



Attendance Policy Reviewed and updated Jan 2022

National Lockdown: All Purple is what the school has/will be doing during any period of National Lockdown. Any changes in government guidance will be reflected in any updates if another Lockdown occurs

The Topsham School is committed to providing a full and efficient educational experience for all pupils. We believe that if pupils are to benefit from education, good attendance is crucial. As a school we do all that we can to ensure maximum attendance for all pupils. Any problems that prevent full attendance need to be identified and addressed as speedily as possible.

It is the policy of our school to celebrate achievement. Attendance is a critical factor to a productive and successful school career. Our school will actively promote and encourage high levels of attendance for all our pupils.

Our school will give a high priority to conveying to parents and pupils the importance of regular and punctual attendance. We recognise that parents have a vital role to play and that there is a need to establish strong home-school links and communication systems that can be utilised whenever there is concern about attendance.

If there are problems which affect a pupil's attendance we will investigate, identify and strive in partnership with parents and pupils to resolve those problems as quickly and efficiently as possible. We will adopt a clearly focused approach aimed at returning the pupil to full attendance at all times.

Objectives

- ✓ to encourage full attendance and punctuality
- ✓ to record and monitor attendance and absenteeism and apply appropriate strategies to minimise its occurrence
- ✓ to acknowledge and reward a successful record of attendance
- ✓ to ensure a consistent approach throughout the school

Statutory Duty of Schools

The Education Act 1996 requires parents or guardians to ensure their children receive efficient, full-time education, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. Schools are responsible for recording pupil attendance twice a day; once at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session. An entry must be made in the attendance register for all pupils of compulsory school age who are on the school's admission roll

This duty remains during this time. Registers for children in their Pods will be taken in the morning and again in the afternoon and reported to the office to

ensure relevant and accurate reporting can be completed in line with DfE requirements. Parents have been informed to follow attendance procedures 'as normal'. The schools remote learning policy states that children are expected to attend an online registration when working remotely and this is part of the home school agreement for remote learning. Teachers will follow up non attendance via email and if nothing has been reported by parents by 11 am office staff will follow up to check if the child and family is safe.

Principles

Parents are legally responsible for ensuring that a child of compulsory school age attends school regularly.

We will work towards ensuring that all pupils feel supported and valued. We will send a clear message that if a pupil is absent the school will act swiftly to ensure the pupil will be able to return to school as soon as possible to avoid potential significant risk to progress and attainment. We will ensure the school community is made aware of our Attendance Policy and will take advice from the and the Education Welfare Service in reviewing the policy.

We will encourage parents/carers to be actively involved in promoting their child's attendance. We will ensure that all staff are aware of the requirements of the registration process and that they receive training on Registration Regulations and the Law relating to attendance. Regular information will be sent to parents and pupils informing them of attendance rates and related issues.

Attendance will be an important feature of the School Improvement Plan should attendance figures show a significant decline.

Consistent and vigorous monitoring and evaluation procedures will be in place.

During any Lockdowns where only children of Key Workers and those identified as Vulnerable are to attend school face to face, the following will take place. Numbers within school will be capped, in line with the schools RA100 risk assessment which will be ratified by FGB and LA. Not all parents of children in these 2 categories may wish to send their child to school and in line with Government Guidance will not be penalised for not sending their child to school. The most Vulnerable should attend (children within the care of Social Services or those with a social worker) However, a parent's decision not to send their child into the school's onsite provision will be respected. Parents will be requested to provide reasons why their child will not be attending and these reasons will be logged according to DfE guidance. If appropriate the Education Welfare Officer will be informed, especially if there are any safeguarding concerns. It follows that if there are any safeguarding concerns the school, led by the Headteacher and DSL will, inform and work with all relevant agencies to ensure the child safety.

Remote attendance and engagement will be monitored by class teachers and followed up initially by then. If needed any concerns will be escalated to Phase Leaders and then to the Headteacher

Parents' Responsibilities.

