor attendance and for appropriate action to be taken.

**Holiday Requests** – The school has a Leave of Absence form that all parents have to fill in when requesting LOA. Requests will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances. The vast majority are not authorised.

**Parent Support Advisor** – The PSA does not work specifically with families with poor attendance but often the families that she does work with do have issues with attendance and therefore she will involve this in her support, this has been very successful in the past.