Townlands C of E Primary Academy

Attendance & Punctuality Policy

Policy Date: October 2026

Policy Review Date: September 2027

Townlands C of E Primary Academy seeks to ensure that all their children receive a full-time education which maximises opportunities for each child to realise his/her full potential. We expect all children on roll to attend every day when the school is in session, as long as they are fit and healthy to do so.

Once a child is enrolled at school, parents/carers have a legal responsibility to ensure that their child attends every day. It is also important that children arrive punctually for the start of the school day. Pupils are required to attend school for 190 days out of 365. This leaves 175 other days each year for holidays.

Aims

This policy aims to show our Commitment to meeting our obligations with regards to school attendance, including those laid out in the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on working together to improve school attendance (applies from 19 August 2024), through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- Setting high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all pupils
- Promoting good attendance and the benefits of good attendance
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence
- Building strong relationships with families to make sure pupils have the support in place to attend school

We will also promote and support punctuality.

Good attendance is important because:

- Research indicates a direct link between underachievement and poor attendance
- Regular attenders make better progress (socially and/or academically)
- Regular attenders find school routines and school work easier to cope with
- Regular attenders find learning more satisfying
- Good habits developed early in the school career continue throughout a child's entire educational journey
- The more time a child misses from school, the harder it is for them to catch up on missed work.

Legislation and guidance

This policy is based on the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on working together to improve school attendance (applies from 19 August 2024) and school attendance parental responsibility measures. The guidance is based on the following pieces of legislation, which set out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of the Education Act 1996
- Part 3 of the Education Act 2002
- Part 7 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (and 2010, 2011, 2013, and 2016 amendments)
- The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024
- https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2006/1751/contentsThe Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 and the 2024 amendment
- https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2013/757/regulation/2/madeIt also refers to:

- School census guidance
  - Keeping Children Safe in Education
  - Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools

Roles and responsibilities

The Governing Board

The governing board is responsible for:

- Taking an active role in school attendance by promoting the importance of attendance across the school, as per the school's vision, values, policies and ethos
- Ensuring the school's attendance management processes are delivered effectively, and that consistent support is provided for pupils who need it most by prioritising staff and resources
- Ensuring the school has high aspirations for all pupils, but adapts processes and support to pupils' individual needs
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data and helping school leaders focus improvement efforts on individual pupils or cohorts who need it most
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school and repeatedly evaluating the effectiveness of the school's processes and improvement efforts to make sure they are meeting pupils needs
- Holding the Headteachers to account for the implementation of this policy

The Headteachers

The Headteachers are responsible for:

- The implementation of this policy at the school
- Ensuring that dedicated training is provided to staff with a specific attendance function in their role
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary, and/or authorising Attendance Champion to do so
- Alongside the SENDCo working together with the parents of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) to develop specific support approaches for attendance for pupils with SEND
- Communicating the school's high expectations for attendance and punctuality regularly to pupils and parents/carers through all available channels

The School Attendance Champion is responsible for attendance

The school attendance champion is responsible for:

- Leading, championing and improving attendance across the school
- Setting a clear vision for improving and maintaining good attendance
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having a strong grasp of absence data and oversight of absence data analysis
- Regularly monitoring and evaluating progress in attendance
- Liaising with pupils, parents/carers and external agencies, where needed
- Building close and productive relationships with parents to discuss and tackle attendance issues
- Adhere to the regulations School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024
- The designated senior leader responsible for attendance is Paula Shakespeare and can be contacted via telephone on 01455 843859 and/or email office@townlands.leics.sch.uk

The Attendance Officer

The school attendance officer is responsible for:

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data (see supporting children who are absent)
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance, and the Headteachers
- Working with the safeguarding and pastoral team to tackle persistent absence
- Advising the Headteachers when to issue fixed-penalty notices
- Responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, onto the school registers by the close of registration each morning and afternoon.

The attendance officer is Sarah McCord and can be contacted via 01455 843859 and/or email office@townlands.leics.sch.uk.

