

ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY POLICY

Aims

At Tunbridge Wells Girls' Grammar School (TWGGS) we are committed to the continuous raising of achievement of all our pupils. We aim to provide a stimulating and supportive environment where individual needs and abilities are recognised and all are encouraged to develop to their full potential. Excellent attendance is crucial for pupils to reach their full potential and benefit from the opportunities presented to them, and any problems that impede full attendance must be identified and addressed as speedily as possible. We aim for maximum attendance and punctuality for all our pupils, with absence and lateness only for unavoidable reasons. Poor attendance undermines educational attainment and progress and sometimes puts pupils at risk by facilitating anti-social behaviour. We strive to promote an ethos and culture which encourage excellent attendance and where each pupil will feel valued, supported and secure. We aim to build and maintain effective partnerships between the school and its parental body, external support agencies and the wider community. The Governors, Headteacher and Staff, in partnership with parents have a duty to promote full attendance

Roles and Responsibilities

Pupils

- Attend all their lessons on time, ready to learn
- Give their form tutor a note from their parents to explain any absence (as appropriate)
- Follow school procedures for signing in and out and if they arrive late
- Ensure they make up work they have missed through absence

Parents

- Have a legal duty to ensure that their child attends school and arrives on time
- Encourage their children to attend school every day that school is open
- Should contact reception by phone on 01892 520902 or via email - reception@twggs.kent.sch.uk before 10.00am whenever their child is not able to attend school. This is essential for safeguarding
- Regularly update the school and inform the school when their child is returning from absence
- Send a note to the Form Tutor on their child's return
- Avoid making medical/dental appointments for their children during school hours whenever possible
- Should not take their children out of school during term time for holidays, other than in the most exceptional (authorised) circumstances.

Form Tutors

- Ensure registers are completed accurately and according to school procedures
- Promote the importance of punctuality and attendance
- Follow up absence notes when pupils return
- Identify issues relating to pupil's attendance and punctuality
- Contact parents to discuss issues relating to their child's attendance and punctuality
- Monitor lateness and to address it in conjunction with the relevant Director of Achievement
- Apply the appropriate rewards and sanctions relating to attendance and punctuality

Teachers

- Be aware of lateness and absences and notify Reception/Pastoral Staff if truancy is suspected
- Provide an ethos, which places a high value on regular attendance and good punctuality
- Set a good example in matters relating to their own attendance and punctuality
- Complete lesson by lesson attendance for all pupils

Directors of Achievement

- Analyse absence and lateness data provided by the Receptionist and Deputy Headteacher and to take action as necessary to address absence/lateness issues
- Review attendance with the Deputy Headteacher at half termly intervals in order to identify any problems

- Liaise with Receptionist and Deputy Headteacher over issues of persistent absence and lateness that have not been addressed
- Ensure that work is collected and sent home for girls in cases of extended absence
- Ensure pupils are rewarded for excellent attendance through certificates

Receptionist

- Collect and record pupil attendance and absence data, and ensure that it is up to date
- Enter the appropriate attendance code (See National Attendance Codes)
- If no reason for absence has been provided, contact parents by telephone
- Ask parents what kind of sickness their child is suffering from
- Remind tutors/ pupils of outstanding absence notes
- Support staff in the use of electronic registration systems
- Support the Directors of Achievement and Deputy Headteacher in the monitoring and review of pupil absence/ lateness
- Generate letters home when there is poor punctuality and attendance, or excellent attendance

Deputy Headteacher

- Liaise with the Receptionist, Pastoral Support and Directors of Achievement to monitor attendance
- Work with Pastoral Support to liaise with the Educational Welfare Officer and other external agencies with respect to attendance
- Receive weekly reports on pupils who have been identified as causing concern and take appropriate action
- Implement and update the school's attendance policy; ensure it is adopted and made known to all new staff

Pastoral Support

- Work closely with the Deputy Headteacher and Directors of Achievement in monitoring attendance
- Provide support and reintegration to school when a child has been absent
- Where the level of absence has not improved and there are unauthorised absences, the school will make a referral to the KCC Inclusion and Attendance Service using the Digital Front Door. If it is not clear a referral to the Service is appropriate, the school will consult with the Local Authority School Liaison Officer for advice
- For the cases that require intensive family support, the school may make an Early Help Notification

SLT

- Ensure the registration and off-roll procedures are conducted in accordance with statutory requirements
- Ensure that attendance returns are submitted to the DfE as required, and regularly monitor the effective usage of the school's registration system
- Designate a senior member of staff with oversight and responsibility for attendance, with clear lines of responsibility throughout the school
- Discuss persistent absentees at least termly
- Ensure that staff complete lesson and session registers and are accountable for accurate record keeping

