



TOWNLEY
— EST 1937 —
GRAMMAR SCHOOL

Attendance Policy

Introduction

Townley Grammar School enjoys very high rates of attendance and punctuality, significantly above national rates. We believe strongly that this supports the high levels of academic attainment at the school.

In accordance with Keeping Children Safe in Education, 2024, we recognise that Children Absent in Education are at significant risk of underachieving, being victims of harm, exploitation or radicalisation, and becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training) later in life.

Aims and responsibilities

The School

Townley Grammar School aims to:

- Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence
- Create an inclusive, nurturing and welcoming ethos in which students are stimulated, grow in self-esteem and experience success
- Encourage the educational development of all students by promoting the importance of school attendance
- Ensure all staff give attendance a high profile with clear procedures and expectations
- Work in partnership with governors, parents and carers, the South Eastern Attendance Advisory Service (SEAAS) Welfare Service and other professionals to support students in achieving optimum attendance at school

- Make sure that students know that their presence is important and helps to create a sense of belonging
- Inform parents promptly over concerns about student absence and give them an opportunity to discuss difficulties with a member of the pastoral team
- Employ a range of strategies to encourage good attendance and punctuality and promptly investigate all absences, liaising closely with parents or carers
- Act early to address patterns of absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled

Townley Grammar School is required to:

- Register pupils attendance twice daily, once at the start of the morning session and again during the afternoon session

- Record whether every pupil is present, attending an approved educational activity, absent or unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

- Inform the Local Authority if any student fails to attend school regularly or has been absent without the school's permission for a continuous period of 10 days or more

Parents and Carers

Parents are legally obliged to ensure their children of compulsory school age who are registered at school attend regularly

Parents are expected to support the importance of education by ensuring that:

- Their daughter/son attends school every day, properly attired and in a condition to learn
- Their daughter/son arrives at school on time
- They contact the school daily before 9.30 a.m. if their daughter/son is unable to attend and every subsequent day thereafter
- They avoid making routine medical appointments for their daughter/ son during school hours
- That family holidays are only taken during the school holidays
- Take an active interest in their child's education and promote the benefits of regular attendance
- Attend all attendance improvement meetings and be willing to discuss poor attendance patterns and possible solutions

Parents should do everything possible to encourage their child to attend. However, if the reason for their reluctance appears to be school-based, such as difficulty with work or bullying, please discuss this with the school at the earliest opportunity. Allowing your child to be absent without taking any action is likely to make the situation worse and gives your child the impression that attendance does not matter.

All absences from school should be phoned through to the dedicated Absence Line - 020 8304 8311 Option 1. Alternatively email attendance@townleygrammar.org.uk

If you would like to discuss your child's attendance, contact should be made with the Attendance Officer in the first instance. Attendance Officers Year 7-11 and Sixth Form: attendance@townleygrammar.org.uk

The named senior Leader responsible for attendance is L Butler

Students

Students are expected to:

- Attend school every day
- Arrive on time and appropriately prepared for lessons
- Speak to their House Tutor and/or a member of staff if experiencing any problems in school
- Accept help, support and guidance when offered and deemed appropriate

Attendance

- If a student in Yrs 7-13 arrives after 0905 they should report to the Student Hub to sign in and register. The signing in book should be filled in with the reason for their lateness.
- If a student in Yrs 7-13 arrives after 0830 but still during tutor time, the student should report to their form tutor who will mark them as late. If their form is in assembly, they must report to the ALM in the assembly room who will mark them as late.

Punctuality

- We have the highest expectations of our students, and they are expected to be in their form rooms by 8:30am each day. Alongside our high expectations we are also aware of the difficulties some students may face, particularly when they are dependent on public transport. Students may be late due to circumstances beyond their control. It is our responsibility to ensure fairness and proportionality are at the centre of our systems and processes
 - Students who are late will sign in as per normal procedures in their form room if they arrive by 0900.
 - Any student arriving after 0900 will sign in with the attendance team in the student hub.
 - If a student is late once in a week, Arbor will send a message to parents/carers on the day informing them. We ask that parents discuss at home with their child the reasons behind late arrival and inform the school if there are any concerns

We adopt a graduated approach to supporting students if they fall below our expectations on punctuality. The initial stage is at form tutor level, supported by a late report. If lateness persists the levels escalate to Senior Leadership Level. At each stage, parental involvement and dialogue is necessitated.

