



Attendance and Truancy Policy

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Statement of intent

Tor School's 'attendance motto' is "learning, resilience, success."

We believe that good attendance is essential

- in order to facilitate good teaching and learning
- to unlock increased levels of academic success for each learner
- as a way to both build and express the kinds of resilience that will serve our learners well in their future lives

To this end, we are committed to:

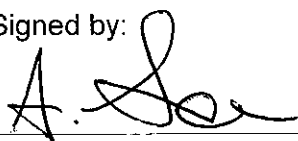
- promoting and modelling good attendance.
- ensuring equality and fairness of treatment for all.
- intervening early and working with other agencies to, first, ensure the health and safety of our pupils and, second, to help them to attend school more regularly
- rewarding regular attendance.
- following the framework set in section 7 of the Education Act 1996 which 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 school or otherwise".

Signed by:



Headteacher

Date:

2/10/19



Chair of governors

Date:

2/10/19

1. Legal framework

1.1. This policy has due regard to the following legislation and guidance, including, but not limited to:

- The Education Act 1996
- The Equality Act 2010
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (as amended)
- DfE (2016) School Attendance Advice

1.2. All staff must ensure they adhere to and implement the requirements of any equality legislation.

2. Definitions

2.1. Tor School defines “absence” as either:

- Arrival at school after the register has closed.
- Not attending school for any reason.

2.2. Tor School defines an “authorised absence” as:

- An absence for sickness for which the school has granted leave.
- Medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall during school time for which the school has granted leave.
- Religious or cultural observances for which the school has granted leave.
- An absence due to a family emergency.

2.3. Tor School defines an “unauthorised absence” as:

- Parents keeping children away from school unnecessarily or without reason.
- Truancy before or during the school day.
- Absences which have not been properly explained.
- Arrival at school after the register has closed.
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays.
- Day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed.
- Leaving school for no reason during the day.

2.4. Tor School follows the current Department of Education guidance which defines “persistent absenteeism (PA)” as:

- Missing 10 per cent or more of schooling across the year for any reason.

3. Key roles and responsibilities

- 3.1. The Management Committee has overall responsibility for monitoring the implementation of the attendance policy and procedures of Tor School.
- 3.2. The Management Committee has overall responsibility for ensuring that the attendance policy, as written, does not discriminate on any grounds, including, but not limited to, ethnicity/national origin, culture, religion, gender, disability or sexual orientation.
- 3.3. The Management Committee has responsibility for handling complaints regarding this policy as outlined in the school's Complaints Procedures Policy.
- 3.4. The Headteacher is responsible for leading the implementation and management of the attendance policy and procedures of Tor School.
- 3.5. Tor School will employ an Education & Family Support Worker (EFSW) who will take operational responsibility for the day-to-day delivery of the school's attendance policy and procedures, and who will contribute to the strategic development of the school in this area.
- 3.6. Staff, including teachers, support staff and volunteers will be responsible for following the attendance policy, and for ensuring pupils do so too. They will also be responsible for ensuring the policy is implemented fairly and consistently.
- 3.7. Staff, including teachers, support staff and volunteers will be responsible for modelling good attendance behaviour and implementing the agreed policy.
- 3.8. Designated members of staff will take the attendance register on Schoolpod at the start of each school day and at the start of each afternoon session. As well as the start of each lesson.
- 3.9. The school will ensure that every pupil has access to full-time education as quickly as possible when they arrive with us. Many of our pupils have been absent from school for considerable periods of time. Sometimes a full timetable can be problematic in terms of health and social needs. We endeavour to move to full time as quickly as possible.
- 3.10. The school will inform the LA of any pupil being deleted from the admission and attendance registers if they:
 - Are being educated from home.
 - No longer live within a reasonable distance of the registered school.
 - Have an authorised medical note.
 - Are in custody for a period of more than four months and the proprietor does not reasonably believe they will be returning.
 - Have been permanently excluded.

- 3.11. Tor School will maintain close links with Education Safeguarding, informing them of any pupil who fails to attend school regularly, or who falls below designated attendance thresholds.
- 3.12. Parents will be expected to take responsibility for the attendance of their child/children during term-time.
- 3.13. Parents will be expected to promote good attendance and ensure that pupils attend school every day.
- 3.14. Pupils are responsible for their own attendance at school and any agreed activities throughout the school year.
- 3.15. All pupils are responsible for their punctuality to lessons.

