



**Inspiring Optimistic Learners**

## **Attendance (Students) Policy**

<b>Reviewed: September 2021</b>	<b>Next review due: September 2022</b>
<b>Governing Body Committee: N/A</b>	<b>CLT contact: Martine Blandin- Neaves</b>
<b>Policy adopted by the Full Governing Body on: N/A</b>	

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## A. RATIONALE

This is a thriving and improving College and every child plays their part in making it so. We aim for an environment which enables and encourages all members of the community. For our students to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and be at College, on time, every day the College is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

The College has targets to improve attendance and all members of our College community have an important part to play in meeting these targets.

The minimum level of attendance for this college is 96% attendance. Our target is to achieve better than this because we know that good attendance is the key to successful outcomes for students.

Throughout the Academic Year, the College monitors absences and punctuality to show us where improvements need to be made.

## B. WHY REGULAR ATTENDANCE IS IMPORTANT

**Learning:** Any absence affects the pattern of a child's education and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any student's absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class. Ensuring regular attendance at College is the parents' legal responsibility and permitting absence from College without a good reason creates an offence in law and can result in prosecution.

**Safeguarding:** Children may be at risk of harm if they do not attend College regularly. Safeguarding the interests of each child is everyone's responsibility and within the context of this College, promoting the welfare and life opportunities for our students encompasses:

- Attendance
- Behaviour Management
- Health and Safety
- Access to the Curriculum
- Anti-bullying

Failing to attend the College on a regular basis will be considered as a safeguarding matter.

The College is working with an Education Welfare Officer. The main role of the Council's Education Welfare Service (EWS) is to ensure that children of compulsory school age attend school regularly. The EWS does so in partnership with both the school and parents. This can take many forms; from attendance meetings, home visits, school meetings, letters and telephone conversations amongst others. The aim of this is to come up with an action plan that will work towards supporting the student to increase their school attendance, and therefore their future prospects.

## C. MONITORING ATTENDANCE

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2013, require schools to take an attendance register twice a day, once at the start of the morning session and again during the afternoon session.

The register must record whether the student was:

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

The College day starts at **8.45am** and we expect students to be in their tutor groups for that time.

At **9.30am** the registers will be closed. In accordance with the Regulations, if a student arrives after that time they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will **not** count as a present mark and will be marked as unauthorised absence (unless a satisfactory explanation and evidence has been provided, for example a medical appointment). On arrival after tutor time (after 9:15am) students must report to reception to sign in.

The afternoon session register will be taken during period 5 with their subject teacher.

Teachers during lessons 1-5 will also take a register. If a student is absent from a lesson and it is not coded on the register the teacher will email the name of the student using the 'missing students' email address. This will inform the Attendance Manager, reception, the staff in the Medical Room and the Behaviour Support Team.

### **Punctuality**

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If a child misses the start of the day they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher or tutor getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving students also disrupt lessons, can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage absence.

### **How we manage lateness**

Students will receive a late mark on the register if they are late to tutor time or arrive after registration has closed. The Attendance team to run off a weekly report and if a student has persistent lateness (3 or more lates) an afterschool detention will be set with where punctuality can be discussed. Exceptional circumstances will be considered (for example, issues with transport).

## **D. UNDERSTANDING TYPES OF ABSENCE**

Every half-day absence from the College has to be classified by the College (not by the parents), as either **AUTHORISED** or **UNAUTHORISED**.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from College for an appropriate reason like illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in College time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the College does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This type of absence can lead to meetings with parents and/or the Education Welfare Office (EWO) or in extreme cases legal proceedings. This includes:

- parents/carers keeping children off College unnecessarily;

- truancy before or during the College day;
- absences which have never been properly explained;
- children who arrive at the College too late to get a mark;
- shopping, looking after other children or birthdays;
- day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed.

Whilst any child may be off College because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend College. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the College, the parents and the child.

### **Persistent Absenteeism (PA)**

In line with the DfE, the College uses the term persistent absentee for a student who misses 10% or more across the Academic Year for whatever reason. Absence at this level will impact negatively on any child's educational prospects and we need parents' fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence thoroughly and any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and parents/carers will be informed of this via a letter, message on SIMS parent APP or phonecall.

PA students are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system and we also combine this with academic mentoring where absence affects attainment. PA students will also be required to meet with the attendance coordinator and the HOY once a half term to discuss their attendance.

