

GREAT TORRINGTON  
COMMUNITY SCHOOL  
SPORTS COLLEGE



*Policy and Guidelines*  
*on*  
*Pupil Attendance*

Reviewed HOY: May 2009

Ratified by Governors:

## *Policy and Guidelines on Pupil Attendance*

This policy and guidelines summarise the School's position on pupil attendance. The policy and guidelines are based on more detailed information, regulations and procedures laid out in:

- "School Attendance - Policy and Practice on Categorisation of Absence" issued by the Department of Education
- "Marking of Registers and Recording of Lateness", part of the "Not the Timetable" staff booklet, Great Torrington Community School
- "Great Torrington Community School Behaviour Policy" - sections dealing with sanctions for truancy.

The Department of Education document is held by the Head, Pupil Support Co-ordinator, Heads of Year, etc.

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### **1. Statement of Purpose**

- 1.1 Regular school attendance has always been important. Without it the efforts of the best teachers and the best schools will come to nothing. Education provides a means of advancement for all young people. Pupils need to attend regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them in law. Irregular attendance undermines the educational process and leads to educational disadvantage. It places children at risk and in some cases it can result in pupils being drawn into patterns of anti-social or criminal behaviour. For these reasons the Governors and staff of Great Torrington Community School recognise the importance of maximising pupil attendance and joining in partnership with parents and the local community to achieve high levels of attendance. Great Torrington Community School is actively working to surpass government minimum attendance expectations.

### **2. Reporting Absences**

- 2.1 It is the responsibility of parents to inform the School of the reason for a pupil's absence as soon as possible. However, it is the school who will decide whether an absence is authorised or unauthorised. Parental contact on the first day of absence is the normal expectation. Parents should make a note in the pupil's planner on their return to school, which should be shown to their tutor. School procedures on the reporting of pupil absences are detailed in "Marking of Registers and Recording of Lateness", part of the "Staff Handbook", Great Torrington Community School Sports College.

### **3. The Importance of Registration**

- 3.1 Both staff and pupils should see the taking of registers as an integral and key part of the school day, as intended in law. Particular attention should be paid to accurate registration and to the preservation and security of registers. Registration records will be

called on as evidence in legal proceedings for non-attendance under Section 444 Education Act 1996.

#### **4. The Education Welfare Service**

4.1 The Local Authority is charged in law with enforcing school attendance where pupils of compulsory school age are concerned. The School therefore works closely with the Local Authority's Education Welfare Service to ensure that they can bring the maximum of assistance to the school in matters of attendance. (Leaflets available in Reception).

#### **5. Fixed Penalty Notices**

5.1 Great Torrington School is committed to working with parents and pupils in ensuring regular attendance – however, when this approach has little or no effect, the Headteacher, in consultation with the Education Welfare Service, will instruct 'fixed penalty notices' to be issued as laid down in Devon County Council guidelines. (Leaflets available in Reception).

#### **6. Categorising Absence: Key Points**

6.1 The various categories of absence are dealt with in detail in the Department of Education guidelines, "School Attendance – Policy and Practice on Categorisation of Absence".

6.2 The key points of the guidelines which the school wholly endorses are:

- a. Registered pupils of compulsory age are required by law to be in school.
- b. While it is right that schools should recognise that individual pupils and families have problems, the aim is to expect regular, full-time attendance.
- c. Punctuality should be actively encouraged.
- d. Lateness should be actively discouraged. Persistent lateness will be referred to the Education Welfare Service.
- e. Where a pupil is absent without prior authorisation an explanation is required. If one is not forthcoming, the absence must be treated as unauthorised and the register annotated accordingly.
- f. The school is not obliged to accept a parental note where there is reason to doubt the validity of the explanation offered.
- g. Explanations such as minding the house, looking after children, or shopping trips within school hours will not be acceptable reasons for absence.
- h. The School should not lead parents to expect that, as of right, the School will agree to family holidays during term time. Each application will be considered on its merits - School will not authorise holiday where the pupil absence rate is greater than 7%.
- i. Even where absence is authorised, the School should be alert to emerging patterns of absence which may seriously disrupt continuity of learning.
- j. In promoting regular attendance, schools should work closely with the Education Welfare Service.
- k. School will analyse data with particular regard to potential persistent absentees and persistent absentees and action plans or PSPs will be instigated in consultation with pupil and parents/carers to address any issues.

