

Tenax Schools Trust

West Malling CE Primary School and The McGinty

Speech and Language SRP

Attendance Policy

Approval Arrangements

All statutory policies in the Trust are ultimately the responsibility of the Trust Board. To enable it to discharge this responsibility appropriately and in collaboration with the constituent schools, the Trust Board will

1. set a full Trust wide policy,
2. set a 'policy principles' document (a framework within which Headteachers develop a full and appropriately customised policy),
3. or delegate to Headteachers or LGBs the power to develop their own policy.

This is a Level 2 Policy against the Trust Governance Plan.

Approved by	Chair of Governors acting on behalf of LGB
Date	September 2024
Date for Review	September 2025
Responsibility	Headteacher & Families and Community Manager

This policy was approved by the LGB for implementation on the date above.

With thanks to the Headteacher and Admissions Team at Bishop Chavasse for their help in developing this policy.

Introduction

At Tenax Schools Trust, it is our goal to develop children in a happy, safe, Christian environment. Through a broad, balanced, ambitious and inspirational curriculum, we enthuse and challenge, allowing every child's potential to be realised. Our curriculum is knowledge rich, exciting, meaningful and responds to the needs of the individuals within our learning community, enabling them to shine academically and flourish socially, emotionally, morally, culturally and spiritually. Underpinning this passion is our school vision, which is seen in school, each and every day. At Tenax Schools Trust, we live by our trust vision:

Our foundation as a Church of England trust means we are a family of schools all with their own unique identities but in which all are known, valued and loved.

The inspiration of our trust name, Tenax, means that just as God never gives up on us we are called to be steadfast and persevere to help each child flourish. Informed by our knowledge that each of us is wonderfully made, known and loved by God however far we may be from Him we aim to build communities founded on hope and wisdom.

Our commitment to providing academic and character excellence aims to ensure that through our educational provision all our schools are liberated to serve a thriving society which works for the common good. We aim to ensure that every child has a transformational education in which doors of opportunity and choice are consistently opened.

As we look to the example of Jesus, believe in God's love, and invite the sustaining presence of the Holy Spirit we can be equipped in this common endeavour. This Christian foundation helps us learn what we need to help make wise judgements. It can inspire us to show love through the warmth of our hospitality. It reminds us to conduct ourselves with a humility that respects the dignity of others.

The West Malling CE Primary School and The McGinty Speech and Language SRP vision:

*As God's children we grow and learn together,
Encouraging everyone in our community to "let their light shine" (Matthew 5:16).
We strive to be the best we can be,
Knowing that "whatever we will be has not yet been revealed" (1 John 3:2).
Through love, trust, compassion, hope, forgiveness and perseverance,
We flourish as one inclusive family.*

We are all God's children, and the safety and welfare of every individual, child and adult, within our organization is of paramount importance. Our Christian vision and values provide the foundations on which this Attendance Policy is built.

This Policy reflects the Equalities Act 2010. The Trust recognises that no direct or indirect discrimination may take place on the basis of any of the protected characteristics. All children, regardless of first language, disability, race, gender, cultural or socio-economic background, should receive equal access to the full curriculum. We believe that our curriculum should celebrate the individuality of each child, providing opportunities for them to develop their interests. We want our curriculum to provide our pupils with the knowledge and skills that they need so they can be well prepared for future life.

Statement of Intent

Tenax Schools Trust is committed to the continuous raising of achievement and progress of all our pupils. The whole curriculum, and indeed school day, is carefully constructed and regularly evaluated, revised and refreshed in order to ensure that it is relevant, engaging and provides the essential knowledge and skills to equip our pupils for the future.

As such, regular and punctual attendance is critical if our pupils are to be successful and benefit from all the learning opportunities presented to them.

One of our basic principles is to celebrate success. Good attendance is fundamental to a successful and fulfilling school experience. We actively promote 100% attendance for all our pupils and we use a variety of weekly, termly and annual awards to promote good attendance and punctuality.

The Trust Board, Local Governors, Headteacher and Staff, in partnership with parents, have a duty to promote full attendance at Tenax Schools Trust.

