



TOWNSEND
CHURCH OF ENGLAND SCHOOL

Attendance Policy

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1. Introduction

At Townsend, our vision 'Achievement for All, Respect for All' is underpinned by the concept of 'Love your neighbour' from the story of the Good Samaritan, Luke 10:25-37. We value everyone, and show love and respect for ourselves and others, setting high standards and supporting each other so that we can all flourish. The concept of 'love your neighbour' is taught in three strands:

1. Love your neighbour – treat others as you would wish to be treated yourself
2. Love yourself – self-care is important, look after yourself physically, mentally and spiritually
3. Love the journey – whether academic or personal, Townsend supports everyone's journeys to enable you to flourish individually and collectively

Townsend Church of England School is committed to achieving excellent levels of attendance for individual children and for the school. Underpinning this commitment is the belief that if children attend school regularly and punctually, they will be best able to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them, they will achieve better outcomes, be safe and supported and be able to make and sustain relationships. Attendance is a whole school approach, and all staff are committed to ensuring pupils attend school. Every child should be aiming for above 95% attendance and anything below 90% is deemed by the Government as Persistent Absence and anything below 50% is deemed as severely absent.

The Hertfordshire County Council Attendance Policy guided, assisted and empowered our school to meet its responsibilities and to provide an agreed framework within which consistent practices and procedures are applied.

In addition, all schools follow the DfE's statutory safeguarding guidance, Keeping Children Safe in Education, which emphasises the importance of understanding the potential vulnerabilities of children who are missing or absent from education.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2>

2. Statement of Intent

Townsend Church of England School wants to work closely together in partnership with parents/carers to achieve excellent levels of school attendance and punctuality for all pupils. We will do this by ensuring as a school we:

- Develop and maintain a positive and effective whole school culture that promotes the benefits of good attendance.
- Embed a culture where attendance is everyone's business and where a 'support first' approach is used.
- Provide support, advice and guidance to parents, children and young people, taking into consideration the vulnerability of some children and young people and the ways in which this might contribute to absence.
- Will handle confidential information with sensitivity and work collaboratively to remove any barriers to attendance.
- Are conscious of potential safeguarding issues related to attendance.
- Recognise the individual child or young person when planning for reintegration following periods of absence.
- Promote effective partnerships with the Statutory Attendance Support Team and with other services and agencies.
- Recognise attendance as an important area of school improvement and make sure it is resourced appropriately to create, build and maintain systems and performance.
- Apply this policy fairly and consistently and recognise the individual needs of children and young people and their families who have specific barriers to attendance. Schools will consider their obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- Understand the importance of school as a place of safety where pupils can enjoy trusted relationships with staff and pupils, particularly for children with a social worker and those

who have experienced adversity, recognising that children missing education can act as a vital warning sign to a range of safeguarding issues.

3. School Responsibilities

- The Headteacher will be responsible for the implementation and management of this policy underpinned by clear expectations, procedures and responsibilities. These are communicated to and understood by staff, pupils and their families, ensuring compliance with DfE guidance for schools and local authorities.
- Ensure there is a Designated Senior Leader with responsibility for attendance and punctuality of pupils, who will be responsible for the day-to-day running of the attendance management, accurate completion of admission and attendance registers, tracking and intervention systems, providing regular reviews to their senior team and school governors.
- Ensure all teaching and non-teaching staff know and understand their responsibilities for attendance and adopt a consistent approach in dealing with absence and lateness. Staff will actively work to maximise attendance rates, both in relation to individual pupils and the pupil body, receiving the training and professional development they need. Every member of staff has a shared responsibility for promoting, supporting and intervening with issues around attendance. Form tutors who have twice-daily contact with students and have a significant role to play in ensuring good attendance of individual pupils.
- Ensure Directors of Learning for Year Groups oversee and monitor the attendance of pupils in their year groups and will work with students and families to ensure attendance is as high as possible.
- Ensure the school Attendance Engagement Officer and Attendance Administration Officer support the work of form tutors and Directors of Learning.
- The school is responsible for supporting the attendance of all students and for dealing with problems that may lead to non-attendance. We will aim to identify the barriers to low or non-attendance and work together with families and pupils to overcome those barriers where possible. We will do this using a range of strategies and with reference to the following documents:
- Working together to support school attendance (DFE)
(https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65f1b048133c22b8eecd38f7/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance_applies_from_19_August_2024_.pdf)
- Mental Health Issues affecting a pupil's attendance guidance (DFE)
(https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1136965/Summary_of_responsibilities_where_a_mental_health_issue_is_affecting_attendance.pdf)
- Emotionally Based School Avoidance guidance (HFL)
(<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/microsites/local-offer/media-library/documents/resource-area-documents/summary-guidance-for-schools-on-emotionally-based-school-avoidance-pdf-438kb.pdf>)