4. Training of staff

- 4.1. At Tor School, we recognise that early intervention can prevent bad behaviour. As such, we seek to embody and develop a coherent, effective approach to identifying potentially at-risk pupils and to intervening successfully to improve pupil welfare, behaviour and attendance; we expect all colleagues to be an active part of this.
- 4.2. New teachers and support staff will be briefed on our Attendance and Truancy Policy and procedures as part of their new starter induction.
- 4.3. We will periodically update existing teachers and support staff on attendance policy and procedure as this develops. We will inform all colleagues about our attendance statistics and trends, anticipating that the pupil-centered professional conversations that this prompts will help us to maintain a qualitative as well as a quantitative approach to attendance management.

5. Pupil expectations

- 5.1. Pupils will be expected to attend school every day.
- 5.2. Tor School expects all pupils to attend lessons punctually.

6. Absence procedures 'on the day'.

- 6.1. Parents are required to contact the school as soon as possible on the first day of any absence. The school office is usually open from 8:00am on school days.
- 6.2. Alternatively, parents may call into school and report to the admin office where arrangements will be made to speak to a member of staff.
- 6.3. A phone call/text message/email will be made to the parent of any child who has not reported their absence on the first day that they do not attend school.
- 6.4. The school will always follow up any absences in order to:

- ascertain the reason for the absence.
- ensure that proper safeguarding action is being taken.
- identify whether the absence is authorised or not.
- identify the correct code to use to enter the data onto the School Census System.

6.5. In the case of repeated absence, arrangements will be made for parents to speak to the EFSW, tutor or a senior member of staff.

7. Promoting attendance

7.1 Tor School will actively promote the value of school attendance to both pupils and parents, using tutor time, school website, regular individualised letters to parents/ carers, text messaging etc.

7.2 We use a number of different intervention strategies, graded 'Green', 'Amber' and 'Red':

- 'Green' – strategies used to reward and further encourage good, excellent or improved attendance.
- 'Amber' – strategies used to inform and encourage pupils and parents in situations where attendance is, or is at risk of becoming, a matter of concern
- 'Red' – intervention strategies used where attendance is a matter of serious concern.

7.3 'Green' strategies include:

Attendance Certificates / Lottery – will regularly reward those pupils who have managed 100% of expected attendance across a limited time period (usually 2 to 4 weeks); certificates will be sent to all pupils achieving the designated attendance, letters will inform parents, and all those eligible will be entered into a draw to receive a shopping voucher or other prize. Covering letters will, where possible, link good attendance to recent 'behavioural positives' and/or success in learning.

Positive texts – will be sent on Friday afternoons to 100% attenders over one or more weeks (esp. to those pupils who are thereby working towards eligibility for a Certificate/ lottery draw), and to 'noticeable improvers' who are making real progress towards better attendance. Text messages will, where possible, link good or improved attendance to recent 'behavioural positives' and/or success in learning.

7.4 'Amber' strategies include:

Pre-emptive texts – where relevant, particularly where parents or carers are struggling to ensure attendance and/or maintain appropriate contact with the school, a text will be sent in the morning reminding parents of the pupil's timetable for that day (i.e. the learning

which will be missed if absent), and reminding the parent to be proactive about contacting the school.

Reminding parents of statutory intervention options open to the school and the local authority, and inviting parents or carers to meet with EFSW, tutor and/or a member of SLT alongside the student, in order to look at how we can work together to improve attendance.

7.5 'Red' strategies include:

Requiring medical evidence for any further sickness absence, once certain thresholds have been reached.

Attendance Clinics – at which we meet with the parent or carer in order to look at how we can take urgent action to secure improved attendance, with a short-term attendance target then notified to the parent or carer in writing

Making a formal referral to Education Safeguarding, with a view to possible Parenting Order, Education Supervision Order, School Attendance Order, Penalty Notice etc. or, in extremis, prosecution

8. Contact information

- 8.1. Parents must provide accurate and up-to-date contact details.
- 8.2. Parents are responsible for updating the school if the details change.