Aims

We are committed to meeting our obligation with regards to school attendance through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- Promoting good attendance
- Reducing absence, including persistent absences
- Acting early to address patterns of absences
- Building strong relationships with families to ensure children have the support in place to attend school
- Ensuring every child has access to full-time education which they are entitled to

Attendance Figures	Attendance Rating
98% +	Outstanding attendance
95% to 97.9%	Good attendance
90% to 94.9%	Requires improvement
80% to 89.9%	Inadequate attendance
Below 80%	Unacceptable attendance

Equal Opportunities

At Tenax Schools Trust we believe that all children, regardless of first language, disability, race, gender, cultural or socio-economic background, should receive equal access to the full school curriculum.

Disability Statement

Tenax Schools Trust is proud to be an inclusive trust. We are able to offer access to the full curriculum for children who have a physical disability. We have easy access into the whole building and have accessible toilet facilities within the school. The school works closely with parents and appropriate outside agencies, to address any identified, additional needs.

Parental Responsibility

Parents have a legal duty to ensure that their children attend school regularly and arrive on time. Regular attendance is essential to the all-round development of the child and they should be allowed to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them in order to make good progress in their learning. Poor attendance and lateness detrimentally impacts educational attainment and progress, and often impacts children's self-esteem and well-being. It can also put pupils at risk by undermining peer relationships and friendships, and by encouraging anti-social behaviour. Please seek support proactively if barriers develop with maintaining your child's school attendance.

It is the parents' responsibility to contact the school on the first day their child is absent. This is a safeguarding requirement so that all parties know that your child is safe and their whereabouts is known.

Parents should update the school daily each morning regarding their absence and inform the school when their child is returning.

All absences must be reported by **8.55am** each morning. To report an absence please telephone the school office on 01732 842061 or email office@west-malling.kent.sch.uk

Any medical or dental appointments should be made outside of the school day. Evidence of the appointment must be provided if an appointment can only take place during the school day.

(The above is in reference to Section 1 of [Working together to improve school attendance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance))

School Timings

The school gates are opened at 8.45am. Pupils are expected to be in class and marked in the daily register by 8.55am.

Any pupil arriving after 8.55am will be marked late (L), any pupil arriving after 9:15am will be marked as late after the register closes (U).

All pupils that arrive late must report, with their parent, to the school office where the reason for lateness is recorded on Passtab by the parent or adult responsible for dropping them to school – this is a safeguarding requirement.

The afternoon register in class is taken at 1:00pm.

The school day finishes at 3.00pm. Please make sure that your child is picked up promptly at this time unless attending an after-school club.

The Role of the School Staff

At our school there is a whole school responsibility and approach for improving school attendance, with specific staff taking individual responsibility.

While the Headteacher holds overall responsibility for attendance, the Admissions and Attendance Officer and the Families and Community Manager are responsible for monitoring attendance issues;

1.1 Class teacher responsibilities:

- Recording attendance of each child twice daily

1.2 The School Office responsibilities:

- Assist and update attendance and lateness records
- If no contact has been made for the absence then the parents/guardians are contacted on the first day of the absence by telephone asking for a reason for the absence
- Where there has been no response, the school will contact the parents/guardians via email requesting the reason for the absence
- The appropriate attendance codes are entered into the register (see National Attendance Codes)

1.3 The Admissions and Attendance Officer responsibilities:

- Monitoring and analysing daily attendance data
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify and focus on areas of improvement
- Attending a termly attendance meeting with the Headteacher and Families and Community Manager

- Providing attendance reports and data to the Headteacher and DSL team
- Liaise with families and arrange calls and meetings to improve attendance for individual children
- Issue letters regarding individual children's attendance

The Admissions and Attendance Officer, Teresa Holman, can be contacted via phone on 01732 842061 or email at office@west-malling.kent.sch.uk

1.4 The Families and Community Manager responsibilities:

- Leading attendance across the school
- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
- Evaluate and monitor processes and implement when needed
- Having an oversight of data and devise individual strategies to improve attendance issues
- Delivering targeted interventions and support children and families

The Families and Community Manager, Jo White, can be contacted via phone on 01732 842061 or email at jwhite@west-malling.kent.sch.uk

