

TCS Attendance Policy

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Policy prepared / reviewed by:	JL / Assistant Headteacher
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Content:

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**TESTBOURNE
COMMUNITY
SCHOOL**

Call: 01256 892061
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1. National Guidance

Guidance for schools on support and procedures for pursuing legal action for non-attendance.

Code of Conduct – issuing penalty notices for unauthorised absence from schools (2015).

Effective practice document for school attendance procedures and admissions for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children 2014.

Guidance for children on school roll but absent and at risk of missing in education (2014).

Elective home education – advice to schools for Head teachers to apply (2014).

Guidelines for Hampshire schools, education centres and alternative providers in relation to length of school day – Statutory Regulation (2009).

Hampshire County Council Guidance for schools and other education providers – promoting pupil attendance and recording absence.

2. Purpose / Statement of Intent

Every child has a right to access the education to which he/she is entitled. Parents, students and the School share the responsibility for ensuring that attendance at school is maximised and that unjustified and unauthorised absenteeism is kept to a minimum. At Testbourne Community School we consistently strive to achieve a goal of 100% attendance for all children and a whole school attendance figure of at least 96%. Every opportunity will be used to convey to students and their parents or carers the importance of regular attendance.

1.1 Promoting Good Attendance & Punctuality

The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the school, parents and the child. The Home/School agreement will contain details of how we will work with parents and our expectations of what parents will need to do to ensure their child achieves good attendance.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Provide information on all matters related to attendance in our Termly Attendance letter, Head teacher's Newsletter and school website
- Report to parents on how their child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainments;
- Meetings with parents, students and staff to work together on raising attendance levels individually and across the school

2 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

2.1 Responsibility of the School

A member of the Senior Leadership Team will oversee, direct and co-ordinate the school's work to:

- Promote regular and improved attendance
- Ensure that attendance issues are identified at an early stage and that support is put in place to deal with any difficulties.

If absence is frequent or continuous, except where a child is clearly unwell, Heads of House, tutors and PSAs will discuss with parent/carers the need and reasons for their child's absence and will encourage them to keep absences to a minimum. A note or explanation from a student's home does not mean an absence becomes authorised. The decision whether or not to authorise an absence **will always rest with the school**.

2.2 Responsibilities of Students:

- Attend every day unless they are ill or have an authorised absence.
- Arrive in school on time.
- Go to all their registrations and lessons on time.
- Take responsibility for registering at the Student Support Office if they are late or are leaving the school site during school hours.

2.3 Responsibilities of Parents and Carers:

Regular attendance at school is a parent/carers legal responsibility (section of the 1996 Education Act) and permitting absence from school that is not authorised by the school creates an offence in law.

Parents will:

- Inform the school on the first day of absence and provide information regarding the reason for absence and anticipated length of absence.
- Provide a written letter explaining a child's absence if requested.
- Avoid taking their child out of school for non-urgent medical or dental appointments.
- Only request for leave of absence if it is for an exceptional circumstance (County Leave of Absence Form available from the school) and sent to the Head teacher.

3 RECORDING ATTENDANCE

The School will ensure effective record-keeping of registration and lesson attendance and punctuality following Hampshire County Council Guidelines:

For further advice and guidance refer to: Hampshire guidance 'Promoting Pupil Attendance Recording Absence' available at: <http://documents.hants.gov.uk/childrens-services/HIAS/Promotingpupilattendanceandrecordingabsence-maindocument.pdf>

3.1. Lateness /Punctuality

For further advice and guidance refer to: Hampshire guidance 'Promoting Pupil Attendance Recording Absence' available at: <http://documents.hants.gov.uk/childrens-services/HIAS/Promotingpupilattendanceandrecordingabsence-maindocument.pdf>

- **The school day begins at 8.45 and all pupils are expected to be in school at the time. Morning registration is at 8.45 am and it closes at 9.10am.**

AM Registration

If a pupil arrives in Tutor between 8.45 and 9.10am the attendance will be registered as L (before register closes).

If a pupil registers after 9:50 they will be registered as U (late after register closes). This mark shows them to be on site, but is legally recorded as an absence.

- All lateness is recorded daily. This information will be required by the courts, should a prosecution for non-attendance or lateness be necessary

On-going and repeated lateness is considered as **unauthorised absence and will be subject to legal action** (see section 6 for further detail).

