

ATTENDANCE POLICY

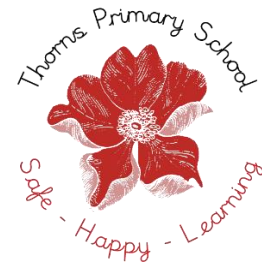
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Date: September 2023

Every child is safe, happy and learning because every adult is caring, happy in their work and skilled.

We value:

working **T**ogether
happiness
achieve with**o**ut limits
fairness and equality
kindness
safety and **s**ecurity



Our aim is for every child to:

- feel safe and secure at all times, and to know that the adults in school will help them if they are worried, frightened or feel unsafe;
- be an independent, resilient learner who sees mistakes as an opportunity to learn, is not afraid to try and seeks help when they need it;
- be an excellent communicator: able to listen and understand, speak with clarity and with a broad vocabulary;
- be a reader: finding pleasure in books and reading and with the skills to read fluently and accurately and to understand a range of texts;
- be a writer: writing fluently and with detail for a specific purpose and an understanding of the audience, using and applying a range of skills;
- be a mathematician: solving problems in a range of contexts by applying fluent knowledge and recall of number facts;
- develop the knowledge, skills and understanding of scientists, artists, designers, geographers, historians, linguists, musicians and performers;
- value being physically active and healthy;
- have the skills required to thrive in a technological age;
- be self-aware, emotionally intelligent and accepting of others, showing kindness and respect and an understanding of differences;
- acquire the skills and desire to contribute positively to the wider community.

Our commitment is to provide every child with:

- a school that is well led and managed by a strong team of leaders and governors;
- school staff who will keep them safe and who know what to do to protect them from harm;
- a sense of justice and knowledge of right and wrong;
- high-quality teaching from skilled professionals;
- teachers and support staff who have opportunities to grow and develop, extending their own expertise through training and development;
- access to specialist services to support additional needs;
- buildings and grounds that are safe, welcoming, clean and tidy;
- a learning environment that promotes and supports active learning;
- challenges that stretch and encourage higher-order thinking, team work and creativity;
- exciting and stimulating resources that encourage the acquisition and deepening of knowledge, understanding and skills across the curriculum;
- enrichment opportunities, including after-school clubs, exciting trips and visitors to broaden their experience of the wider world;
- a voice – where their views and opinions matter and are listened to;
- opportunities for their parents and carers to spend time in school and be involved in school activities;
- the chance to try new things and have a go, developing the resilience that will prove valuable throughout life;
- ambitions and aspirations;
- a 'can do' attitude, and the 'powers' for lifelong learning and success.

Thorns Primary School - Attendance Policy

Regular attendance at school is crucial in raising standards of education and in ensuring every child can meet their full potential. Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind. Children with poor attendance tend to achieve less in both primary and secondary school.

At Thorns Primary school 'Attendance is everyone's responsibility to ensure all children are in full time education. Everyone in the structure is a leader in driving good attendance'

The Government expects:

- *Schools and Local Authorities to:*
 - *Reduce absence including persistent absence*
 - *Ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled*
 - *Act early to address any patterns of absence through regular and thorough monitoring.*
 - *Use a whole school holistic approach to encourage good attendance and overcome any barriers to attendance.*
 - *Safeguard and promote the welfare of children as per Section 175 of the education act 2002, this is done by monitoring and supporting regular attendance.*

What the law says about School Attendance:

By law, all children of compulsory school age (between 5 and 16) must receive a full-time education. Section 444 (1a) of the Education Act 1966 says: "If a child of compulsory school age, who is a registered pupil at a school, fails to attend regularly, without reasonable justification, then his/her parent is guilty of an offence and can be prosecuted".

Children are required to attend school for 190 days (380 sessions) in any single academic year (September-July).

This policy is informed by DFE. Circular 11/91 "The Education (Pupil registration) (England) Regulations 2006, amended 2016" and "Education Act 1996 section 444, the "School Attendance – Policy and Practice on Categorisation of Absence," DEF 1994 – Paragraph 21, page 4 which reminds us that: "Only the school, within the context of the law, can approve absence, not parents. The fact that a parent has offered a note or other notification (telephone call, written letter) in relation to a particular absence does not, by itself, oblige the school to accept it".

