

Temple Grove Academy Attendance Policy

September 2020

Statement of Intent

Temple Grove Academy is committed to the continuous raising of achievement of all our pupils. From September 2020 attendance will be mandatory for ALL except where Statutory Exemptions apply. Regular attendance is critical if our pupils are to be successful and benefit from the opportunities presented to them. Open dialogue between school staff and parents is actively encouraged, and recognised as being fundamental to building collaborative relationships between home and school. We do recognise that some pupils may need some social and emotional support on their return to school; this will be assessed and address through our school SEND officer. Staff have engaged in training to support their ongoing knowledge of how emotional wellbeing impacts of learning and will be responsive to children's needs if their behaviour is of a concern.

One of our basic principles is to celebrate success. Good attendance is fundamental to a successful and fulfilling school experience. We actively promote 100% attendance for all our pupils and we use a variety of weekly, termly and annual awards to promote good attendance and punctuality.

The Governors, Headteacher and Staff in partnership with parents have a duty to promote full attendance at Temple Grove Academy

Parental Responsibility

Parents continue to have a legal duty to ensure that their children attend school regularly and arrive at their allocated time and at the entrance specified. 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 pupils at risk by encouraging anti-social behaviour.

It is the parents' responsibility to contact the school on the first day their child is absent. This is a safeguarding requirement so that all parties know that a child is safe and their whereabouts is known. Parents will be required to update the school on the progress of their child's symptoms as we continue to navigate the safe exit from the COVID19 pandemic. To aid this process Temple Grove Academy uses the Studybugs App:

<https://studybugs.com>

We actively encourage all parents to download this app and use it to report sickness, however this will be followed up by our Welfare Officer to ascertain whether Public Health Advice is necessary, and to offer reassurance on a child's return to school. Studybugs is a secure system and all communications are encrypted.

All pupils who arrive late must report to the school office to ensure that their lateness is recorded and to sanitise their hands.

The Role of the School Staff

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

Our Attendance Team consists of: Mrs Lisa Sprigmore, ADHT, who has overall responsibility for monitoring attendance issues. Mrs Tracy Rust, Office Manager, and Mrs Sarah Cattley, Welfare Officer, will manage the day to day attendance issues.

Bubble Teachers complete a register at the beginning of each morning and once during the afternoon session. Marking the attendance registers twice daily is a legal requirement. (The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006). Teachers mark pupils present, absent or late. The teacher notifies the Attendance team of children whose attendance is causing concern.

It is the responsibility of the Attendance Team to ensure:

- Attendance and lateness records are up to date
- All parents are contacted on the first day of absence by phone to ascertain to ascertain the nature of the child's illness / symptoms
- A home visit will be carried out should we be concerned with a child's absence or lack of communication with school
- The appropriate attendance code is entered into the register (see National Attendance Codes)
- Parents are informed termly of the child's attendance figure

Timeline of the Staged Approach for Managing Poor Attendance

- Studybugs produce daily alerts should a child's attendance dip below 95%, parents will be contacted to make them aware of the issue.
- Weekly Attendance monitoring meetings are held by the attendance team.
- 90 - 95% attendance - school intervention letters are sent and followed up with a telephone conversation.
- Where the level of absence has not improved and there are unauthorised absences, the school will make a referral to the KCC Inclusion and Attendance Service using the Digital Front Door. If it is not clear a referral to the Service is appropriate, the school will consult with the Local Authority School Liaison Officer for advice.

Children Missing from Education

No child should be removed from the school roll without consultation between the Headteacher and the Inclusion and Attendance Service when appropriate. Please see the circumstances below:-

Where a child is missing from education, Local Authority guidance will be followed, by completing a Child Missing Education referral for the following circumstances:-

- If 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 (pupil file) has been requested by another school.

Lateness

At Temple Grove Academy the register is taken at the start of the school day (staggered start times in place for each Bubble). Pupils arriving after their allocated time will be required to report to the school office.

Frequent lateness will be discussed with parents.

Authorising Absence

Only the Headteacher can authorise absence using a consistent approach. The Headteacher 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.

Absence (for example leave for holidays) during term time can only be approved in "exceptional circumstances". The following reasons are examples of absence that will not be authorised:

- Persistent nonspecific illness e.g. poorly/unwell
- Absence of siblings if one child is ill
- Oversleeping
- Inadequate clothing/uniform
- Confusion over school dates
- Medical/dental appointments of more than half a day without very good reasons
- Child's/family birthday
- Shopping trip
- Family Holidays (with some rare exceptions)

Persistent unauthorised absence (10% or more of the school year) may result in an AS1 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 **need to** be attached to the completed AS1 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

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 can 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)

Exceptional circumstances could include:

- 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 wedding or funeral of a person close to the family.
- Any strong personal reasons why a family might need to take a child away from school for a short break.

Any examples provided are illustrative rather than exhaustive. It is acceptable to take a pupil's previous record of attendance into account when the school is making decisions. The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are rare, significant, unavoidable and short. And by 'unavoidable' it implies that an event could not reasonably be scheduled at another time. It is important to note that Headteachers can agree the absence of a child in exceptional circumstances and this discretion can be used also to determine the length of the authorised absence.

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.

Important – please be aware

Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 says that parents are **guilty** of an offence of failing to secure regular attendance at school unless they can prove that the child was absent:

- with leave (the school has given permission)
- due to sickness or any unavoidable cause (the sickness or unavoidable cause must relate to the child, not the parent)
- religious observance
- failure by the Local Authority to provide transport

In law, these are the only acceptable reasons for a child being absent from school.

The Headteacher may authorise absence in “exceptional circumstances” but this must be requested in advance and agreement to each request is at the discretion of the Headteacher, acting on behalf of the Governing Body (Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006). Each case will be judged on its merits and the Headteacher’s decision is final. Once the decision not to authorise leave is taken, it cannot be authorised retrospectively.

If the absence is not authorised and the holiday is taken anyway, the case may be referred to the Inclusion and Attendance Service who may issue a Penalty Notice to each parent for each child taken out of school.

Failure to pay the penalty in full by the end of the 28 day period will result in prosecution by the Local Authority.