

ATTENDANCE POLICY

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following:

- **Safeguarding Policy**
- **Boy Supervision Policy**
- **Boy Who Has (Or Seems To Have) Gone Missing Policy**
- **Disabled Persons (The Treatment Of) Policy**
- **Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Policy**
- **Memoranda**
- **Behaviour Rewards and Sanctions Policy**
- **UK Visas and Immigration Policy**
- **Trips and Educational Visits Policy**
- **Trips Handbook**
- **Away Fixtures Handbook**

This policy has regard to the following guidance and advice:

- Working together to improve school attendance (2024)
- Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance (2024)
- Toolkit for schools: communicating with families to support attendance (2023)
- Guidance for parents on school attendance (2023)
- 'Is my child too ill for school?' guidance (2024)
- Keeping children safe in education (2024)
- School behaviour and attendance: parental responsibility measures (2020)
- Children missing education (2016)
- Supporting pupils with medical conditions at school (2017)
- Behaviour in schools: advice for headteachers and school staff (2024)
- Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools (2023)
- Mental health and behaviour in schools (2018)
- Support for pupils where a mental health issue is affecting attendance (2023)
- Remote education guidance (2023)
- SEND Code of practice: 0 to 25 years(2015)

INTRODUCTION

The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their son receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school.

Where parents decide to register their son at Tonbridge, they have a legal duty to ensure their son attends School regularly. This means their son must attend every day that the School is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the School. This is essential for a boy to get the most out of their School experience, including their attainment, wellbeing, and wider life opportunities. For the most vulnerable boys, regular attendance is also an important protective factor and the best opportunity for needs to be identified and support provided.

Attendance is the essential foundation to positive outcomes for all boys including their safeguarding and welfare and should therefore be seen as everyone's responsibility in School. Improving attendance is everyone's business. The barriers to accessing education are wide and complex, both within and

beyond the School gates, and are often specific to individual boys and families. Good attendance begins with School being somewhere boys want to be and therefore the foundation of securing good attendance is that School is a calm, orderly, safe, and supportive environment where all boys are keen and ready to learn.

Some boys will experience normal but difficult emotions that make them nervous about attending School, such as worries about friendships, schoolwork, examinations or variable moods. It is important to note that these boys are still expected to attend School regularly - in many instances, attendance at School may serve to help with the underlying issue as being away from School might exacerbate it, and a prolonged period of absence may heighten anxious feelings about attending in future. School staff should work alongside families to ensure that such circumstances do not act as a barrier to regular attendance by mitigating anxious feelings in School as much as possible.

Tonbridge Schools sets high expectations for attendance and punctuality for all the benefits it brings to the boys and boys missing education can act as a vital warning sign to a range of safeguarding issues. Some boys find it harder than others to attend school and, therefore, at all stages of improving attendance, Tonbridge School and partners should work in partnership with boys and parents collaboratively to remove any barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships and working together to put the right support in place. Securing good attendance cannot, therefore, be seen in isolation, and effective practices for improvement will involve close interaction with the School's efforts on curriculum, behaviour, bullying, special educational needs support, pastoral and mental health and wellbeing, and effective use of resources. It cannot solely be the preserve of a single member of staff, or organisation, it must be a concerted effort across all teaching and non-teaching staff in School, governing body, the local authority, and other local partners.

RESPONSIBILITIES

The Second Master has overall responsibility for the School's approach to attendance, supported by the Deputy Head Pastoral and Lower Master (josie.mcneil@tonbridge-school.org), who is the senior attendance champion, all working closely with Housemasters. The Lower Master tracks attendance data monthly, half termly, termly and across the academic year to identify students with poor attendance and overall trends. The data is cross referenced with attendance remarks and data recorded on CPOMs to understand the wider pastoral picture in decision making. It is a regular point of discussion at the DSL meetings.

REGISTRATION

The Boarding nature of Tonbridge School means that Boarding boys are on-site 24 hours a day during term-time unless parents have explicitly informed Housemasters on a given weekend, for example. Day boys tend to arrive at 8.00am and are encouraged to stay for as long as they need to take advantage of all that is on offer at School.

All Day boys should register in their Houses by 8.20am. The Housemaster must also ensure that boys are registered during lunch (this acts as the afternoon registration). Boys who have not registered in their House by 8.20am must sign in at Reception before attending Chapel or lessons. Registers must be filled in according to the guidelines outlined in Appendix I.

Registration closes at 8.55am. Reception will contact the parent of any boy who has not presented himself at School that day after period I, updating the register accordingly.

Although there is no legal requirement to keep formal registers in Boarding Houses, Tonbridge School has taken the decision to implement a morning and afternoon registration session for the Boarding Houses too. In addition to morning checks and checks at lunchtime, staff on duty in Boarding Houses should also carry out formal checks at tea and at least once more in the evening, as well as a final

check at bedtime, to ensure that boys are present. In addition, we make sure that we know the whereabouts of Boarding boys by operating a signing-in and signing-out system in Houses and boys' mobile phone numbers are available to all staff.