#### **7. Attendance Monitoring**

7.1 All attendance data is to be kept on SIMS. See Appendix A for the relevant codes.

- 7.2 Pupils register at 8.55 a.m. and 2.05 p.m. daily.
- a. It is the responsibility of all tutors to accurately complete the daily registers, to determine and record the cause of each absence and to take appropriate action on each occasion. All absences should be discussed with students, even when covered by a note or entered in the pupil's Planner.
  - b. Pupils who arrive after registration up until 9.15 a.m. in the morning, and 2.25 p.m. in the afternoon (i.e. during the 20 minutes following registration), will be marked with an "L". If pupils arrive later than 20 minutes after the register closes they will be marked with a "U" ([Late after registers closed] - Unauthorised Absence). However, if they travel on school transport registration time will be altered to accommodate and ensure the pupils are not penalised - as agreed with B Dubash, Senior EWO.
  - c. School expect pupils to make up missed time either at lunch or after school to encourage the pupils to take responsibility for timekeeping. Parents will be informed for five or more incidents.
  - d. First day calling for a list of priority pupils (based on concerns from school and home) is undertaken by the Attendance Officer.
- 7.3 Concerns from tutors will be passed to HOY/Pupil Support Co-ordinator.
- 7.4 HOY will meet with Education Welfare Service on a regular minimum half-termly basis to discuss all pupils with an attendance level below 94%. Action will be determined at this meeting and letters will be sent (see Appendices B, C, D, E & F).
- 7.5 School will inform and involve parents in all strategies to improve attendance. This may include meeting with parents, staff, EWS and Governors. Referral, when necessary, will be made to the Education Welfare Service and service procedure will be followed.
- 7.6 Attendance percentage will be noted on all school reports and will be discussed at parents' evenings.
- 7.7 Meeting with parents may take place. If no improvement, referral will be made to the Education Welfare Service.
- 7.8 A meeting between Pupil Support Co-ordinator and Education Welfare Service will take place each week to discuss:
- a. all referred cases
  - b. cases identified as needing prompt action
  - c. referral to School Nurse or Doctor
  - d. systems within the school
  - e. use of reintegration programmes for pupils with long-term absence
  - f. Pastoral Support programmes for pupils identified with behavioural problems
  - g. "Children in care"
  - h. Statemented pupils
  - i. Use of outside agencies
  - j. This meeting also analyses data re vulnerable groups i.e. statemented pupils and CIC, and will look at specific groups to follow year trends, differences between genders etc.

- k. School recognises good attendance with termly certificates issued to all pupils with 100% and recognising annually attendance of over 97% with an exceptional certificate for 100%.

A.M. Hardy (Mrs)  
Assistant Headteacher &  
Pupil Support Co-ordinator  
May 2009

## Table of new DCSF codes

Code	Description	Statistical Meaning	Physical Meaning
/	Present (AM)	Present	In for whole session
\	Present (PM)	Present	In for whole session
@	Do not use	Unauthorised Absence	Late for session
B	Educated off site (not Dual reg.)	Approved Educational Activity	Out for whole session
C	Other Authorised Circumstances including Study Leave	Authorised Absence	Out for whole session
D	Dual registration (attending other establishments.)	Approved Educational Activity	Out for whole session
E	Excluded (no alternative provision made)	Authorised Absence	Out for whole session
F	Extended family holiday (agreed)	Authorised Absence	Out for whole session
G	Family holiday (not agreed or days in excess)	Unauthorised Absence	Out for whole session
H	Family holiday (agreed)	Authorised Absence	Out for whole session
I	Illness (not med/dental appointments)	Authorised Absence	Out for whole session
J	Interview	Approved Educational Activity	Out for whole session
L	Late (before registers closed)	Present	Late for session
M	Medical/Dental appointments	Authorised Absence	Out for whole session
N	No reason yet provided for absence	Unauthorised Absence	Out for whole session
O	Unauthorised Abs (not covered by other code)	Unauthorised Absence	Out for whole session
P	Approved sporting activity	Approved Educational Activity	Out for whole session
R	Religious Observance	Authorised Absence	Out for whole session
T	Traveller absence	Authorised Absence	Out for whole session
U	Late (after registers closed)	Unauthorised Absence	Late for session
V	Educational visit or trip	Approved Educational Activity	Out for whole session
W	Work experience	Approved Educational Activity	Out for whole session
X	DCSF #: School closed to pupils	Attendance not required	Out for whole session
Y	Enforced closure	Attendance not required	Out for whole session
Z	Do not use	Authorised Absence	Out for whole session
!	DCSF X: Non-compulsory school age abs	Attendance not required	Out for whole session
#	School closed to pupils & staff	Attendance not required	Out for whole session
*	DCSF Z: Pupil not on roll	Attendance not required	Out for whole session
-	All should attend / No mark recorded	No mark	No mark for session

### Notes:

You will notice that the characters used to represent the codes by the DCSF and Capita ES differ in three cases:

The **X** code in Attendance, 'School Closed to Pupils' is **#** in DCSF documentation.

The **!** code in Attendance, 'Non-compulsory school age' is **X** in DCSF documentation.

The **\*** code in Attendance, 'Pupil not on roll' is **Z** in DCSF documentation.

These three codes have not been changed by Capita to the DCSF character for technical reasons. The DCSF have agreed that Capita can leave the character for these three codes unchanged in Attendance. In each case Capita have indicated the DCSF character in the code's description.

The meaning and guidance of the codes supplied by the DCSF remains accurate.

