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**Attendance Policy**

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**Aims**

Our service aims to meet its obligations with regards to school attendance by:

* Promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence.
* Ensuring every pupil has access to full time education to which they are entitled
* Acting early to address patterns of absence

We also support parents to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend regularly, and will promote and support punctuality in attending school and lessons.

Our service aims to:

* Maintain the learners academic progress and enable them to return to mainstream education/encourage good attendance by ensuring that the learner is offered a relevant and appropriate curriculum.
* Make all learners feel valued and to help them develop self-esteem/challenge non-attendance by the first day response system and following a staged approach to poor attendance.
* Achieve target attendance for all individual learners of 95%

Alternative Provisions are places of learning and are expected to meet the short-term needs of learners experience serious social, emotional and mental health difficulties. The learners will be from one of these categories:

* On placement with the aim of re-integration into their home school
* On long fixed term exclusion with the aim of returning to the home school
* On long fixed term exclusion and are seeking a place in a new school
* Permanently excluded
* In receipt of tuition for medical needs
* On placement with alternative providers
* Awaiting assessment for an EHCP

Many learners who are referred to these provisions have experienced poor levels of attendance in their mainstream school. This could be because of regular absence or because of frequent exclusions or maybe a combination of the two. Learners can have a poor attitude to school and this can affect their level of attendance.

Attendance matters to everyone. Non-attendance affects not only the individual child and their family but it has significant effect on educational progress, and the wider community. Regular attendance matters to employers because it influences young peoples expectations of work.

Irregular attendance leads to poorer personal, social and life skills and has been shown to be linked to a lower likelihood of obtaining a job and of remaining in long term employment.

Non-attendance exposes children to risks and dangers, sometimes with costly or even tragic results for themselves or others.

The alternative provision service emphasises the importance of partnership between the provision and the parents/guardians. Without mutual support for each other, the impact on the child’s progress will be minimised. Parents will be invited to support the concept of partnership with the service.

**Legislation and guidance**

This policy meets the requirements of the school attendance guidance from the Department for Education (DfE) and refers to the DfE’s statutory guidance on school attendance parental responsibility measures. These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

* The Education Act 1996
* The Education Act 2002
* The Education and Inspections Act 2006
* The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006
* The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2010
* The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2011
* The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013
* The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2016
* The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

This policy also refers to the DfE’s guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.

**Principles**

* In line with the Service Vision, Mission and Values, learners will be arranged into teaching groups to ensure that all are provided with differentiated and quality learning experiences and materials to ensure they have every opportunity to reach their full potential.
* Learners with learning difficulties and those who need special support received this support in a sensitive way within the learning environment in which they are placed.
* Learners will be expected to attend for the recommended time of 10 hours a week.
* Providers will contact parents each day that a learner is absent, unless we have had prior notification that the learner will be absent on a particular day. In order for this to be effective we need to ensure we have up to date information, including daytime contact numbers, email addresses and mobile numbers.
* Schools will be informed regularly of their learners attendance. Schools are able to telephone and obtain this morning attendance.
* Some learners are solely registered on the roll of the local authority provision. In these cases where attendance is a concern, our Education Welfare Service would advise and support with the case and progress to prosecution where appropriate.
* Where learners are accruing an unacceptable number of unauthorised absences, a warning letter will be sent advising parents/carers that unless there is an immediate improvement they are likely to incur a Penalty Notices which will be issues by the Local Authority in accordance with legislation.
* Acceptable reasons for absence and appropriate recording of both attendances and non-attendances are included in the 2014 DfE guidance Advice on school attendance. This was circulated to all Alternative Provision Managers in October 2014.

**Procedures to support positive attendance**

By law, all schools (except those where all pupils are boarders) are required to keep an attendance register and all pupils must be places on this register. The register will close at 10am each morning.

The attendance register will be taken at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark whether every pupil is:

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

Attendance is one of the topics covered at the planning/referral meeting, keyworker meetings and review meetings.

Thirsty minutes after the designated start of the day the homes of learners who have not arrived will be contacted by phone unless there has been prior contact.