Governors

- Ensure that the school has a current attendance policy and that it is shared with parents via the website
- As appropriate, discuss attendance rates and persistent absence rates
- Ensure that school registers are kept in accordance with the law

Children Missing Education

No child should be removed from the school roll without consultation between the Headteacher and the Inclusion and Attendance Service when appropriate. Please see the circumstances below:-

Where a child is missing from education, Local Authority guidance will be followed, by completing a Child Missing Education referral for the following circumstances:-

- If the whereabouts of the child is unknown and the school has failed to locate her/ him
- The family has notified the school that they are leaving the area but no Common Transfer Form (pupil file) has been requested by another school

Encouraging good attendance

Pastoral staff will use target setting with individual pupils to encourage high standards of attendance and punctuality

The school works closely with parents and use the strong home-school links already established whenever there is a concern about attendance or punctuality. Parents are informed of their child's attendance rate in their annual written report.

When there are concerns about the absence or punctuality record of a pupil (95-100% attendance), the class teacher or form tutor should investigate and notify the relevant Director of Achievement of concerns, and/or contact parents if appropriate. Where attendance is between 90-95% a letter is sent home, and meetings with parents may take place. With attendance below 90%, actions will be accelerated. Where the level of absence has not improved and there are unauthorised absences, the school will make a referral to the KCC Inclusion and Attendance Service using the Digital Front Door. If it is not clear a referral to the service is appropriate, the school will consult with the Local Authority School Liaison Officer for advice. For the cases that require intensive family support, the school may make an Early Help Notification. In the last resort, parents/carers may be referred for penalty enforcement

Holidays

There is growing concern about the amount of time lost by pupils due to family holidays in term time and the disruption it causes to their learning. Regular attendance at school is essential and vital to any pupil's progress. Best attendees are usually the highest achievers. As from 1st September 2013, new regulations came into force which stated that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. This means that no authorised absence will usually be granted for family holidays. If any parents choose to take their child on a holiday during term time, they risk the repercussions of an unauthorised absence which could include the potential issuing of fines under a penalty notice (See Appendix 1).

Authorising Absence

Only the Headteacher can authorise absence using a consistent approach. The Headteacher is not obliged to accept a parent's explanation. A letter or telephone message from a parent does not in itself authorise an absence. If absences are not authorised, parents will be notified.

If no explanation is received, absences will not be authorised.

Absence (for example leave for holidays) during term time can only be approved in exceptional circumstances (See Appendix 1). The following reasons are some examples of absence that will not be authorised:

- Persistent nonspecific illness e.g. poorly/unwell
- Absence of siblings if one child is ill
- Oversleeping
- Inadequate clothing/uniform
- Confusion over school dates
- Medical/dental appointments of more than half a day without very good reasons
- Child's/family birthday
- Shopping trip
- Family holidays (with some rare exceptions)

Persistent unauthorised absence (10% or more of the school year) may result in an AS1 referral to the Local Authority School Liaison Officer for consideration of prosecution. The school will follow procedures prior to referral and parents will be notified in writing.

When a referral is made, the child's Registration Certificate, copies of all letters sent to parents and minutes of any meetings need to be attached to the completed AS1 referral form with any other relevant information.

Local Authority Action may include:-

- Attendance Improvement Meeting
- Home visits
- Liaison with other agencies
- Fast Track to Prosecution

Punctuality

Punctuality to school is vital. While understanding that lateness can sometimes be caused by circumstances outside of the pupil's control, for example a late bus, pupils and families need to take responsibility for ensuring that they are on time to school

Medical issues – please also refer to the Medical Needs Policy

Where a pupil misses more than half the morning or afternoon because of essential medical appointments, this will be recorded as “authorised absence” in the register.

If a pupil is persistently absent from school but this is backed up by medical evidence, the school can amend their timetable accordingly. This should only take place for a period of 8 weeks, with a plan to improve attendance from then on. If the medical condition continues, as long as there is the relevant evidence the school will work around this to support the pupil in the best way possible

Monitoring

TWGGGS expects pupils to be in school every day that the school is open for pupils. If a pupil's attendance is a cause for concern, this will be discussed at pastoral meetings and a plan to improve their attendance will be put in place.

SLT will review overall school attendance figures on a termly basis and attendance will be discussed at the Community and Communications Governors meeting three times each year

- **Registration codes – see Appendix 2**
- **Letters to parents – see Appendix 3**
- **Guidance for Form Tutors and Staff covering registration – see Appendix 4**
- **Attendance folder to be kept at reception**

Review

This policy will be reviewed by the Deputy Headteacher every 3 years

Appendix 1

Penalty Notices Proceedings for Poor Attendance

Penalty Notices are issued in accordance with Kent County Council's Education Penalty Notices Code of Conduct effective from January 2016 and revised in April 2017.

