

# Attendance Policy



## Thurston CE Primary Academy

**Approved by:** Governing Body

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**Thurston CE Primary Academy is committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all its children and recognises this can only be achieved by supporting and promoting 100% school attendance for all its children. Research suggests that good attendance enables all children and young people to achieve optimum academic progress.**

**Missing out on learning time leaves children vulnerable to falling behind and more likely to achieve less in school.**

Attending school every day = 100% attendance.

Attending 4 1/2 days a week = 90% attendance.

Attending 4 days a week = 80% attendance.

If your child is 5 minutes late every day they will miss 3 days of learning each year.

If your child is 15 minutes late every day they will miss 2 weeks of learning each year

## **1. Aims**

This attendance policy ensures that all parents, staff and governors in our school are fully aware of and are clear about the actions necessary to promote good attendance.

Through this policy we aim to:

- Improve pupils' achievement by ensuring high levels of attendance and punctuality.
- Achieve a minimum of 95% for all pupils, apart from those with chronic health issues.
- Create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm and are valued by the school.
- Raise awareness of the importance of uninterrupted attendance and punctuality at every stage of a child's education to parents, carers and pupils.
- Ensure that our policy applies to Reception age children in order to promote good habits at an early age.
- Work in partnership with pupils, parents, staff and the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) so that all pupils realise their potential, unhindered by unnecessary absence.
- Outline all stakeholders responsibility for promoting 100% attendance.
- Promote a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which children feel safe, secure and valued, and encourage in pupils a sense of their own responsibility.
- Establish a pattern of consistently monitoring attendance and supporting families and children when trigger points are reached.
- Recognise the key role of all staff in promoting good attendance.

## **2. Categorising Absence**

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parent/carer), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required. Each half-day is known as a 'session'.

**Authorised absences** are morning or afternoon sessions away from school for a genuine reason such as illness (although you may be asked to provide medical evidence for your child before this can be authorised), medical or dental appointments, which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

**Unauthorised absences** are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been given. This type of absence, for 8 or more sessions, can lead to the Local Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings which may include issuing a fine or they can refer the matter to the Magistrates Court, whereby each parent may receive a fine up to £2500 and/or up to 3 months in prison. If you are found guilty in court you will receive a criminal conviction.

Unauthorised absence includes, however is not exhaustive:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily e.g. because they had a late night or for non-infectious illness or injury that would not affect their ability to learn.
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Children who arrive at school after the close of registration are marked using a 'U'. This indicates that they are in school for safeguarding purposes however is recorded as an unauthorised absence for the session.
- Shopping trips
- Looking after other children or children accompanying siblings or parents to medical appointments
- Their own or family birthdays
- Holidays taken during term time without leave, not deemed 'for exceptional purposes' by the headteacher- may result in school applying to the local authority to issue a penalty notice or if you have previously been issued a Penalty Notice, the school may request a direct prosecution by the local authority.
- Day trips
- Other leave of absence in term time which has not been agreed

### **Leave of Absence**

Thurston CE Primary Academy will not grant a leave of absence for holidays except in very limited, exceptional circumstances. Time off school for family holidays is not a right. An application must be made in writing, with appropriate evidence, in advance of the intended holiday.

Circumstances where a leave of absence will be considered include:

- The parent is a member of the armed forces or emergency services and his or her leave is limited for operational reasons and cannot be taken in school holidays;
- The parent is an agricultural worker or works in a support industry for the agricultural industry and can only take leave during term time;
- The parent is subject to a strict and un-negotiable holiday rota and evidence is provided to this effect;
- When an exceptional family crisis occurs and a leave of absence is requested.

Requests for holidays for the following reasons will not be authorised:

- cheaper cost of holiday;
- availability of the desired accommodation;
- poor weather experienced in school holiday periods; and
- overlap with beginning or end of term.

The school will respond to all requests for a leave of absence in writing giving the reasons for the decision. The school will not authorise leave of absence during periods of national tests ie: KS1 Phonics screening and KS2 SATS.

