

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Statement of Intent

Tilstock CE Primary School is committed to the continuous raising of achievement of all our students. Regular attendance is essential if our students are to be successful and benefit from the opportunities offered to them.

Good attendance is fundamental to a successful and fulfilling school experience. We actively promote 100% attendance for all our students and we use a variety of weekly, termly and annual awards to promote good attendance and punctuality.

The Governors and Staff in partnership with parents have a duty to promote full attendance and our school will give a high priority to conveying to parents and students the importance of regular and punctual attendance.

We recognise that parents have a vital role to play and there is a need to establish strong home-school links and communication systems that can be used whenever there is concern about attendance. If there are problems which affect a pupil's attendance we will strive, in partnership with parents and students, to resolve those problems as quickly and efficiently as possible. We will adopt a clearly focused but sympathetic approach, aimed at returning students to full attendance at all times.

Principles

We will ensure that:

- All staff are aware of the registration procedures when necessary and receive in-service training on registration regulations and education law.
- Complete registers accurately at the beginning of each morning and during the afternoon session.
- Stress to parents/carers the importance of contacting staff early on the first and any subsequent days of absence.
- Display attendance rates in our newsletter and reward good or improved behaviour for students.
- Promote positive staff attitudes to students returning after absence.
- Consult with all members of the school community and the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) in developing and maintaining the whole school attendance policy.
- Ensure regular evaluation of attendance procedures by senior managers who will report to school governors.

- Work towards ensuring that all students feel supported and valued. We will send a clear message that, if a student is absent, she/he will be missed.
- Monitor and investigate any patterns of lateness or absence.
- Celebrate Excellent and Improved School Attendance.

Routine Procedures

- Whenever a child is unable to attend school it is important and necessary that parents inform us of the circumstances no later than 8.45am on the first day of absence. This notification can be made in the first instance by telephone. If the school has not received a reason for a child's absence the school administrator will contact home to clarify the reason for the non-attendance. If we are unable to reach you by phone we may visit you at home.
- We request that you call on every subsequent day of absence unless you have discussed alternative arrangements with the school administrator and agreed when school would next be contacted. This allows us to code the Register with the correct reason for absence, rather than leaving the absences as unexplained.
- If the student is absent for more than one day a letter to the school via the class teacher must be sent. If your child has suffered a stomach bug, they should not return to school until they have been clear of sickness or diarrhoea for 48 hours.
- The reasons for absence are recorded in the daily attendance register. To ensure that this shows whether the absence is authorised prior notification of medical appointments is required. Requests for children to leave school during the school day should be made in writing whenever possible, or in an emergency by telephone.
- A student will only be released to a recognised adult. If a child is ill during the school day parents will be contacted by telephone and requested to collect their child. It is important that the school is informed of any change of telephone contact numbers. At the beginning of each academic year we will ask all parents to complete a new admissions form to ensure we have current information.
- We will discuss all concerns with the Marches Academy Trust's Family Support & Attendance Officer or the Local Authority Education Welfare Officer (EWO) if no response is received after 2 days of absence and may request that they visit you at home.

Authorised/Unauthorised Absence

The law is very clear that it only school can authorise an absence. The key points that we consider when deciding to authorise absence are:

- It is a legal requirement that registered students of compulsory school age attend regularly and punctually.
- Schools are not obliged to accept a parental explanation for pupil absence.
- We expect regular and punctual attendance, even when the school is aware of family difficulties. Looking after siblings or a sick parent, shopping or going on a trip will not be acceptable reasons for absence.
- Medical evidence is required for every absence; if this is not provided by the parent/carer, the absence could be treated as unauthorised. Medical evidence may be in the form of an appointment card, sight of medication etc. A Medical Certificate signed by a G.P. will not be requested as evidence by school.
- Where absence is authorised, we will remain vigilant to emerging patterns of non-attendance such as first and last days of term, or specific days of the week.
- Lateness should be actively discouraged and persistent lateness treated in the same way as irregular attendance. Students who arrive half an hour after the Register has opened (0855) will be marked as U - Late (After Registration Closed). This means that although present in school they will not receive a present mark.

Leave of Absence

The law states that parents do not have the right to take their child out of school for holidays in term time and that leave of absence should only be authorised in exceptional circumstances by the Headteacher:

- Holidays in school time are discouraged because they disrupt children's learning and education. Parents are asked to seriously consider the educational implications for their children, and also the impact for other children within the class, before making an application. Research shows that consistent attendance is crucial in giving children the best chance of success.
- Parents wishing to apply for Leave of Absence should write to the Headteacher outlining their request and explaining why the circumstances are exceptional.

- If a student has accumulated other absences, or there have been previous requests under exceptional circumstances, the request will be less likely to be approved.
- Retrospective requests for leave of absence will not be authorised.
- Family holidays during term time for reasons of finance or convenience are not considered exceptional. If your request for leave of absence is not authorised and you decide to take your child out of school you will automatically receive a Warning Notice letter from the Education Access Service and may incur a fine.

When Attendance is causing concern (including Lateness)

- The Government believes that Students of Primary School Age should have at least 96% Attendance. We make no apology for expecting all students to have 100% attendance and will contact you by letter when Attendance falls below 97%.
- If attendance falls below 95% we will invite you into school to meet with a member of staff and/or the Family Support and Attendance Officer to discuss ways in which school can support your child to improve their attendance. The aim of this meeting will be to identify and resolve (by means of appropriate support) the difficulties, which are preventing the pupil from attending school.
- Following a School Attendance Meeting we will monitor attendance closely and should there be no improvement we will refer the case to the Local Authority Education Welfare Officer. The Education Welfare Officer will endeavour to support you and your child to improve their attendance but the Education Welfare Service can apply to the courts to issue fines to parents of children who are not attending school regularly.
- **Lateness.** A pupil's punctuality is a legal requirement and the parents/carers of a pupil who is persistently late are guilty of an offence. The law treats persistent lateness in the same way as irregular attendance and parents can be prosecuted if late arrival is not resolved. Students who arrive late disrupt not only their own education but that of others. If a student is late with no good reasons on five occasions we will write to you, and if there is no improvement refer the case to the Education Welfare Officer.

Performance

We will review our progress against National Attendance Targets and will evaluate interventions which have been successful as part of this process.

When evaluating success the school will consider whether or not:

- Attendance has improved.
- Punctuality has improved.
- Parental response to absences has improved.
- The school has been successful in raising the profile of attendance both within the school, Local Governing Body and the local community.
- Students are fully aware of the importance of punctuality and regular attendance and know what their attendance is when asked.
- Attendance issues have been included as topics in school assemblies, Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) lessons, or as a theme for any other lessons/assemblies

Practice

The school will recognise the importance of good practice by:

- Keeping and maintaining registers accurately.
- Maintaining a consistent approach to marking registers.
- Carefully and accurately inputting data into the Register.
- Regularly analysing attendance data.
- Ensuring prompt follow-up action in cases of non-school attendance.
- Liaising closely with the school's Family Support and Attendance Officer and EWO.
- Rewarding excellent and improved attendance.
- Keeping the Register. The register is a legal document and must be kept accurately.