- **Please note that students are expected to be in their form rooms by 8:30am each day and there are no changes to our school day timings. Any student who arrives after 8:30am will be marked as late unless authorised in advance or due to extenuating circumstances, as notified by parents/carers.**

Authorised Absences

The Attendance Officer (Years 7 to 11) or Sixth Form Administrator (Sixth Form) must be informed on the first day of absence before 8.30 am by either:

- a letter signed by the parent/carer
- a telephone call from the parent/carer
- a text message to the Arbor system
- an e-mail from the parent/carer (sent from the same e-mail address currently notified to us on our administrative systems)

and **every subsequent day** before 8.30 am if the absence continues.

- The Attendance officer (and Sixth Form Administrator) will inform parents/carers of their child's absence if the school has not received any notification
- If, after a period of seven school days since a student has returned, there has been no communication from parents/carers despite a written, e-mail or telephone request from the School's Attendance Officer to explain the absence(s), this will be recorded as an unauthorised absence

If a student is unwell for 5 continuous days, the Attendance Officer (and Sixth Form Administrator) will contact home and advise medical advice be sought

- Punctuality and attendance is reported on School reports
- In the Sixth Form, for university open days, students should complete an authorised absence slip. This needs to be signed by subject teachers and handed in to the Sixth Form administrator before the proposed absence
- Sixth Form students are allowed to attend a maximum of three university open days that take place during school time over their time in the Sixth Form

The following absences may be treated as authorised by the school:

- Illness
- Medical or dental appointment (parents/carers are encouraged to make appointments out of school hours. Where possible the student should only be out of school for minimum amount of time necessary for the appointment)
- 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
- ~~Close~~ Family bereavement
- Leave of absence authorised by the school
- Suspension or Exclusion

Other absence that may be authorised

The school may authorise other absence providing the Attendance Officer is notified by 12 noon on the first day of the absence.

These absences include:

- Emergency situations for a family member e.g. sudden illness
- Transport problems where these are not known in advance
- Exceptional circumstances that are caused following a natural disaster
- 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. If the funeral is held overseas, five days of absence will be considered to accommodate travel arrangements and would be the maximum number of days authorised for a funeral overseas. .
- Any strong personal reasons why a family might need to take a child away from school for a short break.
- where an opportunity will develop a skill that directly links to their future career

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. On occasions we may request supporting evidence for requests.

The Attendance Officer should record the reason for absence in the register.

In all cases, the School will decide whether an absence is authorised or unauthorised.

Requests for Leave of Absence

Requests for leave of absence require approval in advance and should be submitted at least 5 days before the planned absence. Parents may write a letter or e-mail addressed for the attention of the Headteacher. When the letter or email is received, the Headteacher, in consultation with the Attendance Officer and Learning Manager, will decide whether to authorise or not, and send the appropriate letter. Only the Headteacher can authorise absence using a consistent approach. The Headteacher is not obliged to accept a parent's explanation. A letter, telephone message or email 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.

The School disapproves strongly of term time absences for reasons other than illness except in specific circumstances. DFE guidelines are quite clear.

Discretionary authorised absence may be granted for family reasons such as attendance at a funeral, a close family wedding, close family graduation ceremonies, ~~for~~ approved educational activities and for an exceptional experience, for example performing in a West End Musical.

Authorised absence will only be granted where proper procedures have been followed and the permission given. Authorised absence will not be granted retrospectively.

Where the School and the parents fail to reach an agreement and the student is then absent from school the absence must be marked as unauthorised and notified to the ~~Educational~~ SEAAS Welfare Officer.

Where parents keep a student away for longer than agreed then the extra time ~~should also~~ will be marked as unauthorised.

Leave will not be granted for family holidays, long weekend package tours nor for days immediately before end of term or at the start of a new term where this is not justified on any of the grounds outlined above.

Unauthorised Absences

Absences will not be authorised for:

- Truancy
- Any work undertaken during school hours
- Family holidays during term time (unless agreed by the Headteacher following an application procedure)
- Interview/meeting for a Sixth Form place at another educational establishment – please note that it is unlawful for a school to conduct an interview as part of their admissions arrangements for Sixth Form and is in breach of the Admissions Code to which all schools must adhere
- Part-time work
- Leisure activities
- Birthdays or similar celebrations
- Babysitting younger siblings
- Shopping
- Driving lessons
- Persistent nonspecific illness e.g. poorly/unwell
- Absence of siblings if one child is ill
- Oversleeping
- Inadequate clothing/ uniform
- Feeling too upset to attend
- Not wanting to come in as it is Non Uniform Day
- Confusion over school dates
- Medical/dental appointments of more than half a day without very good reasons
- Child's/family birthday
- Shopping trip

Truancing is a serious contravention of our school behaviour policy and will be treated as such.