School Administration Staff

School administration staff will:

- Monitor the school absence line and enquire into reasons for absence where none has been given (N Code). Take calls from parents/carers about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system
- Transfer calls from parents/carers to the School Attendance Champion where appropriate, in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance

SENDCo

The SENDCo will:

- Alongside the Headteachers, School Attendance Champion and the Attendance Officer, work together with the parents/carers of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) to develop specific support approaches for attendance for pupils with SEND
- Communicate with the local authority when a pupil with an education, health and care (EHC) plan has falling attendance, or where there are barriers to attendance that relate to the pupil's needs

Parents/Carers

Where this policy refers to a parent, it refers to the adult the school and/or local authority decides is most appropriate to work with, including:

- All natural parents, whether they are married or not
- All those who have parental responsibility for a child or young person
- Those who have day-to-day responsibility for the child (i.e. lives with and looks after them)

Parents are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every school day, the school is open and on time
- Call the school to report their child's absence before 8.40am on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence and advise when they are expected to return
- Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day
- Only request leave of absence in exceptional circumstances and do so in advance
- Keep to any attendance contracts that they make with the school and/or local authority i.e.: Notice of improve letter
- Seek support, where necessary, for maintaining good attendance, by contacting the school attendance team on 01455 843859 or email office@townlands.leics.sch.uk

Pupils

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school every day, on time

Recording attendance

Attendance Register

We will keep an electronic attendance register, and place all pupils onto this register.

We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark, using the appropriate national attendance and absence Codes from the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024, whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

See Appendix 1 for the DfE attendance Codes.

We will also record:

- Whether the absence is authorised or not
- The nature of the activity, where a pupil is attending an approved educational activity
- The nature of circumstances, where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 6 years after the date on which the entry was made.

The school day starts at 8.40am and ends at 3:05pm.

Pupils must arrive in school by 8:40am on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at 8.40am and will be kept open until 9am. The register for the second session will be taken at 1pm.

Unplanned Absence

The pupil's parent must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 8.40am, or as soon as practically possible, by calling the school absence line (01455 843859 option 1).

We will mark absence due to physical or mental illness as authorised, unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

Where the absence is longer than 5 days, or there are doubts about the authenticity of the illness, the school will ask for medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents will be notified of this in advance.

Planned Absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent notifies the school in advance of the appointment.

Parents must notify the school office by telephone 01455 843859 and/or email office@townlands.leics.sch.uk

However, we encourage parents to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

The pupil's parent must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence.

Lateness and punctuality

The school day starts after the classroom gates/doors close at 8:40am for all year groups. Pupils who arrive after these times will be recorded as late to school (L Code). The registers close at 9am and after this, lateness is recorded as unauthorised absence (U Code). The afternoon begins at 1:00pm. Pupils who arrive after this will be recorded as unauthorised absence (O Code).

A pupil who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code
- After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code

Where there are concerns about punctuality, the school will make a verbal contact with parent/carer. If the concerns persist, the parent/carer will receive a written Notice 1 about punctuality, including a copy of the child's registration certificate, and stating the total minutes late over a determined period.

If there is still no improvement, the school will arrange a meeting with parent/carer. In the event of persistent lateness, the school may make a formal referral to the LA and may result in a fixed penalty notice.

Following up unexplained absence

Where any pupil we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the school will:

- Send message to pupil's parent/carer on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to request reason for absence. If the school has not had a response form the parent and are unable to reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts, the school may take the following steps:
    - Contact with other schools where siblings may be registered
    - A welfare visit to the pupil's home
- Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session(s) for which the pupil was absent
- Call the parent on each day that the absence continues without explanation, to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the school will consider involving an education welfare officer
- Where appropriate, offer support to the pupil and/or their parents to improve attendance
- Identify whether the pupil needs support from wider partners, as quickly as possible, and make the necessary referrals

- Where support is not appropriate, not successful, or not engaged with: the school will make a referral to the local authority where the parent will be issued a notice to improve, penalty notice or other legal intervention (see sanctions section).

