Attendance Policy

Introduction

This policy sets out our school's position on attendance and details the procedures that all parents/carers must follow to report their child absent from school.

It is the aim of Torpoint Nursery and Infant School to ensure that children have a love of learning, experience success and realise their full potential. Our Attendance Policy reflects this and recognises that regular attendance has a positive effect on the motivation and attainment of all children.

It is vital that children develop regular attendance habits from an early age (see Appendix 1). If a child is unable to attend school for any reason, the parent/carer should inform the school of the reason on the first day of the absence. If the school is concerned about a child's attendance for any reason, we will contact the parents/carers to discuss the matter, in the first instance. We understand that communication between parents/carers and the school is paramount to help ensure that all children achieve good attendance to enable them to have the best possible start in their school life. We will support parents/carers to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend regularly and arrive in school punctually.

We want children to attend school every day, unless they are really not well enough to do so. We believe that children who attend school regularly are more likely to feel settled, maintain friendships, keep up with their learning and gain the greatest benefit from their education. We want all children to enjoy school, grow up to become emotionally resilient, confident and competent adults.

We will do all we can to encourage our children to attend. We will also make the best provision we can for a child who needs additional support in school or who is prevented from attending school, due to a medical condition.

Aims

We are committed to meeting our obligation with regards to school attendance through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- Promoting good attendance;
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence;

- Ensuring every child 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 ensure children have the support in place to attend school.

Legislation and Guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the "Working together to improve school attendance" 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:

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, 2016 amendments)
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.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Governing Board
The Governing Board is responsible for:

- Promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos;
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties;
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data;
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school;
- Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance;
- Holding the Headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

The Headteacher
The Headteacher is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the school;
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors;
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual children;
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies;
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary.
- Being the school's Attendance Champion.

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance

The designated senior leader is responsible for:

- Leading attendance across the school;
- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement;
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes;
- Having an oversight of data analysis;
- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data;
- Arranging calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues;
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to children and families.

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance is Danielle Kellond – Headteacher and can be contacted on Tel: 01752 812245.

The Attendance Officer

The school attendance officer is responsible for:

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data;
- 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 (Danielle Kellond – Headteacher);
- Working with the Education Welfare Service to tackle persistent absence;
- Advising the Headteacher (authorised by the Headteacher) 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 by 9.00 am each morning. Class Teachers will record all reasons for absences in their absence record book. Class Teachers will monitor children's patterns of attendance in liaison with the Attendance Officer.

School office staff

School office staff will:

- Answer telephone calls from parents/carers about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it in the absence book and inform the Class Teacher.

Parents/carers

Parents/carers are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends school every day and on time;
- Telephone the school to report their child's absence before 9.00 am 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 2 emergency contacts for their child;
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day.

Our School Procedures:

Attendance Register

The law makes it clear that schools must take the attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. On each occasion the school must record whether each child is:

- Present;
- Absent;
- Attending an approved educational activity; or,
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

Present at School (and Lateness)

Children are marked present if they are in school when the register is taken. If a child leaves the school premises after registration they are still counted as present for statistical purposes.

If punctuality/lateness is an ongoing issue, parents/carers will be supported to break down barriers in order to ensure their children arrive on time at the start of the school day.

- Our children must arrive in school between 8.35 am and 8.40 am on each school day;
- Our morning register is taken at 8.40 am and will be kept open until 9.00 am;
- Our afternoon register is taken at 12.50 pm;
- A child who arrives in school late before the registers close will be marked as 'late' (L) – which counts as present;
- A child who arrives late after the registers close will be marked as absent. If the child is late arriving due to a valid reason such as an unavoidable medical appointment, the absence will be authorised. If the child is late for no valid reason, then the child will be marked with an unauthorised absence code 'late after the registers close' (U).

Authorised Absence

'Authorised absence' means that the school has given approval in advance for a child of compulsory school age to be away from school. If the school has no prior warning of an absence, then the school will establish the reason for the absence and decide if the circumstances are exceptional to authorise.