✓ Parents should ensure that if their child is to be absent from school for any unavoidable reason such as sickness they should contact the school by 8.55am, on

the first morning of absence. This may be done by phone, by letter/email to the admin email or in person.

At this time parents will need to ensure they email admin@topsham.devon.sch.uk by 8.55am on each day of any absence. They MUST give a full reason as to why their child is unwell, including informing the school whether the illness involves coronavirus symptoms. Those working remotely should attend their online register period: FSU 9am, KS1, 8.45, Yr 3 and 4 8.50 and Yr 5 and 6 8.55. Staggered times have been set out to support families with more than one child. Teachers need to have 'eyes' on child at this time as a matter of safeguarding

✓ When children are absent from school for 5 consecutive days, the Educational Welfare Officer requires us to ask parents to provide some form of medical evidence in order to authorise the absence as illness. We are not looking for doctor's notes – they cost money and take up GP's time. Suitable evidence could include:

- Doctors appointment card stamped and signed by receptionist to confirm appointment kept
- Prescribed medication
- Walk in centre slip
- Call log/consultation text printed by receptionist
- Some parents have online access to patient records – from here you can print past, current, future appointments and/or a patient summary record.

At this time this may not be appropriate or possible and the school would keep in contact with the parents and advice would be sought from the EWO

✓ Parents should avoid absences during term-time. If this is absolutely unavoidable they should complete an Absence Request available from the school office and the school website. As from September 2013 the law changed which means that absence during term time can only be granted in exceptional circumstances. The school interprets exceptional to mean, once in a lifetime and never to be repeated. ***This does not include holidays.***

✓ The law does not grant parents/ carers an automatic right to take their children out of school during term time. If the request is for an absence in term time you must have Parental Responsibility and be the parent/ carer with whom the child normally lives. Permission must be sought in advance. If the circumstances relating to this request are considered exceptional and the absence is authorised by the school, the authoring of the absence will be condition on the child attending satisfactory up to the date covered by this request.

At this time advice would be sought from the EWO if any request of this kind was made.

Warning – if the school refuses your request and the child is taken out of school, this will be recorded as an unauthorised absence. A significant amount of unauthorised absence may make you liable for a Penalty Notice for each child, payable by each parent/ carer or the subject of court proceedings which could result in a fine up to £2,500, and or a term of imprisonment of up to 3 months.

Appointments

✓ If your child is going to be absent from school for a medical or dental appointment, please bring a copy of the hospital letter, appointment card, prescription label or text confirming the appointment to the school office. This can also be emailed to admin@topsham.devon.sch.uk Please do not request a letter from your doctor, an appointment card with the time and date can be obtained from receptionists. This will enable us to authorise your child's absence as a medical appointment.

At this time, if a child needs to be absent from school- whether as part of in school provision or remote provision parents would need to inform the school and supply relevant evidence to ensure the child could leave the premises safely or enter the premises safely if arriving later than their Pods identified entry time.

Punctuality

✓ Parents should ensure that their child arrives at school in time for the start of registration (8:55 a.m.). School gates open at 8.45, allowing enough time for all children to be in class by 8.55. If a child arrives after 9:00 a.m. his/her parent should report directly to the school office.

At this time punctuality is imperative. Following government guidance the school will implement a staggered entry and exit timetable to minimise risk. Any child arriving after their allocated time will need to wait with their parent until it is deemed safe for them to enter or exit the school The following times and information have been taken from relevant RA100 used during previous Lockdowns:

Expectations of parents

- One parent to drop off and one to pick up this includes Year 6 children are NOT to walk to or from school unaccompanied as they need to adhere to social distancing measures doing these journeys- parents are expected to social distance while awaiting for gates to open
- Parents to be informed of the staggered start and finish time for their child. This is:
 - R to arrive at 9am and leave and 3.30pm
 - Yr 1 and 2 pod: 8.45 am and leave 3.15pm
 - KS2 pod: 8.50am and leave 3.20pm
- Parents to ensure they are prompt for drop off and pick up. Any child late for their allocated drop time will need to wait with their parent, adhering to social distancing, until a member of the SLT advises it is safe for the child to now enter. If a parent is late to pick up their child at their allocated time, the child will be kept in isolation until the parent arrives.
- Parents are not to come through the school gates and onto site. Parents will need to drop their child at their allocated gate: Blue or Yellow and then leave the area.
- Parents to ensure their child comes through their allocated gate and lead teacher will take the children to their learning area through these pre identified entrance
- The walkways from the school gates to pod entrances are marked showing 2m distancing along the pathways to ensure that children are walking in a an orderly and safe manner
- Parents must leave straight after drop off- do not stand and chat. The entrances/exits need to be clear as soon as possible to ensure the next group arriving or leaving are safe to do so.
- Children to bring in as little in as possible- water bottle, packed lunch box, coat. *Children are NOT to bring in cuddly toys or ANY other objects from home.*
- At this time is expected that parents will support their children remains

socially distanced while awaiting entry into the school and adhere to this both on the way to school and while walking home.

School Responsibilities

✓ The school will record and monitor attendance in accordance both with the statutory requirements and with the principle that regular, uninterrupted attendance is vital to a child's educational progress.

At this time the school will monitor and record attendance in line with government guidance: Recording attendance in the school attendance register during the coronavirus outbreak. The information below is taken directly from that document

✓ Registers will be called twice daily: by 9a.m. and at 1pm for FSU and KS1 and at 1:15 p.m for KS2.

At this time registers will be taken twice daily. Once in the morning the Pods start time and again in afternoon according to the Pods lunch timings.

Remote registration will take place each morning within the allotted time frame and at the end of the day 'check' in. Children are expected to attend both. Engagement and attendance at allocated live sessions will be monitored and followed up by the class teacher and followed up by Phase Leader and then SENDCO and Headteachers as needed.

✓ Registers will then be taken to the office and close at 9:05 a.m. and 1.05 (FSU/KS1) or 1:20 p.m (KS2). Any child arriving after the closing of the register will be recorded as 'late' for that session.

At this time completed registers will be left by the Pod and identified staff member to pick up and return to office. This is to ensure no child is walking through the halls when not necessary and minimise the number of adults moving through the school.

✓ All absences should be approved by the school at least 24 hours in advance and submitted on the appropriate form.

✓ The head teacher will regularly collect attendance data and will use this data during meetings with the school's Education Welfare Officer [EWO]. These meetings will agree on attendance thresholds and targets and will identify respective tasks and follow-up actions for both the school and EWO.

At this time attendance data will be shared with the Senior Administrator each day for the purposes of completing the DfE Educational Setting Status Form

✓ If attendance is deemed to be a concern the Headteacher may request a meeting with parents/carers of the child to ensure that appropriate support can be put in place to raise attendance.

At this time as stated above, it is expected that parents MUST contact the school, via the admin email to report any absence and give clear reasons as to why the child is absent. Any concerns would be followed up with a telephone

call from the Headteacher, a potential home visit by the Head accompanied by a member of SLT and informing and seeking guidance from the EWO

✓ **Attendance which drops below 95%:** Regular monitoring meeting between head teacher and attendance administrator to monitor both late and absence data. Parents of children identified with falling attendance may be sent Letter One from the escalation procedure in the first instance.

Escalation procedures (see Appendix for copied of letters)

1. Parents of children identified with falling attendance may be sent Letter One from the escalation procedure in the first instance.
2. If after sending Letter One, attendance remains a concern, Letter 2 may be sent to parents. If, after sending Letter 1, attendance is no longer causing concern, an Improvement in Attendance Letter may be sent.
3. If Letters 1 and 2 have both been sent and attendance is still unsatisfactory, the EWO will be contacted to send a third letter and/or arrange a meeting with parents as deemed appropriate.