- A Penalty Notice can only be issued in cases of absence for 10 or more half day sessions (5 school days) without authorisation during any 100 possible school sessions or period of 50 days of schooling – these do not need to be consecutive.
- A Penalty Notice can also be issued where an excluded child is found in a public place during school hours.
- After the appropriate request for a Penalty Notice is received, the KCC Inclusion and Attendance Service will issue a warning letter setting out 15 school days during which no unauthorised absence is to be recorded
- If unauthorised absence is recorded during the 15 day period a Penalty Notice will be issued (one per parent per child)

Exceptional circumstances could include:

- Service personnel returning from a tour of duty abroad where it is evidenced the parent will not be in receipt of any leave in the near future that coincides with school holidays.
- Where an absence from school is recommended by a health professional as part of a parent's or child's rehabilitation from a medical or emotional issue.
- The death or terminal illness of a person close to the family.
- To attend a wedding or funeral of a person close to the family.
- Any strong personal reasons why a family might need to take a child away from school for a short break.

Any examples provided are illustrative rather than exhaustive. It is acceptable to take a pupil's previous record of attendance into account when the school is making decisions. The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are rare, significant, unavoidable and short. And by 'unavoidable' it implies that an event could not reasonably be scheduled at another time. It is important to note that Headteachers can agree the absence of a child in exceptional circumstances and this discretion can be used also to determine the length of the authorised absence.

Where Penalty Notices are imposed, the regulations state that the penalty will be £120 to be paid within 28 days, reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days. Penalty Notices are issued to each parent of each child. Failure to pay the penalty in full by the end of the 28 day period will result in prosecution by the Local Authority.

Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 says that parents are **guilty** of an offence of failing to secure regular attendance at school unless they can prove that the child was absent:

- with leave (the school has given permission)
- due to sickness or any unavoidable cause (the sickness or unavoidable cause must relate to the child, not the parent)
- religious observance
- failure by the Local Authority to provide transport

In law, these are the only acceptable reasons for a child being absent from school.

The Headteacher may authorise absence in "exceptional circumstances" but this must be requested in advance and agreement to each request is at the discretion of the Headteacher, acting on behalf of the Governing Body (Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006). Each case will be judged on its merits and the Headteacher's decision is final. Once the decision not to authorise leave is taken, it cannot be authorised retrospectively.

If the absence is not authorised and the holiday is taken anyway, the case may be referred to the Inclusion and Attendance Service who may issue a Penalty Notice to each parent for each child taken out of school.

Failure to pay the penalty in full by the end of the 28 day period will result in prosecution by the Local Authority.

Appendix 2

/	Present (AM)
\	Present (PM)
B	Educated off site (not Dual Reg)
C	Other authorised circumstances
D	Dual registration (attending other establishment)
E	Excluded (no alternative provision made)
F	Extended family holiday (agreed)
G	Family holiday (not agreed or days in excess)
H	Family holiday (agreed)
I	Illness (not medical/dental appointments)
J	Interview
L	Late (before registers closed)
M	Medical/Dental appointments
N	No reason yet provided for absence
O	Unauthorised absence (not covered by other code)
P	Approved sporting activity
R	Religious observance
S	Study leave
T	Traveller absence
U	Late (after registers closed)
V	Educational visit or trip
W	Work experience
#	School closed to staff and pupils
Y	Enforced closure
X	Non-compulsory school age absence
Z	Pupil not on roll
-	All should attend/No mark recorded

Appendix 3 – Absence letters

1. Dear «salutation»

Your daughter «chosen_name» in class «year_reg» was absent from school on the date/s below, and her absence/s have yet to be accounted for. The school's absence policy requires a telephone call or e-mail (reception@twggs.kent.sch.uk) before 10am on the first day of absence. This must be followed by a written note (which may be in her planner) signed by a parent/guardian on her return. Until we have a signed letter from you, we are unable to authorise her absence, and would therefore request that you indicate below the reason/s for absence and sign in the space provided.

Date/s of non-attendance

Reason (illness/hospital or medical appt.)

«periods_of_absence»

Signature

Thank you for your co-operation in this matter.

