Attendance & Punctuality Policy

TAO Independent School believes attendance is not just a legal requirement but a relational commitment. For young people with SEND, trauma histories, and disrupted education journeys, consistent, trusted relationships and predictable routines are therapeutic in themselves.

Purpose

Our model recognises that poor attendance is often a symptom, not the root issue, so we use relational, trauma-informed, and graduated responses rather than defaulting to punitive measures. We promote taking pride in attendance.

Attendance is directly linked to curriculum access and progress. Consistent attendance enables pupils to access sequential learning within subject Schemes of Work, maintain relational safety with trusted adults, and engage fully in therapeutic and outdoor education pathways. Disrupted attendance is therefore treated as both a safeguarding and learning concern.

We aim to:

- Ensure that every young person has the highest possible attendance and punctuality.
- Identify and support barriers to attendance early.
- Ensure attendance systems reflect trauma-informed, person-centred practice.
- Meet all statutory requirements and contribute to safeguarding.

Principles

- We expect daily attendance for all scheduled TAO sessions unless there is a valid reason.

- TAO does not distinguish between “school refusal” and “school-based trauma”; we address underlying needs and reframe avoidance compassionately but consistently.

- Each day/session missed is treated as significant, and early intervention begins at the first sign of disengagement.

- TAO does not itself issue penalty notices.

- Attendance registers are taken at the start of every morning and afternoon session in line with statutory school attendance requirements.

Trauma-Informed Response Stages

Trigger: 1 Day/Session Missed

- Logged as unauthorised unless valid reason given.
- Contact with the parent/carer and, where appropriate, a welfare/home check by familiar staff.

Trigger: 2 Days/Sessions Missed

- Triggered Internal Family Help Plan.
- Involves lead practitioner, safeguarding lead, and parent/carer.

Possible interventions:

- Home visit with pupil voice tool.
- Therapeutic check-in session.
- Transport changes.
- Staffing or sensory adaptations.

Trigger: 3 Days/Sessions Missed

- Formalised Attendance Action Meeting.
- Involves the Headteacher, parent/carer, and external professionals if applicable.
- Reassurance offered, flexible return plan proposed (e.g. meet at outdoor base or walk-in handover).

Outcomes may include:

- Family Help referral/support.
- Step-by-step re-engagement plan with EHCP involvement.
- School-based therapeutic support plan.

- A time-limited, individually planned reintegration arrangement where appropriate, taking account of statutory requirements and the pupil's EHCP.

Where children have EHCPs, attendance plans are shared with LA SEN caseworkers.

Where attendance concerns raise safeguarding thresholds, procedures are followed in line with the Safeguarding Policy.

Flexibility & Structure Balance

TAO offers structured routine with tailored access points:

- Pupils may re-enter the setting via nature walk, 1:1 morning meet, or base camp soft start.
- If a pupil is struggling, we don't withdraw the offer; we adjust the doorway.

Punctuality

Punctuality is expected and supported. Attendance registers and times are logged. Late arrivals are:

- Logged and explored through conversation.
- Reframed as a signpost for unmet need, not punished.
- Supported through adapted travel, start times, or meet locations where necessary.

Persistent lateness follows the same graduated response as absence.

Partnership & Accountability

TAO works collaboratively with:

- Parents/carers through weekly updates and rapid response when patterns emerge, with attendance recording that reflects religious observance, medical appointments, and planned absences.
- Virtual schools and SEND teams for looked-after or EHCP pupils.
- Local authority attendance services where persistent absence or individual circumstances indicate that additional support or statutory intervention may be required.

Where a pupil's whereabouts are unknown, or they fail to attend without explanation, TAO follows its Children Missing Education procedure, including notifying the Local Authority within statutory timescales. This is separate from the persistent-absence (10%+) threshold above.

We keep safeguarding central and prioritise relational safety and stability. Attendance contracts may be presented to parents/carers to ensure all parties understand their responsibilities for attendance.

Monitoring and Review

Attendance is recorded electronically for every session using a secure digital system. Registers are completed by staff at the point of delivery and stored centrally to ensure accuracy, oversight and safeguarding monitoring.

- Attendance is monitored and reviewed weekly by the Headteacher and the SENDCo to identify patterns of absence, potential safeguarding concerns, and barriers to learning requiring early intervention.
- Patterns are logged via OneDrive dashboard, accessible to key professionals.
- This policy is reviewed annually or after any major incident involving attendance breakdown.

Attendance data is processed in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR, ensuring information is stored securely and only shared with authorised professionals for safeguarding or statutory purposes.

Parent/Carer Engagement

At TAO Independent School, we ensure full transparency and partnership with families around attendance expectations from the outset. During induction:

- Parents/carers receive a clear explanation of our staged attendance response and its trauma-informed basis.
- Our attendance commitment is outlined in the TAO Family Handbook, with shared language around consistency, re-engagement, and flexibility.
- We emphasise that one missed session can be significant, not due to punishment, but because of the potential disruption to relational safety and therapeutic routine.

We maintain:

- Weekly feedback loops (verbal and/or written).
- Immediate contact after any absence.

- Collaborative solution-seeking as opposed to blame.

Attendance Thresholds

TAO does not use attendance targets as a punitive measure. We do track patterns and aim for:

TAO aims for attendance of 95% or above, while recognising that persistent absence is defined as missing 10% or more of possible sessions. Absences are always explored with curiosity and compassion but held within a structure that mirrors the world beyond education: reliability, showing up, and relational consistency matter.

Linked Policies & Documents

Behaviour Management Policy • Health & Safety Policy • Parent/Pupil Handbook • Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy • SEND Information Report

Legal Framework & Review

This policy has been developed with reference to the following legislation and guidance:

- Education Act 1996
- Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 (as amended) – Part 3
- Equality Act (2010)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2026
- SEND Code of Practice (2015)
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026

Version Updates

Version	Date	Author	Review / Changes	Approved By
1.0	01/10/2025	Daniel Giblin	Published	Headteacher / Proprietor

2.0	26/08/2026	Daniel Giblin	Applied TAO policy-suite review: resolved KCSIE 2025→2026 and Working Together 2024→2026 references, corrected the Independent School Standards Regulations citation to 2014 (as amended), fixed the DSL/Headteacher role duplication in weekly monitoring (now Headteacher and SENDCo), standardised remaining DSL references, corrected a missing space/punctuation in the attendance thresholds paragraph, and flagged the Family Help Plan terminology change for DSL confirmation.	Headteacher / Proprietor

TAO
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