

Trent CE Primary School Governing Body

ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY POLICY



Kindness Thankfulness Perseverance

“A new command I give you: love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another”
Inspired by Jesus’ example, the Trent school community aims to serve one another in love.

We show **kindness** to others because God has shown us great kindness.

We live **thankful** lives, because every good thing comes from God.

We **persevere**, not giving up, because God is our helper.

Approved by committee/GB	Full GB
Ratified by GB	October 2024
Date for review	September 2026

School Absence Policy (2024)

This policy is written with the school's vision in mind: Inspired by Christ, we serve one another in love.

We believe that being inspired by Christ in the area of attendance and punctuality, means that we as a school have a responsibility to ensure equal and fair access to education for all children under our care. Just as Jesus cared for all people equally, we want to ensure that all children attending Trent School are given the same opportunities as each other. This can only happen when all children are in school for the same amount of time. Just as Jesus loved everyone, we seek to show love and support to all families and help them ensure that there are no children who miss out on the education that they need and is legally due to them.

1. Purpose

Regular attendance at school is essential for every child's educational success and personal development. Consistent attendance ensures that pupils do not miss out on vital learning opportunities, enabling them to build on previous knowledge, develop critical skills, and stay engaged with the curriculum. Beyond academics, attending school regularly fosters social skills, builds resilience, and helps children form positive relationships with their peers and teachers. Irregular attendance can lead to gaps in learning, lower achievement, and feelings of isolation, all of which can negatively impact a child's future prospects. Therefore, promoting good attendance is key to ensuring every child reaches their full potential.

This policy outlines the procedures for managing pupil absences to ensure compliance with the latest legal requirements and promote regular school attendance. It applies to all pupils enrolled at the school.

2. Legal Framework

This policy is designed in line with the **Education Act 1996**, **Children and Families Act 2014**, and new amendments introduced in 2024. These include:

- **Department for Education (DfE) Guidance on School Attendance (August 2024)**, emphasizing collaboration and the removal of barriers to attendance through multi-disciplinary teams.
- **Children Missing Education – Updated August 2024**
- **Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions at School (December 2015)**
- **Education for Children with Health Needs who Cannot Attend School (December 2023)**
- **Suspensions and Exclusions – Updated August 2024**
- **Keeping Children Safe in Education – Updated September 2024**

3. Attendance Expectations

Regular attendance is crucial for pupils' academic success and overall development. Pupils are expected to attend school every day unless there is a valid reason for their absence.

4. Reporting Absence

- **Parental Responsibility:** Parents or guardians must notify the school of their child's absence by 9:00 a.m. on the first day of absence. The notification should include the reason for the absence and an expected return date.
- **Notification Methods:** Absences must be reported via phone or the office email.

5. Absence Categories

Absences are categorised as follows:

- **Authorised Absence:** Absences will be authorised if the school is satisfied with the reason provided by the parent or guardian. This includes:
 - Illness (medical evidence may be required for extended absences)
 - Medical or dental appointments (where it is not possible to schedule outside school hours)
 - Religious observance
 - Bereavement of a close family member
 - Exceptional family circumstances (approved by the headteacher)
- **Unauthorised Absence:** Absences will be marked as unauthorised if:
 - No valid reason is provided or the reason is not acceptable under the school's policy.
 - Parents fail to communicate with the school about the absence.
 - Term-time holidays.

6. Medical Absences and Support

- **Medical Evidence:** If a pupil's illness leads to an extended absence of more than five consecutive school days, the school will require medical evidence, such as a doctor's note or appointment confirmation.
- **Support for Long-Term Absence:** In cases of prolonged illness or other health-related absences, the school will work with the parents/guardians to provide support, including adjustments to the learning plan, remote learning options, or referrals to external agencies if needed.

7. Term-Time Leave Requests

- Parents cannot take pupils out of school during term time for holidays. Term-time leave will only be granted in exceptional, unavoidable circumstances and must be requested in writing to the headteacher in advance. Evidence of reasons for this request will be requested.