Where learners are dually registered, schools are notified of the pupils attendance via email and are able to telephone and obtain the morning attendance if required from 10.30am daily.

Official registers will be retained for a minimum of 3 years from the end of the academic year for which they are relevant.

**Unplanned absence**

Parents/School must notify the Alternative Provision on the first day of the unplanned absence – for example if their child is unable to attend due to ill health by 10am or as soon as practically possible. Information will be given to parents about how to notify the provision of an unplanned absence during their initial planned meeting.

Absence due to illness be will authorised unless TOL has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness. If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, TOL may ask parents to provide medical evidence such as a doctors note, prescriptions, appointment card or other appropriate forms of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily. If TOL 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.

**Medical or Dental Appointments**

Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an unauthorised absence; advance notice is required for authorising these absences. However, we encourage parents to make medical and dental appointments out of TOL hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

**Lateness and Punctuality**

A pupil who arrives late but before the register has closed will be marked as late using the appropriate code (L)

A pupil who arrives after the register has closed will be marked as absent using the appropriate code (U)

Each base has its own system of rewards and sanctions to respond to lateness and punctuality. This information will form part of the induction process.

**Following up Absence**

The service will follow up any absences to ascertain the reason, ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary, identify whether the absence is approved or not and identify the correct attendance code to use.

**Recording attendance to schools**

This will be done by TOL staff who will collate attendance from all allocated provision on a twice daily bases and inform school attendance leads of their information and school attendance recording.

**Reporting to Parents**

Attendance will also form part of the reporting to parents in any meetings they attend regarding their child including termly review meetings.

**Authorised and Unauthorised Absence**

Head teachers may not grant any leave of absence to pupils during term time unless they consider there to be exceptional circumstances.

TOL considers each application for long term absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the Head of Services discretion.

Valid reasons for authorised absence include:

* Illness and Medical/Dental appointments
* Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by religious body to which the pupils parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart.
* Traveller pupils 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.

**Legal Sanctions**

Where learner attendance on entry or during the stay in our provision falls below the nationally identified P.A level of 90% Parenting Contracts leading to possible Penalty Notices will be considered and implemented for individual learners unless there are clear reasons why this would not be advisable. Parenting contracts can also be used in evidence in legal sanctions relating to non-school attendance to progress Penalty Notices or prosecution where appropriate.

If issued with a penalty notice, parents must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice ultimately rests with the head teacher, following the local authorities code of conduct for using penalty notices. This may take into account:

* A number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
* One off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
* Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during TOL hours without a justifiable reason.

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute the parent or withdraw the notice.

**Strategies for Promoting and Monitoring Attendance**

The alternative provision service follows an attendance strategy to ensure all absence is followed up in a consistent and robust manner in the interests of promoting good attendance and safeguarding all learners.

Each base has its own system of rewards and sanctions to respond to lateness and punctuality.

The TOL staff monitors pupil absence on a daily basis.

Parents are expected to call the school in the morning if their child is going to be absent due to ill health by 10am and provide updates as necessary for longer periods of absence. If parents do not make contact TOL will make contact via telephone, text or with a home visit.

If a pupils absence goes above 3 days we will contact the parents to discuss the reason for this. If after contacting parents a pupils absence continues to rise, we will consider involving an education welfare officer.

The persistent absence threshold is 10%. If a pupils individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 10%, the pupil will be considers as a persistent absentee.

Pupil-level absence data is collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE’s school absence national statistic releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. We compare our attendance data to the national average and share this with governors.

**Roles and Responsibilities**

* The Head Teachers

The Head teacher is responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented consistently across the service and for monitoring TOL-level absence data and reporting it to the governors.

The head teacher also supports other staff in monitoring the attendance of individual pupils and issues fixed-penalty notices where necessary.

* The teacher in charge

The teacher in charge of each phase:

* Monitors attendance data at the teaching base and individual pupil level.
* Reports concerns about attendance to the Head
* Works with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence
* Arranges calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
* Advises the head of service when to issue fixed penalty notices.
* Class teachers

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes and submitting this information to the school office.

**Monitoring Arrangements**

This policy will be reviewed every year by the head teacher.