Parents, guardians or carers of pupils who have patterns of lateness will be contacted to discuss the importance of good time keeping and how this might be achieved. If lateness persists parents, guardians or carers will be invited to attend the school and discuss the problem and support offered. If support is not required or is declined and a child has 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence due to lateness recorded in any 10 week period the school or the Hampshire County Council will be required to issue parents with a penalty notice in accordance with Hampshire's Code of Conduct for issuing penalty notices for non-attendance (See section 6 of this policy for further detail).

PM Registration

If a pupil arrives in Period 5 after 14.10pm the attendance will be registered as L (before register closes).

From September 2015 all schools will be required to work with Hampshire County Council to take legal action if a pupil is:

- Persistently late (coded *U*) for up to 10 sessions (five days) after the register has been closed
- Persistently late before the close of the register (coded *L*), but the school has met with parents and has clearly communicated that they will categorise as unauthorised any further lateness (code *O*), and where the threshold of 10 sessions (five days) has been met

If a pupil is late due to a medical appointment, they will receive an authorised absence coded 'M'. Please be advised that where possible doctors and dentists appointments are to be made outside of school hours or during school holidays. The school may require confirmation of medical appointments made within school hours.

4. WHAT SHOULD A PARENT DO IF THEIR CHILD IS ABSENT?

4.1 First Day Absence

A child not attending school is considered a **safeguarding** matter. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

If a child is absent the parent/carer must contact the school on the morning of the first day of absence

- If a parent/carer has telephoned the school we may still require a note with an explanation of the absence on the first day back (if requested).

If a child is absent we will:

- Telephone or text the parent/carer on the first day of absence if we have not heard from the parent/carer; *This is because we have a duty to ensure the child's safety as well as their regular school attendance*

4.2 Third Day Absence

If a child is not seen and contact has not been established with you any of the named parent/carers after three days of absence the school is required to start a child missing in education procedures as set down by Hampshire County Council Guidance. We will make all reasonable enquires to establish contact with parents and the child including making enquires to known friends, wider family. If contact is unsuccessful the school will follow HCC guidance.

4.3 Ten Day's Absence

We have a legal duty to report the absence of any student who is absent without an explanation for 10 consecutive days. If the child is not seen and contact has not been established with the named parent/carer then the Local Authority is notified that the child is 'at risk of missing'. Children's Services Staff will visit the last known address and alert key services to locate the child. Parents/carers have a responsibility to ensure their contact details are up to date.

4.4 Continued or Ongoing Absence

If a child misses 10% (3 weeks / sessions) or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason they are defined as a **persistent absentee**. Whether or not this absence is authorised the school will invite parent/carers to discuss the issues and agree an action plan to support the parent/carer/child.

4.5 Request for Leave of Absence:

Amendments to school attendance regulations were updated and enforced from September 2013: (Pupil registration) (England) regulations state that:

Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. It is important to note that Headteachers can determine the length of the authorised absence as well as whether absence is authorised at all. The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are rare, significant, or unavoidable

which means the event could not reasonably be scheduled at another time. There is, however, no legal entitlement for time off in school time to go on holiday and in the majority of cases holiday will not be authorised.

Parents/Carers wishing to apply for leave of absence need to fill in an application form (available from Testbourne Community School) in advance and before making any travel arrangements.

If term time leave is taken without prior permission from the school, the absence will be unauthorised and if the number of sessions absent hits the thresholds set down in Hampshire's Code of Conduct parent/carers will be issued with a fixed-penalty fine, or other legal action in accordance the code (see section 6 for detail).

For National Guidance refer to:

- School Attendance 2015 located at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-attendance>

For County advice and guidance refer to:

- Hampshire County Council Guidance for schools and other education providers – promoting pupil attendance and recording absence.
- Guidance on approval of Extended leave of absence

<http://www3.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/iba-resources-for-schools/atten-guidance/attendance-guidance-for-schools.htm>

5 UNDERSTANDING TYPES OF ABSENCE – AUTHORISED & UNAUTHORISED

Pupils are expected to attend school every day for the entire duration of the academic year, unless there is an exceptional reason for the absence. There are two main categories of absences:

- **Authorised Absence:** is when the school has accepted the explanation offered as satisfactory justification for the absence, or given approval in advance for such an absence. If no explanation is received, absences cannot be authorised.
- **Unauthorised Absence:** is when the school has not received a reason for absence or has not approved a child's leave absence from school after a parent's request. This includes:
 - parents giving their children permission to be off school unnecessarily such as for shopping, birthdays, to look after siblings
 - truancy before or during the school day
 - absences which have not been explained

A school can, if needed, change an authorised absence to an unauthorised absence and vice versa if new information is presented. Any changes will be communicated to

parents/carers. An example of this would be where a parent states a child is unwell but on return to school there is evidence they have been on holiday.