LATENESS

Day Housemasters monitor boys' punctuality and follow up any concerns around repeated lateness to School with parents. The Director of Learning and Academic Enrichment monitors the statistics for boys late to lessons and follows up with individual Housemasters where necessary. Housemasters will refer any concerns to the Deputy Head Pastoral if they have safeguarding or welfare concerns connected to lateness.

If a parent of a Day boy knows that their sons are running late, they should email the Housemaster and School Reception as soon as possible to warn them that this is the case. Boys, and their parents, will be notified and challenged about persistent lateness. The boy must sign in at Reception as soon as he arrives at School.

AUTHORISED ABSENCE

Tonbridge School will only grant a leave of absence to certain specific circumstances. A full list of circumstances is listed in Annexe I. Requests for exceptional absence (i.e. absence for days other than Religious Festivals, medical or dental appointments, or on compassionate grounds) should be sent to the Housemaster at least 2 weeks in advance where possible. The Housemaster will seek advice from the Headmaster on a case-by-case basis taking into account the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind the request.

A parent of a Day boy who is ill, should email the Housemaster and School Reception before 8.00am on the first day of absence. Any telephone calls or emails after that time should be directed to the School Reception, 01732 365 555 or Reception@tonbridge-school.org, who will inform the Housemaster. Parents of a boy who has been absent should, on his return to School, confirm the reason for the absence to his Housemaster in writing (email is acceptable). The School will always telephone parents or guardians in the case of an unexplained absence on the first and subsequent sessions of absence in order to make sure that a boy has not suffered an accident or to understand the reason for the absence.

The School always strives to send parents the term dates over a year in advance in order that they can arrange their holidays without disrupting their son's education. Please note that it is the Governors' policy usually not to allow holiday to be taken during term.

ABSENCES

The Lower Master will analyse weekly attendance patterns and trends and use this analysis to provide reports to Housemasters, teachers or tutors to facilitate discussions with boys, parents and senior staff especially where this is not taking place already.

The Lower Master conducts analysis of half-termly, termly, and full year data to identify patterns and trends which include analysis of boys and cohorts, and identifying patterns in uses of certain codes, days of poor attendance and where appropriate, subjects which have low lesson attendance. This should not just focus on persistent and severe absence, but look at all severities of absence to identify pupils who can be supported earlier before patterns become entrenched. This analysis will be used to provide reports to Housemasters, teachers or tutors to facilitate discussions with boys, parents and senior staff especially where this is not taking place already and to devise specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data. The School will inform parents about their child's attendance and absence levels where these are at levels that might be cause for concern.

Where a boy is missing School for long periods of time, even where due to ill health (both physical and mental), the Housemaster will look to communicate with parents weekly, inviting them into School for meetings at least once per half term and getting regular updates from healthcare and other professionals as to the status of the boy. The Lower Master, Deputy Head Pastoral and Headmaster will be kept informed as necessary through CPOMS and invited to these meetings where necessary.

In cases of both long term physical or mental ill health, School staff cannot diagnose or treat physical or mental health conditions, but they can work together with families and other agencies with the aim of ensuring regular attendance for every boy including facilitating any relevant pastoral support with the clear aim of improving attendance as much as possible whilst supporting the underlying health issue. This could include considering reasonable adjustments to practice and policies to help meet the needs of the boy who is struggling to attend school, as well as making formal reasonable adjustments under section 20 of the Equality Act 2010 where a pupil has a disability or consider whether a time-limited phased return to school would be appropriate, for example for those affected by anxious feelings about school attendance. Attendance is everyone's business so in many of these cases School will not be able to fully support a pupil without the assistance of a range of other agencies such as mental health support teams, the local authority, children and young people's mental health services, GPs or other health services and will consider making referrals to them. Where a boy's health need means they need reasonable adjustments or support because it is complex or long term, School can seek medical evidence to better understand the needs of the pupil and identify the most suitable provision.

In the first instance, these meetings will be to support boys and parents by working together to address any in-School barriers to attendance and where barriers are outside of the School's control, work together with all partners to support boys and parents to understand barriers to being in School, to access any support they may need voluntarily, agreeing actions or interventions to address them. This may include referrals to services and organisations that can provide support. These actions should be regularly discussed and reviewed together with boys and families.

Where absence intensifies, so should the support provided, which will require the School to work in tandem with the local authority and other relevant partners. Where engagement in support is proving challenging, the School will hold more formal conversations with the parents, and the boy where appropriate. This may include the School's point of contact in the local authority School Attendance Support Team.

Supportive approaches are most effective when they are put in place as early as possible and therefore it is essential all partners work together in a timely manner. In all cases, the School will monitor the impact of any intervention(s) and make adjustments where necessary in discussion with the boy, parents and any other partners.

Where voluntary support has not been effective and/or has not been engaged with, it may be necessary for the parents to withdraw their son from the School.

