

Student Attendance Policy



Rationale

Our Attendance Policy is set to reflect the current regulations concerning the attendance of students at the college and should be read in conjunction with the LA guidelines on attendance and policy on holidays in term time. It is to be considered in conjunction with the statutory regulations governing attendance at schools and will not affect these. The maintenance of a good level of attendance is a fundamental part of the ethos of the college.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- ▲ ensure there are clear, relevant guidelines for keeping registers which are carefully and routinely carried out by staff.
- ▲ ensure that good attendance has a high priority with students, parents/carers and staff.
- ▲ demonstrate clearly the procedures when there is a concern about an absence.
- ▲ ensure understanding of the actions that can be taken by Torbay Council's Attendance Improvement Service to ensure good attendance.

Rights, Responsibilities and Roles

The College:

- ▲ will ensure that all relevant staff understand and apply the college registration process: that they must complete all registers accurately at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session and each other lesson and that incomplete or inaccurate registers are unacceptable both from a safeguarding aspect and as they provide a daily record of attendance which may be required in a court of law.
- ▲ will ensure that clear attendance expectations and information is regularly communicated to parents/carers through a variety of media such as the college website, newsletters, the college prospectus and parents' meetings.
- ▲ will record and monitor all absenteeism and lateness accurately.
- ▲ will ensure that the attendance of all students is monitored on a fortnightly basis, in order to identify persistent absentees and those students at risk of becoming persistent absentees.

- ▲ has clear procedures to identify and follow up all absence and lateness, allocating individual staff roles and responsibilities.
- ▲ will review this Attendance Policy and associated procedures annually in consultation with Torbay Council's Attendance Improvement Service.

Parents/Carers:

- ▲ have a legal responsibility to ensure that their child regularly attends college or any alternative provision put in place. Failure to fulfill this duty may result in legal action being taken by Torbay Council.
- ▲ are responsible for ensuring that their child attends college regularly, punctually, properly dressed and equipped and in a fit condition to learn.
- ▲ are responsible for immediately informing the college of the reason for an absence on the first morning of the absence and each morning thereafter.
- ▲ should not take their child on holiday in term time and are made aware that the potential consequences of doing so without prior written permission from the college include being issued with a fixed penalty notice and a prosecution. Further details can be found below in the 'Leave of Absence during term time' section.

Absence

All absences must be explained by parents/carers and the college will then decide whether or not the absence can be authorised.

Some examples of absences that may be authorized are: as follows (this list is not exhaustive):

- ▲ Illness¹
- ▲ Exceptional family circumstances such as a bereavement
- ▲ Days of religious observance
- ▲ Unavoidable medical/dental appointments²

¹Medical evidence may be requested where a student has been absent due to illness for 5 consecutive days or more or where their attendance is below 93% or they are regularly absent due to illness. Failure to provide evidence when requested may result in the absences being recorded as unauthorised. As we understand that writing letters for this purpose is not a good use of GP time and resources, the evidence can be a signed GP appointment card or a copy of a prescription slip.

²All routine (non-emergency) appointments should be made, whenever possible, outside of college hours. If an appointment during college hours is unavoidable, evidence of this appointment will need to be provided. Failure to provide evidence may result in the absence being recorded as unauthorised.

Leave of absence during term time

The college works in accordance with legislation made clear in the Education (Student Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, whereby leave of absence may not be granted during term time, unless there are exceptional circumstances, and that the number of days a student can be absent from college when leave is granted will be determined by the Principal or Vice Principal to whom that responsibility is delegated.

Requests for leave of absence must be submitted by parents/carers using an Absence Request Form available from the college reception office at least half a term in advance of the proposed absence. Requests for leave of absence will be decided on a case by case basis and granted only where it is determined that there are exceptional circumstances.

Parents/Carers requesting leave of absence will be advised of the outcome in writing. If the absence is not authorised and the student is removed from college anyway, the college may refer the case to Torbay Council's Attendance Improvement Service to consider issuing a penalty notice to the parents/carers for the unauthorised absence.

If a student is absent from college during term time and no absence request has been made, the college will write to the parents/carers to inform them that the absence has not been authorised and that a Penalty Notice may be issued. If the parents/carers can demonstrate that the absence was due to an exceptional circumstance and that an absence request could not have been made in advance, a Penalty Notice will not be issued.

The notices carry a financial penalty, details of which, along with other information are published by Torbay Council's Attendance Improvement Service at <https://www.torbay.gov.uk/schools-and-learning/attendance/holidays-in-term-time/>

The current penalty is £60 if paid in full within 21 days or £120 if paid in full after this time but within 28 days. Part or late payments are not acceptable and there is no legal right to appeal the Penalty Notice once it has been issued.

Failure to comply with a Penalty Notice may result in prosecution proceedings being initiated for an offence of failing to ensure regular school attendance which is contrary to section 444 of the Education Act 1996. A conviction may result in a fine of up to £2,500 and/or a maximum of three months imprisonment.