1.5 The Headteacher responsibilities:

- Implementation of policy at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting this to governors
- Supporting staff with monitoring attendance
- Monitoring the impact of attendance strategies that are implemented

The Headteacher, David Rye, can be contacted via phone on 01732 842061 or email at headteacher@west-malling.kent.sch.uk

(The above is in reference to Section 2 of [Working together to improve school attendance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance))

1.6 The Trust Board responsibilities:

- Support schools to prioritise attendance
- Ensure school and Trust leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- Use data to understand patterns of attendance, compare with other local schools, identify areas of progress and where greater focus is needed

Using data to target attendance improvement

At our school we use attendance data to help us analyse patterns of absence including:

- Whole school and individual pupil basis
- Groups – for example, FSM (Free School Meals), SEN (Special Educational Need), PP (Pupil Premium), CIC (Child in Care), GRT (Gypsy, Romany, Traveller), EAL (English as an Additional Language)
- Make comparisons with national data

We share attendance reports with families and use data to help us understand the impact of interventions to help improve attendance.

Timeline of the Staged Approach for Managing Poor Attendance

- Any attendance falling below 95% - will be investigated and may lead to the issue of School intervention letter 1 being sent out to parents showing the attendance figure for their child with authorised and unauthorised absence breakdown.

- Continued falling attendance after Letter 1 has been issued – Letter 2 issued with parents invited to a meeting with members of the School Attendance Team. Timelined targets are then set to improve attendance and where appropriate a support plan to improve attendance is created. If this meeting is not attended then a phone call will be made to parents to arrange another date and or hold meeting over the telephone.
- If attendance has not improved after the initial meeting, then a further meeting is held with members of the School Attendance Team to complete necessary paperwork such as a 'Parent Contract' issued by Kent County Council. In the event of the local authority being invited to the meeting, this will be communicated ahead of time. This contract should include the child attending the meeting to complete the Pupil's voice section. Further targets are set for the parents and pupil to follow to improve attendance. This is signed by all parties attending the meeting.
- Where the level of attendance has not improved and there are continued unauthorised absences, the school will make a referral for a PIAS 7 to the Kent County Council Inclusion and Attendance Team for a Penalty Notice Warning letter. This service can be applied for multiple times in the school year and Kent County Council will monitor the requested child's attendance for 15 days.
- For cases that require intensive family support, the school may suggest a Family Key Worker Service via the Front Door using a Statement of Referral (SOR).
- After this point if there has been no improvement in attendance and we have exhausted every effort, we will apply for a Penalty Notice to be issued from the Local Authority. This will be issued to each parent of each child and the amount of the penalty will be £160 to be paid within 28 days, reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days. Failure to pay the penalty in full at the end of the 28-day period may result in prosecution by the Local Authority.

The national framework for penalty notices

In line with Chapter 6 of Working Together to Improve School Attendance (applies from 19 August 2024), Tenax Schools will work together with local authorities and make use of the full range of legal interventions rather than relying solely on penalty notices or prosecution. It is for individual schools and local authorities to decide whether to use them in an individual case after considering the individual circumstances of a family. These are:

- Attendance contracts
- Education supervision orders
- Attendance prosecution
- Parenting orders
- Penalty notices

Where used, these interventions are clearly aimed to change behaviour and ensure attendance improves.

The interventions might be used when support:

- Is not appropriate for the situation – such as an unauthorised holiday in term time
- Is not successful
- Is not engaged with

Authorised and Unauthorised Absences

All schools can grant a leave of absence when a pupil needs to be absent from school with permission. All schools are expected to restrict leaves of absence to the specific circumstances set out in regulation 11 of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024.

These circumstances are:

- Taking part in a regulated performance or employment abroad: in line with a licence issued by a local authority or Justice of the Peace or a body of persons approval (BOPA). (For full details please see Code C1)
- Attending an interview: for entry into another educational institution or for future employment where requested in advance by a parent the pupil normally lives with.
- Study leave: for public examinations, as agreed in advance with a parent the pupil normally lives with. Please note this does not include any internal examinations such as mocks as study leave should not be granted in such cases.
- A temporary, time-limited part-time timetable: where the pupil is of compulsory school age, both the parents who the pupil normally lives with and school agree the pupil should temporarily be educated on a part-time basis for exceptional reasons and have agreed the times and dates when the pupil will be expected to attend school as part of that timetable. (For full details please see part-time timetable)

Exceptional circumstances:

All schools can grant a leave of absence for other exceptional circumstances at their discretion. Exceptional circumstance leave must be requested in advance by a parent who the pupil normally lives with. Schools are then expected to consider each application individually taking into account the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind the request. If a leave of absence is granted, it is for the school to determine the length of the time the pupil can be away from school.

