

Temple Ewell Church of England Primary School

Common Trust Policy, Use as Published

Trust Attendance policy

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1. Our Aim

Aquila's attendance target for this academic year is: 96.5%. We believe that regular attendance is the key to enabling children to gain the greatest benefit from their education and reach their full potential. Regular attendance is defined as **attending school on time every day when the school is open, unless there is an unavoidable reason for not doing so.**

Improving attendance is everyone's business. The foundation of good attendance is that an Aquila school is a calm, orderly, safe and supportive environment where all pupils want to be and where they are keen and ready to learn.

We recognise that some pupils find it harder to attend school. Therefore at all stages our schools will work with pupils and parents to remove barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships and working together to put the right support in place. We will actively promote this ethos throughout our school communities and encourage our schools to support pupils to achieve 96.5% attendance. Where this expectation is not met, we will work with schools to identify and address the barriers that prevent regular attendance.

We know that a good attendance policy and effective practices for improvement will involve interaction with the curriculum, behaviour, anti-bullying measures, special educational needs support, pastoral care and mental health and well-being work. Improvement will require concentrated effort from all teaching and non-teaching staff, governors, Aquila, the local authority and parents.

Research shows children and young people who attend school at least 96% of the time are more likely to achieve good results. Studies of attendance show a clear correlation between attendance and achievement, which continue throughout primary and secondary school. Good attendance develops the essential life skills necessary for young people to be responsible and successful citizens and is important for personal, social and emotional development and self-esteem.

Parents, please ensure that you and your child/children support your school's rules about attendance.

We explain about different types of absence in this policy which has been written with the Trust values of aspire and nurture at its heart

2. The Law.

The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school.

3. Working Together to Improve Attendance.

All partners, all teaching and non-teaching staff, governors, Aquila, the local authority, pupils and parents, should work together to improve attendance following these stages.

EXPECT. Aspire to high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents and build a culture where all can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across the school.

MONITOR. Rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.

LISTEN AND UNDERSTAND. When a pattern is spotted, discuss with pupils and parents so we listen and understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.

FACILITATE SUPPORT. Remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. This might include an early help referral or whole family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues.

FORMALISE SUPPORT. Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners should work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances, this may include formalising support through a parenting contract or education supervision order.

ENFORCE. Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, enforce attendance through statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.

4. Expect.

Aquila schools will promote the benefits of good attendance, set high expectations for every pupil and communicate these expectations clearly.

We believe that good attendance is a learned behaviour just as poor attendance can become a hard to break habit. As such, it is an essential part of the school culture and all staff have a role to play in promoting the importance of good attendance. Additionally in Temple Ewell Church of England Primary School, the designated senior leader with responsibility for championing and improving attendance is Angela Matthews. The Governor overseeing attendance is Dayle Hall.

To help focus on good attendance the school will:

- Celebrate and reward students who achieve our expectations of a high level of attendance and those who have shown sustained improvement
- Set high expectations for attendance and punctuality and communicate these regularly.
- Share attendance information with parents and students focusing on the link between attendance and achievement.
- Promote high attendance and punctuality through displays, assemblies, class discussion ; always reinforcing the link between attendance and achievement

- Communicate attendance matters to parents via My Child at School (MCAS); telephone; email; letter and through the school website.
- Continue to support families and children to attend school every day and on time.
- Publish this policy on the school website
- Ensure new parents are made aware of the school expectations

5. Monitor.

Admission and attendance registers will be kept up to date. The information for both admissions and attendance is held in Bromcom.

The attendance registers will be completed in both morning and afternoon sessions. The registers will be taken in the morning at 8.50am. Pupils are expected to attend every day that the school is open unless they are unwell or there are exceptional circumstances.

If a pupil is absent, parents are expected to contact the school through the My Child at School App or if this is not possible, via telephone. Parents must give a reason for the absence that will be recorded in Bromcom.

