ATTENDANCE POLICY

Including COVID-19 ADDENDUM

Date of Policy:	September 2020
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* Policy Review: Annually or otherwise dictated by the Governors or by changes in legislation.

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1) AIMS

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

- Promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence
- Ensuring every pupil 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. In this instance, 'regularly' means the School's internal attendance target of 96%.

Research both locally and nationally shows that there is a clear link between high attendance and good progress and attainment. We believe that excellent attendance is key to children's progress and attainment and that excellent punctuality shows respect for staff and that the children are ready and willing to learn.

2) LEGISLATION AND GUIDANCE

This policy meets the requirements of the school attendance guidance from the Department for Education (DfE) and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on school 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 (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2010
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2011
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2016
- St. Helens Education Welfare Service (School Attendance)
- Government School Attendance in relation to School Attendance (Academic Year 2020-2021)

3) SCHOOL PROCEDURES

Expectations

Pupils: We expect that all pupils will:

- Attend school regularly
- Attend school punctually
- Attend school appropriately prepared for the day
- Discuss with their class teacher or Head of Department any problems preventing them from attending school
- If a child is late (after registration at 8:50), they NEED to report to the Main Office.

Parent/carers and persons who have day to day responsibility for the children will:

- Encourage regular school attendance and be aware of their legal responsibilities
- Ensure that the child/children in their care arrive at school punctually, prepared for the school day and have completed any homework they have been given
- Give at least 3 days' notice for an appointment and supply appropriate documentation.
- Contact the school by the start of the school day on every day of absence, whenever any problem occurs that may keep the child away from school
- Update the school each day of their child's absence. If a child is absent for multiple days, the reason of absence for the first day does not count for the subsequent days (exemption for those self-isolating for so many days or have days of absences already authorised by the office).
- Contact the school promptly whenever any problem occurs that may keep the child away from school
- Provide the school with a medical certificate, appointment card or prescription document if absence due to illness extends beyond 2 days.

The governors expect that school staff will:

- Keep regular and accurate records of attendance for all pupils as required by current legislation
- Monitor every pupil's attendance
- Contact parents/carers as soon as possible when a pupil fails to attend and where no message has been received to explain the absence
- Encourage good attendance
- Provide an appropriate response to any pupil's concerns

Attendance register

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

The attendance register will be taken at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark (see appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes) whether every pupil is:

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

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

Every entry in the attendance register will be preserved for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

School session times

Pre-Prep pupils must arrive in school by 9:00 on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at 9:05 and will be kept open until 9:10. The register for the second session will be taken at 12:30and will be kept open until 12:40

For a Pre-Prep School pupil who arrives at school after 9:00 am, a late mark will be recorded. A pupil who arrives after 9:10 am without a valid explanation will be recorded as 'late after close of register' and counted as an unauthorised absence for that session. Any pupil who arrives after 9:10 am will be recorded on Integris MIS in case of any emergency drill.

Lower School pupils must arrive in school by 8:50 on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at 9:00 and will be kept open until 9:05. The register for the second session will be taken at 12:45 and will be kept open until 12:50

For a Lower School pupil who arrives at school after 9:00 am, a late mark will be recorded. A pupil who arrives after 9:05 am without a valid explanation will be recorded as 'late after close of register' and counted as an unauthorised absence for that session. Any pupil who arrives after 9:10 am will be recorded on Integris MIS in case of any emergency drill.

Middle & Upper School pupils must arrive in school by 8.40am on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at 8.50am and will be kept open until 9.00am. The register for the second session will be taken at 1.40pm and will be kept open until 1.45pm.

For a Middle or Upper School pupil who arrives at school after 9.00 am, a late mark will be recorded. A pupil who arrives after 9.30 am without a valid explanation will be recorded as 'late after close of register' and counted as an unauthorised absence for that session. Any pupil who arrives after 9.00 am will be recorded on Integris MIS in case of any emergency drill.

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 [time] or as soon as practically possible (see also section 6).

