

Tanfield Lea Community Primary School

Attendance Policy



Opening Doors, Enriching Lives

Head Teacher: Mark Temple
Chair of Governors: Andrew Gladstone-Heighton

Date: September 2025
Date for Review: September 2026

Attendance Key Contacts

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|---------------|---------------------------|-------------|
| Mr M Temple | Head Teacher | 01207234500 |
| Mrs L Sabourn | School Attendance Officer | 01207234500 |

Who in school can help if you are experiencing difficulty/require help and support?

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|----------------|---------------------------|-------------|
| Mrs Dixon | Administrator | 01207234500 |
| Mrs Hole | Administrator | 01207234500 |
| Mr P Mansfield | Behaviour Support Lead | 01207234500 |
| Mrs Sabourn | School Attendance Officer | 01207234500 |

Introduction to our School Attendance Vision and Ethos

Tanfield Lea Community Primary School seeks to ensure that all its children receive an education which maximises opportunities for each child to learn. The school will strive to provide a calm, orderly, safe, and supportive environment where all children want to be and are keen and ready to learn within a culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance.

'**Turn Up**' is the first of our school values. Regular school attendance plays a vital role in children's wellbeing and their education, ensuring that their current learning needs are being met but also building their future ability to learn.

As attendance is the essential foundation to positive outcomes for all children, improving attendance is everyone's business, a concerted effort across all teaching and nonteaching staff in school, the governing body, the local authority, and other local partners.

Some children find it harder than others to attend school and therefore at all stages of improving attendance, the school and partners will work with children and parents to remove any barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships and working together to put the right support in place.

Why is regular attendance so important?

Being in school every day that it is open, is important to your child's achievement, wellbeing, and their wider development. There is a renewed national focus on maximising a child's time in the classroom, as evidence shows that the students with the highest attendance throughout their time in school gain the best GCSE and A Level results.

| Attend Today, Achieve Tomorrow | | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 100% Attendance | 0 weeks of learning missed | Best chance of success. Well done, supports child's progress and attainment and their social well-being. |
| 96% Attendance | 1 week and 2 days of learning missed | |
| 90% Attendance | 3 weeks and 4 days of learning missed | Attendance less than 90% is classed as 'Persistently absent'. Poor attendance, impacting on progress and attainment and their social well-being. |
| 85% Attendance | 5 weeks and 3 days of learning missed | |
| 80% Attendance | 7 weeks and 3 days of learning missed | Very poor attendance, significant impact on progress and attainment and social well-being. |
| 75% Attendance | 9 weeks and 1 day of learning missed | |

Attendance is crucial to your child's progress and their overall well-being. If they attend regularly they are accessing high quality learning opportunities as well as enjoying and nurturing friendships.

We are an inclusive school and support the needs of all children. We recognise how attendance is crucial in supporting children including those with Special Educational Needs, challenges with their behaviour and supporting all children's well-being.

This policy is supported by our policies on Behaviour and Safeguarding

The school and all partners will work together to:

EXPECT

Aspire to high standards of attendance from all children and parents and build a culture where all can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across the school.



MONITOR

Rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (individuals and specific groups) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.



LISTEN AND UNDERSTAND

When a pattern is spotted, discuss with children and parents to listen to understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.



FACILITATE SUPPORT

Remove barriers in school and help children and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. This might include an early help or whole family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues.



FORMALISE SUPPORT

Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners should work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond.



ENFORCE

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, enforce attendance through statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the child's right to an education.

1 Expectations

We recognise that the relationship between attendance and achievement of our students is inextricably linked.

Regular school attendance is crucial to maximise pupil progress and enjoyment of learning, and for this reason the school is dedicated to ensuring its attendance policy is adhered to.

We will ensure that:

- All students have an equal right, and access to, an education in accordance with the national curriculum, or agreed alternative.
- Attendance is a priority across the school.
- Aspire to high standards on attendance.
- Students will not be deprived of their education opportunities by, either their own absence or lateness, or that of students.
- Action is taken where necessary to secure an improvement in attendance.

2 Attendance Data

Attendance is monitored daily by school staff and analysed weekly by the Attendance Officer.

Attendance data is analysed looking particularly at those children who are under 95% and those that are at risk of becoming a persistent absentee/severe absentee (children with 90% or less attendance/children with 50% or less attendance).

Actions are agreed between the Attendance Officer and the Head Teacher every week where there is a concern that attendance is deteriorating.

Attendance Data is also analysed on a half term basis and this data is shared with governors.

3 Listening to and Understanding Barriers to Attendance

When a concern is identified, be it persistent absence or a pattern of absence, action will be agreed between the Attendance Officer and Head Teacher.

