

TORFIELD AND SAXON MOUNT ACADEMY TRUST

Academy Trust
ATTENDANCE POLICY

SEPTEMBER 2022

TORFIELD AND SAXON MOUNT ATTENDANCE POLICY

This document describes the attendance policies of the Torfield and Saxon Mount Academy Trust schools. There is a similar document for each school in the trust. The individual policies have similarities and also a number of differences to reflect the different phase and local priorities of each school.

This policy has been approved by the Academy Advisory Board of governors. It is an active document in that it is the subject of regular review and updating.

SECTION 1.

Introduction

Regular and punctual attendance is of paramount importance in ensuring that all pupils and students have full access to the curriculum. Valuable learning time is lost when pupils and students are absent or late.

Our school has a duty to promote attendance and equally, parents and carers have a duty to make sure that their pupils and students attend regularly. We understand that working in partnership with parents and carers is the best way to ensure the highest level of attendance possible.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the 'Missing or Absconding Pupils Policy'

Aim

To convey the school approach to attendance and support our work with pupils and their parents or carers to educate them on the importance of regular and punctual attendance.

To provide clear procedures involving pupils, parents or carers relating to school attendance.

To ensure, every pupil has access to fulltime education

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:

- 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

Governors and Executive Headteacher

The Directors and Academy Advisory Board, with the Executive Headteacher for Torfield and Saxon Mount recognise the importance of promoting school attendance and take their responsibility to do so seriously.

Governors and the Executive Headteacher are responsible for regularly monitoring attendance figures for the whole school. Governors, with the Executive Headteacher also provide support and challenge in holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

Governors and the Executive Headteacher ensure that school leaders fulfil their responsibilities and statutory duties by publishing an attendance policy and by receiving, reviewing and discussing reports at governance meetings regularly throughout the year. Where appropriate governors and the Executive Headteacher also support school leaders to arrange appropriate training for school staff on attendance.

The Headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors and the Executive Headteacher
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Liaising with the Local Authority in requesting a fixed-penalty notice to be issued, where necessary and ensuring the school is following best practice in promoting regular attendance.

Teachers

Class Teachers / Form Tutors are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office by 9.10 am.

School Secretary / admin team

The school secretary / admin team are responsible for taking calls from parents about absence and for recording reasons for absence on the school system and inform relevant staff.

School secretaries / admin staff are expected to make first day phone calls after the registers have closed, to identify reasons for pupil absence if this has not been communicated by parents / carers.

SECTION 2.

Procedure and Practice

For a pupil or student to reach their full educational achievement a high level of school attendance is essential. Any pupil or student who is absent from school at the morning or afternoon registration period must have their absence recorded as being authorised, unauthorised or as an approved educational activity (attendance out of school). Only the Headteacher or a member of staff acting on their behalf can authorise a pupil's or student's absence. If there is no known reason for the absence at registration, then the absence must be recorded in the first instance as unauthorised.

Lateness

Morning registration at Torfield and Saxon Mount will be completed by 9.10 am. The registers will remain open for 10 minutes. In cases where the absence at registration was, for example, to attend an early morning medical appointment, the appropriate authorised absence code will be entered.

The afternoon registration at Torfield School will be at	1.00 pm
The registers will close at	1.10 pm

The afternoon registration at Saxon Mount will be at	1.45 pm
The registers will close at	1.55 pm

Practice

Good attendance is important, because:

- statistics show a direct link between under-achievement and attendance below 95%
- regular attenders make better progress, both socially and academically

- regular attenders find school routines, school work and friendships easier to cope with
- regular attenders find learning more satisfying
- regular attenders are more successful in transferring between primary school, secondary school, and higher education, employment or training

Monitoring Procedure

A member of the senior leadership team (SLT) will be designated to oversee, direct and coordinate the school's work in promoting regular and improved attendance and will ensure the attendance policy is consistently applied throughout the school. This person will also ensure that attendance is recorded accurately and analysed regularly. They will ensure that attendance issues are identified at an early stage and that support is put in place to deal with any difficulties.