9. Attendance register

- 9.1. The designated staff members will take the attendance register at the start of each school day and at the start of the afternoon session. This register will record whether the pupil is:
 - Present.
 - Absent.
 - Attending an approved educational visit.
 - Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.
- 9.2. Tor School will use the national attendance codes to enable the school to record and monitor attendance and absence in a consistent way. The following codes will be used:
 - / = Present in the morning
 - \ = Present in the afternoon
 - L = Late arrival before the register has closed

- C = Authorised absence
- E = Excluded but no alternative provision made
- H = Authorised holiday
- I = Illness
- M = Medical or dental appointments
- R = Religious observance
- B = Off-site educational activity
- G = Unauthorised holiday
- O = Unauthorised absence
- U = Arrived after registration closed
- N = Reason not yet provided
- X = Not required to be in school
- S = Study leave
- T = Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence
- W = Work experience
- V = Educational visit or trip
- P = Participating in a supervised sporting activity
- J = At an interview with prospective employers, or another educational establishment
- D – Dual registered – at another educational establishment
- Y = Exceptional circumstances
- Z – Pupil not on admission register

9.3. Every entry into the attendance register will be preserved for three years.

10. Lateness

10.1. Punctuality is of the utmost importance.

10.2. The school day starts at 9.30am; pupils should be in their family room at this time.

10.3. Registers are marked by 9.45am; pupils will receive a late mark if they are not in their classroom by this time.

- 10.4. The register closes at 10:00am; pupils will receive a mark of absence if they do not attend school before this time.
- 10.5. Attendance after the register closes will receive a mark to show that they are on site, but will count as an absent mark.

11. Truancy

- 11.1. Truancy means any absence of part, or of all, of one or more days from school, during which the school has not been notified of the cause behind such absence.
- 11.2. All staff will be concerned about the regular attendance of pupils, and the importance of continuity in each child's learning.
- 11.3. Any pupil with permission to leave the school during the day must be signed out at reception and sign back in again on their return.
- 11.4. Immediate action will be taken when there are any concerns that a child might be truanting.
- 11.5. The following procedures will be taken in the event of a truancy:
 - In the first instance, a letter of warning will be sent to the parents of the pupil, informing them of the truancy and stating that any future occurrences could result in further action being taken.
 - If any further truancy occurs, then the school will consider issuing a penalty notice.
 - A penalty notice will be issued where there is overt truancy, inappropriate parentally-condoned absence, excessive holidays in term time and persistent late arrival at school.

12. Missing children

- 12.1. Pupils are not permitted to leave the school premises during the school day unless they have permission from a member of SLT. We will maintain good lines of communication with local police teams in order to proactively manage any risks arising from pupil absence and/or behaviour in the community.
- 12.2. The following procedures will be taken in the event of a pupil going missing during the school day:
 - The colleague who has noticed the missing pupil will inform the SLT immediately.
 - The office team will also be informed as they will act as a point of contact for receiving information regarding the search.

- 12.3. Available staff will begin a search of the area immediately outside of the school premises, and will take a mobile phone with them so they can be contacted.
- 12.4. If the pupil has not been found after 20 minutes, then the parents of the pupil will be notified.
- 12.5. If the parents have had no contact from the pupil, or if we have not been able to contact the parents, then we will take other steps to ascertain the pupil's whereabouts. This may include contacting third parties if reasonable (e.g. other family members if details available – or the pupil may have gone to a friend's house and the friend is also a pupil and thereby known to us etc), and/or contacting the police.
- 12.6. The teacher who was in charge of the lesson or activity during which the pupil went missing will log this on Schoolpod describing all circumstances leading up to the pupil going missing.
- 12.7. If the missing pupil has an allocated social worker, is a LAC, or has any special educational needs and/or disabilities, then the appropriate personnel will be informed.
- 12.8. When the pupil has been located or returns to the school site, members of staff will care for and talk to the pupil to ensure they are safe and well. Colleagues must notify the office team, who will then ensure that parents or carers are notified.
- 12.9. The headteacher will take the appropriate action to ensure the pupil understands they must not leave the premises, and sanctions will be issued if deemed necessary.

13. Term-time leave

- 13.1. At Tor School, our aim is to prepare pupils for their future lives and careers. With this in mind, we require parents to observe the school holidays as prescribed.
- 13.2. Leave during term time will only be authorised in exceptional circumstances, for example bereavement or serious illness.
- 13.3. Any requests for leave during term time will be considered on an individual basis and the pupil's previous attendance record will be taken into account.
- 13.4. If term time leave is not granted, taking a pupil out of school will be recorded as an unauthorised absence and may attract sanctions such as a penalty notice.