There is an expectation that over the course of an academic year, a child's attendance at Thorns Primary School will be 96% or more (the national average). Absence that falls below 90% is categorised by the Government as persistent absence. With this in mind, the following actions will be taken:

- **All parents will be notified on their Child's attendance every term.**
- **When a child's attendance falls to 95%, parents will be notified, If attendance fails to improve in the next half term, the school attendance officer will communicate with parents and child to identify the barriers to attendance and work with the parents to overcome them.**
- **When a child's attendance reaches 90%, parents will be notified in writing that all further absences will be unauthorised without supporting medical evidence.**
- **If attendance does not improve Children will be placed on a Parental Attendance Agreement.**
- **If 12 sessions of unauthorised absence have been recorded during a 6-week period, a referral to the Local Authority Education Investigation Service will be made.**

Parents must:

- Ensure that their child is able to attend school for the whole academic year by ensuring their child attends school unless there is a reason for the absence which has been approved by the school.
- Inform the school as soon as possible if there may be any barriers to attendance (through attendance officer, class teacher, phone call to school office).
- Work in partnership with school and any other relevant agencies in order to maintain good attendance.
- *Parents to perform their legal duty by ensuring their children of compulsory school age who are registered at school attend early and ensure that all pupils are punctual to their lessons and attend school regularly.*

(Department for Education – Advice on School Attendance (www.Education.gov.uk) July 2017)

Definition of a parent: (section 576 Education Act 1996)

A parent means:

- All natural parents, whether they are married or not
- Any person who has parental responsibility for a child or young person
- Any person who has care of a child or young person ie lives with and looks after the child
- All those with day-to-day responsibility for a child or young person

If you feel that your child has an illness which may warrant them remaining at home then you must:

Consider first of all whether you feel that your child would still be able to take part in the majority if not all of the school's activities. In this case, you should still send your child to school. Should your child become unwell during the day and/or where the school feels that they are no longer able to participate in school activities, the school will contact you to collect your child.

If you feel that your child cannot take part in the school's activities and would be better remaining at home then you must contact the school as soon as possible on the first/each day of absence before 9:30 am. Failure to do so constitutes a breach of this policy.

The person ringing will be asked to identify themselves and clearly give the reason for the absence. This information will be recorded.

If your child has a medical appointment then you must:

Contact the school prior to the appointment to ask for approved arrangements for your child to be collected/returned to school as close to the appointment time as possible. The school will ask to see a copy of the appointment time/letter. The school will not authorise the absence unless they have seen a copy of the letter/appointment card. Wherever possible, ensure appointments are made outside of school hours.

If you need to request 'leave' for a specific reason, then you must:

Follow the school guidelines regarding an application for leave eg holiday. (See 'Leave of Absence').

If you know that your child will be late for school you must:

Contact the school as soon as possible to tell them that your child will arrive late. Make every effort to get your child to school as soon as possible.

If you are having difficulty getting your child to attend school you must:

Notify the school immediately (school attendance officer, class teacher, Head Teacher) about your concerns. The school will make every effort to meet with you and attempt to rectify the problem.

The School must:

- Keep regular, efficient and accurate recording of attendance registers. These are completed at the beginning of each morning session and at the beginning of the afternoon session, using a coding system approved by the DfE and Local Authority. For each child, for each session, there will be a code relating to present or absent. The absent code will either be authorised or unauthorised. (See 'Use of Attendance Codes')
- Ensure that parents/carers are aware of the times for the beginning of each session, school term dates and other INSET days when a pupil is not expected to attend school
- Notify the parents of any immediate school closure eg due to bad weather
- Respond to requests for attendance data from the Education Support Service, Local Authority, Department for Education, OFSTED
- Present attendance data regularly to the Governing Body and parents
- Regularly communicate with parents their child's attendance over the term and at the end of a school year.
- Notify parents as early as possible where their child's attendance is a cause for concern
- Support parents to identify and overcome any possible barriers to attendance including referrals to any relevant organisations including Early help, Reflexions mental wellbeing service.
- Notify the Education Support Service of individual children whose attendance is a cause for concern

The Pupil must:

- Attend school regularly.
- Arrive on time and be appropriately dressed and prepared for the school day.
- Ensure that their behaviour does not conflict with the smooth day to day running of the school and that they do not behave in a way that may put them at risk of exclusion

Use of Attendance Codes

A series of codes are used for each child and for each school session. The codes are used by all schools so that reasons for absence can be easily and universally monitored. Each code will mean that the absence has been authorised or unauthorised.