Leaders at both school and Trust level will monitor attendance data, including attendance for different groups of pupils and cohorts. Where levels of attendance fall below acceptable levels, investigation at individual level will be undertaken, with the aim of quickly working with parents and external agencies to re-establish clear expectations and improve attendance before achievement and well-being of pupils is negatively affected.

6. Listen and Understand.

Where a child does not attend school, for whatever reason, the school will contact parents/carers to highlight this. If absence levels are close to 96% we will discuss the issue via telephone, letter or email. Where there are genuine reasons for the absences and attendance is shown to be improving, the school will continue to monitor and review the attendance for the rest of the academic year and the start of the next.

School and parents will discuss barriers to attendance and plan targeted supportive actions to increase attendance. Aquila schools work hard to build strong respectful relationships with parents and these discussions will ensure the best placed person in the school team works with and supports the family and pupil to return to good attendance levels.

Where there are no genuine reasons for the absences, parents may be asked to meet with the Head Teacher or senior designated attendance lead to discuss the school's concerns. Visits to the family home may be made in order to discuss attendance matters. In some cases, if no improvement is made and there are not sufficient reasons for the absences, further legal action may be taken by Kent County Council in accordance with the Education Act 1996.

As part of our duty to safeguard pupils, schools will consider whether the patterns of attendance may indicate a safeguarding concern. School Attendance is part of our safeguarding duty. If a pupil is absent for two days or more without explanation, a home visit may be made and Police Welfare Checks can be requested.

7. Facilitate support.

Following investigation of pupil or parent concerns, it may be necessary to make changes or adaptations to school systems and routines for the individual pupil to ensure the return to good attendance. This may be temporary, until the habit of good attendance is achieved.

Strategies will vary from case to case but may include:-

- Collecting the pupil from home
- Welfare time to discuss concerns in school
- Removal of specific in school barriers to attendance
- Funded Breakfast Club
- Before school nurture provision

8. Formalise support.

When there is no improvement to attendance and pupils are at risk of persistent absence or pupils and parents are not engaging with the voluntary support, further formal action will be taken. Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school (equivalent to one day a fortnight across the full school year)

This will begin with a meeting in school to discuss and understand the barriers to attendance and agree interventions and actions to address them. This may include referral to services and organisations that provide support. If the child becomes persistently absent support may include one to one tuition or a parenting contract. Depending on the nature of the issue, and level of diagnosed SEN need, the school may apply for an EHCP. If the needs are wider and a whole family response is required, the school will encourage a voluntary early help assessment.

During this stage, it may also be appropriate to engage the Local Authority School Attendance Support Team in meetings that will clearly explain both the support on offer but also the legal implications and consequences of persistent and severe absence (missing 50% or more of school) on the pupil.

If parents refuse to engage with this support, the school will consider whether this an indication of a safeguarding issue and will seek advice under our legal obligations in Keeping Children Safe in Education. Severe absence will be considered an indication of neglect and therefore a safeguarding issue.

9. Enforce.

This is the final stage of the process flow chart.

Prevention – of poor attendance through celebration and reward for good attendance so that all pupils develop good patterns of attendance. Using data rigorously to pick up increasing levels of absence before it becomes a regular pattern. Using support and good attendance management to help families re-establish good attendance levels.

Voluntary support – early intervention to help parents and pupils overcome difficulties in establishing good attendance habits

Early intervention – to agree an action plan for pupils with higher levels of absence.

Enforce – work with the local authority on legal routes to ensure good attendance is re-established.

Where the supportive approach has not improved attendance, enforcement is the final stage where there are consequences to continued persistent or severe absence or rules about holidays in term time have been broken.

There are several options open at this stage and the family circumstances will be considered by the school, trust and local authority to be certain there will be a change in parental behaviour. See **Appendix 1**.

10. Children with medical conditions and SEND.

We recognise that these pupils may face greater challenges, however, their right to an education is the same as any other pupil so our attendance ambition is the same. To support these pupils and their families, reasonable adjustments will be made and detailed in the individual health care plan. We will ensure these pupils have access to support in school. Our aim is to be inclusive for these pupils without condoning poorer attendance.