## **E. ABSENCE PROCEDURES**

### **REGULAR COMMUNICATION OF STUDENTS ATTENDANCE**

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility - parents, students and all members of College staff.

To help us all to focus on this the College will report to parents on how their child is performing in College, and what their attendance and punctuality rate is.

If a student's attendance drops below 95% and is a concern, Parents will be sent a letter in the post from the College notifying them of this.

To ensure Parents are kept up to date with their Child's current Attendance percentage, Parents will also receive a half termly message via SIMS parent App notifying them of their child's attendance. (in particular if a student's attendance has dropped below 95%, 90%, 85% or 80%)

In school, students will be told what their attendance percentage/record is during tutor time each week. All students will also have a discussion about their attendance with their tutors once a Half Term which will be recorded on the school system (SIMS)

The College regularly celebrates good attendance by recognising students with termly and half termly rewards. Students start afresh each half term allowing more opportunities for them to receive incentives for 100% attendance in any half term or term. There is also formal recognition in the form of termly certificates, ranging from 97%-100% attendance.

### **If your child is absent parents must:**

- Contact the College as soon as possible on the first day of absence and on each subsequent day of absence;
- If it is a planned absence, complete an Absence Request Form. A copy of which can be found at Appendix B.

### **If your child is absent the College will:**

Telephone or text you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from parents. Attendance will be tracked on systems developed at the College internally and if the child's attendance becomes a concern then the tutor will speak to the child and telephone the parents/carers outlining their concerns and offering any support that may be needed.

If attendance continues to be a concern, A letter will also be sent home outlining the concerns and stating that any future absence will only be authorised with a medical note. Parents may also be contacted by the Attendance Coordinator, the Education Welfare Officer or the Head of Year and parents may be invited in for a meeting.

If a student's attendance continues to be a concern, at this stage, the College will seek advice from the Education Welfare Officer on legal procedures which may include penalty notices or court proceedings. Parents will be invited in for a meeting with either the HOY and/or the Senior member of staff for Inclusion.

If all interventions above have failed, the College will issue a first warning letter followed by a second warning letter if need be in order to inform parents of the severity of the situation in relation to the poor attendance. If this fails to lead to an improvement in attendance then the College will invite the parents/carers in for an Education Planning Meeting to discuss an attendance action plan for their child. (Appendix A).

The Education Planning Meeting is designed to ensure that all parties continue to support the full attendance of the student.

## **F. LEAVE OF ABSENCE IN TERM TIME**

Taking a leave of absence, e.g. a holiday in term time will affect children's education as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking children away in College time.

Any applications made for a leave of absence must be made using the official College form and we request that at least 15 days-notice is given. Each application will be considered on a case by case basis by the Headteacher.

It is now illegal for schools to authorise any leave of absence except in exceptional circumstances.

Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the College, or in excess of that agreed, will be classed as unauthorised. A Penalty Notice may also be issued by the Local Authority.

### **How to request permission for absence:**

- Complete an Absence Request Form (these can be collected from the college reception). (Appendix B).

- The Absence Request Form must be submitted a minimum of 15 days before the requested absence and should be addressed for the attention of the Attendance Manager.
- The Headteacher will consider whether to give permission for the absence and you will receive a letter or a phonecall within 7 working school days confirming whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.

### **Authorised absences**

Permission for absence will be granted only in exceptional circumstances. Examples of authorised absence include (not an exhaustive list):

- Unavoidable medical/dental appointments
- Days of religious observance
- Exceptional circumstances such as bereavement
- Seeing a parent who is on leave from the armed forces (subject to confirmation from the Commanding Officer or Welfare Officer)
- When Traveller children go on the road with their parents.
- External examinations.

The Headteacher will consider each absence request individually and will take into account the following:

- The reason for the leave
- The time and duration of the leave
- Whether or not the leave could have been taken during the statutory school holiday periods
- Your child's record of attendance
- The learning that will be missed.

The Headteacher will also decide how many days your child can be away from school if the absence is granted.

### **Unauthorised absences**

Torpoint Community College believes the greater the attendance, the greater the achievement and will therefore not authorise absences for the following circumstances (not an exhaustive list):

- Holidays/ holidays already paid for
- Any type of shopping
- Looking after siblings/unwell parents
- Minding the house
- Birthdays
- Resting after a late night
- Visiting relatives
- Visiting relatives staying with you.