Reporting to parents

The school will regularly inform parents (see definition of 'parent', as used in this policy) about their child's attendance and absence levels.

- Parents can view attendance levels via the Arbor Portal
    - Attendance will be monitored weekly/half termly/termly/yearly. Parents will be informed of low attendance, by letter in the first instance. If attendance falls below 95%, the following will be actioned:
        - Attendance meeting
        - Notice to improve letter
        - Referral to the Local Authority
        - Fixed penalty Notice

Authorised and unauthorised absence

Approval for term-time absence

The Headteachers will allow pupils to be absent from the school site for certain educational activities, or to attend other schools or settings.

The Headteachers will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if the request meets the specific circumstances set out in the 2024 school attendance regulations. These circumstances are:

- Taking part in a regulated performance
- A temporary, time-limited part-time timetable
- Exceptional circumstances

We define **'exceptional circumstances'** as a leave of absence that has been applied for in advance by the parent and the Headteachers believe the circumstances to be exceptional. Each application will be considered for leave of absence individually taking into account the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind each request.

Where leave of absence is granted, the school will determine the number of days a pupil can be absent from school. A leave is granted entirely at the Headteachers discretion.

As a leave of absence will only be granted in exceptional circumstances, it is highly unlikely a leave of absence will be granted for the purposes of a family holiday.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least 2 weeks before the absence, a leave of absence request form, can be accessible from the school office. The Headteachers may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

Other valid reasons for **authorised absence** include (but are not limited to):

- Illness (including mental-health illness) and medical/dental appointments
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parent(s) belong(s). If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parent's religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Parent(s) travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travellers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and new travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision

- If the pupil is currently suspended or excluded from school (and no alternative provision has been made)

Other reasons the school may allow a pupil to be absent from the school site, which are not classified as absences, include (but are not limited to):

- Attending an offsite approved educational activity, sporting activity or visit or trip arranged by the school
- Attending another school at which the pupil is also registered (dual registration)
- Attending provision arranged by the local authority
- If there is any other unavoidable cause for the pupil not to attend school, such as disruption to travel caused by an emergency, a lack of access arrangements, or because the school premises are closed

Sanctions

Our school will make use of the full range of potential sanctions – including, but not limited to, those listed below – to tackle poor attendance. Decisions will be made on an individual, case-by-case basis.

Penalty notices

The Headteachers (or someone authorised by them), local authority or the police can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age, by issuing a penalty notice.

If the school issues a penalty notice, it will check with the local authority before doing so, and send a copy of any penalty notice issued.

Before issuing a penalty notice, the school will consider the individual case, including:

- Whether the national threshold for considering a penalty notice has been met (10 sessions (5 days) of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks)
- Whether a penalty notice is the best available tool to improve attendance for that pupil
- Whether further support, a notice to improve or another legal intervention would be a more appropriate solution
- Whether any obligations that the school has under the Equality Act 2010 make issuing a penalty notice inappropriate

Each parent who is liable for the pupil's offence(s) can be issued with a penalty notice, but this will usually only be the parent/parents who allowed the absence.

The payment must be made directly to the local authority, regardless of who issues the notice. If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

If issued with a **first** penalty notice, the parent must pay £80 within 21 days, or £160 within 28 days.

If a **second** penalty notice is issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil, the parent must pay £160 if paid within 28 days.

A **third** penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within 3 years of the date of the issue of the first penalty notice. In a case where the national threshold is met for a third time within those 3 years, alternative action will be taken instead.

A penalty notice may also be issued where parents allow their child to be present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification, during the first 5 days of a suspension or exclusion (where the school has notified the parents that the pupil must not be present in a public place on that day). These penalty notices are not included in the National Framework, not subject to the same considerations about support being provided, and do not count towards the limit as part of the escalation process.

In these cases, the parent must pay £60 within 21 days, or £120 within 28 days.