In very exceptional circumstances schools may agree to a temporary part time timetable as a solution or part of a re-integration package. This will be strictly monitored and in place for the shortest time possible. A Pastoral Support Programme or other agreement will be time limited with the aim of the pupil returning to full attendance either at school or in an alternative provision.

11. Sharing data.

Aquila schools will share data and engage in meetings with the local authority through the regular Targeting Support Meetings.

In addition, schools will notify the local authority when a pupil is added to or deleted from the admissions register. This must be notified within 5 days of a child starting school, other than into youngest school year group on the normal date of admission, and before the pupil is deleted from the register, except on transfer to the next stage of education at the usual time.

12. The Role of Governance.

Local Governors and the Trust Board have a duty to monitor attendance to ensure actions are effective and to challenge trends. Aquila will also support schools through sharing of good practice at regular meetings of the designated attendance leaders. All schools will appoint a governor to focus on attendance. In Temple Ewell Church of England Primary School this is Dayle Hall.

If attendance is an issue in a school, the Trust and governors will work with the school leaders to develop a comprehensive attendance action plan, which will be evaluated and reviewed regularly.

Attendance data from Bromcom will be reported at every governing body and trust board meeting.

13. The Role of the Local Authority.

Individual pupils' barriers to attendance often go far beyond the school gates. Persistent absence is almost always a symptom of wider issues in a pupil's life, and barriers to attendance are often specific to local contexts. The local authority, statutory safeguarding partners and other local partners therefore have a crucial role in supporting pupils to overcome those barriers and ensuring all pupils can access the full-time education to which they are entitled. Local authorities are facilitators of wider support needed by individual families and schools to overcome barriers in the short term. They are also strategic leaders that work across a geographical area to remove barriers in the longer term.

Aquila schools will engage with the local authority School Attendance Support Team, attend Targeting Support Meetings, encourage multidisciplinary support for families and provide evidence if legal intervention by the local authority is needed.

Appendix 1 - Formal or Legal Enforcement Processes.

There are five types of formal and or legal process that can be followed if enforcement is needed to ensure the pupil receives their entitlement to a suitable education and parents comply with their duty to ensure the pupil attends the school at which they are registered.

1. A parenting contract.

This is a formal written agreement between the parents and either the school or local authority to provide a more formal route to secure engagement with support. A meeting will be arranged to explain the purpose and benefits of the parenting contract. Parents will be asked to outline their view on their child's attendance, the underlying issues and how they believe these can be addressed. If a parent fails to attend a meeting without good reason or notification, further attempts to make contact and arrange another meeting will be made, but all attempts at support will be recorded.

The contract will describe the requirements on parents, details of the support from the school and local authority. Support may include provision of a lead practitioner, signposting to local authority, including health services or the voluntary sector, including foodbanks or formal parenting programmes. A contract will generally be agreed for between 3 and 12 months. The contract will conclude with a statement by the parent that they will abide by the requirements. This statement will be signed by the parents. All parties will have a copy of the contract.

If a parent does not comply with the contract, the lead practitioner will make contact, seek an explanation and either review the contract if the parent is not at fault or issue a written warning that they are not satisfied with the explanation and stating that the contract will be terminated and another course of action pursued. A copy of this letter will be kept on file.

If there is no response to the warning or the non-compliance continues, a final meeting will be called to determine whether a different legal intervention is required. The decision and reasons will be formally recorded.

2. Education supervision orders (ESO).

An ESO will be used when voluntary support is not effective and this approach will be beneficial to parents and pupils, This approach may be used if there are safeguarding concerns, but generally the s.17 Child in Need or s.47 Child Protection Plans will be used.

The Local authority must fully consider using an ESO before moving to prosecution.

An ESO is made through the Family or High Court and gives the local authority a formal role in advising, helping and directing parents to ensure the pupil receives a suitable full time education. The order initially lasts for a year but extensions can be granted within the last three months for up to three years.