✓ **Attendance which drops below 90%:** Regular attendance monitoring may result in a letter being sent by the school or educational welfare officer indicating the need to supply medical evidence to support any absence

✓ The school will employ a number of strategies to promote regular, punctual attendance:

- the head teacher will communicate regularly with parents on attendance matters;
- appropriate personal encouragement or congratulation will be offered to individual children;
- clear attendance information will be entered in the school prospectus.
- a weekly class attendance certificate will be awarded during achievers assembly.
- Certificates will be given at the end of each term for pupils with excellence attendance; this being at 99% or above.

Procedures

These procedures are in place to ensure maximum engagement in promoting attendance:

- Registration times in the morning are 8.55am until 09.05am. The afternoon registration time is 13.00pm – 13.05pm for KS1 and 13.15pm until 13.20pm for KS2

At this time registration will take place as soon as the children are in their Pods. It is accepted that at present this process may take longer due to the need for social distancing and handwashing routines needing to take place. However the school will strive to have all registers completed within a 20 min window.

- Any child arriving after 09.05am should report to the schools front office where they will be signed in and the time recorded. They will be registered with a late mark (L). Any child arriving after register closes at 09.15 will be recorded as an unauthorised absence (U).

At this time any child arriving after this time will be marked as late and may have to wait for admittance to ensure safety of the child and others

- Punctuality will be monitored by the Attendance Monitor through the registers. Children with continuous late marks will be reported to the Head teacher who will take action in the first instance in a letter to the parents. If lateness persists the head teacher will initiate a meeting with the parents.

At this time persistent lateness will be challenged by the Headteacher and support provided to ensure punctuality. If lateness persists guidance will be sought by the Head from the EWO as lateness could pose a risk to the child and children already in school.

- The school will undertake a first day absence procedure. Parents are expected to phone the school office to inform the school of their child's absence. If parents do not phone the school with any reason for absence, the office staff will endeavour to phone the home telephone contact number by 9:30am to ascertain a reason for absence. If no one can be contacted this will be viewed as a matter of safe-guarding and the may lead to a visit from the Headteacher and other of staff or from the police to check everyone is safe.

See above for the procedures that will be followed in relation to absence

- A vulnerable pupil's list will be retained in the office which indicates children for whom priority calling must be made in the event of any unexplained absence. This would apply to children who are subject to a child protection plan or other safeguarding issues for example.

At this time the school has a duty to offer onsite provision to children identified as vulnerable. Guidance in this areas acknowledges that this provision may be limited to only certain days or times, including the use of part time tables if this is supported by the Inclusion Team or deemed necessary due to SEND needs and in accordance with risk assessments for these children. Children who have a child protection plan or a social worker will remain on the schools vulnerable list and regular contact made by the DSL/DDSL to ensure close working relationships are maintained with families and relevant services

- Guidance on authorised and unauthorised absence will be reported in regular newsletter updates.

At this time this is not appropriate

- Children with attendance issues will be monitored by the Attendance Monitor and reported to the Head teacher, concerns will be flagged up and discussed with the EWO.

- When a parent rings the office reporting absence e.g. illness the office record this in the day attendance and monitoring file including the 'active symptoms the child presents with.

Please see above for reporting absence procedures

- Parents are reminded that unless sickness or diarrhoea or other contagious illness children who feel better may come in for the afternoon session.

At this time this will not be deemed appropriate

- The parents of those children with non obvious active symptoms may receive a follow up phone call at 11:30am to check on the child and offer their attendance at the afternoon session.

At this time this will not be deemed appropriate

The following procedures are not in line the guidance at this time.