The following information outlines the main circumstances where absence may be authorised by the school:

Illness

In most cases, absences for illness which are reported by following the school's absence reporting procedures will be authorised, that is unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

Where a child has a high level and/or frequency of absence, the school may require medical evidence of some description in order to authorise any future medical absences. If this is the case, the school will make the parents/carers aware of this expectation in advance.

The reporting of absence due to illness remains the responsibility of the parents/carers. Absences due to illness which have **not** been reported to the school by the parents/carers on the first day of absence may not be authorised.

Parents/carers should telephone the school office by 9.00 am on the first day of a child's absence. If a child is absent for more than one day, the parents/carers should contact the school each day to provide an update on the child's condition, unless otherwise agreed by the school.

Children taken ill during the school day

If a child needs to be sent home due to illness, this should be by agreement with an appropriately authorised member of school staff. In such circumstances, the child must be collected from the school office by a parent/carer or another authorised adult (as advised by the parent/carer), and signed out in the 'signing out' book. No child will be allowed to leave the school site without parental confirmation/permission.

Medical/Dental Appointments

Parents/carers should try to make appointments outside of the school day wherever possible. Where appointments during school time are unavoidable, the child should only be out of school for the minimum period of time necessary for the appointment. It is not acceptable for a child to miss a whole day's schooling for an appointment, unless absolutely necessary, in which case the school will need an explanation as to why this is.

If a child must attend a medical appointment during the school day, they must be collected from the school office by the parent/carer or another authorised adult (as advised by the parent/carer), and signed out in the 'signing out' book. No child will be allowed to leave the school site without parental confirmation/permission.

Advance notice is required for medical or dental appointments, unless it's an emergency appointment.

Religious Observance

At Torpoint Nursery and Infant School we acknowledge the multi-faith nature of the school community and recognise that on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside of school holidays or weekends. In accordance with the law, the school will authorise one day's absence for a day exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parent/carer belongs. Should any additional days be taken, these will be recorded in the register as unauthorised absence.

Exclusions

If the school deems it necessary to exclude a child from school, then the school will follow the guidance as set out by the Local Authority/DfE. Any exclusion must be agreed by the Headteacher.

First Day of Absence Response

Our school requests that our parents/carers inform us about the reason why their child is absent from school. If no contact has been made, then the office staff will contact the person allocated as priority 1 on the child's emergency contact details. The school aims to do this by 9.45 am each day. If no response is gained, then the office staff will continue down the priority list to ascertain a reason for the absence. The school will prioritise those children considered to be vulnerable e.g. Looked After children; children subject to a Child Protection Plan, children open to Social Care as a Child in Need.

Parents/carers will be asked to supply details of at least **three** people who can be contacted in an emergency, and these details will be reviewed on a regular basis through parent consultations and as a reminder on newsletters, etc.

If the school is unable to make contact with any of the emergency numbers provided, and is concerned for the welfare of the child, we may request a Welfare Check from the Police.

Leave of Absence Requests

Only in exceptional circumstances can an absence be authorised. The school will consider each application individually, taking into account the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind the request. The request must be made by the parent with whom the child normally lives, and permission must be sought in advance. Where a leave of absence is granted, the school will determine the number of days a child can be away from school. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the Headteachers discretion.

Circumstances in which a leave of absence could be authorised may include a family emergency or a family funeral. However, parents/carers will also be aware that, wherever possible, it can be better for children to continue to attend school normally during difficult family times.

Parents/carers should complete a Leave of Absence Request form. The request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated; and wherever possible, at least **two weeks** before the absence. **Although such absence may be unauthorised, it is better that we know your child is safe, rather than missing from school.** Please be aware that you may be required to provide us with additional evidence in order to support your request.

Unauthorised absence

Unauthorised absence is where a school is not satisfied with the reasons given for the absence.