Consequences depend on the individual situation and truanting from lessons will always be taken seriously. Parental involvement and support is a clear expectation in line with the school behaviour policy.

When considering whether to authorise individual cases of absence, the school will consider:

- The nature of the event
- Frequency of absence
- Whether advance notification was given
- Overall attendance record of the student
- Level of attainment and progress

Legal Sanctions

Schools can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age. If issued with a penalty notice, parents must make the payment directly to the local authority.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice ultimately rests with the headteacher, following the local authority's code of conduct for issuing penalty notices. This may take into account:

- A number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

The penalty is:

- £80 if paid within 21 days of receipt
- £160 if paid after 21 days, but within 28 days

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute the parent or withdraw the notice.

Persistent Absence

Year 7 to 13

Attendance (either on a lesson or daily basis) falling below 95% (the school expects 96%) or persistent lateness, without a medical or other satisfactory explanation, will be considered to be a serious concern and will be closely monitored by the school.

If attendance (either on a lesson or daily basis) falls below 90% then remedial action will be initiated by the Attendance Officer working with the SEAAS Welfare Officer. The following procedure will be taken:

- **Support Stage 1:** Start of academic year: Action Plan created. Meet (Pastoral Team / Learning Manager - impact on academic performance / Head of School / SLT link - more severe cases) with parent/ carer of those who attended meetings previous academic year.
- **Support 2:** Written communication, internal school letter of support sent home below 90%. Learning Manager monitors academic progress vs attendance figures - close monitoring begins
- **Support 3:** Written communication, SEAAS school letter (further ongoing absence below 90% - usually further 3 days) Support/ Challenge IEP by Learning Manager. 1-1 meetings/ mentoring with LMs
- **External Challenge:** Meeting led by SEAAS with Learning Manager and Family Liaison Officer and Attendance Officer present.
- **Challenge:** Head of School / SLT year group link / Head teacher meeting with SEAAS in attendance. Follow up with written communication. Parent notified that all absence is

- unauthorised unless medical evidence is provided.
- **Legal Action:** In consultation with Bexley Council and SEAAS as Welfare Provision.

Long-term absence due to illness

The person with overall responsibility for students who cannot come to school because of medical needs is the SENDCO. Contact with parents and monitoring of school work will be the Assistant Learning Manager (or Learning Manager in the Sixth Form). If a student is, or is likely to be, absent due to medical needs for more than 15 school days, the School will inform the SEAAS Welfare Officer.

The Learning Manager, SENDCO, School Nurse or member of SLT, in consultation with the parents and, if necessary, the SEAAS Welfare Officer, will assess the student's capabilities, educational progress and programmes of work. The Assistant Learning Manager should make arrangements for work and materials to be delivered to and collected from the student and ensure that the student is informed about school events. The reintegration process will be supported and aligned with the medical professionals overseeing the Care plan of the student. It is therefore important for parents/carers to share medical letter/s with the school as soon as possible as a Risk Assessment and Reintegration Plan would be drafted and shared with the parents before the Final Reintegration Plan is implemented.

The Assistant Learning Manager must liaise with the Examinations Officer to make arrangements for public exams. The tutor should encourage and facilitate contact with peers through school e-mails.

SENDCO, School Nurse and Learning Manager will monitor the process of reintegration after a long absence.

University, College and Employment References

Townley Grammar School has a policy of writing positive testimonials and references, acknowledging and recognising the fullest possible range of student's progress and achievement. However, Universities, Colleges and Employers do need to know about the attendance and punctuality records of potential applicants as this is important when they are deciding on their suitability to gain a place/employment.

Townley Grammar School may, at its discretion or when required, provide attendance and punctuality information on references and testimonials, either in the form of percentage statistics and/or as a written statement.