If absence is frequent or continuous, except where a pupil or student is known to be unwell and there is supporting information to explain the length of absence, the designated senior leader, or a designated member of staff will discuss this with parents/carers to establish the reasons for their child's absence. If a number of absences occur and there is no supporting information available, staff will seek to ensure that this information is provided, prior to recording the absences as authorised.

A note or explanation from a pupil's/student's home does not necessarily mean an absence becomes authorised. The decision whether or not to authorise an absence will always rest with the school. The Headteacher, or a delegated member of staff will make the decision.

The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the school, parents/carers and their child. To help focus on this, the school will:

- provide information on matters related to supporting attendance in the school's regular newsletter / on the school website / in Annual Review meetings and annual school reports
- report to parents/carers on how their child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and if this relates to their attainment or progress.
- rewarding good or improving attendance through regular certificates and rewards
- where it is appropriate, set targets for the school and for classes for attendance

Particular Responsibilities of classroom staff

- It is a legal requirement for teachers to complete the class register. This task can be delegated, however the responsibility itself cannot be delegated. Failure of the teacher to ensure the register is taken can lead to disciplinary action being taken.
- Ensure that all pupils and students are registered accurately using the electronic register and that it is completed on time and accurately
- Promote and reward good attendance with students at all appropriate opportunities
- Liaise with the senior leadership team on matters of attendance and punctuality
- Communicate any concerns or underlying problems that may account for a pupil of students' absence
- Where appropriate, provide access to the school curriculum through home learning

- Support pupils and students with absence to engage with their learning once they are back in school.

Pupils and students will be supported and encouraged by all staff to:

- Attend every day unless they are ill or have an authorised absence
- Arrive in school on time
- Go to all their registrations and lessons on time

Responsibilities of parents/carers

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is a parent/carer's legal responsibility (Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act) and permitting absence from school that is not authorised by the school creates an offence in law.

Parents/carers will:

- inform the school on the first day of absence with the reason for absence (either by email or phone) before **8:30am**. Parents / carers also need to continue to inform the school on each subsequent day of absence.
- discuss with the tutor/class teacher any planned absences (e.g. medical appointments) well in advance and complete an absence request form.
- support high attendance in aiming for 100% attendance each year
- wherever possible, avoid taking their child out of school for non-urgent medical or dental appointments
- only request leave of absence if it is for an exceptional circumstance

Parents / Carers: What to do if your child is absent?

A child not attending school is considered a **safeguarding** matter until the reason for absence is known. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

Day One:

- If a child is absent parents/carers must contact the school by **8.30am** on the first day of absence by telephone or email and inform them of the reason for the absence.
- If the school has not heard from parents/carers by the close of registers at **9.10am** the school will telephone parents/carers. We will aim to make this phone call before 10.00am. This is because the school has a duty to ensure a child's safety as well as for supporting their regular school attendance.
- Parents and carers should continue to inform the school on each subsequent absence.
- The school's administration team or senior leaders will follow up any unexplained absences by contacting parents/carers. The reason for absence will be recorded in the school register. The Headteacher or a member of SLT with responsibility for attendance will be informed of any unexplained absence on the same day that it is registered. The school cannot accept verbal messages from parents/carers via

transport escorts alone and we will follow this up if the parent/ carer has not contacted the school directly.

Day Three:

If a pupil or student is absent for two consecutive days and the school has not heard from parents/carers despite further attempts by email and phone, then on the third day of absence the school will aim to complete a home visit. The school will make all reasonable enquiries to establish contact with parents/carers and the pupil or student, including making enquiries to known friends and wider family. In the event that the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead has a reasonable concern about the wellbeing of the child then a home visit may be completed on the first or second day of an unexplained absence.

If a pupil or student is not seen and contact has not been established with any of the named parents/carers, after three days of absence the school is required to start missing in education procedures as set down by County Council guidance.

Day Ten:

The school has a legal duty to report the absence of any pupil/student who is absent without an explanation for ten consecutive days. If the child is not seen and contact has not been established with the named parent/carer, then the local authority is notified that the child is at risk of being missing from education. Children's Services staff will visit the last known address and alert key services to locate the child. If the school has any reasonable concern about the wellbeing of the child, the Day Ten process may be started before day ten is reached.