Yours sincerely,

Receptionist

2. Dear «salutation»

I am writing to you again because your daughter «chosen_name» in class «year_reg» was absent from school on the date/s below, and her absence/s have still to be accounted for. The school's absence policy requires a telephone call or e-mail (reception@twggs.kent.sch.uk) before 10am on the first day of absence. This must be followed by a written note (which may be in her planner) signed by a parent/guardian on her return. Until we have a signed letter from you, we are unable to authorise her absence, and would therefore request that you indicate below the reason/s for absence and sign in the space provided.

Date/s of non-attendance

Reason (illness/hospital or medical appt.)

«periods_of_absence»

Signature

Thank you for your co-operation in this matter.

Yours sincerely,

Receptionist

3. Dear «salutation»

Re: «chosen_name» «year_reg»

I understand that Mrs Holloway, Receptionist, has written to you on two previous occasions requesting authorisation for your daughter's absence on the dates listed below. May I take this opportunity to remind you that failure to respond to these requests will result in the absences being recorded as unauthorised. I would be grateful if you could take the time to complete and return the form so that we can authorise the absences and keep our records up to date.

Date/s of non-attendance

Reason (illness/hospital or medical appt.)

«periods_of_absence»

Signature

Thank you for your co-operation in this matter.

Yours sincerely,

Director of Achievement

4. **KS3** - Dear «salutation»,

Re: «chosen_forename» «chosen_surname» - «reg»

In a review of attendance, it has come to my attention that since the beginning of the academic year, your daughter has an attendance rate of «percentage_attendance»%.

I am sure that you are aware, attendance at school is a legal requirement and extended periods of absence, albeit one block or odd days, can have a detrimental effect on a pupil's learning. You may be interested to know that the school average is consistently above 95%.

I am sure you share my concern and would wish to work with the school to improve your daughter's attendance. If there is any particular reason that we are unaware of please do not hesitate to contact us.

Please can I remind you to contact the school on the first day of absence before 10.00am to inform us of the reason for any absence.

Yours sincerely,

Director of Achievement Key Stage 3

5. **KS4 before study leave** - Dear «salutation»,

Re: «chosen_forename» «chosen_surname» - «reg»

In a review of attendance, it has come to my attention that since the beginning of the academic year, your daughter has an attendance rate of «percentage_attendance»%.

I am sure that you are aware, attendance at school is a legal requirement and extended periods of absence, albeit one block or odd days, can have a detrimental effect on a pupil's learning. You may be interested to know that the school average is consistently above 95%.

I am sure you share my concern and would wish to work with the school to improve your daughter's attendance. If there is a particular reason for your daughter's absence that we are unaware of, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Please can I remind you to contact the school on the first day of absence before 10.00am to inform us of the reason for any absence.

Yours sincerely,

Director of Achievement Key Stage 4

6. **KS4 after study leave** - Dear «salutation»,

Re: «chosen_forename» «chosen_surname» - «reg»

In a review of attendance, it has come to my attention that since the beginning of the academic year, your daughter has an attendance rate of «percentage_attendance»%. Despite some of this final total being accounted for by study leave, your daughter is still not reaching the expected levels of attendance.

I am sure that you are aware, attendance at school is a legal requirement and extended periods of absence, albeit one block or odd days, can have a detrimental effect on a pupil's learning. You may be interested to know that the school average is consistently above 95%.

I am sure you share my concern and would wish to work with the school to improve your daughter's attendance. If there is any particular reason that we are unaware of please do not hesitate to contact us.

Please can I remind you to contact the school on the first day of absence before 10.00am to inform us of the reason for any absence.

Yours sincerely,

Director of Achievement Key Stage 4

7. **Sixth Form** - Dear «salutation»,

Re: «chosen_forename» «chosen_surname» - «reg»

We are legally bound to review attendance and since the beginning of the academic year, our records show that your daughter's attendance has now fallen to «percentage_attendance»%. The school average is consistently above 95%.

We are aware that there may be unavoidable reasons for your daughter's absence, eg. long-term illness or medical treatment. However, we are required to inform you of your daughter's current rate of attendance.

If we have not been updated on medical, pastoral, or personal reasons causing absence from school please do contact me to discuss the matter on 01892 559168 or on sixthform@twggs.kent.sch.uk

Clearly, when lessons are missed, particularly in the Sixth Form, it is very difficult for your daughter to catch up on class work and discussion notes, which does have a real impact on her understanding and progress at A Level. Please be assured that our aim is to provide the best support for your daughter during her time in Sixth Form, to help her achieve her personal goals.