14. Religious observances

- 14.1. Tor School will take advice from local religious leaders of all faiths to establish the appropriate number of days required for religious festivals.
- 14.2. Parents must inform the school in advance if absences are required for days of religious observance.

- 14.3. The day(s) of absence must be exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong.

15. Appointments

- 15.1. As far as possible, parents should attempt to book medical and dental appointments outside of school hours.
- 15.2. Where this is not possible, a note and appointment card should be sent to the school.
- 15.3. If the appointment requires the pupil to leave during the school day, the pupil must be signed out by a parent.
- 15.4. Pupils must attend school before and after the appointment wherever possible.

16. Young carers

- 16.1. Tor School understands the difficulties young carers face, and will endeavour to identify young carers at the earliest opportunity from enrolment at the school, as well as throughout their time at the school.
- 16.2. Tor School takes a caring and flexible approach to the needs of young carers and each situation will be examined on a case-by-case basis, involving other agencies if appropriate.

17. Exceptional circumstances

- 17.1. When absence is due to exceptional circumstances, the 'Y' code will be used on the attendance register.
- 17.2. Exceptional circumstances include when a pupil is unable to attend because:
- The school is fully or partially closed.
 - Transport provided by the school or LA is not available and the pupil's home is not within walking distance.
 - There has been widespread disruption to travel services which has prevented the pupil from attending.
 - The pupil is in custody and will be detained for less than four months.
- 17.3. The use of the 'Y' code is collected in the school census for statistical purposes.

18. Ethos, monitoring and review

- 18.1. Tor School, as a Pupil Referral Unit, recognises that this presents a number of contextual challenges and opportunities. Challenges include:

Many of our pupils have previously struggled – and continue to struggle - with attendance. The overall absence rate for pupil referral

units in 2017/18 was 35.3% (latest available DfE figures), and the percentage of enrolments in pupil referral units who were persistent absentees was 76.1%.

Our pupil cohort is less stable than in most mainstream schools, which makes both relationship-building with families and like-for-like statistical monitoring of absence more of a challenge.

Where a pupil is, for a period of time, not able to attend school full-time, e.g. for health reasons, this also has statistical implications. Some pupils may be working towards a full-time timetable – or may have stepped away from attending full-time for a limited, agreed period – meaning that some pupils' timetables will change week by week.

Opportunities include:

Our pupil cohort is much smaller than in most mainstream schools, which makes it possible to deliver a more personalised response to families, in terms of seeking to work with them to improve pupil attendance.

- 18.2. With the above in mind, we have a regular process of monitoring and review in respect of attendance, and a number of different statistical measures we use. We have a regular schedule for contacting parents or carers about attendance, and we seek to use attendance data to notice relevant patterns and trends. This is summarised in Appendix A.
- 18.3. Attendance policy and procedures will be reviewed annually by the Headteacher.
- 18.4. Any changes made to the attendance policy and/or procedures will be communicated to all members of staff.

Appendix A- Objectives, Interventions & Monitoring

Attendance Aim

Our aim is, wherever possible, for each pupil to be on or to move towards a full-time timetable which they attend in full (100%).

Attendance Objectives

We recognise that many – if not most – of our pupil cohort will come to us having struggled to maintain attendance in mainstream schools. This struggle will often have expressed itself as persistent absenteeism (attendance at <90%, in many cases much lower). The overall absence rate for pupil referral units in 2017/18 was 35.3% (latest available DfE figures); we aspire to

help each pupil to significantly improve their attendance compared to their most recent attendance data from mainstream school

significantly outperform the national average for PRUs in terms of overall attendance.

This sets the context for the banding we use in order to monitor our attendance. We look regularly at which pupils fall into which of these attendance bands:

< 50%	85-89.9%
50-69.9%	90-94.9%
70-79.9%	95-100%
80-84.9%	

We aim for pupils struggling with attendance to move up through these attendance bands – both in terms of %attendance overall, and in terms of % of expected attendance (in terms of those pupils who may be on part-time timetables temporarily). In setting attendance targets for pupils to meet (e.g. in letters home or at either informal or Attendance Clinic meetings), we either set a target of

95%+ of expected attendance = good to excellent attendance, OR

90%+ of expected attendance = moving out of the DfE's "persistent absenteeism" category; please note, we would only set this target as an interim measure, if we believe that suggesting a 95% target outright would feel, for the moment, unachievable for a particular pupil or would harm our working relationship with that family

In no instance would we be setting a 'target' of less than 90% attendance for a pupil; to do so would be to send the wrong message, as we would be condoning persistent absenteeism.