### **3. Penalty Notices**

The Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003, section 23 empowers designated Local Authority (LA) Officers, Headteachers (and Deputy and Assistant Headteachers authorised by them) and the Police to issue Penalty Notices in cases of unauthorised absence from school.

Parents have a legal responsibility (Education Act 1996, Section 7) to ensure that their children receive a full-time and efficient education, and LAs have a duty to enforce this when necessary. A parent is defined as someone who has parental responsibility for a child or who has the care of the child (Education Act 1996, Section 576).

A Penalty Notice **will be issued where a pupil has missed four school days (eight sessions) or more due to unauthorised absence**; this is most commonly issued when:

- A request for a leave of absence of four or more days has not been authorised;
- A leave of absence of four or more days has not been requested, and therefore has not been authorised;
- A pupil has been late after the register has closed on eight or more occasions.

The penalty is:

- £60 per parent/carer, per child, payable within 21 days;
- If not paid within 21 days, the Penalty increases to £120 per parent/carer, per child, payable between 21 and 28 days;
- If the Penalty is not paid within 28 days of issue, the Local Authority will start legal proceedings against you which may lead to a fine of £1000.

A fixed penalty notice will be issued for the first unauthorised holiday taken during term time. Any further unauthorised holiday will be referred to the Local Authority for prosecution.

Penalty Notices will not be used in the case of unauthorised absence of children who are in care. Referrals are made by the Office Administrator, who will complete the Penalty Notice Referral Form and send it to Suffolk County Council in accordance with agreed procedures.

There is no statutory right of appeal once a notice has been issued. Payment of a Penalty Notice discharges parents' liability for the period to which the Notice relates.

Parents will not receive more than one Penalty Notice per child in any 12-month period.

A full copy of Suffolk County Council's Penalty Notice Protocol is available on request.

### **4. Registers**

Morning registers open at 8.45am and close at 9.00am. Children can arrive at school from 8.35am. If your child arrives at school between 9am and 9.15am, they will be coded In the register as 'Late'. If your child arrives after 9.15am they will be classed as an unauthorised absence. The number of minutes late is recorded in the register.

If your child is absent the school must be contacted and provided with a reason on each day of the absence. If the school has not had contact from parents providing a reason for absence by 9.30am the school office will call to confirm the child's safety.

Parents' Responsibilities The Education Act 1996 states that all children should attend school regularly and punctually. Section 444 of the Act says: "If a child of compulsory school age, who is a

registered child at the school, fails to attend regularly at school, his parent is guilty of an offence". (NB: Where the Education Act refers to "his", it also means "her".)

## **5. Lateness and Punctuation**

Pupils are expected to arrive at school on time every day. It is very disruptive to their own education, and that of others in their class, if they are late. Children who are persistently late or absent soon fall behind with their learning. Children who are absent from school frequently develop large gaps in their learning which will impact on their progress and their ability to meet age related learning expectations.

Pupils who arrive after the register closes (see below) will be marked absent for the whole session (a session being a morning or an afternoon). This absence will be unauthorised unless the school is satisfied that there is a legitimate reason for the pupil to be late. A pupil who is persistently absent by reason of lateness will be dealt with in the same way as other student with an emerging pattern of absence; fixed penalty notices may be issued to parents/carers whose children persistently arrive after the register has closed. If the matter is not resolved quickly, it will be referred to the Education Welfare Officer, who also does unannounced gate checks.

For health and safety reasons, it is important that the school knows who is in the building. Pupils arriving late must report to the school office. It is important that all pupils arriving late follow this procedure. For the same reason, it is important that pupils leaving the premises legitimately (e.g. for a medical appointment) or returning to school later in the day should report to the school office. Pupils must report to the office who will ensure the pupil is leaving with a known adult; the pupil must not let themselves out, but must wait to be let out by a member of staff. All pupils leaving the premises must be electronically signed out by the adult collecting them.