After three weeks' maximum, if a pupil/student is still absent with no reason why from parents/carers or any uncertainty around their absence, the Headteacher must contact East Sussex Child Missing Education (CME) (01273 481967 or email at cme@eastsussex.gov.uk). If a pupil/student is placed at the school by a different Local Authority, the school will subsequently contact the pupil's/student's LA under guidance of East Sussex EMA.

Lateness/punctuality

It is important for pupils to be on time at the start of the morning and afternoon school sessions and to lessons. The school day begins at **9:00am** and all pupils and students are expected to be in school between **8:45 and 9:00**. Morning registration is completed at **9.00** and it closes at **9.10am**.

All lateness is recorded daily. A pupil/student is considered late if they arrive a more than 10 minutes after the time for morning or afternoon registration. (This information is required from the school, should legal action by the local authority occur). Any pupil or student arriving after these times will be marked as having an unauthorised absence unless there is a reasonable explanation i.e. school transport was delayed, or there is an exceptional circumstance, in which case the appropriate code will be used. The Headteacher has the discretion to determine what is 'reasonable' lateness. The Headteacher will seek advice from the Executive Headteacher where necessary.

Arrival after the close of registration will be marked as **unauthorised absence** and coded **L** in line with East Sussex County Council and Department of Education guidance. This mark shows the pupil to be on site, but is legally recorded as an absence.

If a pupil is late due to a medical appointment, they will receive an **authorised absence**, coded **M**.

If a pupil travels by local authority provided bus/taxi to school, or school provided transport, and the transport is late, this will be recorded as **authorised**.

Absence requests

We ask that parents and carers request absence from school for any medical and dental appointments or other exceptional absence request in advance, via the submission of an Absence Request form.

All such requests will be passed to the Headteacher to consider approval. The Headteacher will then decide to approve the absence or not. The Headteacher will seek advice from the Executive Headteacher.

A copy of the absence request and any related documentation will be stored in the pupil's/student's file.

Leave of Absence in Term Time

Families are strongly encouraged not to request to take their child out of school for family holidays or events during term time. Any absence request in term time will be reviewed by the Headteacher, who will also seek advice from the Executive Headteacher. Such requests will only be approved in exceptional circumstances. Benefits of cost, convenience or availability do not constitute exceptional circumstances.

Requests for leave of absence during term time should be made to the Headteacher in writing **at least 15 school days prior** to the requested absence date. Any request will be judged on a case-by-case basis.

- Should a request not be agreed and subsequently the pupil or student is absent from school, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. On the pupil's/student's return, appropriate action will be taken by the school, up to and including requesting the child's Local Authority issues a fixed penalty notice (where at least 10 sessions in total have been missed) or takes further action in relation to the absence.

Continued or persistence absence

Absence is defined as 'Persistent Absence' if attendance falls below 90% e.g. they miss 10% or more of school, which equates to three weeks of absence or more across the school year.

Absence for whatever reason disadvantages a pupil or student by creating gaps in their learning. Research shows these gaps affect attainment when attendance falls below 95%.

As such, the school monitors all absence thoroughly and all attendance data is shared with the local authority and the Department for Education.

If a pupil or student has had absence and their attendance level is falling towards or below 90%, we will contact parents/carers to discuss the situation. Usually this will be via a face to face meeting, although it is possible that Teams may be used for this. Persistence absence is monitored at the end of every 'long term' (3x annually). A meeting will be organised to review and address the issue, including to identify if there is further support required. In addition, school Multi Agency Pupil Progress Meetings will also review individual pupil attendance 3x annually, identifying interventions and strategies to support improved attendance where appropriate.

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and carers and to promote attendance. Equally, parents/carers have a duty to make sure that their child attends. School staff are committed to working with parents and carers as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

The school will refer the matter to the County Council if absence is unauthorised and falls below 90%.

The school will also regularly analyse school attendance data in relation to other local schools (mainstream and special) and in relation to national attendance data. This analysis will be informed to help identify any aspects of attendance monitoring for further development and to identify where the school is performing well. It will include whole cohort analysis and analysis by different groups to ensure we are aware of any groups of pupils causing concern. This information will also be shared with governors.

Severe absence

Severe absence is a new term introduced by the government in 2022. Severe absence refers to pupils who miss 50% of school or more.