Parents/carers must notify the school by telephone on the first day of an unplanned absence – for example, if their child is unable to attend due to ill health – by the start of the school day or as soon as practically possible (see also section 6). Absence due to illness will be authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask parents to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card 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.

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.

However, whilst the school will grant requests for absence for dental and medical treatments, parents/carers are encouraged to make these appointments out of school hours where possible. When appointments during school hours are unavoidable, the school office should be notified in advance in writing of the date and time of the appointment and when the child will be collected and/or returned to school. Evidence of the appointment may be requested.

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.

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. When a pupil does not attend school, we will respond following statutory guidance as set out in the DfE Children Missing Education 2016 :

1) **On the first day of absence**, if no note or telephone call is received from the parent/carer by ???? am, the school will make reasonable enquiries to contact them that day by phone, text message or e mail, using all contacts for the family recorded on Integris, in line with the duty under section 10 of the Children Act 2004. The school will also record that they have completed these procedures.
2) **On the second day of absence** if no contact has been made further reasonable enquiries will be carried out. The type of procedure may include checking with other known relatives, neighbours, landlords – private or social housing providers – and other local stakeholders who are involved. The school will also record that they have completed these procedures.
3) If, **by the end of the third day** there has still been no contact made, the school will send a letter of concern to parents/carers and a member of the SMT will be notified. If there is no response, the school will continue to try to contact the parent/carer and a meeting will be arranged with a member of SMT.
4) **After 10 days of absence in a row** (unauthorized), we must report this to the local authority
5) If a child is absent (unauthorized) without leave for **20 days or more in a row**, we are allowed to remove the child from our register.

Reporting to Parents

Attendance will be reported to parents three times per academic year via the termly reporting system. Attendance will be reported as a percentage with the following grades given:

Below 96% - Low, needs to improve

96 - 97% - Expected

97.1 – 98.9% - Good

99 – 100% - Outstanding

4) AUTHORISED AND UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE

Granting approval for term-time absence

We expect that every child will attend school every day. The Principal may not grant any leave of absence to pupils during term time unless they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances. If a situation arises where a parent feels they need to request a leave of absence in exceptional circumstances, the parent must apply in writing, to the Principal at least two weeks prior to the proposed absence.

Exceptional circumstances could include:

- Service personnel returning from a tour of duty abroad where it is evidenced the individual 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 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.
- Where there are exceptional and unforeseen circumstances that fall outside of 1 to 4 above, the Principal agrees to consult with the Welfare Officer prior to any authorisation being given to the parent.

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 3.5 and 3.6
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart.

Unauthorised Absence

- If a child is absent without leave for 10 days or more in a row, we must report it to the local authority.
- If a child is absent without leave for 20 days or more in a row, we will most likely remove the child from our register.

5) STRATEGIES FOR PROMOTING ATTENDANCE

We encourage regular attendance in the following ways:

- By providing a caring and welcoming learning environment
- By responding promptly to a child or parent's concerns about the school or other pupils
- By accurate and punctual completion of registers during morning and afternoon registration (see lateness).
- By publishing attendance statistics
- By celebrating good and improved attendance (examples may include weekly best class attendance and most improved class attendance certificates and trophies, weekly 100% attendance stickers/wristbands for each child, Principal Attendance Award, weekly 100% attenders prize box, termly bronze, silver and gold certificates, celebrate in the school newsletter, annual 100% attenders invitation to Prize giving evening, annual 100% attenders Grand Prize draw)
- By monitoring pupils' attendance with the Attendance Monitor
- By informing parents/carers in writing of irregular attendance, including lateness
- By arranging meetings with parents/carers where necessary
- By reporting 10 consecutive days of unauthorized absence to St. Helens Local Authority

6) ATTENDANCE MONITORING

The Attendance Monitor monitors pupil 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.

If a pupil's attendance drops below 96% we will contact the parents to discuss the reasons for this. (See letter 1 in Appendix 2.)