Action would progress through the following stages to engage with the family:

- Telephone call or letter sent, expressing concern and listen to reasons. Offer of help/support if needed.
- Follow up with a further telephone call recognising the improvement or discussing reasons for little improvement.
- Possible home visit by School Attendance Officer to discuss barriers further.

4 Facilitate Support

The school will try to facilitate support within the school:

For example, Pastoral Support from the Behaviour Support Lead. For KS2 children this includes incentives to improve attendance. At risk children, particularly those from at risk groups such as disadvantaged, children with SEND or children known to care, have a weekly meeting with the Behaviour Support Lead and can achieve a success card stamp and book for improvement in half-termly attendance.

School might also offer free access to Breakfast Club or other reasonable adjustments.

If there are more complex issues, then the school would discuss a referral with parents to agree to an Early Help referral.

These strategies apply to all children where attendance has become a problem including those who are persistently absent or have severe absence.

Where little or no progress is made, the support will be formalised in conjunction with the Local Authority.

5 Formalise Support

Where absence persists and school/other agency support is not working or not being engaged with, partners will work together to explain the consequences clearly.

An Attendance Support Meeting will be held to formally offer further support and document barriers to attendance. Attendance expectations will be outlined at this meeting and parents/carers will be given clear information about level of attendance required over a monitoring period and what to do should their child be unable to attend school.

6 Enforce

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, attendance may be enforced where necessary through statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the child's right to an education.

General/Frequently Asked Questions

When can children be absent from school?

When you register your child at school, you have a legal duty to ensure your child attends that school regularly.

This means that your child must attend every day that the school is open, unless:

- Your child is too ill to attend that day;
- You have asked in advance and been given permission by the school for your child to be absent on that day due to exceptional circumstances;
- Your child cannot attend school on that day because it is a day you are taking part in religious observance;
- Your local authority is responsible for arranging your child's transport to school and it is not available on that day or has not been provided yet; or
- You are a gypsy/traveller family with no fixed abode, and you are required to travel for work that day meaning your child cannot attend their usual school. In most circumstances, however, your child is required to attend another school temporarily during such absences.

These are the only circumstances where schools can permit your child to be absent.

What do I need to do if my child needs to be absent from school for one of those reasons?

You should contact school before 9.30 am to explain why. If not, your child's school will contact you on the first morning of their absence to find out why.

All parents can request a 'leave of absence' for their child which gives them permission to be absent from school. Leaves of absence must be applied for before your child will be absent and will only be granted in exceptional circumstances.

Your child's head teacher has the final say over whether to approve the request and how long your child can be absent.

Their decision will be made after considering the specific facts and circumstances behind your request.

Can I take my child on holiday during term time?

Parents should plan their holidays around school breaks and avoid requesting leaves of absence for holidays unless it is unavoidable.

As leave of absence is only granted in exceptional circumstances, it is very unlikely that your child's head teacher will agree a leave of absence for a family holiday.

If permission is refused and you keep your child off school on the days requested, you are likely to be committing an offence and be issued a fixed penalty notice or be prosecuted by your local authority.

Attendance Procedures and Absence Processes

Promoting Good Attendance and Punctuality

In order to promote attendance and punctuality, the school will give out a weekly banner for the class with the best attendance. The attendance for each class is shared with the children during assembly and points are awarded (1 for 95% and above, 2 for 98% and above and 4 for 100%). The winning class each half term will receive £20 to spend as they wish eg class BBQ, movie and popcorn. In addition to this, children who have had 100% attendance for that week are put into a weekly prize draw.

All children, including Pre-School, who have 100% attendance for a half-term are given a success card stamp.

Children, including Pre-School, with 99% or more attendance receive an annual prize in assembly.

Attendance percentages will be shared with parents on the school newsletter and for individual children on their Attitudes to Learning forms (twice a year) and also on annual reports to parents.

Specific Information about children in Early Years

Pre-school children

We expect your child to attend every session in pre-school as agreed. Should your child be unable to attend, you should contact us to inform us of the reason why. If this is a prolonged period of absence, you should contact us to inform us how your child is and when we can expect them back into pre-school. Should they need any support on their return, this can also be discussed.

If we do not hear from you if your child has not attended pre-school for a number of days, school will make follow-up calls for further information.

Starting in Reception

Letters are sent at the start of the year to all parents whose child has started in Reception outlining school's expectations in regard to attendance and punctuality and also giving information in regard to leave of absence in term time.

Communication

The school requests that all parents please remember to report and explain the reasons for absence and to make sure contact and emergency contact details are up to date.