Specifically the guidance that SIMS Attendance '!' (DCSF 'X') should only be used for a non-compulsory school age absence.

Date:

Tutor Group:

Ref: Stage 1

Dear

STUDENT NAME:

We are concerned to note that the above pupil's attendance since the beginning of the year is %.

The figure identified as being acceptable from Government for an average pupil's attendance is 93%. However, as a proactive encouraging school our own target is 94% and we would ask all parents and pupils to work with us to reach this. As you see from the enclosed registration certificate your child's attendance falls well below this point.

We are aware that absences are generally explained but we are bound to draw your attention to the fact that this level of attendance is unacceptable unless there are very good reasons, such as long term illness covered by a Doctor's Certificate.

We do hope that with your help and guidance we can look forward to an improvement in this attendance figure in the future.

We will, of course, continue to offer every support to help your child within the school environment. However, if there is a problem concerning attendance and you wish to discuss it please do not hesitate to contact me here at the school.

Yours sincerely,

A.M. Hardy (Mrs)  
Assistant Headteacher &  
Pupil Support Co-ordinator

Appendix C

Date:

Tutor Group:

Ref: Stage 2

Dear

STUDENT NAME:

We are concerned to note that the above student's attendance since our last letter has shown little or no improvement. Please find attached a copy of the Registration Certificate, which will show a current figure of %.

The figure identified as being acceptable from Government for an average pupil's attendance is 93%. However, as a proactive encouraging school our own target is 94% and we would ask all parents and pupils to work with us to reach this. As you can see from the enclosed Registration Certificate your child's attendance falls well below this point.

We are aware that absences are generally explained but we are bound to draw your attention to the fact that this level of attendance is unacceptable unless there are very good reasons, such as long-term illness covered by a Doctor's Certificate.

We will monitor attendance for a further 4 weeks and if there is no improvement your child's record will be referred to the Education Welfare Service who will investigate the reason for such low attendance.

We will, of course, continue to offer support to help within the school environment. However, if there is a problem concerning attendance and you wish to discuss it please do not hesitate to contact either me at the school or the Education Welfare Officer on telephone numbers 01271 388548 or 07876 404687.

Yours sincerely,

A. M. Hardy (Mrs)  
Assistant Headteacher &  
Pupil Support Co-ordinator

Date:

Tutor Group: (Late 1)

Dear

Student Name:

I am writing to inform you that ..... has been late to school ..... times this academic year. This is a matter of real concern and must be addressed immediately.

I am sure that you will be as concerned as I am to know that ..... is missing so much education and you will recognise the importance of students being punctual to school if they are to achieve their full potential. It is the parent/carer's responsibility to ensure their child arrives at school on time each day and I would be grateful if you would discuss this with ..... with a view to ensuring punctuality is improved with immediate effect.

We will, of course, continue to offer every support to help ..... within the school environment, however, if there is a problem that you feel may be a contributing factor, please do not hesitate to contact me here at the school.

Yours sincerely

MRS N J MORRISH  
Attendance Officer

DATE

Tutor Group (Late 2)

Dear

Student Name:

I am writing further to our letter of .....when we wrote to inform you that ..... had been late to school .....times this academic year. We note that there has been no improvement and in fact, the number of times that ..... has been late to school has now risen to ..... times. This is a matter of real concern and must be addressed immediately.

I am sure that you will be as concerned as I am to know that ..... is missing so much education and you will recognise the importance of students being punctual to school if they are to achieve their full potential. It is the parent/carer's responsibility to ensure their child arrives at school on time each day.

The persistent nature of ..... 's poor punctuality is such that unless it improves in the next four weeks, further sanctions may, regrettably, be taken. This will be in line with the Government's expectation that all pupils achieve a minimum of 93% attendance.

We will, of course, continue to offer every support to help ..... within the school environment, however, if there is a problem that you feel may be a contributing factor, please do not hesitate to contact me here at the school.

Yours sincerely

MRS N J MORRISH  
Attendance Officer

Date

Tutor Group:

Dear

**Unexplained Absence for .....**

You will be aware that it is a legal requirement that all children between the ages of five and sixteen attend school on a daily basis. Any absences must be accounted for by the parent/guardian either by telephone, letter or a note in the child's planner and this will subsequently be recorded in the attendance register. In line with school policy, any absences that remain unexplained for more than two weeks will be recorded as unauthorised absence.

Listed below are the dates we hold for your child that require explanation. Please could we ask you to complete and sign the slip below and return it to school as soon as possible. In the absence of a reply, any absence which is at least two weeks old will be recorded as unauthorised absence and this mark then remains on your child's record.

We are aware that absences are generally explained and thank you in anticipation of your help and support in this matter.

Yours sincerely,

MRS N J MORRISH  
Attendance Officer

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**FOR THE ATTENTION OF THE ATTENDANCE OFFICER**

**Child's Name:** .....

**Dates requiring reason for absence:** .....

**Reason** .....

.....

.....

**Signed(Parent/Guardian)..... Date.....**