Roles and responsibilities in school

The governing Board

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

The Headteacher

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

The Designated Senior Leader Responsible for Attendance will

- Lead attendance across the school
- Offer a clear vision for attendance improvement
- Evaluate and monitor expectations and processes
- Have an oversight of data analysis
- Devise specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data

The named senior Leader responsible for attendance is L Butler

The Attendance Officer and Sixth Form Administrator

The Attendance Officer:

- Monitors attendance data at the school and individual pupil level
- Reports concerns about attendance to the Headteacher
- Works with SEAAS welfare officers to tackle persistent absence
- Arranges calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues

Subject Teachers/house tutors

Academic staff are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the attendance officer. Registers should be taken within 15 minutes of the start of the lesson. Incomplete registers or inaccurate registers will be reported to the SLT link for the cluster for follow up.

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

Attending a place other than the school

Code	Definition	Scenario
K	Attending education provision arranged by the local authority	Pupil is attending a place other than a school at which they are registered, for educational provision arranged

		by the local authority
V	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
P	Participating in a supervised sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
W	Work experience	Pupil is on a work experience placement
B	Attending any other approved educational activity	Pupil is attending a place for an approved educational activity that is not a sporting activity or work experience
D	Dual registered at another school	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered

Absent – leave of absence

Code	Definition	Scenario
C1	Leave of absence for the purpose of participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad.	Pupil is undertaking employment (paid or unpaid) during school hours, approved by the school
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
J1	Leave of absence for the purpose of attending an interview for employment or for admission to another educational institution	Pupil has an interview with prospective employers, or another educational establishment
S	Leave of absence for the purpose of studying for a public examination	Pupil has been granted leave of absence to study for a public examination
X	Non-compulsory school age pupil not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
C2	Leave of absence for a compulsory school age pupil subject to a part-time timetable	Pupil is not in school due to having a part-time timetable
C	Leave of absence for exceptional circumstance	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances, including maternity leave for pregnant pupils.

Absent - other authorised reasons

Code	Definition	Scenario
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T	Parent travelling for occupational purposes	Pupil is a 'mobile child' who is travelling with their parent(s) who are travelling for occupational purposes
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
I	Illness (not medical or dental appointment)	Pupil is unable to attend due to illness (either related to physical or mental health)
E	Suspended or permanently excluded and no alternative provision made	Pupil has been suspended (fixed period exclusion) but no alternative provision has been made

Absent - unable to attend school because of unavoidable cause

Code	Definition	Scenario
Q	Unable to attend the school because of a lack of access arrangements	Pupil is unable to attend school because the local authority has failed to make access arrangements to enable attendance at school
Y1	Unable to attend due to transport normally provided not being available	Pupil is unable to attend because school is not within walking distance of their home and the transport normally provided is not available
Y2	Unable to attend due to widespread disruption to travel	Pupil is unable to attend because of widespread disruption to travel caused by a local, national or international emergency
Y3	Unable to attend due to part of the school premises being closed	Pupil is unable to attend because they cannot practicably be accommodated in the part of the premises that remains open
Y4	Unable to attend due to the whole school site being unexpectedly closed	Every pupil absent as the school is closed unexpectedly (e.g. due to adverse weather)
Y5	Unable to attend as pupil is in criminal justice detention	Pupil is unable to attend as they are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · In police detention · Remanded to youth detention, awaiting trial or sentencing, or · Detained under a sentence of detention
Y6	Unable to attend in accordance with public health guidance or law	Pupil's travel to or attendance at the school would be prohibited under public health guidance or law
Y7	Unable to attend because of any other unavoidable cause	To be used where an unavoidable cause is not covered by the other codes

Absent - unauthorised absence

Code	Definition	Scenario
G	Holiday not granted by the school	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school or in excess of the period determined by the head teacher.
N	Reason for absence not yet established	Where absence is recorded as code N (reason not yet established) in the attendance register, the correct absence code should be entered as soon as the reason is ascertained, but no more than 5 school days after the session (regulation 10(7) to (9)). Code N must not

		therefore be left on the pupil's attendance record indefinitely; if a reason for absence cannot be established within 5 school days, schools must amend the pupil's record to Code O
O	Absent in other or unknown circumstances	No reason for absence has been established, or the school isn't satisfied that the reason given would be recorded using 1 of the codes for authorised absence
U	Arrived in school after registration closed	Pupil has arrived late, after the register has closed but before the end of session

Administrative codes

Code	Definition	Scenario
Z	Prospective pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
#	Planned whole or school closure	Whole school closure that are known and planned in advance due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day/ Academy day / staggered starts / Induction days.