If it is decided that an ESO is appropriate, the local authority should notify parents in writing and set up a meeting to discuss with the parents. The local authority will write to parents and may combine an ESO with the service of an application notice. An officer of the local authority will be chosen as supervisor of the order and Aquila schools will work with this person to provide support.

Review meetings should be held every three months.

In the case of non-compliance with an ESO, parents may be guilty of an offence and on conviction may be liable to a fine of up to £1,000.

3. Attendance prosecution.

Where a child of compulsory school age fails to attend the school where they are registered regularly, parents may be guilty of an offence and can be prosecuted by the local authority. Prosecution is generally the last resort where all other voluntary and formal support or legal intervention has failed. Only the local authority can prosecute parents and they must fund all associated costs, including the preparation of court documentation.

Local authorities have the power to prosecute:

- Parents who fail to comply with a school attendance order issued by the local authority to require a parent to get their child registered at a named school (under section 443 of the Education Act 1996). This may result in a fine of up to level 3 (£1,000).
- Parents who fail to secure their child's regular attendance at a school, for which there are 2 separate offences: section 444(1) where a parent fails to secure the child's regular attendance; and section 444(1A) where a parent knows that the child is failing to attend school regularly and fails to ensure the child does so. The section 444(1) offence may result in a fine of up to level 3 (£1,000) and the section 444(1A) offence may result in a fine of up to level 4 (£2,500), and/or a community order or imprisonment of up to 3 months.
- Parents who fail to secure the regular attendance of their child at a place where the local authority or governing body has arranged alternative provision (under sections 444 and 444ZA). This may result in a fine of up to level 3 (£1,000), or if the parent is found to have known the child was not attending regularly and failed to ensure that they did so, a fine of up to level 4 (£2,500), and/or a community order or imprisonment of up to 3 months.
- Parents who persistently fail to comply with directions under an Education Supervision Order (under Schedule 3 to the Children Act 1989) or breach a Parenting Order or directions under the order (under section 375 of the Sentencing Act 2020). These may result in a fine of up to level 3 (£1,000).
- In deciding whether or not to prosecute, the Local authority should take into account the level of engagement from parents, including response to warnings and whether a safeguarding plan (Child in Need or Child Protection Plan) is appropriate.
- The 1996 Act also sets out the circumstances in which a pupil has not failed to attend school regularly and therefore the parent has not committed an offence under section 444(1) or (1A) of the Act (the statutory defences). These are:
 - The parent proves the pupil was prevented from attending by their ill health or any unavoidable cause, including exclusion.
 - The pupil has been granted leave of absence by the school or, in the case of alternative provision, by a person authorised to do so.
 - The absence was on a day set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parent(s) belong.
 - The parent proves the local authority were under a duty to provide transport to the school and have failed to do so.
 - If the child has no fixed abode and the parent can prove that their trade / business requires them to travel, and the child has attended school as regularly as the nature of the trade or business permits, and (if the child is 6 or over) the child has attended school for at least 200 sessions during the preceding 12 months up to and including the date on which the proceedings were instituted.

Statutory defences are possible from other types of provision but not generally in a maintained school.

The local authority must bring the case to court within 6 months of the alleged offence and provide the parent with a formal written notification, explaining the process and possible consequences. An application to the Magistrates Court will be made and the local authority will serve the summons to the parent. If the parent is found guilty a fine or a community order or parenting order may be issued.

4. Parenting orders.

These may be imposed by the Court following conviction for non-attendance alongside a fine and/ or community order. Parents do not need to agree prior to the order being made which specifies the responsible officer and require the parent to comply with the arrangements in the order. Non-compliance could lead to a fine of up to level 3, currently £1,000.

5. Fixed penalty notices.

These are served on parents as an alternative to prosecution, where they have failed to ensure their child of compulsory school age attends school regularly and the absence is not authorised and constitutes an offence. They can be issued to each parent liable for the attendance offence. They are intended to prevent the need for court action and are intended to change parental behaviour.