Absence will be unauthorised if a child is absent from school without the permission of the school. Whilst parents can provide explanations for absences, it is the school's decision whether to authorise or not.

Unauthorised absence includes:

- Absences which have never been properly explained;
- Recurring absences, where attendance is already a concern, and where no medical evidence is provided to confirm that the child is not well enough to attend school;
- Children who arrive at school too late to get a mark;
- Parent/carer illness – it is the parent/carers responsibility to ensure alternative arrangements have been made to enable their child still attends school;
- Birthdays;
- Waiting at home for a washing machine to be mended or a parcel to be delivered;
- Long weekends and holidays in term time (unless very exceptional circumstances are agreed in writing, in advance by the school)

Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

In accordance with the DfE school attendance guidance, our school will record children as 'Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances' when our school site, or part of it, is closed due to a circumstance out of our control, e.g. a gas leak. Such circumstances are not recorded as absences.

Support for Poor Attendance (other than unauthorised term time leave)

At Torpoint Nursery and Infant School we understand that developing good patterns and habits of attendance at this crucial time is important for both the child and the family. We also acknowledge that poor attendance at this age can be related more to the decisions taken by the child's parents/carers rather than the child and therefore good communication between home and school is of paramount importance. We strive to provide a welcoming, caring environment, so that each member of the school community feels wanted and secure. We encourage parents/carers to be open and honest with us about the reason for their child's absence. If a child is reluctant to attend, we are here to support parents/carers by ensuring that their child/ren attend school regularly.

Persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence is where a child misses 10% or more of school and severe absence is where a child misses 50% or more of school.

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence;
- Support parents of children who the school considers to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school;
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance;
- Where appropriate use an Attendance Support Plan with the family and review as necessary.

Procedures for reducing persistent and severe absence

1. If a child's attendance falls between 90% and 93%, we will contact parents/carers to discuss any concerns and explore how we can work together to support improved attendance.

2. If attendance falls below 90%, parents/carers will receive a letter to make them aware of this. The Class Teacher will also discuss any support that may help improve attendance and remove barriers to regular school attendance.

3. If attendance remains below 90% but is beginning to improve, we will write to parents/carers to acknowledge this positive progress and encourage continued improvement until attendance rises above 90%.

4. If attendance continues to be a concern and there is little or no improvement, parents/carers will be invited to meet with the Headteacher or a member of the Senior Leadership Team. This meeting provides an opportunity to discuss any challenges the family may be facing and agree an Attendance Support Plan to help improve attendance. We will also explain that future absences may require additional evidence and may not always be authorised.

5. A review meeting will then be arranged to discuss progress and ensure that the right support is in place for both the child and family.

6. If attendance continues to be significantly below expected levels despite the support provided, we may need to seek additional guidance from the Education Welfare Service. This is always a last step, and we will do everything we can to work positively with families and provide support before this becomes necessary.

Legal Sanctions

If your child is absent from school without authorisation, you will be committing an offence under the Education Act 1996. A National Framework for Penalty Notices for school absence, including unauthorised holiday absence, is now law. The Government regulations came into effect from 19 August 2024 and clearly outlines the legal framework for the issue of Penalty Notices.

The issuing of Penalty Notices for Cornwall is outlined below:

- A national threshold of 10 unauthorised sessions for any reason (equivalent to 5 school days) within a rolling 10 school week period will result in a penalty notice being considered. A penalty fine can be issued for any combination of unauthorised absences over a 10 week rolling period.

If a Penalty Notice is used:

- A penalty fine of £80 will be levied, if paid in 21 days. If the fine is not paid by the first 21 days, it will rise to £160 if paid within 28 days of being issued.
- If a second penalty fine is issued to the same parent for the same child within a 3-year rolling period, the fine will automatically rise to £160 with no option to pay the lower rate of £80.
- If a parent then commits a third offence in a 3-year rolling period, the local authority will need to consider other enforcement options available to them. This could include prosecution under section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

We will not usually request legal sanctions from the Local Authority in cases where poor attendance is symptomatic of complex family circumstances. In such circumstances our school will take a holistic approach to the issue, and involve other agencies as necessary. The exception to this will be where parent/carers fail to accept or engage with support offered by the school and/or other agencies, or fail to implement the suggested changes.