We may also seek the advice, guidance and support of the Statutory Attendance Support Team, Services for Young people and other external agencies.

Attendance registers are legal documents that may be required as evidence in court cases. They are also used in an emergency to ensure all pupils are safe. Registers will be taken at the beginning of each morning (8.45am) and once during the afternoon session (2pm). If any pupil (Years 7-11) leaves the site during the school day they must:

- Have a note from a parent/carer explaining the reason
- Must sign out at student reception
- Be collected by a parent/carer on school premises. Students (years 7-11) are not allowed to leave the site on their own without a parent/carer collecting them from the student reception.

If a student at any point of the day feels unwell and does not feel they can stay in school they must go to the student reception to collect a green slip, which must then be signed by their Director of Learning to give permission to go home. The pupil should then return the slip to the student reception,

who will telephone a parent/carer to collect the student. Students should not phone their parents to collect them without permission.

Registers will record whether each pupil is present; attending an approved educational activity; absent; or unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances. In the case of a pupil of compulsory school age who is absent the register will also indicate whether the absence has been authorised by the school. When a student is absent from school and no reason has been given by the parent/carer by 9am, parents/carers will be informed by the school that their child is absent. Gaps should not be left so that entries can be made later. In marking registers, schools will use the national set of symbols as advised by the Department for Education. When the reason for a pupil's absence cannot be established at the beginning of a session, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and any subsequent correction to the register made as soon as practicable after the reason for the absence has been established.

Registers will open and close at regular, set times and attendance information is publicised to parents/carers with all grade sheets that are issued, with school reports and on request by parents/carers.

To reduce the possibility of post registration truancy we also take class registers at the start of each lesson, and we follow up when students are not in lessons. The school also carries out spot checks.

To support the school's aims to maximise attendance, Townsend Church of England School has in place

- Clear systems and strategies to address the attendance of any child that causes concern as i) being under 90% ii) shows a sudden decline iii) displays a particular pattern of absence
- Clear systems and strategies to address persistent absence (under 90%) through a variety of interventions that start with prompt actions from the form tutor with communication home
- Clear procedures to support parents/carers in ensuring the regular and punctual attendance of pupils and promptly respond to any issue which may lead to non- attendance
- Clear systems and strategies in place to respond to first day absences of vulnerable students or other identified students who require prompt contact with home.
- The school is sensitive to the needs of individual parents/carers, and this is reflected in the way in which attendance concerns are addressed. As a school, we understand and recognise that some parents/carers have difficulty understanding written communications and therefore where appropriate will make sure alternative communication methods are in place. The school also recognises the reluctance of some parents/carers to come into school and will where possible ensure the appropriate external agencies are accessed to support full parental engagement with school attendance.

The school also monitors any differences in the attendance of the different learner groups including the most vulnerable, pupils on free school meals, SEND students and students known to a social worker. Form Tutors, Directors of Learning for Year groups and the attendance team, work closely together to intervene and support pupils and families to ensure no child is disadvantaged with regards to access to education.