We will proactively use attendance data to identify pupils who are at 50% attendance or at risk of falling to this. In every case, the senior leader with responsibility for attendance will be aware of and understand the reasons for severe absence. Every pupil's family will be contacted at least termly to discuss and review any identified support or actions agreed to improve attendance.

Sometimes the reasons for severe absence will be complex and may be outside of the school control. In circumstances relating to disagreement over the pupil's placement at the school, we will maintain regular contact with the local authority assessment and planning team as well as ISEND and parents / carers where it is appropriate to do so, in order to agree a joint response to supporting improved attendance.

Where intervention is not working or parent /carers are not engaging with the school to improve attendance, the school will undertake to liaise regularly with both the assessment and planning officer and ISEND in order to, where appropriate, intensify support or intervention through, for example, referral to social care services should there be safeguarding concerns.

Identified pupils/students with specific medical, therapy or Special Educational needs, which contribute to a high level of absence (persistent or severe), will be supported by the following strategies:

- Weekly monitoring of attendance and absence
- Recording absence as authorised using the appropriate code
- Working with the Local Authority to record such absences as authorised to reflect attendance is as good as can be expected for these pupils/students and the school
- Provide home visits where appropriate
- Agreeing and making reasonable adjustments to maximise possible attendance.
- Make provision for home learning to enable the pupil to access their education.

In exceptional circumstances, we recognise that some pupils/students are not 'available for learning' and work with the LA and other agencies to allocate appropriate provision which may not be within our school.

Appendices

1. Absence Request Form Torfield
2. Absence Request Form Saxon Mount

Withdrawal from Learning Application: For Exceptional Circumstances - Torfield School

Did you know that across the year there are just 190 school days? That means there are already 175 days set aside for weekends, holidays, family visits and rewarding days out. We believe every school day counts to give your child the greatest opportunity of attaining a good education and to support a happy and healthy future.

With 175 days already marked out as 'non-school-days', you should have an exceptional reason to withdraw your child from school. The following are considered illegitimate reasons and are likely to be rejected and unauthorised:

- Trips to visit family/friends
- Your child's birthday
- Cheaper family holidays
- Tickets to sports/culture events




100% is recognised as an expected level of school attendance. If your child is out of school for 3 days each term, then their attendance is below 95% and they're spending more days out of school than in it! Should your child need time off due to illness, this figure will quickly become even lower. Because five days of school equates to 25 hours of learning, catching up with extra work out of school is unrealistic.

From a young person's perspective, missing schools means:

- Missing out on fun projects and school activities
- Struggling to catch up on work
- Disconnecting with school friends

The vast majority of headteachers do not authorise any absence in term time, in fact, many schools refused 100% of requests last year.

Think twice about whether you want to proceed.

WHAT IS GOOD ATTENDANCE?					
190 days	180 days	178 days	163 days	161 days	143 days
100%	95%	94%	86%	85%	75%
Good  Only 1-2 day missed per term		Worrying  Between 3-8 days missed per term		Serious Concern  More than 9 days missed per term	

To be completed by parent/carer:

Childs Name..... Tutor Group/ Class

Date of withdrawal from learning..... Date of return to learning.....

Total number of learning days missed.....

Reason withdrawal from learning is requested:

Your child has the right to a full time education and the opportunities that this can bring. We hope that you will work in partnership with us to make sure that your child attends school every day, allowing them access to the education they deserve.

I understand that if the request is unauthorised the Education Support, Behaviour & Attendance Service will be notified of the absence taken and a legal intervention may be instigated in the form of a Penalty Notice or Simple Caution. If a Penalty Notice is issued it will be to each parent for each child taken out of school and that this is a fine of £60 which increases to £120 if not paid within the first 21 days. I understand that if I do not pay this will result in legal action.

Name of Parent/Carer
.....
Signed:..... Date:

Home Address
.....
.....

This form will be submitted to the Headteacher for review. A senior member of staff will conduct a telephone interview with you to discuss the request and to confirm the decision.

Headteacher decision:

Name of child:..... Class..... Year Group.....

Date of telephone interview:.....

Date decision form sent home:.....

Authorised: Your request has been authorised for the following dates:/...../..... to/...../.....