Refer to:

Hampshire County Council Guidance for schools and other education providers – promoting pupil attendance and recording absence.

6 LEGAL MEASURES

6.1 Penalty Notices for Non Attendance and other Legal Measures:

In Education law, parents/carers are committing an offence if they fail to ensure the regular attendance of their child of compulsory school age at the school at which the child is registered, unless the absence has been authorised by the school.

Legal Measures for tackling persistent absence or lateness

Hampshire Schools and Hampshire County Council will:

use the full range of legal measures to secure good attendance. Legal measures will only be considered through a referral to Hampshire's Attendance Legal Panels where:

- 1. The child or family do not require the support, or avail of the support offered, from any agency to improve the attendance**
- 2. The child has 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence and parents are complicit in the child's absence.**

The following legal measures are for pupils of compulsory school age who are registered at a school:

- Parenting contracts set at Education Planning Meetings
- Parenting orders
- Penalty notices
- Education Supervision Orders
- Prosecution

Legal Measures for absence taken when the Headteacher has declined parent/carers request for leave of absence

Where a pupil has unauthorised absence due to either:

1. Non approval of a parent/carer's request for leave of absence or
2. A holiday that has been taken without permission.

and the unauthorised absence is for 10 or more sessions (5 days) in any 100 possible school sessions then a penalty notice for non-attendance will be issued

Where a child has **unauthorised absence** the school must enforce Hampshire' s Code of Conduct for issuing Penalty Notices or follow its guidance on other Legal Measures for Non-Attendance. The Code of Conduct is a statutory document that ensures that powers for legal sanctions are applied consistently and fairly across all schools and their families within the authority. A copy is available from <http://www3.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/attendance-guidance-for-parents/possible-penalties.htm>

The code of conduct states that:

Schools or Hampshire Local Authority will issue a Penalty Notice for any unauthorised absence where the pupil has been:

- absent for 10 or more half-day sessions (five school days) of unauthorised
- absence during any 100 possible school sessions – these do not need to be consecutive.
- persistently late (coded *U*) for up to 10 sessions (five days) after the register has closed
- persistently late before the close of the register (coded *L*), but the school has met with parents and has clearly communicated that they will categorise as unauthorised any further lateness (code *O*), and where the threshold of 10 sessions (five days) has been met
- absent for any public examinations of which dates are published in advance
- absent for any formal school assessments, tests or examinations where the dates have been published in advance unless the issuing of a Penalty Notice would conflict with other intervention strategies in place or other sanctions already being processed.

If a child has unauthorised absence which meets any of the above criteria and the family or child do not require any agency support to improve the attendance then a single Penalty Notice is issued for either:

- 1. 10 sessions of unauthorised absence or lateness in any 10 week school period**
- 2. 1 or more sessions of unauthorised absence during a public exam, formal school assessment or testing where dates are published in advance.**

Parents and Carers will be warned of the likelihood of a penalty notice being issued for unauthorised absence either via a letter, through the leave of absence request form, or through the schools attendance policy and website. The penalty notice is a fine that is issued to each parent/carer who condoned (or was responsible for the child) during the period of unauthorised absence for which the fine has been issued. For each case of

unauthorised absence the school or Hampshire County Council will decide whether a Penalty Notice is issued **to one or more parent/carers** for each child. **N.B** This could mean four penalty notices for a family with two siblings both with unauthorised absence for holiday i.e. one PN for each child to each parent

Each penalty notice carries a fine of £60 if paid within 21 days of the penalty notice being posted. If the fine is not paid within 21 days the Penalty is automatically increased to £120 if paid within 28 days. If the fine remains unpaid the Hampshire County Council will consider prosecution for the non-attendance. Payment methods are detailed on the Penalty Notices themselves. Penalties are to be paid to Hampshire County Council and revenue resulting from payment of Penalties is used by the County Council to help cover the costs of issuing Penalty Notices and/or the cost of prosecuting recipients who do not pay.

For further information parents/carers can request a leaflet from their school and should visit Hampshire County Councils website at:

<http://www3.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/attendance-guidance-for-parents/possible-penalties.htm>

7 LEAVERS

7.1 Leavers

If your child is leaving school parents are asked to:

- Give the school comprehensive information about their plans including any date of a move and your new address and telephone numbers, your child's new education provider and the start date when known. This should be submitted to our school in writing.
- If pupils leave and we do not have the above information, then your child is considered to be a 'Child Missing in Education'. This requires schools and Local Authorities to then carry out investigations to try and locate your child, which includes liaising with Children's Services, the Police and other agencies. By giving us the above information, these investigations can be avoided.