We will take a 'support first' approach in line with the Department for Education's 'Working together to improve school attendance'. Through a support first approach, we will work with parents and carers to tackle the barriers to attendance and intervene early before absence becomes entrenched.

A support first approach will include:

- Having high expectations of all pupil's attendance and challenging pupils and parents where attendance does not meet the Government expectations.
- Rigorously monitoring all pupils' attendance, identifying any patterns of poor attendance and liaising with pupils and parents/ carers to help improve attendance.
- Meet with pupils and parents/ carers to identify the barriers to school attendance and work together to improve attendance.

- Provide support or guidance to external agencies who can support improving school attendance.
- Seek to work with external agencies to break down barriers to attendance and support pupils and their families.
- Work with attendance partners where support is not being accessed by the family to ensure they are accessing any support offered to improve attendance.
- Use attendance improvement plans between the school and families where necessary to improve attendance.
- Where absence is due to a medical reason, we will work with the family to develop individual healthcare plans using any guidance from a medical professional.

4. Sixth Form attendance

Year 12 and Year 13 students are expected to attend school all day, from 8:45am until 3.25pm. Home study will only be agreed for Year 13 students at a time deemed appropriate for the cohort and parents/carers will be expected to sign an agreement for their child to take part in this. The minimum expected attendance figure is 95% and excellent punctuality is expected. The following interventions are used to improve and monitor sixth form attendance.

95%-100% attendance - Recognition in assemblies and Celebration assemblies.

90%-95% attendance - Form tutor conversation – consistent = phone call home

Below 90% - Parents meeting with the Head of Sixth Form/Form tutor

Where a student may have poor attendance, this will be discussed with the student and the parent/carer. Steps are taken to improve attendance, such as attendance and punctuality reports. If attendance does not improve and falls below 80%, we may look to withdraw pupils from their programme of study, or they may be asked to pay for the exam entry. This would be a last resort, and we would hope by working with students and parents/ carers that we can improve attendance.

Year 12/13 students leaving the site at break or lunchtime or for consortium lessons must sign out and sign back in. Consortium schools share attendance data of their students on a weekly basis. Pupils are transported to consortium schools by minibus, and a register is taken by the consortium minibus driver and given to the head of sixth form.

5. Punctuality

Townsend Church of England School will take steps to actively encourage excellent levels of punctuality. Lateness to school and to lessons, is monitored and followed up by subject teachers and form tutors. It is included on the school's behaviour framework and will be sanctioned according to this.

A clear range of strategies are in place for school leaders to ensure appropriate action is taken and that parents/carers are informed where the issue is persistent. Punctuality Reports can be used and where there is a persistent late arrival to school or a persistent late arrival to lessons. Teachers will ensure that the individuals make up missing time at break times or after school. School start times and lesson times are published in school policies, brochures and on the school website and pupils need to ensure they are on time. The school will not keep a register open for the whole session.

If a child arrives after 8.45am they will need to sign in at student reception. If they arrive late on more than one occasion each week (Monday to Friday), they will be issued with a 30-minute centralised lunchtime detention. A detention will be issued for every day they arrive late after the first late of the week.

If a parent / carer produces a note / email which the school deem to be a valid reason for their child's lateness, no sanction will be issued but the child will still be marked as late.

6. Responsibilities – Parents and Carers

Parents/carers are responsible in law for ensuring that their children of compulsory school age receive an efficient education suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs that they may have. Parents/Carers whose children are registered at a school are responsible for ensuring that their children attend and stay at school. Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly. This means their child must attend every day that school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances.

