

Attendance Policy (Students)

Reviewed April 2017 for review Autumn 2020

Rationale

Torquay Girls' Grammar School is committed to providing a full and efficient education to all pupils and endeavours to provide an environment where all pupils feel valued and welcome. We will consistently work towards a goal of 100% attendance for all children. Every opportunity will be used to convey to pupils and their parents the importance of regular and punctual attendance and will urge parents to explore every opportunity to avoid absence.

Why regular Attendance is so important:

Learning:

There is a direct relationship between attendance and achievement and as our aim is to help girls achieve their potential we strive to maximize attendance. Regular absence will seriously affect learning. Catching up missed work is a poor substitute for being in lessons and it invariably affects performance. It also disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others.

Safeguarding:

Children may be at risk or harm if they do not attend school regularly. Attendance at school enables the school to promote the welfare and life opportunities of our students.

School attendance is subject to various Education laws and this school attendance policy is written to reflect these laws and the guidance produced by the Department for Education and Skills

The Law relating to attendance

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that 'the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause her to receive efficient full time education suitable: -

- a) to age, ability and aptitude and
- b) to any special educational needs she may have either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.'

The Law relating to Safeguarding

Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 places a duty on local authorities and governing bodies to have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State with regard to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and students under the age of 18.

Understanding types of absence:

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required, preferably in writing.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like

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illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. Only the headteacher or a member of staff acting on their behalf can authorize absence. This type of absence can lead to the school using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- Truancy before or during the school day
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Children who arrive at school too late to get a mark
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- Day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If your child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually this makes things worse.

Persistent Absenteeism (PA)

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 20% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parents' fullest support and co-operation to tackle this. We monitor all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and you will be informed of this immediately. PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system and we also combine this with academic mentoring where absence affects attainment.

Promoting Attendance

The school will use opportunities as they arise to remind parents/carers, that it is their responsibility to ensure that their children receive their education.

The Home/School agreement can be used in this way.

The school will include details of absence on reports.

The School Attendance Officer

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff and in particular the School Attendance officer in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful and most difficulties can be sorted out in this way.

Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your child misses the start of the day they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day.

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Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons, can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage absence.

Since 1st September 2013 Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Each leave of absence request will be considered on a case by case basis and the request will only be authorised where there are exceptional circumstances. If the leave is granted, the Headteacher will determine the number of school days a child can be away from school.

All applications for leave must be made in advance and at the discretion of the school a maximum of 10 days in any academic year may be authorized. In making a decision the school will consider the circumstances of each application individually, including any previous pattern of leave in term time.

2. The circumstances when leave in term time will NOT be agreed by us:

- When a pupil is just starting the school. This is very important as your child needs to settle into their new environment as quickly as possible.
- Immediately before and during assessment periods; internal exams, GCSE, A levels or Controlled Assessments or any other public examinations.
- When a pupil's attendance record already includes any level of unauthorized absence.
- Where a pupil's attendance rate is already below (95%) for the previous 20 week period or will fall to or below that level as a result of taking leave. This is even if the previous absence was due to an unavoidable cause such as illness.
- Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school, or in excess of that agreed, will be classed as unauthorized. If leave is granted it should be for only one holiday in any one school year.

You may receive a fixed penalty notice (FPN) if:

- Your child was absent from School for 10 or more sessions (5 or more days) due to an unauthorised holiday; OR
- Your child has accrued 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence in any 6 month period.

A FPN may be issued per parent and per child and you are given two payment options, these are:

- Pay £60 within 21 days of receipt of the FPN
- Pay £120 between 28 days of receipt of the FPN

If you do not pay the FPN, we may start prosecution proceedings, unless the FPN was issued in error in which case it will be withdrawn.

Once we start prosecution proceedings you will be summoned to appear in court where you will have the opportunity to explain your situation to the court. If you plead guilty or are found guilty, the court could issue you to pay a fine of up to £1000.

Summary

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend. All school staff are committed to working with parents and pupils as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible and that every child's welfare and life opportunities are promoted.