TOWERS SCHOOL

AND SIXTH FORM CENTRE

ATTENDANCE AND PENALTY NOTICE POLICY

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SLT Responsibility: A. Kinsella-Wood
Approved By: Principal

THE TOWERS SCHOOL & SIXTH FORM CENTRE

Attendance & Penalty Notice Policy – changes from previous version

Audit Log		
Section of policy	**Update**	**Date**
3.1 Attendance register	Wording changes to reflect current procedures	June 24
3.2 Unplanned absence	Wording changes to reflect current procedures	June 24
3.4 Lateness and punctuality	Wording changes to reflect current procedures	June 24

Attendance and Penalty Notice Policy

1. Aims

Towers school aims to meet its obligations with regards to school attendance by:

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

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

Towers School is committed to the continuous raising of achievement of all our students. Regular attendance is critical if our students are to be successful and benefit from the opportunities presented to them. One of the principles is to celebrate success. Good attendance is fundamental to a successful and fulfilling school experience. We actively promote 100% attendance for all our students and use rewards and praise to promote this.

The Trustees, Principal and staff, in partnership with parents have a duty to promote full attendance at Towers school.

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 students at risk by encouraging anti-social behaviour.

It is the parents' responsibility to contact the school on the first day their child is absent and each day of absence thereafter. 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 Towers School and inform the school when their child is returning.

All students that arrive late must report to Student Reception where the reason for lateness is recorded.

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the attendance guidance from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on Towers 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 (Student Registration) (England) Regulations 2006
- The Education (Student Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2010
- The Education (Student Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2011
- The Education (Student Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013
- The Education (Student 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.

3. School procedures

3.1 Attendance register

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

The attendance register will be taken during personal development time, which starts at 08.40am every morning and once during every lesson throughout the day. It will mark whether every student is:

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

The register for the first session will be taken at 08.40 hrs and will be kept open until 9:10 hrs.

3.2 Unplanned absence

Parents must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence, for example, if their child is unable to attend due to ill health by 08.30 or as soon as practically possible (see also section 6).

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt or the student has more than 10 days absence, the school may ask parents to provide specific medical evidence as to why the individual is unfit to attend school. This evidence could include a doctor's note, prescription 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.

3.3 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. As previously

stated, evidence of appointments may be requested by the school.

However, we strongly encourage parents to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the student should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary. Parents should supply the school with a copy of the medical / dental appointment letter if requested by the school.

Applications for other types of absence in term time must also be made in advance. Information relating to whether the School can authorise such absences can be found in section 4.

3.4 Lateness and punctuality

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

Students arriving late must report straight away to Student Reception. Where their name and the reason for lateness will be recorded.

A student who arrives after the register has closed (at 9:10am) will be marked as absent, using the Code U. This will count as an unauthorised absence and a detention may be issued. Frequent lateness after the register has closed (U) will be discussed with parents and could provide grounds for prosecution or a Penalty Notice.

3.5 Following up absence

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.

3.6 Reporting to parents

The School reports to parents on their child's attendance record via the Arbor parent app.

4. Authorised and unauthorised absence

4.1 Granting approval for term-time absence

The Principal may not grant any leave of absence to students during term time unless they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'.

We define 'exceptional circumstances' as

- 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.
- 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 funeral of a person close to the family.

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 Principal's discretion.

Valid reasons for authorised absence include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments – as explained in sections 3.2 and 3.3
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the student's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Traveller students 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 student is attending educational provision Only the Principal can authorise absence using a consistent approach.

The Principal is not obliged to accept a parent's explanation. 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.

4.2 Unauthorised absence

The following reasons are examples of absence that will not be authorised:

- Persistent non-specific illness e.g. poorly/unwell
- Absence of siblings if one child is ill
- Oversleeping
- Inadequate clothing/uniform
- Confusion over school term dates
- Medical/dental appointments of more than half a day without very good reasons
- Child's/family birthday
- Shopping trips
- Family holiday

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

When a referral is made, the child's registration certificate, copies of all letters sent to parents and minutes of any meetings will be attached to the completed statutory attendance intervention referral form with any other relevant information.

Local Authority Action may include:

- Attendance Improvement Meeting
- Home visits

- Liaison with other agencies
- Fast track to prosecution

4.3 Study leave

Study leave is not granted by default.

4.4 Legal sanctions Penalty Notices Proceedings for Poor Attendance

Penalty Notices are issued in accordance with Kent County Council's Education Penalty Notices Code of Conduct effective from January 2016 and revised in April 2017.

• A Penalty Notice will only be issued in cases of absence for 10 or more half day sessions (5 School days) without authorisation during any 100 possible school sessions or period of 50 days of schooling – these do not need to be consecutive.

• A Penalty Notice can also be issued where an excluded child is found in a public place during school hours.
• 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) 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.

5. Strategies for promoting attendance

The school rewards good attendance in celebration PD lessons with certificates and badges. The school works with parents to support regular attendance by communicating early about issues, acknowledging positive improvements, indicating a named contact in school, usually within the Welfare team.

6. Attendance monitoring

The attendance officer monitors student absence on a daily basis.

Parents are expected to call the school in the morning if their child is going to be absent due to ill health (see section 3.2).

Parents are expected to call the school at the start of every day that their child is absent.

If a student's absence goes above 5 days we may contact the parents to discuss the reasons for this (see appendix 2).

If after contacting parents a student's absence continues to rise, we will consider involving a School Liaison Officer from the local authority.

The persistent absence threshold is 10%. If a student's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 10%, the student will be classified as a persistent absentee.

Student-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 trustees.

The school collects and stores attendance data, and uses it internally, for example, to track the attendance of individual students, identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern, and monitor and evaluate those children identified as being in need of intervention and support.

7. Children Missing Education

No child will be removed from the school roll without consultation between the Principal and the Inclusion and Attendance Service when appropriate. Where a child is missing from education, Local Authority guidance will be followed, by completing a Child Missing Education referral under the following circumstances:

• 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 (student file) has been requested by another school.

8. Roles and responsibilities

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

8.1 The Trust Board

The Trust Board is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school on at least a termly basis. It also holds the Principal to account for the implementation of this policy.

8.2 The Principal

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

8.3 The Attendance Manager

The Attendance Manager will oversee attendance through the Welfare Team.

- Monitors attendance data at the Towers School and individual student levels
- Reports concerns about attendance to the Assistant Principal
- Works with Welfare Managers to tackle persistent absence
- Arranges calls, meetings and home visits with parents to discuss attendance issues (See Appendix 2: Timeline of the Staged Approach for Managing Poor Attendance)
- Advises the Principal when to issue fixed-penalty notices

8.4 Class Teachers and PD teachers

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

9. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed every year by the Assistant Principal & Attendance Officer. At every review, the policy will be updated on the website.

10. Links with other policies

This policy is linked to our Child Protection Policy & Procedures.