Fixed penalty notices must be issued in line with the Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007 and can only be issued by a headteacher or someone authorised by them (a deputy or assistant head), a local authority officer or the police. All schools and the police must send copies of fixed penalty notices issued to the local authority.

Fixed penalty notices 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 fixed period or permanent exclusion. The parents must have been notified by the school at the time of the exclusion the days that the child must not be present in a public place.

Appendix Two - Types of absences

Every instance of absence has to be classified by the school (not by parents) as either authorised or unauthorised. All reasons for absences are fully investigated and if no reason is given, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

Authorised absences (approved absences)- Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason, like illness, medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time. Absences due to illness/appointments need to be reported to the school via telephone/email/MCAS no later than 9.30am on each day of absence.

Illness- In most cases, absences for illness reported following the school's procedure will be authorised, unless there is a reason to believe that the illness is not genuine, or if there is persistent sickness absences that are affecting a child's attendance and education. In these cases, the school reserves the right to request supporting medical evidence for the period of illness. This can be in the form of a medical appointment card or a prescription issued on the day of absence. Only in rare cases will the school request a letter from a GP or medical practitioner.

Absences due to illness which have not been reported to the school by the Parent/Carer on the first day of absence may not be authorised and will be recorded as an unauthorised absence. The reporting of absence due to illness remains the responsibility of the Parent/Carer.

It is school policy that where a child has been sent home from school or absent due to vomiting or diarrhoea, they must not return to school until 48 hours after the last episode to reduce the risk of infection to other children and adults at the school.

Medical/Dental Appointments- Wherever possible, medical and dental appointments should be made out of school time. Where appointments during school time are unavoidable, the absences may be authorised providing that we are informed of the absences following the school's procedure.

The child should be absent for as short a period of time as possible. All absences for medical or dental appointments must be supported by providing the school office with sight of or a copy of the appointment card or letter – only then will the absence be authorised.

Exclusion- When a child is excluded from attending school for a fixed period of time, this is counted as authorised absence.

Religious Observance- Aquila acknowledges the multi-faith nature of school communities and recognises that on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside of school holidays or weekends and this necessitates a consideration of authorised absence for religious observance. One day will be granted as authorised absence for religious observance of festivals such as Eid, and any additional days taken may be recorded in the register as unauthorised absence. The school must still be notified of the absence by 9.30am on these occasions.

Exceptional Circumstances- Only the Head Teacher can approve absences from school classed as Exceptional Circumstances. Examples of such absences may include a family bereavement, music or ballet exams, visits to other schools or sporting activities and service personnel returning from a deployment where leave will not fall in a school holiday. Some holidays in term-time may also be classed as Exceptional Circumstances and each case will be reviewed on an individual basis by the Head Teacher. However, there is no automatic right to take a holiday in term time. Schools will never authorise holidays which fall in SATs week or at the start of a new academic year, as research shows poor attendance in the first key days of a new year are closely linked to persistent absence through the year.

To apply for an absence to be recorded as Exceptional Circumstances, Parents/Carers must email the school for the attention of the Head Teacher outlining the following: -

- The reason their child will be absent from school during term-time and why it should be classed as Exceptional Circumstances.
- Why the absence is unavoidable
- The dates of the intended absence and the reason

The Head Teacher will then review the request, taking into account: -

- The circumstances of the request and purpose of the absence the length of the proposed leave –
- The child's current and previous attendance record – No holiday will be authorised if the proposed leave will take the pupil's absence to 10% (i.e. persistent absence)
- Their ability to catch up on missed schooling. –
- Proximity to SATs tests or other school exams –
- The child's educational needs and general welfare –
- Previous term-time holiday / absences due to Exceptional Circumstances taken in the current and previous academic years.