First Day Absence Procedure Guidance followed by the school

- Registers are taken promptly and sent to the office immediately on completion.
- Vulnerable pupils are marked in red in the register and the absence of any such pupil is passed verbally to the office immediately.
- Parents are expected to phone the school office to inform the school of their child's absence. Absence mailbox and emails are checked.
- Registers are collated and the list of children absent with no explanation If parents do not phone the school with any reason for absence, the office staff will endeavour to phone the home telephone contact number by 9:30am to ascertain a reason for absence.
- The classroom is checked to ensure the pupil has not entered the building without being signed in at the office
- Start first day calling for children absent without explanation, call everyone on the contact list until you get an answer. Leave messages if there is a voicemail option.
- You might get an overseas ring tone - is the family taking a holiday they haven't told you about?
- Call the contact list at least twice
- If no reply at all consider whether any children have additional agency support, such as a social worker, contact them or other identified contact on the vulnerable list if appropriate.
- Do you have any in school intelligence, does anyone know the family.
- No explanation from a supportive family is very worrying - so don't just concentrate on children who you already know to be vulnerable.
- Consider whether a home visit is needed
- If you cannot get an answer refer immediately to children's services / MASH / Police and request a welfare call.
- If you can see them inside a house avoiding your knock, don't refer - unless you think the children are at risk of significant harm
- A vulnerable pupil's list will be retained in the office which indicates children for whom priority calling must be made in the event of any unexplained absence. These pupils must be rung first. This would apply to children who are subject to a child protection plan or other.

The target setting process. safeguarding issues for example.

- Targets are reported to the DFES when requested by the LA.
- The Education Welfare Officer makes regular visits to discuss attendance with the Head teacher and the Attendance monitor.

- Inclusion of attendance information can be found in the procedure manuals in the school office. Individual attendance information is reported to parents with the end of term report.
- It is essential that everyone involved in promoting attendance is clear about the important role that must be carried out in order to raise standards.
- Responsibility to promote attendance is the responsibility of the whole school community.

SafeGuarding: Children Missing in Education

Attendance at school is a statutory requirement and school have a statutory duty to SafeGuard pupils. Part of Attendance monitoring is to swiftly identify Children Missing in Education. The Topsham School will use Babcock's Guidance on Roles and Responsibilities, in consultation with the school EWO to ensure we follow appropriate procedures to safeguard our children. This document can be found alongside this policy

Appendix:

Template for Letter One:

Dear XXXXXXXXXXX

RE: Attendance – XXXXX XXXXX

The school regularly monitors the attendance of all pupils and have noticed that XXXX's attendance has dropped below XXXX%. For a child to fully benefit from the education being provided, their attendance should be at least 93% or above. The Government's recommended figure is 96%.

We will continue to monitor XXXX's attendance as per school policy and hope that in bringing this matter to your attention we can work together to help improve XXX's attendance.

Attached for your information is a copy of the school's Attendance Policy and XXXX's Registration Certificate.

If you have any questions, concerns or further information to support the reason(s) for XXXX's absence(s) then please do contact us on the telephone number above.

Kind regards

Yours sincerely

Mrs Emma Pipe
Headteacher

Template for Letter Two:

RE: Attendance – XXXX XXXX

As you are aware the Educational Welfare Officer visits school regularly to check the registers and attendance of pupils. A letter was sent to you dated _____ to alert you to the fact that XXXXXXXX attendance was lower than government guidelines; 96% attendance is the government recommendation to ensure children make good progress within the year.

Our records show that XXXXXXXX attendance is still below that which is expected. To date xxxxxxxx
has missed -----

As you know good attendance is essential if your child is to get the best from their education. I have been asked to now only authorise any future absence which is supported by medical information such as appointment card from your Doctor, Walk-In Centre, Hospital or Dentist to confirm a visit to a medical professional was made.

If the school can support you in anyway in raising XXXXXXXX attendance please do contact the school office to arrange a meeting with myself so we can work together to ensure XXXXX attendance improves.

Template for Improvement in Attendance Letter

Dear XXXXX

RE: Improvement in attendance - XXXXXXXXXX

The school regularly monitors the attendance of all pupils and I am pleased to note a significant improvement in XXXX's attendance since XXXX.

Please find attached for your information a copy of XXXX's registration certificate and congratulate him/her on the improvement.

Kind regards

Yours sincerely

Mrs Emma Pipe
Headteacher