Yours sincerely,

Head of Sixth Form

Appendix 4 Guidance for Form Tutors and Staff covering Registration

Completing Attendance Registers

- Electronic registers are to be taken at 8.45 am and 1.35 pm
- On mornings where a whole-school assembly takes place, pupils are to be registered very promptly in form rooms and then go immediately to assembly unless an arrangement has been made
- If a pupil is not present in the form room by the close of registration, indicate this with a letter 'N'. **Registers close at 8.50 a.m. and 1.40 p.m.** and should be **saved** at that time. Anyone arriving after that in the morning or afternoon respectively is late. Please ensure you are consistent in your application of the closing time for the registers. It is only by being consistent across the school for all pupils that we are seen to be fair
- Pupils who arrive at school after 8.50 a.m. in the morning and 1.40 p.m. in the afternoon should sign in at reception. Even if pupils arrive in your form room after 8.50 a.m., they must still sign in
- Pupils with peripatetic music lessons should always sign in at reception if they miss registration
- Return register folders to reception after morning registration by 9.10 a.m.
- For pupils arriving between 8.50 and 9.30 a.m. a late mark will be recorded by the Receptionist. Any pupil signing in after 9.30 a.m. or 1.45 p.m. is classified as absent and a note is required from parents. The only exception is where there is known to be a major transport failure
- Absence notes. When an absence note is brought in (should be the day the pupil returns), the tutor should initial and date the note. Ensure the pupil's name and form are clearly on the note. Put the note in the register folder and on the computer
- An email or telephone call to reception still needs backing up by a note from the parents. It is the Form Tutor's responsibility to ensure a note is received. Where an email or telephone call is received, the Tutor or Receptionist will record it in SIMS. The Receptionist will remove signed notes from the register folder on a regular basis
- If pupils do not bring in a note by the **second day after they return**, this should be indicated to the Receptionist. If an absence letter is not received, a letter will be sent to parents from the Director of Achievement. If a satisfactory letter is not received, the absence will become unauthorised.

Appendix 5 Absence Protocol

Receptionist

- The Receptionist will endeavour to contact parents of all pupils absent each day if no notification has been received from parents

Parents

- Parents should e-mail – reception@twggs.kent.sch.uk or telephone the school for any absence on the morning of the pupil's first day of absence, ideally before 10.00am. Parents should ensure that any email or telephone call to the school office concerning an absence is backed up by a letter

Pupils

- Pupils should ensure they bring in an **absence note** on the day they return. When this is received, the Form Tutor will make a note onto the electronic register to indicate this

Form tutor

- If the absence extends beyond one week, or if a pupil has a higher than usual rate of absence, or a regular pattern of absence, the Tutor must **inform the Director of Achievement** who will investigate further

Authorising an absence:

Absence is authorised by the school, not the parent; the production of an absence note does not lead to automatic authorisation. Absences for illness, medical appointments, music exams, funerals, etc, should be authorised by the Director of Achievement/Deputy Headteacher/ Headteacher initialling the absence note.

Absences for other reasons, including family outings, social occasions, holidays etc.

The Headteacher informs all parents on Induction Evening that absences for holidays or social occasions will only rarely be authorised. Requests for pupil absence during term time should be made by email or letter to the Headteacher. Any requests granted must be noted by the Receptionist /Admin Support and then passed on to the relevant Director of Achievement. If necessary, the Director of Achievement will check the pupil's attendance before indicating their approval and will pass on the letter to the Headteacher for approval. If the Headteacher does not approve the absence, then the parents will be informed of this. In some cases, sanctions may then be taken against the parents if the pupil is still taken out of school; these will be in line with Local Authority guidelines and could include Penalty Notices.

Monitoring of attendance

The Receptionist will provide the following data for the Directors of Achievement to take action on

- 1) Each week a list of percentage attendance for each pupil in the year group, with pupils with absences less than 90% identified
- 2) Each fortnight the Receptionist prints off lates and high rates of illness for Directors of Achievement
- 3) The Receptionist provides Tutors with a list of unexplained absences twice a week. Tutors reply to the Receptionist.
- 4) At the end of each term the Receptionist compiles a late letter for every girl who has had 10% lates. This is given to the Director of Achievement
- 5) At the end of every other term, a low attendance letter is sent home
- 6) Each week the Receptionist sends a letter to chase any absentees outstanding. Next, a chaser letter for any letters outstanding for two weeks. Then, a final letter for those letters outstanding for three weeks. If we still have not received any information the Receptionist telephones parents for a verbal reason

The Director of Achievement will take appropriate action on this data. This could include the following:-

- Speaking with the pupil to discuss reasons for absence/lateness
- Contact with the parent to discuss reasons for absence/lateness
- In liaison with the Deputy Headteacher agreeing a formal 'notice to improve' for the parents
- Refer the situation to the Educational Welfare Officer

Kent School Referral Pathway – Pupil Attendance