7.2 Gypsy Roma Traveller Showman and Showman families

For further advice and guidance on Attendance & GRT and Showman see County Guidance at: <http://documents.hants.gov.uk/childrens-services/HIAS/Promotingpupilattendanceandrecordingabsence-Section6.pdf>

Further support & Guidance is available from Hampshire's EMTAS Service.

Absence of a child from a traveller family that has left the area may be authorised if the absence is for **work purposes only** and it is believed that the family intends to return. To ensure the continuity of learning for Traveller children, dual registration is allowed. That means that a school cannot remove a Traveller child from the school roll while they are travelling. When the Traveller is away the home school holds the place open and records the absence as authorised through the T code. Distance Learning packs for traveller children are not an alternative to attendance at school.

7.3 Absence through child participation in Public Performances, including theatre, film or TV work & Modelling.

For further advice and guidance on child employment and performance licenses visit Hantsweb at

<http://www3.hants.gov.uk/childrens-services/childrenandyoungpeople/child-employment.htm>

Parents of a child performer can seek leave of absence from school for their child to take part in a performance. They must contact the Head teacher to discuss the nature and frequency of the work, whether the child has a valid performance licence and whether education will be provided by the employer during any future leave of absence. Any absence recorded as part of a child's participation in a public performance is recorded as C an authorised absence.

7.4. Absence through competing at regional, county or national level for Sport.

Parents of able sportsmen and women can seek leave of absence from school for their child to take part in a regional, county, national and international events and competitions. It is however, down to the Headteacher's discretion whether to authorise this and they will wish to discuss with you the nature and frequency of the absence and how learning will continue if absence occurs. Permission for your child to leave early or arrive late to attend coaching and training sessions are also at the discretion of the Head teacher and are not likely to be approved if it is a regular event, unless the sports club or association are providing an education tutor as part of their coaching.

Study Leave

We believe that pupils' needs are best met if they attend school every day in the period leading up to examinations. No study leave will be granted during this period, therefore, and pupils / students will be expected to attend school in the usual way. A bespoke timetable will be provided for the Year 11 pupils to ensure they get the most from this revision period for their GCSE examinations. Study leave will only be granted to Year 11 pupils / students during the time of the GCSE examination period. Should any pupils / students wish to attend school (or should their parents wish them to) on the days and at times when they are not sitting examinations, arrangements will be made for them to do so. The school will work within the legal requirements of:

- Study leave should only be granted to Year 11 pupils and never to those in other year groups;
- It should never exceed 15 school days in a year and is most appropriately granted during the examination period itself, ie not before the beginning of that period;
- It should always be granted sparingly taking account of an individual pupil's / student's ability to manage and benefit from unsupervised study;
- Any pupil has the right to attend school during study leave and a parent has the right to insist he/she does so;

- Any sessions given to pupils as study leave has a statistical meaning of authorised absence (coded S as it is not an 'approved educational activity') and should be recorded and reported on by the school as such.

7.5 Teenage Pregnancy

Support will be directed by the key worker to keeping a pupil in school and wherever possible her return to full time education as soon as possible after the birth. A pupil who becomes pregnant should be allowed no more than 18 weeks authorised absence to cover the time immediately before and after the birth of the child. After that time, any absence should be treated as unauthorised.

8 RECORD PRESERVATION

8.1 School Registers

School registers are legal documents. We will ensure compliance with attendance regulations by keeping attendance records for at least 3 years. Computer registers will be preserved as electronic back-ups.

Appendices

The Law

The Education Act 1996 Part 1, Section 7 states:

The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable-

- [a] To his age, ability and aptitude and
- [b] To any special needs he may have.

either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

For educational purposes the term parent is used to include those that have parental responsibility and/or those that have the day to day care of the child.

The legislation that appertains to children who are of compulsory school age and are registered at school is contained within this Act.

Part V1 Section 444 contains the details of when an offence is committed if a child fails to attend school.

Register and Admission Roll keeping.

The legal requirements are found in: The Education [Pupil Registration] (England) Regulations 2006

Guidance documents on attendance.

The following DfE documents are used to guide attendance recording.

Absence and Attendance codes (Guidance for Schools and Local Authorities)

Keeping Pupil Registers (Guidance on applying the Education Pupil Registration Regulations)

These and other guidance documents are available on the DfE website

Hampshire County Council Guidance is available on Hantsweb