8. Monitoring Attendance

- **Daily Monitoring:** Teachers will take attendance every morning and afternoon. The school office will record this data in the attendance register.
- **Persistent Absenteeism:** Pupils who miss more than 10% of school days will be classified as persistent absentees. In such cases, the school will initiate meetings with parents to discuss concerns and agree on action plans to improve attendance.

9. Identifying Patterns of Absence

The school will actively monitor and investigate patterns of absence that raise concerns, particularly:

- **Sibling Absence:** When siblings are repeatedly absent from school at the same time, the school will investigate to ensure the absences are legitimate and that there are no underlying issues, such as family holidays taken.
- **Absence Around School Holidays:** The school will also monitor cases where pupils are frequently absent immediately before or after school holidays. Absences during these times often indicate unauthorised leave taken for extended holidays and schools may request evidence to confirm the validity of the reason for absence (e.g., medical documentation).

The school will also conduct home visits to validate absences if deemed necessary.

In addition, the school may contact siblings' schools to investigate if there is a pattern of absence due to holidays.

- **Action on Patterns:** If patterns of absence are detected (e.g., siblings missing school together, or frequent absences before/after holidays), parents will be contacted to provide an explanation. Unauthorised patterns of absence may result in warning letters and potentially trigger the issuing of a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) if the threshold is met.

10. Challenging Parents Based on Pupil Disclosures

- If a pupil discloses to a staff member that they have been on holiday during an absence that has not been authorised, the school will take immediate action to **challenge the parents**.
 - **Follow-up:** The school will contact parents to verify the child's disclosure and request an explanation.
 - **Consequences:** If the absence was taken without prior permission, the absence will be marked as unauthorised, and parents may be subject to a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) in line with the school's absence policy.
 - **Parental Meetings:** Parents may be required to attend a meeting with school leadership to discuss the importance of school attendance and the legal obligations surrounding term-time holidays.

11. Targeted Support Meetings

- Schools will hold termly **Targeted Support Meetings** to identify, discuss, and agree on plans of action for severely and persistently absent pupils.
- These meetings will support schools in contacting external professional teams who should be working with families to address attendance barriers.
- Regular data analysis will be conducted, including comparisons with other schools, to identify areas that need attention.

12. Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs)

In line with the 2024 DfE guidance, FPNs will be issued under the following circumstances:

- A penalty notice will be considered after **10 unauthorised absence sessions (5 school days)** within a rolling **10-school-week** period. This includes unauthorised holiday absences and consistent late arrivals after the register closes.
- **Examples:**
 - Four sessions of holiday absence combined with six late sessions.
 - 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in one week.
 - A pattern of unauthorised absence over several weeks.
- Parents can receive FPNs twice in three academic years, with the first penalty at £80 and the second at £160 (per parent, per child)
- A third penalty cannot be issued within the three-year period, and schools should refer the case to the Education Welfare Team (EWT) for alternative legal actions.
- The **Local Authority (EWT)** has the discretion to issue an FPN when parents intentionally stay below the threshold but engage in absenteeism.

13. Children Missing School

A child can be referred to the appropriate authority when they fail to return to school after:

- **5 days** following a period of leave.
- **10 consecutive school days** without explanation or communication from the parents.

In such cases, the school will make reasonable efforts to contact the family, including first-day response calls, home visits, and contacting emergency school contacts. If these efforts fail, the school will escalate the case to the Local Authority.

14. Consequences of Poor Attendance

Parents may be subject to fines from the local authority if unauthorized absences continue. The school may also involve the local authority's **Education Welfare Officer** to handle persistent absenteeism.

15. Safeguarding Concerns

The school has a legal duty to report prolonged unexplained absences to safeguarding authorities. If there are concerns that a pupil's absence may be due to safeguarding issues, appropriate action will be taken following the school's safeguarding policy.

16. Lateness

At Trent we feel that children arriving late in the classroom disrupt both their own learning and the learning of others. If a child misses the start of the day, they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Arriving late can also be embarrassing for the child as well as potentially encouraging absence. Good time-keeping is a vital life skill which will help our children as they progress through their school life and out into the wider world.

The school day at Trent is split into two sessions, morning and afternoon, with a registration period at the beginning of each.