It is vital, that school can contact parents if their child becomes unwell during the school day or in order to discuss the reasons for absence.

School should have at least two people they can contact.

The school will analyse absence across the school. As a result of this, some families will receive letters to inform them if their child's absence is lower than it should be if no prior discussion has taken place (unless this is due to other specific and known circumstances, for example medical needs). If we have concerns regarding your child's attendance then we may contact you by phone, letter, invite you to a meeting or make a visit to your home.

As a parent you may identify concerns about school attendance early on if you have seen a change in your child's attitude to school or in their willingness to attend. If this is the case, please share your concerns with us and we can work together to ensure that school attendance doesn't ever need to decline. The quicker that concerns are shared, the quicker they can be resolved.

The school will work with you to discuss ways that we can offer support in finding a way to improve attendance.

On the First Day of Absence

- Telephone or email the School Office before 9.30 am giving a reason for the child's absence. If a child is absent from school and there is no phone call from home then school will phone home to inform parents that the child is not in school and enquire about a reason why.
- A message via another parent or sibling **is not** acceptable.

Doctors' and dentists' appointments should be made outside of school time. If this is not possible, your child should miss the minimum amount of school time necessary. If they are well enough to come back to school following the appointment they need to.

Periods of Extended Absence

If a child's absence continues beyond three days then parents are requested to notify the school to update them. If a phone call is not received then the school will contact home to verify the absence and take any relevant action in relation to assuring itself of the child's welfare.

If the school receives no reason for any absence then an unauthorised absence will be recorded. Continued absenteeism and unauthorised absences could result in more formal action.

Absence Authorisation

The High Court has confirmed that the school's Head Teacher authorises absences. In some circumstances, the school may request that parents provide medical evidence to support absences.

We are committed to supporting your child effectively, to ensure that they get the very best education possible and therefore have the best life chances. All challenges made concerning persistent absences, will be handled sensitively and in confidence.

Punctuality

Registration time is 8.50 am at which point the entry gates will be locked and all children must enter by the main entrance. It is **so** important for all children to be on time, as missing

the first few minutes of any lesson can be disruptive and unsettling, both for children and for the rest of the class. If a child arrives in school up to 10 minutes after this time then a late mark will be recorded in the register (L). Registers will be closed at this point and any children arriving more than 10 minutes late will be recorded as (U) which is a late after registers close mark and this is classed as an unauthorised absence (a number of these marks can also contribute to more formal action being considered).

If your child is late for school

All children arriving late at school will be asked the reason for their lateness and this will be recorded on the school's attendance data base (SIMs).

If a child is late (after register closes) for school on a number of occasions

A letter will be sent home from school to parents to say their child's punctuality is causing some concern. If this continues a meeting with the Attendance Officer will be offered to discuss ways that the school can offer support in finding a way improve this. Incentives to improve punctuality may also be offered to children.

If lateness becomes persistent with no identifiable reason

A Parenting Contract would be considered.

Help and Support

If you need help with attendance, it is important that you contact school about the issues as soon as possible. The quicker we know what the problem is, the quicker that we can work together to solve it and put a plan together which will meet your child's needs and ensure your child can benefit from all that school has to offer. Where needed we can also involve other services to make sure that your child and your family gets the right support, at the right time from the right people.

Leave of Absence in Term Time

Head teachers are only able to grant leave of absence during term time **unless there are very exceptional circumstances**. The school will consider each request of absence individually, taking into account the circumstances, such as the nature of the event for which leave is sought.

An application for leave of absence must be made well in advance via a form which is available from the school website or in person from the school office. Where a leave of absence is granted, the head teacher will determine the number of days a child can be away from school.

A leave of absence is granted entirely at the head teacher's discretion. If an application for leave of absence is not made prior to the time of the required absence, then the absence will be recorded as unauthorised regardless of circumstances.

Please note that absence will not be authorised under any circumstances during any period of public examinations or internal assessments.

Children with specific needs

School will take account of the specific needs of the child and the policy will be applied fairly and consistently to consider the individual needs of children/families who have specific barriers to attendance.

Consideration has been given to the obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Children Missing from Education

If you move from the area and your whereabouts are unknown, the school can legally remove your child from the roll after 20 school days of unauthorised absence. It is **vital that you keep school informed of any change of details** and regularly update them if details change. Your child may be at risk of losing their school place if your whereabouts are not known.

It is also important that emergency contact information is kept up to date and that if you are leaving the area, you provide details of where and how you can be contacted. If you do not do this and the school is unable to trace your child, this would be treated as a **safeguarding matter**.