Only the school can approve or decline a request and make the decision as to whether the absence be authorised. Retrospective requests will not be considered and the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. If permission for the absence is not given and the child is still absent, it will be recorded as unauthorised and a Penalty Notice may be requested from Kent County Council.

Unauthorised Absences

Holidays during term time- Absences due to family holidays which have not been designated by the Head Teacher as 'Exceptional Circumstances' will be recorded in the register as unauthorised. Requests for holidays during term time need to be submitted via email to the school as detailed above (see 'exceptional circumstances'). All requests for holidays during term time will be responded to in writing by the school giving details of whether or not a Penalty Notice will be issued for the absence.

Absences for unsatisfactory reasons- These absences will be recorded as unauthorised: -

- A child or family member's birthday –
- Attending a wedding or other celebration –
- Closure of a sibling's school or class (for example because of strike action) –
- Illness where the child is considered well enough to attend school –
- Unable to get up in the morning –
- Arriving to school late after registers close at 8.55am.
- A sibling is ill
- Confusion over school dates
- Not having a complete school uniform

Penalty Notices Kent County Council may issue Penalty Notices where a child has of 8 or more sessions (4 or more days) of unauthorised absences. This includes absences due to lateness after the registers have closed, unauthorised absences due to non-reporting or illnesses where supporting medical evidence has been requested but not supplied. Temple Ewell Church of England Primary School may request that a Penalty Notice is issued to the parent/s for the absences. In requesting and issuing Penalty Notices, the school will follow Kent County Council's Code of Conduct for Penalty Notices. More information on Penalty Notices can be found on the Kent County Council website.

Lateness A pupil arriving late can seriously disrupt their own and others' learning. Registers are taken in the classroom before 8.55am, children arriving after these times will be recorded as late and must report to the School Office to sign

in. Registers close completely at 9.01am, children arriving after this time without good reason such as a medical appointment, dentist or another previously agreed reason, will be marked on the register as having an unauthorised absence for the whole morning. In such cases, the school will inform Parents/Carers of the decision and explain the possible consequences of continued unauthorised absence due to persistent lateness. Children who have at least 8 absences in the register due to unauthorised lateness within any 10 week period may be subject to a

Penalty Notice being requested from Kent County Council. If a child is persistently late (more than 30% of lateness in any 10 week period) then Temple Ewell Church of England Primary School reserves the right to unauthorise the absence for arrival after 9.00am and the penalty notice procedure will take place. Temple Ewell Church of England Primary School will contact families that are persistently late to offer support and guidance throughout this process.

Children missing in education Where a child is absent from school for 10 days or more and no contact has been made by the parents to confirm the reason and the expected date of return (including where children have been granted leave for Exceptional Circumstances and have failed to return on the agreed date), the school will consider them to be missing. The child will be referred to the Education Welfare Service which could result in their removal from Temple Ewell Church of England Primary School registers and a re-application will need to be made for another school place. If the school has any concerns regarding the safety of a missing child prior to the 10-day period, a referral may also be made to the Education Welfare Service.

Attendance Support Temple Ewell Church of England Primary School offers varied support for children or families that are having difficulties with attendance or persistent lateness. A list of Family Support Services can be found on the website, or the matter can be discussed with a member of the school team.

Formal guidance informing this policy:-

Education Act 1996, which states if any child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at school fails to attend regularly at the school, his/her parent, is guilty of an offence.

Working Together to Improve School Attendance May 2022

The Children Act 1989

The Crime and Disorder Act 1998

The Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003

The Education and Inspections Act 2006

The Sentencing Act 2020

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006

The Education (Parenting Contracts and Parenting Orders) (England) Regulations 2007

The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007

Relevant government guidance

Parental responsibility measures for attendance and behaviour

Children missing education

Keeping children safe in education

Working together to safeguard children

Elective home education

Alternative provision: statutory guidance for local authorities

Exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England

Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions

Ensuring a good education for children who cannot attend school because of health needs

Promoting and supporting mental health and wellbeing in schools and colleges

Approaches to preventing and tackling bullying