Legislation regarding Penalty Notices clearly outlined from Cornwall Council below:

If your child is absent from school without authorisation, you will be committing an offence under the Education Act 1996. We may submit a request to Cornwall Council for a Penalty Notice to be issued, in accordance with Sections 444A and 444B of the said Act. Penalty Notices are issued per liable parent, per child and each carry a fine of £80 if paid within 21 days or £160 if paid after this but within 28 days.

If your child is further absent from school without authorisation within any 3- year period, you will be committing a further offence under the Education Act 1996. We may submit a request to Cornwall Council for a Penalty Notice to be issued, in accordance with Sections 444A and 444B of the said Act. Penalty Notices for a second offence are issued per liable parent, per child and each carry a fine of £160, payable within 28 days.

Importantly, fines per parent will be capped to two fines within any three-year period. Once this limit has been reached, other action such as a parenting order or prosecution will be considered.

Failure to pay the Penalty Notice may also result in legal action. If you are prosecuted and attend court because your child has not been attending school, you could get a fine of up to £2,500. Cornwall Council may also apply for the costs incurred in taking the matter to Court, including legal costs. Absence not authorised by the school may also result in a prosecution in the Magistrates' Court under Section 444(1) or Section 444(1A) of the Education Act 1996, leading to a fine of up to £2,500 and/or a custodial sentence. Again, Cornwall Council may also apply for the costs incurred in taking the matter to Court, including legal costs.

Money raised from fines is only used by the local authority to cover the costs of administering the system, and to fund attendance support. Any extra money is returned to the government

Attendance Monitoring

The school will:

- Monitor attendance and absence data weekly, monthly, half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual child level;

Analysing attendance

The school will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify children or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these children and their families;
- 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:

- Provide regular attendance reports to Class Teachers, and other school leaders, to facilitate discussions with families;
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies.

Safeguarding and Attendance

Our school monitors patterns of absence for all children as part of our standard procedures. However, we are aware that sudden or gradual changes in a child's attendance may indicate additional or more extreme safeguarding issues. In line with the government guidance *Keeping Children Safe in Education* we will report safeguarding issues onto the relevant authorities. As part of our safeguarding duty and our standard procedures, we will inform the Local Authority, Education Welfare Service, Social Care, and/or the Police of the details of any child who is absent from school when the school cannot establish their whereabouts and is concerned for their welfare.

The school will follow Cornwall Council's Child Missing in Education procedure and make CME referrals when required.

Links with other policies

- Child protection and safeguarding policy;
- Behaviour policy.
- Pupil Premium Strategy Statement
- Cornwall Council Code of Conduct

Policy Review Date: July 2026

Date to be Reviewed: September 2027

Appendix 1

There are 175 non-school days in a year and 190 school days each year.

Absence in terms of days	190 school days in each year 190 days for your child's education	7 days absence 183 days in school	10 days absence 180 days in school	19 days absence 171 days in school and the equivalent of a month not in school that year	28 days absence 162 days in school If it 85% each year, your child is missing the equivalent of a year of education over their time at primary school	47 days absence 143 days in school
percentage	100%	96%	95%	90%	85%	75%
	Good -Best chance of success -Gets your child off to a flying start -Helps their confidence, social development as well as their academic progress -Over 97% is considered excellent attendance		**Some Concern** -Harder for your child to make progress -School starts tracking your child's attendance closely, -Once below 93% medical evidence may be required to authorised further absences linked to illness	**Worrying** -Your child is now classified as a 'persistent absentee' - Education Welfare Officer involvement is likely	**Serious Concern** -Having a significant impact on your child's education and well-being -Legal Action may be taken	