If after contacting parents/carers a pupil's attendance continues to fall to between 92-96%, we will invite the parent/carer into school for a meeting to discuss how we can work together to make improvements. (See letter 2 in Appendix 2.)

When attendance has fallen below 95% and this is due to a number of short-term illnesses, a letter will be sent to parents asking to provide proof of this. (See letter 3 in Appendix 2.)

The persistent absence threshold is 10%. If a pupil's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 10%, the pupil will be classified as a persistent absentee. Once attendance falls to or below 90%, A member of the Senior Management Team will meet with the parent/carer to draw up an action plan to improve school attendance, which will be monitored and evaluated on a weekly basis.

Pupil-level absence data is collected on a weekly basis for both average attendance figures and for Persistent Absentees. Data of this will include: average weekly attendance, attendance for vulnerable groups, class attendance data and comparison to both National and Local Authority Averages. At Tower College we also monitor potential Persistent Absentees (pupils with attendance between 90.1 – 92%) so intervention and support can be put in place to prevent these pupils from dropping into the persistent Absentee bracket.

Each term absence data is 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 governors.

7) ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Principal and Governors

- Adopt and implement the whole policy consistently across the school
- Ensure that the registration procedures are carried out efficiently in line with current legislation and that appropriate resources are provided
- Ensure that all absences are coded correctly in line with DCSF guidance
- Initiate a scheme for contacting parents/carers on the first day of absence
- Initiate contact with parents/carers in cases of unexplained absence and lateness
- Ensure that key office staff have dedicated and protected time for liaison and follow up work the Attendance Officer
- Consult and liaise closely with SMT on a regular basis and take responsibility for ensuring appropriate pupils are identified and referred without delay
- Work in close collaboration with the Attendance Monitor during their termly/half termly register analysis ensuring agreed action is carried out
- Set whole school attendance targets and to publish attendance data
- The Principal will monitor and evaluate attendance with the Attendance Monitor and report it to governors
- The Principal also supports other staff in monitoring the attendance of individual pupils

The Attendance Monitor

- Monitors attendance data at the school and individual pupil level
- Oversees the registration process and ensure that registers are completed accurately and punctually
- Initiates contact with parents/carers about daily absences and records it in the school system
- As instructed by the Principal or Department Heads, manages the school's scheme for contacting parents/carers in cases of unexplained absence and lateness
- Consult and liaise closely with the Department Heads regularly to tackle persistent absence
- Reports concerns about attendance to the Principal
- Arranges calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues

Class Teachers

- Complete registers accurately and punctually at least twice daily
- Inform the Head Teacher of concerns
- Be alert to signs of disaffection that may lead to non-attendance and report them to the office staff or Department Heads

Office/reception staff

- Share any concerns expressed about attendance or disaffection that might lead to non- attendance with the Principal of Department Heads
- Follow up any unexplained non-attendance or lateness with the Principal or Department Heads when required

8. MONITORING ARRANGEMENTS

This policy will be reviewed annually by the SMT. At every review, the policy will be shared with the governing board.

9. LINKS WITH OTHER POLICIES

This policy is linked to our Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

APPENDIX 1: Attendance Codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Pupil is on a work experience placement

Code	Definition	Scenario
Authorised absence		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment

R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence	Pupil from a Traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
Unauthorised absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
N	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed

Code	Definition	Scenario
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody
Z	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
#	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day

APPENDIX 2: Letters to Parents

Letter No. 1

Dear

Re Attendance for [name]

Pupils' welfare is of paramount importance to us and we believe that regular attendance throughout the year is essential for their success and fulfilment.

[name's] attendance is currently ..... %, which is only just above our target of 96%.

This may be owing to illness or medical reasons but if there are any other issues which may be affecting attendance, please contact ???? as soon as you can to discuss this.

I look forward to an improvement in [name's] attendance as we move onwards through the school year.