Unauthorised: Your request has been unauthorised for the following dates:/...../.. to/...../.....

Penalty Notice request to ESBAS attaching telephone interview log

Headteacher signature..... Date:.....

Dear Parent / Carer,

ABSENCE REQUEST / FAMILY HOLIDAY IN TERM TIME

This letter relates specifically to requests for taking children out of school during term time for a family holiday or exceptional circumstance. The Department for Education (DfE) has amended the regulations and guidance in relation to absences in term time. There is no automatic right to take your child out of school during term time.

Government legislation no longer enables head teachers to authorise requests for leave for children to be taken out of school unless there are considered to be 'exceptional circumstances'. It is for the Head Teacher to determine the number of days a child can be away from school or if leave is granted. If you think that your request falls into this category you will need to complete the form on the reverse of this notification. A response will be sent to you as soon as possible. If the absence requested is not considered to be an exceptional circumstance, and you nevertheless take your child out of school, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised in line with guidance from the DfE and the County Council.

Parents are therefore asked to note the following:

- There is no entitlement for parents to remove their child from school for the purposes of a holiday in term time.
- In exceptional circumstances parents can request to remove their child for a family holiday.
- All such requests must be made on the school's official withdrawal from learning application form, stating clearly what the reason is for making the request.
- a covering letter is required stating the reason for the request.
- The "exceptional circumstances" must be clearly stated on the form.
- The form must be returned to the school office at least fifteen days before the start date of the holiday.
- Parents should not assume that returning the form guarantees that the holiday request will be approved.
- The Headteacher has the authority to decide whether or not to authorise the absence. In making a decision he/she will take the following into account.
- The reasons given for the holiday (e.g. the "exceptional" circumstances).
- The time of the year and/or term.
- The educational impact on the child.
- The child's previous attendance record – including any patterns of absences.
- The Headteacher will inform parents of the reason/s for a request being refused.
- In signing the form, parents are confirming that they understand the following:
- If a child is removed for a family holiday without approval, the absence will be marked as "unauthorised" in the class register. In addition, the Headteacher will report the absence to the Education Support, Behaviour and Attendance Service (ESBAS) who may issue a Fixed Penalty Notice. A Penalty Notice is a fine of £60 per child, per parent, which increases to £120 if not paid within the first 21 days. If the Penalty Notice remains unpaid this will result in further legal intervention.
- A child who is removed for a prolonged period in term time (that is – longer than a normal absence for sickness) will miss a large amount of school work while he or she is away and will be unprepared for the work on returning to school.
- The school cannot guarantee that the teacher will be able to spend time helping a child to catch up with the work missed during the holiday.
- Extra work to do while absent or on return will not usually be provided.

Yours sincerely,

Amanda Jagot,
Headteacher

Withdrawal from Learning Application: For Exceptional Circumstances - Saxon Mount School

APPLICATION BY PARENT/CARER FOR A HOLIDAY DURING TERM TIME

If, after reading the letter on the reverse, you consider you have exceptional circumstances to request a leave of absence during term time, please complete this form and return to the school at least 15 days before the date you wish to remove your child from school.

Pupil Name Tutor Group/Class

Home Address

First day of absence Date of return to school

Total number of days missed

Reasons for absence

.....

.....

.....

I understand that if the request is unauthorised the Education Support, Behaviour & Attendance Service will be notified of the holiday taken and a Penalty Notice will be issued. I understand that a Penalty is issued to each parent for each child taken out of school and that this is a fine of £60 which increases to £120 if not paid within the first 28 days. I understand that if I do not pay this may result in legal action.

Name of Parent/Carer making application

Signed Dated

(Please ensure you are giving at least 15 day's notice of the proposed absence)

✂-----

Pupil Name Tutor Group

AUTHORISED: Your holiday request has been authorised for the following dates:

___/___/___ to ___/___/___

UNAUTHORISED: Your holiday request has been unauthorised for the following dates:

___/___/___ to ___/___/___ as it does not meet the criteria set by the Department for Education

This means that it is not considered that the circumstances you describe are exceptional. If you proceed to take the absence, the Penalty Notice/s will be issued.

Signed Head Teacher Date ___/___/___