The Head Teacher may decide to use a code that authorises a child's absence due to:

- Exceptional circumstances agreed by the Head Teacher
- Day of religious observance – officially set aside by the religious body to which the family belong
- Medical/dental appointment – pupils should be absent only for a reasonable amount of time that is necessary for them to attend the appointment
- Genuine illness or stay in hospital and/or consequent recuperation at home following medical treatment
- Prevention from attending by an unavoidable cause eg exceptionally bad weather coupled with the inability to arrive in school safely eg wheelchair users)
- Attending a family funeral (this must not however exceed an agreed period of absence)
- Exclusion – a temporary or fixed term exclusion will be recorded with code 'E', a permanent exclusion will be treated as authorised absence until the child is removed from the school register

The following will be coded as 'present'

- Education off-site eg visit
- Education off-site at another setting eg exams or dual registered pupils
- Approved sporting activity

Unauthorised codes are used where it is felt that the reason given does not justify the absence. This may include:

- A shopping trip
- A birthday
- Attending a pop concert/football match
- Bad weather – too wet, too cold
- All session absence for a single short medical appointment
- Lack of usual transport – the parent must demonstrate that every effort has been made to get the child to school safely
- Taking a holiday or period of leave that has not been approved by the Head Teacher
- Parents giving a reason which after investigation is found to be false

Where no reason for the absence is given, the absence will be unauthorised.

Leave of Absence

Holidays in term time are not permitted by legislation. Any request for 'leave' must be made in writing using the school's "Leave of Absence" forms. These must be received by the Head Teacher no later than **15 working days** before the proposed leave is due to take place. Where 15 working days notice is not given the request will automatically be recorded as unauthorised absence, save in exceptional circumstances

There is no automatic entitlement in law for time off school for the purpose of a family holiday (amendment to the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006, made September 2013)

Therefore, each request must meet specific 'exceptional circumstances' which would not be expected to be repeated within an academic year, or to occur regularly throughout a child's school life. Exceptional circumstances are considered to be 'rare, significant and unavoidable, and as short as possible'. Reasons such as, 'it's cheaper', or 'fits in with work patterns' are not classed as exceptional circumstances.

Due to The Education (Pupil Registration 2006) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 that came into force: 'Leave of Absence' shall not be granted unless:

1. An application is made in advance to the school
2. The Head Teacher considers the request to have exceptional circumstances relating to the application, No' Family Holidays' will be authorised in term time.

If 'Leave of Absence' is taken after the Head Teacher has considered it and deemed it NOT to be for exceptional circumstances, or you do not make an application in advance, then the absence will be recorded as unauthorised absence and may be referred to the Education Investigation Service. This might mean that you could be subject to a

Penalty Notice.

Penalty Fines are interventions available to promote better school attendance. Dudley's Code of Conduct, (which is published on the LA website), states that irregular attendance at school includes taking 'Leave of Absence' without the consent of the Head Teacher.

A Penalty Notice is a fine imposed upon parents and are fines of £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days. If 28 days have expired and full payment has not been made Parents can be prosecuted. There is no right of appeal. The fine applies to all parents.

Lateness

The school day begins at 8.50 am and the afternoon session begins at 1.00 pm.

Registers close at 9.20am for the morning session and 1.15pm for the afternoon session.

Any child who arrives at school after 8.50am will be marked as a late code; any child who arrives after the registers have closed will be marked as a 'U' code which then will then mark them as missing the morning session.

Being persistently late even within the first 30 minutes of the session will negatively affect a child education.

Lateness is regularly monitored, when 10 Late codes have been recorded in any 6-week period parents will be notified and support will be given where necessary to improve punctuality.

Late collection

We ask that you call to inform us if you will be late collecting your child.

If no message is received, Children's services will be contacted after 3.30pm, If a child is collected after 3.30pm on more than one two occasions within a half term they will be taken to our wrap around care where the relevant charge will need to be paid.

Absence due to Illness

Children who are genuinely poorly are not expected to attend school and an authorised code will be used. In more extreme cases where the child is unlikely to return to school for an extended period of time, the school will arrange for Home and Hospital Educational Support to be put in place and at this point the child may become 'dual registered'. However, where the child's repeated absence due to illness is becoming a concern, the Head Teacher may decide to remove the right to the authorised code, and unauthorise further absences due to illness, particularly if the absences total between 5 and 10 days. The Head Teacher may ask the parent to provide information that supports the parent's view that the child is too unwell to return/attend school eg prescriptions, appointment cards/letters. The Head Teacher will notify the parent of this decision in writing.

In order to avoid this, it is essential that parents inform the school of any health concerns that may be affecting the child's ability to attend school regularly.

Unauthorised absence

After the registers have closed at 9.20am , any child who is still absent with no reason given will be marked as an 'O' code 'Unauthorised absence' In these circumstances the Attendance officer will follow the following procedures.