Key Measures

%attendance	We track what % of a full-time timetable each pupil is attending.
%expected	We also track what % of a part-time timetable each pupil is attending.
%comparison	We compare each pupil's attendance at Tor School with their most recent %attendance at their most recent mainstream school.

Attendance Interventions

Our starting point for attendance interventions (based on %expected, and the bands described above) is as follows:

95-100%	<u>Congratulate & encourage</u> to maintain and to aim for 100% of expected.
90-94.9%	<u>Inform & encourage</u> to aim for and exceed 95%+, ideally 100% of expected.
85-89.9%	<u>Inform & ask</u> student, parent and tutor what could be done to improve on this level of attendance. Over a short time period, given our context, this could indicate a temporary setback that can be resolved with a tutorial/ pastoral approach.
80-84.9%	<u>Seek to meet with</u> student and parent to identify and address any factors which may be causing this problematic level of absence. We will wish to offer a level of 'supportive challenge' at this stage.
< 80%	<u>Involve SLT</u> in responding to this concerning level of absence (equivalent to more than one day per week). At this stage, absence may also be hitting other thresholds which would indicate a referral to Education Safeguarding.

The above interventions are subject to discussion at SLT, where summary attendance data will be presented on a 'quarter-term' basis (see below). There will, from time to time, be extenuating circumstances which cause us to take a different approach from that outlined above, in respect of any given level of absence.

Other Indicators

%bespoke	In expressing attendance figures to parents/ carers over short periods, we will sometimes quote a figure which disregards any fixed-term exclusions during the given
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time period; because these reflect decisions we have taken in accordance with our behaviour policy and procedures, they may distort underlying attendance trends and/or progress

Bradford factor

We will also track the Bradford factor of each pupil over the school year to date. The formula for calculating the Bradford factor is:

$$B = S^2 \times D, \text{ where:}$$

B = Bradford Factor

S = total number of spells (instances) of absence of a pupil over the year to date

D = total number of days of absence of the same pupil over the same period

The Bradford factor is a measure used in human resources in order to pinpoint problematic absence – the theory being that (for instance) 20 days' absence in a given year taken as 'odd days' due to non-specific coughs, colds etc may be more concerning than 20 days' absence in the same year caused by an overt, documented medical condition and taken as a four-week block.

Mon – Fri

We will track patterns of absence for each pupil (and for our cohort as a whole) across days of the week. Repeated absence on, for instance, a Monday or Thursday could indicate either a pupil/ family problem (e.g. a problem with being 'school-ready' after the weekend) or a problem with a particular day/ lesson.

Data & Monitoring Cycles

Weekly

Where possible, we aim to update the data above on a weekly basis in order to be pastorally responsive to attendance changes.

'Quarter terms' As a minimum, we ensure that the data above is available (discussed at SLT, available to tutors) on a 'quarter term' basis, i.e. in the middle and at the end of each of our six terms. During 2019-20, the schedule for this is as follows:

Tue 3 Sep – Fri 27 Sep (4 weeks)

Mon 30 Sep – Fri 25 Oct (4 weeks)

Mon 4 Nov – Fri 22 Nov (3 weeks)

Mon 25 Nov – Fri 20 Dec (4 weeks)

Mon 6 Jan – Fri 24 Jan (3 weeks)

Mon 27 Jan – Fri 14 Feb (3 weeks)
Mon 24 Feb – Fri 13 Mar (3 weeks)
Mon 16 Mar – Fri 3 Apr (3 weeks)

Mon 20 Apr – Fri 8 May (3 weeks)
Mon 11 May – Fri 22 May (2 weeks)
Mon 1 Jun – Fri 19 Jun (3 weeks)
Mon 22 Jun – Fri 17 Jul (4 weeks)

This schedule (1) allows us to be flexible and responsive in responding to trends (2) is motivational for pupils and parents, if attendance figures are quoted by the 'quarter term' instead of, or as well as, cumulatively, because quoted figures can then change substantially over the course of several weeks (3) allows us to compare 'like for like' across successive school years.

Annually

We are committed to monitoring attendance on an annual basis as a whole school, in order to observe and respond to trends and also to ensure that we are achieving or working towards the aims and objectives set out above.