Notices to improve

If the national threshold has been met and support is appropriate, but parents do not engage with offers of support, the school may offer a notice to improve to give parents a final chance to engage with support.

Notices to improve will be issued in line with processes set out in the local Code of Conduct for the local authority area in which the pupil attends school.

They will include:

Details of the pupil's attendance record and of the offences

- The benefits of regular attendance and the duty of parents under section 7 of the Education Act 1996
- Details of the support provided so far
- Opportunities for further support, or to access previously provided support that was not engaged with
- A clear warning that a penalty notice may be issued if attendance doesn't improve within the improvement period, along with details of what sufficient improvement looks like, which will be decided on a case-by-case basis
- A clear timeframe of between 3 and 6 weeks for the improvement period
- The grounds on which a penalty notice may be issued before the end of the improvement period

Strategies for promoting attendance

At Townlands C of E Primary Academy, we recognise the importance of building good habits of attendance, and support pupils in doing so. One of our basic principles is to celebrate success. Good attendance is fundamental to a successful and fulfilling school experience. We actively promote 100% attendance for all our pupils, and we use a variety of weekly, termly and annual rewards to promote good attendance and punctuality.

- Designated Attendance Support Team
- Every week, we present the top attending class with the attendance bear and trophy
- Weekly attendance percentages for all classes are shared through our 'Facebook' page to celebrate success
- Children with 100% attendance for the whole academic year, receive a special attendance badge/certificate
- On occasions, additional attendance incentives are run for individual pupils/classes
- Attendance certificates
- Develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance

Supporting pupils who are absent or returning to school

Pupils absent due to complex barriers to attendance

Some pupils face greater barriers to attendance than their peers. These can include pupils who suffer from long-term medical conditions or who have special educational needs and disabilities, or other vulnerabilities.

- High expectations of attendance remain however, we will work with families and pupils to support improved attendance.
- Regular meetings with parent/carers to discuss reasonable adjustments and additional support from external partners where appropriate.

Pupils absent due to mental or physical ill health or SEND

- Parents are expected to work with school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance

- Where a pupil has an education health and care (EHC) plan and their attendance falls, or the school becomes aware of barriers to attendance that related to the pupil's needs, the school will inform the local authority.
- Attendance team to work with pastoral to offer support where required and put in place additional support and adjustments.
- Where appropriate offer additional support from wider services and external partners
- Monitor regular data

Pupils returning to school after a lengthy or unavoidable period of absence

- The school attendance team will meet with the child and family member before they start back to discuss their concerns and agree a plan for their first day.
- This can help alleviate anxiety. The school should arrange peer support and inform teachers of any special requirements. Use the meeting to update or complete an Individual Healthcare Plan.

Attendance monitoring

The School Attendance Champion will ensure all school-based staff complete their attendance responsibilities in line with the school's policies and procedures.

Monitoring attendance

- The school will monitor attendance and absence data (including punctuality) weekly, half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil, year group and Cohort level.
- Specific pupil information will be shared with the DfE on request.
- As of 19th August 2024 all schools are required to share their data with the DfE to its management information system so the data can be accessed regularly and securely.
- Data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics.
- The school will benchmark its attendance data at whole school, year group and/or cohort level against local, regional, and national levels (where data is available) to identify areas of focus for improvement, and share this with the governing board.

Analysing attendance

The school will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils, groups or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and
- Identify pupils whose absences may be a cause for concern, especially those who demonstrate patterns of persistent or severe absence
- Conduct thorough analysis of half-termly, termly, and full-year data to identify patterns and trends
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns

Using data to improve attendance

The school will:

- Develop targeted actions to address patterns of absence (of all severities) of individual pupils, groups or cohorts that it has identified via data analysis
- Provide targeted support to the pupils it has identified whose absences may be a cause for concern, especially those who demonstrate patterns of persistent or severed absence, and their families (see section reducing persistent and severe absence)

- Provide regular attendance reports to facilitate discussions with pupils and families, and to the governing board and school leaders (including special educational needs co-ordinator, designated safeguarding lead and pupil premium lead)
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies
- Share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities and other partners where a pupil's absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe, including keeping them informed regarding specific pupils, where appropriate

Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school. Reducing persistent and severe absence is central to the school's strategy for improving attendance.

