



Regular attendance at school is a prime factor in determining a child's educational achievement. Any absence from school disrupts the continuity of learning and may lead to disaffection. It is important that a pattern of regular attendance is established in the early stages of a child's education. All schools should be vigilant in monitoring attendance and addressing reasons for absences before patterns of irregular attendance become established. A consistent approach across a pyramid will ensure that parents and pupils understand expectations about attendance.

**At Tornedale School we will promote attendance by:**

- ensuring parents are aware of the expectations regarding attendance and the procedures to contact school when absence arises, this information will be published in our school prospectus and will be raised at parent evenings
- responding promptly to any issues that may lead to irregular attendance
- following up swiftly any unauthorised absence
- using the text messaging system to contact parents if their child is not in school and has not let the school know the reason for their absence
- not removing a child's name from the attendance register/school roll unless permitted within the regulations
- communicating with and involving parents promptly when there are concerns about attendance
- having clear procedures within school to progress responses to mounting concerns about problematic attendance
- having effective liaison arrangements to involve the Attendance and Pupil Welfare Service at an appropriate stage.
- Informing parents each term of their child's current attendance percentage compared to the school's target percentage

**Measures to support this will be:**

- regular and consistent monitoring of attendance and a response to the evaluation of this information
- publicising attendance data within the school
- a computerised registration system



- recognising and rewarding good and improved attendance each term
- home school agreement
- direct dialogue with parents either in school or at home
- system for reviewing pupils of concern and planning action
- ensuring all staff are familiar with the Attendance and Pupil Welfare SLA document

## **PASTORAL SUPPORT**

At Tornedale all staff give support to the children in their care. The Staff Handbook has clear guidelines concerning pupil welfare and contains the behaviour policy for the school. All staff are aware of the key policies and implement pastoral support programmes consistently.

When external support is necessary the Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher will contact the Attendance and Pupil Welfare Service or other key agencies.

## **A WHOLE SCHOOL APPROACH TO ATTENDANCE**

Research has shown (Learmonth 1995) that one of the single most effective initiatives designed to improve school attendance is the whole school approach. A whole school attendance policy requires commitment from school staff and involvement of parents, pupils, governors and the wider community in which the school is located.

At Tornedale we work in partnership with parent and pupil to ensure optimum attendance and therefore the best possible educational experience. We believe that promoting good attendance improves achievement.

### **The school's procedure is as follows:**

Monitoring attendance begins with accurate marking of the class register. The marking codes are followed by all staff and the key points are that:

- an explanation for every absence is required
- the school is not obliged to accept a parental explanation for absence
- where absence is authorised, school should be vigilant to emerging patterns of non attendance



- parents are aware that the Headteacher will not authorise requests for leave of absence unless in exceptional circumstances.

Notification of any absence is recorded in the Absence Book in the school office. Parents are aware that school must be notified on the first day of absence. There is a consistent approach to following up any absence. Parents will be contacted by text message on the first day of absence if school has not been notified of a reason for absence. This is undertaken by administrative staff. The Headteacher will follow up any poor attendance, discussing this with the parents. Should any child's attendance prove to be problematic, the school will follow the LA procedures and involve the Attendance and Pupil Welfare Service.

Parents know the importance of contacting school on the first day of absence. This is explained in the School Prospectus, at the meetings for new parents and in our leaflet "Attendance".

### **The importance of PUNCTUALITY**

A pupil's punctuality is a legal requirement and the parents/carers of a pupil who present consistently late are guilty of an offence. The law treats persistent lateness in the same way as irregular attendance and parents can be prosecuted if late arrivals are not resolved.

### **Some effects of persistent lateness are**

- persistent lateness can be as damaging to a pupil's school career as persistent absence
- pupils who arrive late disrupt not only their own education but that of others
- being persistently late can lead to truancy
- chronic lateness may result in a pupil losing their attendance mark and the absence will be noted as unauthorised

The school makes all parents aware of their responsibility regarding punctual and regular attendance and we will

- work in partnership with parents to identify and resolve the problem
- note the time of late arrivals on the computerised attendance system
- follow up persistent lateness in the same way as persistent absence
- identify all pupils with serious punctuality problems



- ensure that all parents are well informed and understand the legal requirements of punctual and regular school attendance
- regularly inform parents of the school's expectations regarding punctuality
- encourage punctuality by ensuring that all staff are on time for lessons and registration.

## **ACCESSING THE ATTENDANCE AND PUPIL WELFARE SERVICE**

### **Referring to the Attendance and Pupil Welfare Service**

Each school has a designated EWO and under the terms of the SLA there should be clear arrangements in place for liaison regarding referrals to the EWO. Whilst the EWO can be consulted about pupil welfare concerns, the acceptance of referrals for action is determined by the criteria laid down in Appendix 4 of the SLA document.

Referrals concerning absence will only be accepted for intervention where there is an established pattern of unauthorised absence or where the school has taken action to challenge significant authorised absence and a referral card is completed.

Once a referral has been accepted, the status of absences should not be changed without reference to the EWO. Subsequent legal action by the EWO acting on behalf of the LEA could otherwise be compromised.

### **Authorisation of Absences**

Only school staff acting in accordance with the school's guidelines can authorise absence on behalf of the Headteacher. Messages or notes giving reasons for absence should not necessarily lead to authorisation (messages and notes should always be retained for subsequent reference purposes). Whilst the government has placed pressure on schools to reduce unauthorised absences it is important that school staff should pay particular attention to and address emerging patterns of authorised absence. It may be necessary to challenge parental explanations. The first day of absence contact will generally transform some unauthorised absences.

Challenging authorised absences is not an easy task if good relationships with parents are to be maintained. Parents must understand that the education of any child who has below 96% attendance is likely to be adversely affected. The first step to take is to contact parents either by phone or letter to voice the concerns about the level of attendance. A meeting in school for a face to face discussion might also be necessary with



*Rossington Tordale Infant School  
Attendance Policy*

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some parents. The meeting should set out the concerns about the level of absences. If parents are agreeable to a medical opinion being sought from the Department of Child Health, a medical consent form should be signed. Where future absences may not be authorised, parents need to be informed of the likelihood of a referral to the Attendance and Pupil Welfare Service. If a medical is agreed the consent form can be sent to school health to request a medical.

Where parentally condoned absences are being challenged it is important that the case is discussed with the EWO so that appropriate action can be planned.

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