

Tong
High
School



Attendance Policy

Introduction:

Tong High School is a successful school and your child plays their part in making it so. We always aim for our students to aspire for excellence, however during our last Ofsted inspection (May 2013), school attendance was judged to be Requires Improvement. For our students to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and that they are in school and on time every day the school is open, unless the reason for absence is unavoidable.

Why Regular Attendance is so important:

Learning and Achievement: - There is a clear link between high attendance and high achievement.

- Of **students who miss more than 50%** of school, **only 3% manage to achieve 5A* to C** GCSEs including English and Maths.
- Of **students who miss between 10% and 20%** of school, **only 35% manage to achieve 5A* to C** GCSEs including English and Maths.
- Of **students who miss less than 5%** of school, **73% achieve 5A* to C** GCSEs including English and Maths.

Figures shown above were published by the Dept. of Education in April 2012

Safeguarding:

Your child may be at risk of harm if they do not attend school regularly. Safeguarding the interests of each student is everyone's responsibility and within the context of our school, promoting the welfare and life opportunities for your child encompasses:-

- Attendance
- Behaviour Management
- Health and Safety
- Access to the curriculum
- Anti-bullying

Failing to attend our school on a regular basis will be considered as a safeguarding matter.

Promoting Regular Attendance

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility - parents, students, tutors, subject teachers and all other members of school staff. To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Report on a half termly basis to all parents/carers through a letter, informing them of their child's attendance and punctuality rate;

- Celebrate good attendance by displaying both individual and tutor group achievements (updated on a weekly basis);
- Reward the highest tutor group attendance on a half termly basis through an outing on the last day of each half term;
- Reward good or improving attendance through certificates issued in assemblies on a half termly basis;
- Inform parents/carers through a letter once their child's attendance falls below 85%, leading to them being classified as a Persistent Absentee.

The above will be coordinated by the Attendance Deputy Student Progress Leader team.

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 him/her to receive efficient full time education suitable:-

(a) to age, ability and aptitude and

(b) to any special educational needs he/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 parents/carer's), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required, preferably in writing.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This includes:

- Parents/carer's 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.

Please note – the rule of students taking 48 hours off school following a sickness bug, often applied in Primary Schools, doesn't apply at High School.

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 makes things worse.

Persistent Absenteeism:

A student becomes a 'Persistent Absentee' when they miss 15% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level will do considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parents/carer's full support and cooperation to tackle this. Any case that reaches the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards the mark will be given priority and you will be informed of this immediately. PA students are tracked and monitored carefully through our Student Progress Teams and all PA cases are also automatically made known to Ms C Forbes, Attendance and Pupils Support Officer, Bradford Council.

Absence Procedures:

If your child is absent you must:

- Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence via one of the following methods:
 - Calling the Attendance Line 01274474594
 - Emailing thsattend@ths.bradford.sch.uk
 - Texting the truancy call number 07786200444 (text message only);
- Send a note into school, on the first day that the student returns to school, with an explanation of the absence - you must do this even if you have already telephoned us (notes must be handed to your child's tutor during period 1);
- Or, or you can call into school and report to reception, who will arrange for a member of the attendance team to speak with you;
- If medical evidence has been requested, please provide one of the following: appointment card, appointment letter, prescription and/or labelled medicine bottle/packet.

If your Child is absent we will:

- Telephone you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you;
- Send a member of Tong High School staff, our Attendance and Pupils Support Officer or a Police Constable to complete a home visit to your address (*when students have been absent for 3 or more days without home contact*);
- Invite you into school to discuss the situation with a member of our Attendance Team, Year Deputy Student Progress Leader or Assistant Headteacher;
- Refer the matter to the Attendance and Pupils Support Officer at Bradford Council (*if attendance falls below 85%*);
- The attendance team will hold weekly meetings with:
 1. The Head of Community to discuss/action plans for all students whose attendance is below 96%;
 2. The Attendance and Pupil Support Officer to discuss/action plans for all students whose attendance is below 90%.

Telephone Numbers:

There are times when we need to contact parents about lots of things, including absence, so we need to have your up to date contact numbers at all times. So help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have an up to date number - if we don't then something important may be missed.

The School Attendance Team:

Parents are expected to contact school as soon as any issues arise, allowing them to work with staff to quickly resolve any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the child to the Attendance and Pupils Support Officer from Bradford Council. She will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve your child's attendance have failed and authorised absences persist, these officers can use sanction such as Penalty Notices, Community Service or Prosecutions in a Magistrates Court. *Full details of the options open to enforce attendance at a school are available from either the School or Bradford Council.*

Lateness:

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your child misses the start of the day they can miss work and vital information and news for the day. Late arrival students also disrupt lessons, can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage absence.

How we manage lateness:

- The school day starts at 8.15 and we expect your child to be in tutorial at that time.
- Registers are marked by 8.20 and your child will receive a late mark if they are not in by that time.
- If your child arrives after 8.15 but before 8.45 they must sign in with the Deputy Student Progress Leader located in the student entrance in order to get their mark.
- If your child arrives after 8.45 they must sign in with the receptionist in Main Reception in order to get their mark.

If your child is persistently late you will be asked to meet with your child's Year Deputy Student Progress Leader and/or Attendance Deputy Student Progress Leader to resolve the problem. You can however also approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

Holidays in Term Time:

THE SCHOOL WILL NOT AUTHORISE A CHILD TO TAKE HOLIDAYS DURING TERM TIME. Parents do not have the legal right to take children out of school for holidays.

- It is not true that you are entitled to 10 days extra holiday each year;
- It is not true that students can 'catch up'. Research shows that by missing lessons, students fall behind, and lessons are NOT repeated at a later date;
- Any holidays are expected to be taken as part of the 176 days available outside term time.

Schools are quite within their rights to say that holidays in school time are not allowed. Parents who take their children out of school during the school term without the Headteacher's authorisation or beyond an agreed date risk being issued with a Penalty Fine, Community Service or being prosecuted.

In addition:

- You risk losing your child's place at school;
- You risk your child's future through lost learning and lower achievement;
- You risk your child feeling left behind and left out.

In special or exceptional circumstances, the Headteacher may choose to authorise a small amount of time out of school. Special or exceptional circumstances do **NOT** include:

- Availability of cheaper Flights;
- Availability of desired/cheaper accommodation;
- Poor weather in school holidays;
- Overlap with the beginning or the end of term.

If you still feel that you wish to apply to take your child out of school during term time, due to exceptional circumstances, please submit your request in the form of a letter addressed to the Associate Headteacher Trude Feiweles 4 weeks in advance of the proposed date.

School Targets:

The school aims to improve our whole attendance figure to be above the national average of 94.3% (May 2013). Your child has an important part to play in order for us to meet this target.

The minimum level of attendance for our school is 96% attendance and we will keep you updated regularly through our website about our progress towards this target, and how your child's attendance compares.

Information on any further projects or initiatives focusing on improving attendance will be available under the attendance section of the school website, and we ask for your full support.

The People Responsive for Attendance Matters in School:

Brenda Blackburn Attendance Deputy Student Progress Leader

Cath Chaplin Attendance Deputy Student Progress Leader

All initial correspondence regarding attendance matters needs to go through the Attendance Deputy Student Progress Leaders listed above.

Richard Westoby Assistant Headteacher

Trude Feiweles Associate Headteacher

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 students as the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible and that every student achieves their potential.