Parents/Carers should:

- Ensure that their children arrive at school on time, appropriately dressed and ready to learn
- Notify the school if their child/children are absent by 8.45 am. This must be done on the first day of absence providing an explanation and daily thereafter to keep the school updated on the child's health.
- Provide medical evidence if required for their child's absence.
- Provide school with sufficient and up-to-date information about their child's medical needs. Parents should make sure that in the first instance they inform the school their child has a medical need and provide evidence of this medical need from a medical professional.
- Provide evidence of medical appointments during school time to the attendance team. This includes medical appointments during our Abbey Services.
- Instil in their children the importance of attending school regularly
- Ensure that they are aware of this Attendance policy and all the details
- Impress upon their children the need to observe the Townsend Church of England School's Behaviour and Behaviour Management Policy
- Take an active interest in their children's school career, praising and encouraging good work and behaviour and attending parents'/carers' evenings and other relevant meetings
- Work in partnership with the school to resolve issues which may lead to non-attendance
- Avoid arranging medical/dental appointments during school hours
- Not book holidays during term time
- Submit any absence request at least 20 days before the proposed absence to the Headteacher for exceptional circumstances. Do not assume absence will be granted until you have received confirmation from the school.
- Refer to the NHS guidance 'Is my child too ill for school' when deciding whether to keep a child off school (<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/is-my-child-too-ill-for-school/>)

7. Admission & Attendance Registers

The rules governing the maintenance of registers, including removal from roll, are contained in the [School Attendance \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2024](#).

All parents/carers must inform the school office (admin@townsend.herts.sch.uk) of any address or contact number changes whenever they occur. This will assist both the school and Local Authority when making enquiries to locate children missing education.

Where a parent/carer notifies the school that a pupil will live at another address the attendance improvement officer will record in the admission register:

- a) the full name of the parent /carer with whom the pupil will live;
- b) the new address; and
- c) the date from when it is expected the pupil will live at this address.

Where a parent/carer of a pupil notifies the school that the pupil is registered at another school or will be attending a different school in future, schools must record in the admission register:

- a) the name of the new school; and
- b) the date when the pupil first attended or is due to start attending that school.

The school is required to notify the Local Authority **within five days** via school admissions - <http://www.intra.thegrid.org.uk/admissions/seam.shtml> when a pupil's name is added to the admissions register at a non-standard transition point. Schools will need to provide the Local Authority with all the information held within the admission register about the pupil. This duty does not apply when a pupil's name is entered in the admission register at a standard transition point – at the start of the first year of education normally provided by that school.

The school is required to notify the Local Authority of any pupil of compulsory school age who fails to attend school regularly, or who has been absent for a continuous period of more than 10 school days, without a legitimate reason. This duty also extends to academies and independent schools.

For further guidance see - <http://www.thegrid.org.uk/info/csf/admissions.shtml>

8. Removal from Roll

There are strict grounds as to when schools may remove pupils from their admissions register. These are outlined in [The School Attendance \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2024](#). Regulation 13(1) states that when a school has decided to delete a pupil's name from their admission roll, they must notify their Local Authority. This responsibility applies to all Maintained Schools, Academies, Free Schools, University Technical Colleges, Education Support Centres and Independent Schools.

If the pupil has left the school without explanation and there are concerns about the pupil's welfare the school will contact the Statutory Attendance Support Team immediately. If the school is concerned about any aspect of a transfer or if a pupil has "disappeared" the matter will be drawn immediately to the attention of the Statutory Attendance Support Team.

9. Elective Home Education

Parents have the right to educate their child at home. As a school, we would discourage this for any child. However, if a parent wishes to electively home educate their child, we request a letter to be sent to the Headteacher informing us of this decision. Parents will be responsible for ensuring the conditions of home education are met once the pupil is removed from roll.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5ca21e0b40f0b625e97ffe06/Elective_home_education_guidance_for_LAV2.0.pdf

10. Authorising Absence

It is only the school a child attends that can authorise an absence. The fact that a parent /carer has provided a note or other explanation (telephone call or personal contact) in relation to a particular absence does not, itself, oblige the school to accept it, if the school does not accept the explanation offered as a valid reason for absence. If, after further investigation doubt remains about the explanation offered - or when no explanation is forthcoming at all - the absence will be treated as unauthorised and the parent/carers informed.