The name and address of any boy who fails to attend School regularly or has missed School for 10 days or more without the absence being recorded as authorised (codes G, N, O and/or U), or who have been recorded with code I (illness) and who the school has reasonable grounds to believe will miss 15 days consecutively or cumulatively because of sickness, will be shared with the local authority. Particular focus will be given by all partners to boys who are absent from School more than they are present (those missing 50% or more of School). If all avenues of support have been facilitated by Schools, local authorities, and other partners but severe absence for unauthorised reasons continues, it is likely to constitute neglect.

As a Home Office sponsor, we are duty-bound to report unauthorised absences of sponsored students of 10 consecutive days and may withdraw sponsorship prior to this if we have reason to believe the student has stopped attending school. We are duty-bound to report any relevant changes to circumstances of our sponsored students that may affect their student status.

The School will help support pupils back into School following a lengthy or unavoidable period of absence and provide support to build confidence and bridge gaps.

CHILDREN MISSING EDUCATION

The School understands its duty in relation to the risks posed by boys missing from education. A boy being absent from education for a prolonged period and/or on repeat occasions can act as a vital warning sign to a range of safeguarding issues. It is important that the School's responses to persistently absent boys missing education is to support identifying such issues, and in the case of absent boys, helps prevent the risk of them becoming a child missing education in the future. This includes when problems are first emerging but also where boys are already known to local authority childrens' social care and need a social worker, where being absent from education may increase known safeguarding risks within the family or in the community. The School will be proactive in supporting parents and boys who are missing School for any reason. The School will report to the Local Authority instances of prolonged unauthorised absence or of a boy being removed from the School's list under the circumstances outlined in KCSIE and, 'Children Missing Education' and, 'Working together to improve School attendance'.

The School will hold regular meetings with the parents of boys missing education or who are vulnerable to do so, to discuss attendance and engagement at School. Where necessary the School identify boys who need support from wider partners as quickly as possible and make the necessary referrals. Ultimately the School will support boys back into School following a lengthy or unavoidable period of absence and provide support to build confidence and bridge gaps.

APPENDIX I ATTENDANCE REGISTER GUIDELINES

All Schools (other than Independent Schools for Boarders only) must keep an attendance register on which, at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session, a boy should be marked present or absent. At Tonbridge this means at 8.20 am in the House and then again at lunchtime.

An oblique stroke (/) is used to record presence, with a stroke in the reverse direction (\) for the afternoon session. **(At Tonbridge there is no need to formally register Saturday afternoon although Boarding staff should do a call at lunchtime and in the early evening. Staff taking teams away must ensure they know which boys are travelling back on the bus with them)**

Boys who are injured or otherwise unable to participate in games are recorded as 'Q' (no sport at all) or 'K' (non-contact sport permitted). These symbols acknowledge a boy's attendance at School and act in the same way as an oblique stroke. These codes are not recorded in submissions to the DfE.

Authorized absence will be shown in the register by one of the following symbols:

(unauthorised absence by an 'N' initially and then 'O' if no satisfactory explanation is supplied, or a 'G' for unauthorised holiday)

Planned school closure

B Other approved educational activity that is not a sporting activity or work experience, details to be recorded in the 'notes' box

C	Other exceptional circumstances, details to be recorded in the 'notes' box. or (C)
E	Suspended or permanently excluded
G	Family holiday (not authorised)
H	Family holiday (for which leave has been granted by the Headmaster)
I	Illness
J	Attending interview with prospective University or possible employer
L	Late (before 8.55am when registration is closed)
M	Medical/dental appointment (illness must be confirmed by a letter from parents)
N	No reason yet for absence (must be amended within 2 weeks)
O	Unauthorised absence
P	Approved sporting activity
R	Day of religious observance in the religious body to which the parents belong
S	Study leave
U	Arrived in school after registration closed (after 8.55am)
V	Educational visit or trip
W	Work experience
X	Absence of non-compulsory school age pupil (6 th Form) for sessions they are not timetabled to attend
Y	Unable to attend due to widespread disruption to travel
Y4	School unexpectedly closed

Any Day boy who arrives too late to register at his House must report to the School Reception who will amend the computer record and keep a written record. The Reception is open from 8.15am. The Receptionist will give details of late arrivals to individual Housemasters by email and amend PASS. This process should be done by 9.35am but any arrivals later than that should be communicated in the same way. Teaching staff are required to send to Reception any boy who arrives in their lesson, but is not yet registered as present on PASS. The Second Master's PA collates the attendance data on a termly basis.

In the event of an emergency (i.e. fire alarm) the Receptionist should take the book out onto the Head with them, so that Housemasters can check who should be there.

If a boy is absent without reason the School will make contact with his parents or guardian at the earliest opportunity. See also the Boy Who Has (Or Seems To Have) Gone Missing Policy.

The registration file for a given year will be backed up regularly (not less than once a month) and be retained for six years after the end of the School year in question.