Yours sincerely,

Ms A C Bingley (Principal)

Letter No. 2

Dear

Re: [name]

I'm writing to express my concern at [name's] recent high levels of absence from school.

[His/her] current attendance has fallen to [percentage]. Falling below 96% attendance will likely have an impact on [his/her] academic achievement.

We acknowledge that each family's circumstances are different and we aim to work with parents to provide the best education for every child.

Pupils' welfare is of paramount importance to us and we believe that regular attendance throughout the year is essential for their success and fulfilment.

We want to make sure that we can support [name's] education in the best way possible, including looking into how we can help [him/her] to address gaps in learning due to absence.

I therefore request that you contact _____ on _____as soon as you can to arrange a meeting to discuss how we can best support [name] in improving [his/her] attendance.

Yours sincerely,

Ms A C Bingley (Principal)

Letter No. 3

Dear

Re: [name]

I have noted that [name's] attendance has now fallen below 94% due to a number of illnesses over the year.

Whilst we appreciate that with some illnesses, attendance at school is not recommended, I am concerned that the high number of absences may be affecting [his/her] success and fulfilment at school.

We are committed to working with families to make sure every pupil gets the support they need, including looking into how we can help address any gaps in learning due to absence.

Therefore, should [name] be unable to attend school in the future due an illness, we politely request that evidence of this in order for the absence to be authorised (this can be in the form of a medical certificate, prescription, a stamped appointment card or the medication itself). Should this not be forthcoming the absence may not be authorised.

Yours sincerely

Ms A C Bingley (Principal)

APPENDIX 4: Attendance Policy Coronavirus Addendum

This addendum is supported by the following guidance:

Coronavirus Attendance Recording for Educational Settings

1. AIMS AND SCOPE

We are committed to meeting our obligations with regards to school attendance by:

- Ensuring every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence
- Supporting parents/carers and pupils who are concerned about the return to school due to coronavirus

This addendum applies from the start of the autumn term 2020 until the end of the 2020/21 academic year. It sets out changes to our normal attendance policy and should be read in conjunction with that policy. Unless covered here, our normal attendance policy continues to apply.

We may need to amend or add to this addendum as circumstances or official guidance changes. We will communicate any changes to staff, parents and pupils.

2. GUIDANCE AND DEFINITIONS

This policy meets the requirements of the Department for Education's (DfE's) guidance on school attendance during the 2020/21 academic year.

This addendum reflects the latest advice from St. Helens LEA. We have also been informed by St Helens Local Authority that children's absences that are the result of parental anxiety must be regarded as unauthorised.

In section 4.2 of this addendum, where we refer to 'close contact', this means:

- Direct close contacts: face-to-face contact with an infected individual for any length of time, within 1 metre, including being coughed on, a face-to-face conversation, or unprotected physical contact (skin-to-skin)
- Proximity contacts: extended close contact (within 1 to 2 metres for more than 15 minutes) with an infected individual.
- Travelling in a small vehicle, like a car, with an infected person

This definition is from the DfE's guidance on full reopening for schools (see number 9 in 'the system of controls').

3. ATTENDANCE EXPECTATIONS

It is mandatory for all pupils of compulsory school age to attend school unless:

- They have been granted an authorised absence by the school in line with section [insert section number] of our normal attendance policy
- They cannot attend school due to specific circumstances related to coronavirus (see section 4, below)

4. WHERE 'NON-ATTENDANCE IN RELATION TO CORONAVIRUS' APPLIES

We will only accept 'non-attendance in relation to coronavirus' in circumstances where a pupil's travel to, or attendance at, school would be:

Against guidance from Public Health England and/or the Department of Health and Social Care relating to the incidence of coronavirus or its transmission

Prohibited by any legislation or statutory directions relating to the incidence of transmission of coronavirus

4.1 Pupil develops symptoms or lives with someone who does

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school on the first day that their child needs to self-isolate. The pupil will stay at home until they or the symptomatic person they live with receives their coronavirus test results.