The reasons for non-attendance at school that will be deemed authorised absences are given below. Where any of our families require support or help with understanding the different reasons for authorised absences, support will be provided. If an interpreter is required, the school will seek to provide this. The school will keep absence notes for at least a term but when a pupil's absence is a cause for concern the notes may be kept longer for this and maybe used in court as evidence there has been a formal referral to the Local Authority because attendance is causing an ongoing concern.

Absence should be authorised if:

- The pupil is ill or prevented from attending by any unavoidable cause. Where illness causes ongoing absence, the school will require supporting medical evidence and this will be requested by our school attendance team or your child's Director of Learning.
- The absence occurs on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parent/carers belongs

- The school at which the child is a registered pupil is not within walking distance of the child's home; and no suitable arrangements have been made by the LA for any of the following: the child's transport to and from school; boarding accommodation for the child at or near the school; enabling the child to become a registered pupil at a school nearer to his/her home
- The pupil is the child of Traveller parents/carers who are known to be travelling for occupational purposes and have agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending alternative provision
- There is a close family bereavement (parent/ sibling/ grandparent)
- A Year 11 pupil is granted study leave. Study leave should be used sparingly and only granted during public examinations. Provision should still be made available for those pupils who want to continue to come into school to revise
- Leave of absence has been applied for in advance and has been granted because of exceptional circumstances relating to the application. Parents/carers should be reminded that they cannot expect, as of right, that the school will grant leave of absence. These must be submitted to the Headteacher 20 days before the requested absence.
- Leave of absence should be granted to allow a pupil to take part in a performance within the meaning of S37 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1963 (c) for which a child performance licence has been issued. Before granting a licence, the Local Authority must be satisfied that the child's education will not suffer. A school letter is requested as part of the licence application as confirmation of this. If a school believes a child's education will suffer because of taking part in a performance, they should provide reasons to the Local Authority in writing. The information must be specific to the child (saying for example that it is against school policy is not sufficient). If the school does not provide such information the Local Authority will issue the licence. The absence should be recorded as code C.
- Evidence is provided for a medical appointment during school hours including on our Abbey days.

Further guidance is available at - <http://www.thegrid.org.uk/info/welfare/attendance.shtml>.

Absence should be unauthorised if no explanation is forthcoming from the parents/carers or if the school is dissatisfied with the explanation.

11. Request for absence for exceptional circumstances

The Absence Request must be completed and submitted to the Headteacher 20 days before the proposed absence.

We define 'exceptional circumstances' amongst others as:

- Illness and medical operations
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and 'New' or 'New Age' Travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a Traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision.
- As a general guideline, exceptional absence circumstances usually apply only to immediate family

Absence without a valid reason, or where there is no explanation, is recorded as unauthorised absence.

- Holidays will not be authorised during term time, regardless of the reason for the holiday.
- Absences that will not be authorised: looking after siblings, birthdays, shopping, non-school trips, weddings (unless immediate family with evidence provided).
- Absences on Abbey Service days without sufficient evidence provided.
- Medical evidence must be provided for 5 days or more absence or where patterns of absence have emerged.

1.1. Persistent and Severe Absence

Where a child's attendance falls below 90% or more of the current school year, the school will work with the pupil and family to put targeted support into place and remove any barriers to attendance.

We must pay particular attention to those students where attendance falls below 50% as these severely absent pupils may face bigger barriers to their regular attendance and are more likely to need more intensive support to improve attendance.

We will regularly monitor and intervene with persistently and severely absent pupils throughout the year and may use an attendance improvement plan to facilitate this.

1.2. Fixed Penalty Notices

We will be adhering to the Hertfordshire County Council Penalty Notices Unauthorised Absence (Truancy) Code of Conduct when looking to issue fixed penalty notice fines.

From 19th August 2024 a new national threshold of 10 unauthorised sessions for any reason (equivalent to five school days) within a rolling 10 school week period has been introduced for when schools must consider issuing a fixed penalty notice. A fixed penalty notice can be issued for any combination of unauthorised absences over a 10-week rolling period. They can be consecutive or span over two terms.