## **G. THE LAW RELATING TO ATTENDANCE**

Regular and punctual attendance at school is a legal requirement and it is essential if pupils are to maximize their educational opportunities.

Parents/carers can commit an offence if they fail to ensure the regular and punctual attendance of their child at the school which the child is registered, unless the absence has been authorised by the school.

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that *'the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him/her to receive efficient full time education suitable:*

- (a) to age, ability and aptitude and*
- (b) to any special educational needs he/she may have*

*either by regular attendance at college or otherwise'.*

Under the Education Act 1996, the Local Authority has a statutory responsibility to ensure that parents secure education for children of compulsory school age and where necessary, use legal enforcement.

The law does not grant parents/carers an automatic right to take their children out of school during term time.

### **The Law relating to safeguarding**

Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 places a duty on local authorities and governing bodies to have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State with regard to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and students under the age of 18.

### **Penalty Notices**

If your absence request is refused and you still take your child out of school the absence will be unauthorised and you may be fined or prosecuted by Cornwall County Council.

Sections 444A and 444B of the Education Act 1996 empowers Authorised Officers of the Local Authority, Headteachers (and Deputy and Assistant Headteachers if authorised by them) and the Police, (including Community Support Officers and accredited persons) to issue Penalty Notices in the cases of unauthorised absence from school.

Penalty Notices can only be issued in cases where a pupil of compulsory school age has been absent and the absence has not been authorised by the school. The minimum level of absence that is necessary before a Penalty Notice can be issued in any circumstance is 12 or more half-day sessions, i.e. the equivalent of 6 school days, of unauthorised absence in any 100 sessions (10 week period). In cases where more than 20 sessions of unauthorised absence occur within 100 sessions (10 week period), prosecution under the Education Act (1996) may be considered as an alternative to a Penalty Notice.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 make clear that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless they are "exceptional circumstances".

### **Issuing Penalty Notices**

Penalty Notices may be issued when the school has warned a parent/carer that a leave of absence of 6 days (12 sessions) has not been authorised and the school has warned the parent/carer of a Penalty Notice. The College will issue a letter to parents/carers if the absence will be unauthorised and warn of a Penalty Notice.

If an Absence Request Form has not been completed by a parent/carer then the warning of a Penalty Notice will have already been given in the letter.

On return from the unauthorised absence the school will contact the Local Authority within 15 working days to notify them of the unauthorised absence and request a Penalty Notice. The request for a Penalty Notice will be taken into consideration by the Penalty Notice Office or Senior Educational Welfare Officer at Cornwall Council.

The parents/carers will receive the Penalty Notice from Cornwall Council 2 working days after it has been agreed after sending by first class post.

The fine per child, per parent is £60 if paid within 21 days or £120 if paid after this but within 28 days for 5 day absences. Failure to pay the penalty notice may result in Court action. The council may also apply for the costs incurred in taking the matter to court.

*Remember: The greater the attendance, the greater the achievement. If you have any queries please email:*  
[enquiries@torpoint.cornwall.sch.uk](mailto:enquiries@torpoint.cornwall.sch.uk)

## Education Planning Meeting

### Appendix A

(Insert name) PLAN  
(Insert date)

Pupil	Date of Birth	Address	Attended
Parents / Guardians	Date of Birth	Address	Attended
Significant Others		Address	Attended
Professionals		Agency	Attended
Reason for the Meeting	<p><i>(insert name of parent)</i> is in receipt of a warning of prosecution in accordance with the Education Act 1996 Section 7 for failing to ensure their son/daughter's regular school attendance. The meeting will give consideration of legal proceedings under Section 444(1) 444(1a) of the 1996 Education Act, consideration of an application for an Education Supervision Order and consideration of a Penalty Notice. This meeting is called under Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 because of the pupil's poor attendance at school. The meeting will consider all the information brought by those attending.</p> <p>Decisions will be taken as to whether the Education Welfare Service will proceed to prosecution, or make an application to the court for an Education Supervision Order should attendance level not improve significantly. Magistrates may make a Parenting Order in addition to any other penalty imposed. Consideration will also be given as to whether a voluntary Parenting Contract or Family Group Conference may be helpful. A Penalty Notice can also be considered.</p>		
Education Welfare Service interventions and concerns			

(including Chronology)	
Parental views	
Pupil's views	
Professional Views	
Strengths identified	
Risks & Concerns that may affect improvement	
Consideration for an Education Supervision Order	
Recommendations & Actions Agreed (please state by whom and when)	

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Education Welfare Officer :	Signed :
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This plan is intended to support the pupil in improving school attendance and addressing any barriers that may be preventing regular attendance.