- First day phone call made, message will be left and text message will be sent if there is still no contact made. (LAC, Children in care, Vulnerable children contact will be made with relevant social worker / key worker to inform of absence)
Translated text messages will be sent to any EAL families.
- Second day phone call, text message, email will be sent informing that a home visit will be made on the 3rd day if no contact is made. These again are all translated for EAL families.
- Third day home visit will be made, if no contact is made a letter will be posted informing that a home visit has been made. At this point safe & well checks by police will be requested and Children's services referrals and ESS will be made.

School Closures

The academic year is 190 days. Schools also have to have an additional 5 days that they can use for staff training; often called INSET (In Service Training) Days. These days are not part of the 190 days which is every child's free entitlement.

The Head Teacher will make every effort to ensure that the school remains open for 190 days. However, in some circumstances, the school may have to close. The Head Teacher must always consider the health, safety and welfare of every person who uses the school site, pupils, staff, parents, volunteers and visitors. If at any point, to use the school building would be detrimental to a person or persons' health, safety and welfare, then the Head Teacher must close part or all of the school. Such events may be:

- Not enough staff to safely supervise the pupils and ensure the safe running of the school
- Lack of fresh running water and/or toilet facilities
- Lack of appropriate lighting and/or heating
- Damage to the structure of the building eg fire, water or weather damage.
- Instruction to close due to a local emergency incident
- Emergency at the school (See Emergency Plan)
- Severe weather - In the event that severe weather is forecast, or is developing, the Head Teacher, will consider either closing the school in advance of the school day, closing the school early, or opening the school later than usual. The action taken will always result from consideration of pupils, parents and staff facing 'significant risk of serious injury' in school or whilst travelling to or from school

Once a decision is made, the Head Teacher will endeavour to inform parents of that decision and the details of any arrangements that have been put in place.

Parents should always assume that the school will remain open during term time unless they hear otherwise.

If the Head Teacher decides to close the school, then the register is closed for the day and coded as an enforced school closure. This does not affect a child's attendance record.

Removal of a Child from the School Roll

Parents need to be aware that their child can be removed from the school role/register. This may occur:

- following a permanent exclusion
- if, following a period of agreed absence, the child fails to return to school within 10 school days of the agreed return date
- Have been taken out of school by their parents and are being "home-educated"
- Have ceased to attend school and no longer live within reasonable distance of the school to which they have been registered
- Have a medical condition that prevents them from attending school

Education Support Service (ESS)

All Parents are responsible for ensuring that their children of compulsory school age receive a suitable full-time education.

The Education Support Service is responsible for ensuring that parents meet their legal obligations in respect of their child's education and to identify levels of support that a family may need in assisting them to ensure that their child receives a suitable education. The Head Teacher and Governing body of each school have the responsibility to inform ESS when a child's attendance becomes a matter of concern and to support the ESS in the actions that they may take.

When it is found that parents fail to meet their responsibilities, the ESS has the legal power to put interventions in place to promote better school attendance and behaviour. This could be in the form of a warning notice, parenting contract, parenting order or penalty notice.

PARENTAL ATTENDANCE AGREEMENT

Thorns Parental Attendance Agreements will be personalised to the specific child/ families, identifying what barriers to attendance are present and what support can be put in place to help overcome them.

A Parental Attendance Agreement is a formal, written, signed agreement between Parents and School or the Governing Body of a School and should contain:

- The concerns that School have with the child's attendance, any concerns that the parent / child may have and identified support that can be put in place to improve attendance.
- A statement by the Parents that they agree to comply for a specified period with whatever requirements are set out in the Contract; and
- A statement by the School or Governing Body agreeing to provide support to the Parents for the purpose of complying with the Contract

Parental attendance agreements can be used in cases of misbehaviour or irregular attendance at a school or alternative provision. Parental attendance agreements are voluntary but the School should record any non-compliance or LA as it may be used as evidence in Court where an application is made for a Behaviour Parenting Order.

FIXED PENALTY NOTICES, (FPN'S)

Penalty Notices are imposed upon Parents and are fines of £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days. The Parents can only be prosecuted if 28 days have expired and full payment has not been made.

There is no right of appeal by Parents against the Penalty Notices. They are an alternative to the prosecution of Parents.

Dudley's LA's Code of conduct states that Penalty Notices can be issued where a pupil's absence has not been authorised by the school. This includes: a number of unauthorised absences, within a rolling academic year; one-off instances of irregular attendance; and where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours.

Education Outcomes - Education Support Service
Children's Services
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