The national framework sets out that a maximum of two penalty notices per child can be issued per parent in a 3-year rolling period. If a parent then commits a third offence in a 3-year rolling period, the local authority will need to consider options available to them to improve attendance.

The 3-year period and escalation of fines begin from the date on which the first penalty notice is issued. Arrangements for payment are set out below and would be included within the fixed penalty notice:

- The first penalty notice issued to a parent for a child will be charged at £80 if paid within 21 days, rising to £160 if paid between days 22-28.
- Where it is deemed to issue a second penalty notice to the same parent for the same pupil within 3 years of the first offence, the second notice is charged at a flat rate of £160 and is payable within 28 days. There is no reduced sum.

A 'parent' is defined as:

- All natural parents, whether they are married or not
- Any person who, although they are not a natural parent, has parental responsibility (as defined in the Children Act 1989) for a child or young person.
- Any person who, although is not a natural parent, has care of a child or young person. Having care of a child or young person means that a person with whom the child lives and who looks after the child, irrespective of what their relationship is with the child, is a parent in education law.

Under the Hertfordshire Code of Conduct a penalty notice can be issued to each parent for each child.

For further information, please visit: <https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/schools-and-education/at-school/penalty-notices-for-unauthorised-absence/penalty-notices-for-unauthorised-absence.aspx>

1.3. Consortium Schools

Pupils attending consortia schools as part of their course need only be placed on the registers of their main school.

1.4. Flexi-schooling

The Headteacher may agree to flexi-schooling arrangements where the parents/carers take on the responsibility for their child's education for part of the school week. This will be only with a written agreement from a parent/carer in place and under exceptional circumstances. Where agreement has been reached, pupils should be marked authorised absent from school during periods when they are receiving home education.

1.5. Part-time timetables

All pupils of compulsory school age are entitled to a full-time education, and parents/carers are responsible for ensuring they receive this. In exceptional circumstances, there may be a need for a part-time timetable for short periods of time to meet an individual pupil's needs and to support them coming into school. If a part-time timetable is necessary, it will be temporary and time-limited with parent/carer agreement. A part-time timetable will be no longer than 6-8 weeks and if this needs to be extended medical evidence from a medical professional will be needed. Part-time timetables are not long-term solutions and will not be used for behaviour reasons.

12. Requests for Family Holidays During Term time

The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024' states that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. It is for the Headteacher to determine what constitutes exceptional circumstances and for them to determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.

Parents who wish to request time off for their child/ren in term time from school should complete the form 'Application for Leave of Absence from School during term time' which can be found on the [school website](#). This form should be returned to the Headteacher to be considered.

Holidays in term time will not be authorised, and parents should be aware that if this unauthorised absence is taken you may be at risk of being issued with a Fixed penalty Notice.

If a student has at least 10 sessions (usually equivalent to 5 school days) of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10-week school week period (which can span different terms or school years and do not have to be consecutive), including holidays the Headteacher can apply for a Penalty Notice to be issued by the Local Authority. This can be for each parent/ carer for each child. The fixed penalty notice issued to a parent for a child will be charged at £80 if paid within 21 days, rising to £160 if paid between days 22-28.

Appendix 1 – Attendance Guidance

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/626669cb8fa8f523b7221b98/UKHSA-should-I-keep-my-child-off-school-guidance-A3-poster.pdf>

<https://assets.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/wpuploads/2022/12/aaa-guide-for-parents-on-school-attendance.pdf>

<https://www.gov.uk/illness-child-education>

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/is-my-child-too-ill-for-school/>

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2024/208/made>

<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/microsites/local-offer/education-support/get-help-to-access-learning/attendance-team.aspx>

<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/schools-and-education/at-school/penalty-notice-for-unauthorised-absence/penalty-notice-for-unauthorised-absence.aspx>