**Torpoint Community College**  
**Absence Request Form**

<b>Child's Name(s)</b>		
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**Before completing the section overleaf please read the following carefully:**

*The law does not grant parents/carers an automatic right to take their children out of school during term time. If the request is for an absence in term time you must have parental responsibility and be the parent/carer with whom the child normally lives. Permission must be sought in advance. If you do not have parental responsibility and/or normally live with the child you must seek the consent of the parent/carer who does and that person should complete the form. Schools will only consider requests from the person with parental responsibility.*

**Things you need to know about requesting leave:**

- The absence request form must be returned to the office for the attention of the attendance officer a minimum of 15 days prior to the absence.
- If your absence request is declined and you still decide to take your child out of school it will be marked as **unauthorised absence** and we will notify Cornwall Council who may decide to take legal action against you. A Penalty Notice can be issued under Section 444A and 444B of the Education Act 1996. This carries a fine per child, per parent of £60 if paid within 21 days or £120 if paid after this but within 28 days. Failure to pay the Penalty Notice may result in Court action. Persistent absences not authorised by the school may result in a prosecution in the Magistrates Court, leading to fines up to £2,500 and/or custodial sentences. The council may also apply for the costs incurred in taking the matter to court.

**When deciding whether to allow term time leave, for any reason, the College will consider the following:**

- The reason for the leave
- The time and duration of the leave
- Whether or not the leave could have been taking during the statutory school holiday periods
- Your child's record of attendance
- Learning that will be missed.

**Torpoint Community College believes the greater the attendance, the greater the achievement and will therefore not authorise absences for the following circumstances (not an exhaustive list):**

- Holidays/ holidays already paid for
- Any type of shopping
- Looking after siblings/unwell parents
- Minding the house
- Birthdays
- Resting after a late night
- Relatives visiting
- Visiting relatives

**Absences will be authorised for the following reasons (not an exhaustive list):**

- Genuine illness
- Unavoidable medical/dental appointments
- Days of religious observance
- Exceptional circumstances such as bereavement
- Seeing a parent who is on leave from the armed forces (subject to confirmation from the Commanding Officer or Welfare Officer)
- When Traveller children go on the road with their parents.

We recognise that it is often expensive to take a holiday during school breaks and that is why some parents may ask for term time leave for their child. However, research suggests that children who are taken out of school may never catch up on the learning they have missed. To put it into context, if your child misses two weeks of school for a holiday every year, this adds up to more than two terms over the child's whole time in school.

By making sure that your child attends school as much as possible you are ensuring that:

- Your child has the same education and opportunities as everyone else in their class.
- Your child won't need to worry about catching up on work or falling behind by missing an important lesson.
- Your child does not miss any important tests/assessments/ homework deadlines.
- Your child will be given any important information/letters sent home about parents evenings or trips at the same time as all other children.
- Your child won't miss out on the activities at the start and end of term which are often fun and a chance to develop friendships

If you wish to apply for leave of absence during term time please provide the following information:

Child's name: ..... Tutor Group: ..... Year: .....

Child's name: ..... Tutor Group: ..... Year: .....

I request absence from (date)..... to (date).....

My child will return to school on (date).....

**This section must be completed**

*Please fully explain the exceptional circumstances that you would like the College to consider:*

Name of parent(s)/carer(s):

.....

Signature of parent(s)/carer(s): ..... Date: .....

What happens next:

- Please return this completed form to the College for the attention of the Attendance Manager.
- The Headteacher will consider this request making a decision in accordance with our Attendance Policy.
- We will inform you of the outcome within 7 working days via a letter.
- Please do not make any bookings until you have received a reply.

*For official use only*

<u>Attendance Manager</u>	<u>Headteacher</u>
Date form received: .....	Request approved: Yes/No
Date Letter sent to Parent / Carer: .....	Headteacher's Signature: .....
SIMS Updated on (date): .....	Date: .....