- **If the pupil's test result is negative**: the pupil will return to school when they feel well and no longer have symptoms similar to coronavirus. They should continue to stay at home if they remain unwell (i.e. with a different illness).
- **If the person the pupil lives with tests negative:** the pupil will stop self-isolating and return to school

4.2 Pupil or a 'close contact' of theirs receives a positive test result

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school about the positive test result as soon as possible.

Pupils who test positive must self-isolate for at least 10 days from the onset of symptoms and must only return to school when they no longer have symptoms (other than a cough or a loss of sense of smell or taste).

If a member of the pupil's household or a 'close contact' tests positive, the pupil must self-isolate for 14 days. The pupil must do this from when the member of their household first had symptoms, or the day the pupil last met with the 'close contact' who received the positive result.

See the definition for 'close contact' in section 2 of this addendum.

4.3. Pupil has to quarantine after travel abroad

The parent/carer must notify the school if their child has to quarantine after travel to a country that is not on the government's exemptions list. The pupil must quarantine for 14 days on their arrival to the UK and return to school thereafter.

4.4 Pupil is required to shield during a local lockdown

The parent/carer will notify the school if they are advised by the government to stay at home and will provide proof of their shielding letter by sending a scan to office@towercollege.com or a photocopy to the school address.

The pupil will stay at home until the shieling measures in the local area are paused. Once the shielding measures are lifted, we will contact the pupil's parent/carer to set the expectation that they can return to school.

4.5 Remote learning provision

If a pupil is not attending school because of circumstances related to coronavirus, but where the pupil is not ill, the school will provide the pupil access to remote education.

We will keep a record of, and monitor, pupil engagement with remote learning, but we will not track this information in the attendance register

The school will **not** provide remote learning to those pupils who are ill for reasons not related to Coronavirus.

The school will **not** provide remote learning to those pupils whose absences are deemed to be unauthorised.

5. RECORDING ATTENDANCE

We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to 'exceptional circumstances' (as defined in section 4 of our normal attendance policy)
- Unable to attend for reasons related to coronavirus (see appendix 1 for the relevant absence codes and when we will use them)
- Pupils must arrive in school at their designated time slot on each school day.

Please see our normal school attendance policy for timings of each department's registrations.

6. FOLLOWING UP ABSENCE

Where any child we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, we will:

- Follow up on their absence with their parent or carer
- Notify their social worker, where they have one
- If a pupil does not attend because they, and/or their parent/carer are concerned about returning to school because of coronavirus, we will encourage attendance, for example - Arrange a phone call/video meeting/in-school appointment between the parent/carer and a member of the SMT to explain the protective measures the school is taking to keep pupils safe.

7. MONITORING ARRANGEMENTS

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the LA or Department for Education is updated**.**

8. PUPIL ABSENCE CODES

The following codes are taken from the DfE's addendum to their school attendance guidance for the 2020/21 academic year. If not covered here, our normal attendance codes apply.

Code	Definition	Scenario
X	Not attending in circumstances relating to coronavirus (COVID-19)	Pupil has to self-isolate because they have symptoms or live with someone who does, and are waiting for their test results
I	Illness	Pupil remains unwell following a negative test result (i.e. with a different illness)
I	Illness	Pupil has to continue to self-isolate because they tested positive
X	Not attending in circumstances relating to coronavirus (COVID-19)	Pupil has to self-isolate (for 14 days) because someone they live with tested positive
X	Not attending in circumstances relating to coronavirus (COVID-19)	Pupil has to self-isolate (for 14 days) because they are a close contact of someone who tested positive
X	Not attending in circumstances relating to coronavirus (COVID-19)	Pupil has to quarantine (for 14 days) after a trip to a non-exempt country
X	Not attending in circumstances relating to coronavirus (COVID-19)	Pupil is required to shield in the case of a local lockdown, or lives with someone who is required to shield
X	Not attending in circumstances relating to coronavirus (COVID-19)	Pupil is asked not to attend in the case of local lockdown