Generally, the DfE and Trust does not consider a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation to be an exceptional circumstance. Leave of absence should not be granted for a pupil to take part in protest activity during school hours.

Only the Headteacher can authorise absence using a consistent approach and may only authorise an absence in “exceptional circumstances”. The Headteacher is not obliged to accept a parent’s explanation. To request an absence parents/carers must submit their request in writing or via email, if possible 14 days prior to the absence. Once the decision not to authorise leave is taken, it cannot be authorised retrospectively.

A letter or telephone message from a parent **does not** in itself authorise an absence. If absences are not authorised, parents will be notified.

If possible, please book medical appointments outside of school hours. We are able to provide you with a letter from the school, outlining our policy and requesting appointments at suitable times. Parents can use this to help make medical appointments at times least disruptive to their children’s learning.

If no explanation or correspondence is received, absences will not be authorised.

The following reasons are **examples** of absence that will **not** be authorised:

- Persistent nonspecific illness e.g. poorly/unwell
- Absence of siblings if one child is ill, or the parent/carer is ill
- Oversleeping
- Inadequate clothing/uniform
- Confusion over school dates
- Medical/dental appointments of more than half a day without very good reasons
- Child’s/family birthday
- Shopping trip
- Family Holidays

The following reasons are examples of certain “Exceptional Circumstances”:

- Service personnel returning from a tour of duty abroad where it is evidenced the parent will not be in receipt of any leave in the near future that coincides with school holidays
- Where an absence from school is recommended by a health professional as part of a parent's or child's rehabilitation from a medical or emotional issue. Medical evidence would need to be provided for this
- The death or terminal illness of a person close to the family
- Compassionate leave to attend a funeral of a person close to the family
- Religious observance

The examples provided are illustrative rather than exhaustive. It is acceptable to take a pupil's previous record of attendance into account when the school is making decisions. The fundamental principles for defining 'exceptional' are rare, significant, unavoidable and short. And by 'unavoidable' it implies that an event could not reasonably be scheduled at another time. It is important to note that the Headteacher **can** agree the absence of a child in exceptional circumstances and this discretion can be used also to determine the length of the authorised absence.

Reducing persistent absences

Persistent absence is where a child misses 10% or more of school. A severe absence is where a child misses 50% or more of school.

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent absences
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of children who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable of becoming persistently absent and agree actions for the family, the child and the school to prevent this from happening
- Provide access to support services to remove the barriers to attendance. Families and children will be expected to engage with the support offered and will be expected to make a reasonable effort to attend school before any support has been initiated
- Engage with local authority attendance service as soon as possible to prevent a child from becoming persistently absent or to support agreed actions aimed at reducing overall absence below the 10% threshold

When a referral is made, the child's Registration Certificate, copies of all letters sent to parents and minutes of any meetings **will be** attached to the completed Request Penalty Notice form with any other relevant information.

Deciding whether or not your child is too ill to come to school

We understand that it can be a difficult decision to make about whether to send your child in or keep them off school if they are feeling unwell. Administration of medications such as Calpol, Paracetamol, Ibuprofen and antibiotics, to keep your child in school, can be given during the day by members of staff. A form **must** be filled in via the school office.

Please see the following NHS guidelines and advice for illnesses:

Coughs and Colds	It is fine to send your child to school with a minor cough or cold. If they have a fever, keep them off school until the fever has broken through.
High Temperature	If your child has a temperature of 38 degrees C or above keep them off school until it has broken through.
Chickenpox	Your child will need to stay away from school until their spots have formed a scab – this is usually about 5 days after the spots first appear.