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Consider potential safeguarding issues and, where suspected or present, address them in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable or at risk of persistent or severe absence, or who are persistently or severely absent, to:
    - Discuss attendance and engagement at school
    - Listen, and understand barriers to attendance
    - Explain the help that is available
    - Explain the potential consequences of, and sanctions for, persistent and severe absence
    - Review any existing actions or interventions
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance, in conjunction with the local authority, where relevant
- Consider alternative support that could be put in place to remove any barriers to attendance and re-engage these pupils. In doing so, the school will sensitively consider some of the reasons for absence
- Implement sanctions, where necessary

Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority and/or DfE is updated, and as a minimum yearly by the Headteachers. At every review, the policy will be approved by the full governing board.

Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Keeping Children Safe in Education

- ## Appendix 1: attendance Codes

The following Codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
Attending a place other than the school		
K	Attending education provision arranged by the local authority	Pupil is attending a place other than a school at which they are registered, for educational provision arranged by the local authority
V	Attending an educational visit or trip	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised or approved by the school
P	Participating in a sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
W	Attending work experience	Pupil is on an approved work experience placement
B	Attending any other approved educational activity	Pupil is attending a place for an approved educational activity that is not a sporting activity or work experience
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
Absent – leave of absence		
C1	Participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad	Pupil is undertaking employment (paid or unpaid) during school hours, approved by the school
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
J1	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment

S	Study leave	Pupil has been granted leave of absence to study for a public examination
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-Compulsory school age is not required to attend
C2	Part-time timetable	Pupil is not in school due to having a part-time timetable
C	Exceptional circumstances	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
Absent – other authorised reasons		
T	Parent travelling for occupational purposes	Pupil is a 'mobile child' who is travelling with their parent(s) who are travelling for occupational purposes
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
I	Illness (not medical or dental appointment)	Pupil is unable to attend due to illness (either related to physical or mental health)
E	Suspended or excluded	Pupil has been suspended or excluded from school and no alternative provision has been made
Absent – unable to attend school because of unavoidable cause		
Q	Lack of access arrangements	Pupil is unable to attend school because the local authority has failed to make access arrangements to enable attendance at school
Y1	Transport not available	Pupil is unable to attend because school is not within walking distance of their home and the transport normally provided is not available
Y2	Widespread disruption to travel	Pupil is unable to attend because of widespread disruption to travel caused by a local, national or international emergency
Y3	Part of school premises closed	Pupil is unable to attend because they cannot practicably be acCommodated in the part of the premises that remains open

Y4	Whole school site unexpectedly closed	Every pupil absent as the school is closed unexpectedly (e.g. due to adverse weather)
Y5	Criminal justice detention	Pupil is unable to attend as they are: • In police detention • Remanded to youth detention, awaiting trial or sentencing, or • Detained under a sentence of detention
Y6	Public health guidance or law	Pupil's travel to or attendance at the school would be prohibited under public health guidance or law
Y7	Any other unavoidable cause	To be used where an unavoidable cause is not Covered by the other Codes
Absent – unauthorised absence		
G	Holiday not granted by the school	Pupil is absent for the purpose of a holiday, not approved by the school
N	Reason for absence not yet established	Reason for absence has not been established before the register closes
O	Absent in other or unknown circumstances	No reason for absence has been established, or the school isn't satisfied that the reason given would be reCorded using one of the Codes for authorised absence
U	Arrived in school after registration closed	Pupil has arrived late, after the register has closed but before the end of session
Administrative Codes		
Z	Prospective pupil not on admission register	Pupil has not joined school yet but has been registered
#	Planned whole-school closure	Whole-school closures that are known and planned in advance, including school holidays