We have a soft start approach to the morning with children able to come into school from 8:35am. Lateness is classed as any child coming into school after 8:45am. All children arriving after 8:45am must report to the main school office so they can sign the late book with a reason for the lateness. **Children arriving after 9.15am will receive an unauthorised absence code which will count as one of their 10 sessions.**

If your child has a persistent late record, you will be asked to meet us to resolve the problem, but you can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

We will encourage good punctuality by being good role models to our children and by celebrating good class punctuality.

17. Monitoring of Attendance and Punctuality

All children are expected to have attendance of 95% or above.

Where a child's attendance is below 95% for any reason, including sickness, parents may be contacted by the Office.

Where a child's attendance falls below 90% or where there are concerns about a child's attendance patterns or lateness, parents will be asked to attend a meeting which may include the Head Teacher.

The EWO has the authority to issue Fixed Penalty Notices to parents whose children have levels of unauthorised lateness which bring them below the Borough Target for attendance.

This process will be initiated by a referral to the EWO where there is a concern which cannot be resolved.

18. Monitoring and evaluation: This policy is updated bi-annually by the Head Teacher and Governing body. Any changes will be communicated to all relevant stakeholders.

APPENDIX 1 - ABSENCE LETTER

Dear _____,

Regular attendance at school ensures that pupils at Trent have the best chance to succeed with their education. As a school, we closely monitor pupil attendance.

Any pupil with attendance below 95% is defined as a 'persistent absentee', regardless of whether the school has authorised the absence. The Government's expectation is that pupil attendance should be above 95% and I would like us to work together to improve the situation as your child's current attendance is _____

The school Governors and I will be monitoring _____'s attendance and we hope to see an improvement soon. Do speak to your child's class teacher about any issues that may be affecting your child's attendance and discuss strategies for improving this with them.

Please do not hesitate in contacting me if you believe the above information is inaccurate or if you have any queries about the content.

Thanking you in advance for your support.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs. Vassiliou

Punctuality

Dear _____,

As you are aware we take attendance and punctuality very seriously at Trent and carefully monitor patterns of lateness.

Our recent attendance and punctuality records indicate _____ has been late to school _____ times this half term. It is very important that children establish good routines and habits in preparation for the rest of their lives. Punctuality is a life skill that they need to develop whilst they are young.

It is essential that you ensure that your child arrives at school on time to prevent disruption to your child's own learning and that of others.

Along with the Governors, we will continue to monitor _____'s punctuality and hope to see an improvement soon.

We understand that there may be rare occasions when your child is unavoidably late due to unforeseen circumstances. On these occasions please make sure that you contact the school office to inform us when they will arrive.

High levels of unauthorised absences or poor punctuality can result in a referral to the Educational Welfare Service or other agencies which have a duty to investigate further and could result in legal action being taken against you.

If you are experiencing difficulties with punctuality and would like to talk to us about it, please make an appointment to speak to us.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs. Vassiliou

Appendix 2 – Independent Traveller Form (Year 6 only)

Lone Traveller Permission Form

Dear Parents/Carers,

Now that your child is in Year 6, they have the opportunity to walk home by themselves with permission from parents/carers.

If you would like your child to walk home from school without an accompanying adult, you must complete this form and return it to us.

If you have any questions regarding this matter, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Kind regards,

The Year 6 team.

I give permission for (child's full name) _____ to walk home alone on the following days:

Monday	
Tuesday	
Wednesday	
Thursday	
Friday	

If your child attends an afterschool club, please tick the box to indicate they can walk home alone after the club has finished

By signing this form, you are acknowledging the following:

- I understand I am responsible to ensure my child has safe access to home on their arrival.
- I am aware of the route they will take and have discuss lone, safe travel with them.
- I understand that the school can accept no responsibility for my child once they have left the school grounds.

Signed:

Name of parent signing:

Relationship to child:

Date:

APPENDIX 3- REQUEST FOR EXCEPTIONAL LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Trent Exceptional Leave of Absence Request Form

Child's Name:

Year:

Name of Parent/Carer making request:

Dates requested:

How many school days:

Return to school date:

Reason for requested absence:

Parent/Carer Signature:

Date:

Please return completed form to the school office as soon as possible, prior to the requested absence.