Cold sores	There is no need to keep your child off school.
Conjunctivitis	There is no need to keep your child off school – please get advice from your pharmacist. Antibiotics can be administered at school if needed.
COVID-19	If your child has mild symptoms such as a runny nose, sore throat or a slight cough and feels well enough your child can go to school. Your child should stay at home if they have a high temperature or does not feel well enough to go to school or resume normal activities. Your child is no longer required to do a COVID-19 test if they have symptoms.
Ear infection	If your child has an ear infection and a high temperature or a severe earache then please keep them off school until they are feeling better or their temperature has broken through. Antibiotics can be administered at school if needed.
Hand, foot and mouth disease	There is no need to keep your child off school.
Head lice and nits	There is no need to keep your child off school.
Impetigo	You will need to seek treatment from the GP with antibiotics. Keep your child off school until the sores have crusted over and healed for 48 hours after the start of the antibiotic treatment.
Ringworm	Your child will need to see a pharmacist unless it is on their scalp which will need to be reviewed by a GP. Your child can attend school once they have started treatment.
Scarlet Fever	Your child will need to see a GP for antibiotics otherwise they will be infectious for 2 to 3 weeks. Your child can return to school 24 hours after starting antibiotics.
Slapped cheek syndrome (fifth disease)	Once the rash appears your child will no longer be infectious so can return to school
Sore throat	You can still send your child into school with a sore throat. If they have a high temperature this can be a sign of tonsillitis so you may need to seek treatment from the GP.
Stomach ache	There is no need to keep your child off school.
Vomiting and diarrhoea	Children with diarrhoea and vomiting should stay away from school until they have not been sick or had diarrhoea for 48 hours.

For further information please see: [Is my child too ill for school? - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/when-to-keep-your-child-off-school/)

Children Missing Education

No child should be removed from the school roll without consultation between the Headteacher and local authority Inclusion and Attendance Team when appropriate. Where a child is missing from education, Local Authority guidance will be followed, by completing a Child Missing Education referral for the following circumstances:-

- If the whereabouts of the child is unknown and the school has failed to locate him/her.
- The family has notified the school that they are leaving the area but no Common Transfer Form (pupil file) has been requested by another school.

(The above is in reference to Section 1 of [Working together to improve school attendance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance))

Attendance Codes

For more detail about absence and attendance codes from the DfE (see Chapter 8 of the [Working together to improve school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/714117/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance.pdf) (publishing.service.gov.uk))

Code	Definition
/	Present (am)
\	Present (pm)
L	Late arrival before the register is closed
K	Attending education provision arranged by the local authority
V	Attending an educational visit or trip
P	Participating in a sporting activity
W	Attending work experience
B	Attending any other approved educational activity
D	Dual registered at another school

Absence Codes (authorised and unauthorised)

Code	Definition
<i>Authorised absence</i>	
C	Leave of absence for exceptional circumstance
C1	Leave of absence for the purpose of participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad
C2	Leave of absence for a compulsory school age pupil subject to a part-time timetable
E	Suspended or permanently excluded and no alternative provision made
I	Illness (not medical or dental appointment)
J1	Leave of absence for the purpose of attending an interview for employment or for admission to another educational institution
M	Leave of absence for the purpose of attending a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance
S	Leave of absence for the purpose of studying for a public examination
T	Parent travelling for occupational purposes
X	Non-compulsory school age pupil not required to attend school
<i>Unauthorised absence</i>	
G	Holiday not granted by the school
N	Reason for absence not yet established
O	Absent in other or unknown circumstances
U	Arrived in school after registration closed

Absent - unable to attend school because of unavoidable cause

Code	Definition
Q	Unable to attend the school because of a lack of access arrangements
Y1	Unable to attend due to transport normally provided not being available

Y2	Unable to attend due to widespread disruption to travel
Y3	Unable to attend due to part of the school premises being closed
Y4	Unable to attend due to the whole school site being unexpectedly closed
Y5	Unable to attend as pupil is in criminal justice detention
Y6	Unable to attend in accordance with public health guidance or law
Y7	Unable to attend because of any other unavoidable cause

Administrative codes

Code	Definition
Z	Prospective pupil not on admission register
#	Planned whole school closure