Absence Procedures

At the beginning of each academic year, the college will remind parents/carers of the procedure for reporting absence as below:

- ▲ Before 8.30 am on the first day of absence the parents/carers must inform the college that their child will be absent by telephoning the 24 hour absence reporting line (01803 408841) , by sending an absence message via SchoolGateway or sending an email to attendance@thespirescollege.com. They must give a reason for the absence and an indication of the expected duration. Unless otherwise stated, for instance if the student will be hospitalised for a known amount of time or must remain absent for 48 hours following sickness and/or diarrhoea, the parent/carer must make contact each morning of every subsequent day of absence. A record of all reports of absence will be kept by the college and details will be entered into the student database accordingly.
- ▲ Registers will be taken by college staff and details entered into the student database accordingly.
- ▲ If a member of staff is concerned about the absence of a student for any reason, they will raise their concerns with an appropriate colleague such as the Pastoral Support Manager, Head of Year, designated safeguarding personnel or a member of the Senior Leadership Team.
- ▲ Each morning of an unexplained absence, parents/carers of the absent student will be sent an automated message asking them to contact the college. Non- response to this message will result in the absence being recorded as unauthorised. Further action may be taken, such as contact with other family members and persons named as contacts for the student or a home visit, which may include speaking with neighbours. Concerns may be shared with appropriate agencies such as safeguarding and child protection officers to ensure the safety of the student. Parents/Carers are responsible to keeping their contact details up to date.
- ▲ Any child of compulsory school age who is not currently attending school is a 'Child Missing Education' (CME). If a student has unexplained absence for 10 consecutive days, or sooner in some cases, the college will notify the School Attendance Team at Torbay Local Authority. The School Attendance Team will liaise with relevant agencies. More information is available on their website: <https://www.torbay.gov.uk/schools-and-learning/attendance/missing-education/> . If a student leaves Torbay, it is important that their parents/carers advise the college of the intended new school or, if a school place has not yet been allocated, the Local Authority area of their new address.
- ▲ If a student with an unexplained absence is subject to a child protection plan or if the college has particular safeguarding concerns, the college will immediately notify the Safeguarding Hub and the Attendance Improvement Service.

Lateness

Arriving to college late results in loss of learning which, when persistent, can add up to a significant proportion of a student's time at college. Disruption is also caused to classes when students arrive late. Therefore the college employs the following strategies to improve punctuality.

Lateness procedures

- ▲ Students who are not in their tutor rooms for registration at 8.30 am are considered to be late and this is recorded as such with the use of an 'L' mark. These students must explain the reason for their lateness to their tutor.
- ▲ Students who arrive at college after 8.30 am are considered to be late and this is recorded as such with the use of an 'L' mark. These students must sign in with a designated member of staff on duty at reception, stating the reason for their lateness.
- ▲ Students who arrive after 8.50 am are considered as late and, as the morning registers are closed at this point, this is recorded as unauthorised absence*. These students must report to reception upon arrival, stating the reason for their lateness. This information will be recorded on ClassCharts and conveyed to the appropriate Pastoral Support Manager. '
- ▲ The appropriate mark will be entered into the student database as soon as possible.
- ▲ Late marks are monitored daily and addressed with students where concerns arise. Students who are late will receive de-merit. Persistent lateness will be addressed by the Head of Year and further sanctions may be applied.

*Students with proof that they are late due to medical appointments will have their attendance marked as such, rather than unauthorised.

Managing poor attendance

The college intends to work with families as much as possible to support good attendance and is keen to employ working relationships with parents/carers.

Student attendance is monitored by the Pastoral Support Managers.

▲ **Attendance Letter 1:**

If a student's attendance level falls to 96% or below, parents/carers are advised by letter that their child's attendance has dropped below the acceptable level.

▲ **Attendance Letter 2:**

If the student's attendance does not improve, approximately two weeks following the date of the first attendance letter, a second letter will be sent inviting parents/carers to attend a meeting with the Pastoral Support Manager.

▲ **Attendance letter 3:**

If the parents/carers do not attend the meeting scheduled in Attendance Letter 2, Attendance letter 3 is sent immediately.

If the parents/carers do attend the meeting but the student's attendance does not improve, Attendance Letter 3 will be sent approximately two weeks after the meeting. This letter invites parents/carers to attend a second meeting with the Pastoral Support Manager in order to identify ways to support the student to improve their attendance.

The Pastoral Support Managers work closely with Torbay Council's Attendance Improvement Service and will refer to them for guidance where persistent absence occurs and there is no response to measures taken by the college or improvement in attendance.

If, at any time, a child has ten or more unauthorised absences equating to 10% within a 6 month period, the college will refer the case to the appointed Educational Welfare Officer or Torbay Council's Attendance Improvement Service to consider legal options available. Legal options include: Penalty Notices, Education Supervision Orders, School Attendance Orders and Prosecution. Please see Torbay Council's website for further details.

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