



Policy Document for: Attendance

Approved: February 2020

Due for Review: February 2021

### Aims

Timu Academy Trust is committed to the continuous raising of achievement of all our pupils. Regular attendance is critical if our pupils are to be successful and benefit from the opportunities presented to them. 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 awards to promote good attendance and punctuality.

The Governors, Executive Principal and Staff in partnership with parents have a duty to promote full attendance at our schools.

### 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. This policy complies with our funding agreement and articles of association.

## Parental Responsibility

Parents have a legal duty to ensure that their children attend school regularly and arrive on time. Regular attendance is essential to the all-round development of the child and they should be allowed to take full advantage of educational opportunities available to them in order to make good progress in their learning. Poor attendance undermines their educational attainment and progress and, sometimes, puts pupils at risk by encouraging anti-social behaviour.

It is the parents' responsibility to contact the school on the first day their child is absent. This is a safeguarding issue requirement so that all parties know that your child is safe and their whereabouts is known. Parents should regularly update the school and inform the school when their child is returning. The school will follow up with the parents on every subsequent day of a child being absent without reason.

Pupils are expected to arrive by 8.50 am.

All pupils that arrive late must report, with their parent to the school office where the reason for lateness is recorded. See lateness section on page 3 for full details.

- Absence due to illness will be authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.
- If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask parents to provide 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.

## Medical or dental appointments

Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence; advance notice is required for authorising these absences.

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.

## Reporting to parents

Attendance will be reported to parents on the three times a year reports. This will be red-amber-green coloured to indicate whether the attendance for the child is meeting the Trust expectations. Since the percentage attendance is calculated based on the number of sessions to date, this is identified to parents where attendance is initially lower than expectation based on a period of illness or unauthorised holiday.

## The Role of the School Staff

At Timu Academy Trust there is a whole school responsibility and approach for improving school attendance, with specific staff taking individual responsibility.

The Head of School has overall responsibility for monitoring attendance issues.

By law, all schools are required to keep an attendance register, and all pupils must be placed on this register. 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

Marking the attendance registers twice daily is a legal requirement. (The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006).

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

Every entry in the attendance register will be preserved for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made. The school 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.

It is the responsibility of the Office Manager in each school to ensure:

- Attendance and lateness records are up to date
- If no reason for absence has been provided, parents are contacted on the first day of absence by phone call and for every subsequent day where the pupil is absent without reason
- Where there has been no communication, letters are sent to parents requesting reasons for absence.
- The appropriate attendance code is entered into the register (see National Attendance Codes)

### Authorised and unauthorised absence

#### Authorising Absence

The Executive Principal or Head of School may not grant any leave of absence to pupils during term time unless they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the Executive Principal's discretion.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments – as explained on page 2.
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's 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

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" and must be requested in writing using the forms available from the front office.

Persistent unauthorised absence (10% or more of the school year) may result in a 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.

### Supporting parents

The Trust is committed to working with parents and carers to ensure that their children attend school regularly and in line with expectations. Where there are ongoing issues for the family, the Family Liaison Officer (FLO) will be in contact with the family to offer support, for example with homelessness. . This may include recommending an application for Early Help to support the whole family or accessing wider support for the family.

The FLO, Community Lead or Community Assistant Headteacher will meet with the family where necessary to offer support and to gain an understanding of the absence period or lateness of children.

### Lateness

At Timu Academy Trust Schools the register is taken at 8.50 am and 1pm. Pupils arriving after these times must enter school by the main entrance and report to Reception where their name and the reason for lateness will be recorded. The pupil will be marked as late before registration has closed (Code 'L').

The register will close at 9.00 am and ten minutes after the afternoon sessions starts in each community. Pupils arriving after the register has closed will be marked as late after registration (Code 'U') and this will count as an unauthorised absence.

Frequent lateness after the register has closed (U) will be discussed with parents and could provide grounds for prosecution or a Penalty Notice.

### Penalty Notices Proceedings for Poor Attendance & lateness

If the support offered by the school has not improved attendance and absences have not been authorised, leading to a period of unauthorised absence of 10 missed sessions in a period of 50 school days, the situation will be addressed rigorously through legal measures including Penalty Notices.

Sanctions of any nature are for use only where parental co-operation in the effort to support regular attendance is either absent or deemed insufficient to resolve the presenting problem.

Schools have the first responsibility to take effective action to improve attendance. They are supported in this by their KCC School Liaison Officer, who is part of the Local Authority's Inclusion and Attendance Service. When the school has done all it can, over a period of time, to improve attendance and there is little or no improvement, two options are available.

- One option, where there is clear evidence of underlying problems in the family that require more intensive support, will be to make a Notification to the Early Help and Preventative Service. This will lead to an assessment of the child's and family's needs and an Early Help Plan to support the family to make changes that will improve school attendance and other outcomes.
- The second option for the school, where there is evidence that the issue is a straightforward case of unauthorised absence, is to work with the Inclusion and Attendance Service after the school's own interventions have not succeeded in improving the pupil's attendance. This may lead to further legal action if the absence from school does not improve.

[Section 444A of the Education Act 1996](#) empowers designated local authority officers, Headteachers (and deputy and assistant Headteachers authorised by them) and the police to issue penalty notices. Schools can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

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 Executive Principal, following the local authority's code of conduct for issuing 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 school 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. There is no statutory right of appeal against the decision to issue a penalty notice and the sole authority to authorise absences lies with the Headteacher and their decision is final.

- 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.
- Personnel working in the Emergency services and the Prison service who have leave dictated by the needs of their employer
- 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 the Executive Principal 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 Principal may authorise absence in “exceptional circumstances” but this must be requested in advance using a form made available from the front office and agreement to each request is at the discretion of the Executive Principal, acting on behalf of the Governing Body (Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006). Each case will be judged on its merits and the Executive Principal’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.

## **Attendance monitoring**

The Community leads monitor attendance on a weekly and monthly basis.

If after contacting parents a pupil’s absence continue to rise, we will consider involving an education welfare officer.

The persistent absence threshold is 10%. If a pupil's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 10%, the pupil will be classified 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 statistics 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 governing body**

The Local Governing Body is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school on at least a termly basis. It also holds the Head of School to account for the implementation of this policy.

### **The Head of School**

The Head of School is responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented consistently across the school, and for monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors. The Head of School also supports other staff in monitoring the attendance of individual pupils and issues fixed-penalty notices, where necessary.

### **Community lead**

- Monitors attendance data at the school and individual pupil level
- Reports concerns about attendance to the headteacher
- Works with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence
- Arranges calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Advises the headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices

## **Children Missing Education**

No child should be removed from the school roll without consultation between the Executive Principal 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 him/her.
- 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.