## **6. Thurston CE Primary Academy's Responsibility's**

All staff at Thurston CE Primary Academy have a key role to play in supporting and promoting 100% attendance and will work to provide an environment in which all our children are eager to learn, feel valued members of the school community and look forward to coming to school every day. The Headteacher or another designated member of the Senior Leadership Team will oversee, direct and coordinate the school's work in promoting excellent attendance and will ensure the Attendance Policy is consistently applied throughout the school.

School staff are responsible for promoting 100% attendance by:

- Ensuring that all registers are taken accurately and within the first 10 minutes of a session.
- Differentiating appropriately between authorised and unauthorised absence (a letter or message from a parent does not in itself authorise an absence – only the school can decide whether the parent's explanation justifies authorising the absence);
- Contacting the parents/carers each day a child is absent from school without being notified in advance and recording the contact.
- Exploring possible interventions where we have concerns around a child's attendance and, where appropriate, consulting with the parents/carers.
- Consulting regularly with the Education Welfare Service if a child's attendance continues to give cause for concern and, where applicable, referring cases for a Fixed Penalty Notice, Prevention Meeting, Education Supervision Order or Fast Track proceedings.
- Analysing attendance figures, monitoring by registration group as well as gender, ethnicity, Pupil Premium status and Special Educational Needs status. The school will also carefully

monitor those children who fall into the Persistent Absence category (where attendance falls below 90%).

- Making sure parents are aware of their child's attendance through termly attendance letters (Appendix C)

In closely monitoring the attendance of the school's children on a cumulative and week to-week basis, the school undertakes a clear step-by-step approach when a decline in a child's attendance is identified

## **7. Parent's Responsibility's**

The Education Act 1996 states that all children should attend school regularly and punctually. Section 444 of the Act says: "If a child of compulsory school age, who is a registered child at the school, fails to attend regularly at school, his parent is guilty of an offence". (NB: Where the Education Act refers to "his", it also means "her".)

Our expectations from you as a parent are that:

- Your child attends school regularly and punctually.
- You notify the school of any absence via email or phone call before 9.00am.
- If your child is absent for more than 3 consecutive days you provide medical evidence.
- You do not take your child out for holidays during term time. If you would like to request holiday then a Leave of Absence Form must be completed to be reviewed by the Headteacher.
- You provide school with an emergency contact number for more than one person. Emergency contact numbers should be kept updated by the parent/carer wherever possible and they should be checked during the annual data collection.

## **8. Pupils' Responsibilities**

All pupils should be aware of the importance of regular school attendance. If they are having difficulties that may prevent them from attending school every day that is available to them, they should speak to their class teacher or another trusted adult. Pupils also have a responsibility for following school procedures if they arrive late, particularly pupils in Years 5 and 6 who may walk to school unaccompanied by an adult.

## **9. Governors' Responsibilities**

The Governing Body shall make arrangements to monitor the implementation of this policy as part of their duties to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of pupils.

## **10. Exceptional Circumstances**

All pupils of compulsory school age are entitled to a full-time education. However, in very exceptional circumstances, the school may see there is a need for a temporary part-time timetable to support this individual, this must not be treated as a long-term solution, so they will be bound by time limits. In agreeing to a part-time timetable, the school has agreed to a child being absent from school for part of the week or day and therefore must record it as authorised absence.

The school must also have regard for the statutory guidance 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' when making arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. The school is required to put in place appropriate safeguarding responses for children who go missing from school, particularly on repeat occasions. Where school staff have concerns about a child, they should use their professional judgement and knowledge of the individual pupil to inform their decision as to whether welfare concerns should be escalated.

The governing body will also make arrangements for ensuring that their functions relating to the conduct of the school are exercised with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children who are on roll at the school.

## **11. Role of the Education Welfare Officer**

- To investigate absence which exceeds more than 10%, and to hold meetings with these parents as required.
- To investigate lateness which exceeds more than 5 sessions as a maximum over a 6-week period.
- To investigate any unexplained absence which exceeds more than 8 sessions within a 12-week period.
- To ensure parents are aware of their legal duty under the Education Act to ensure their children attend school.
- To investigate cases that have been referred for prosecution where persistent absenteeism has not improved despite thorough intervention.

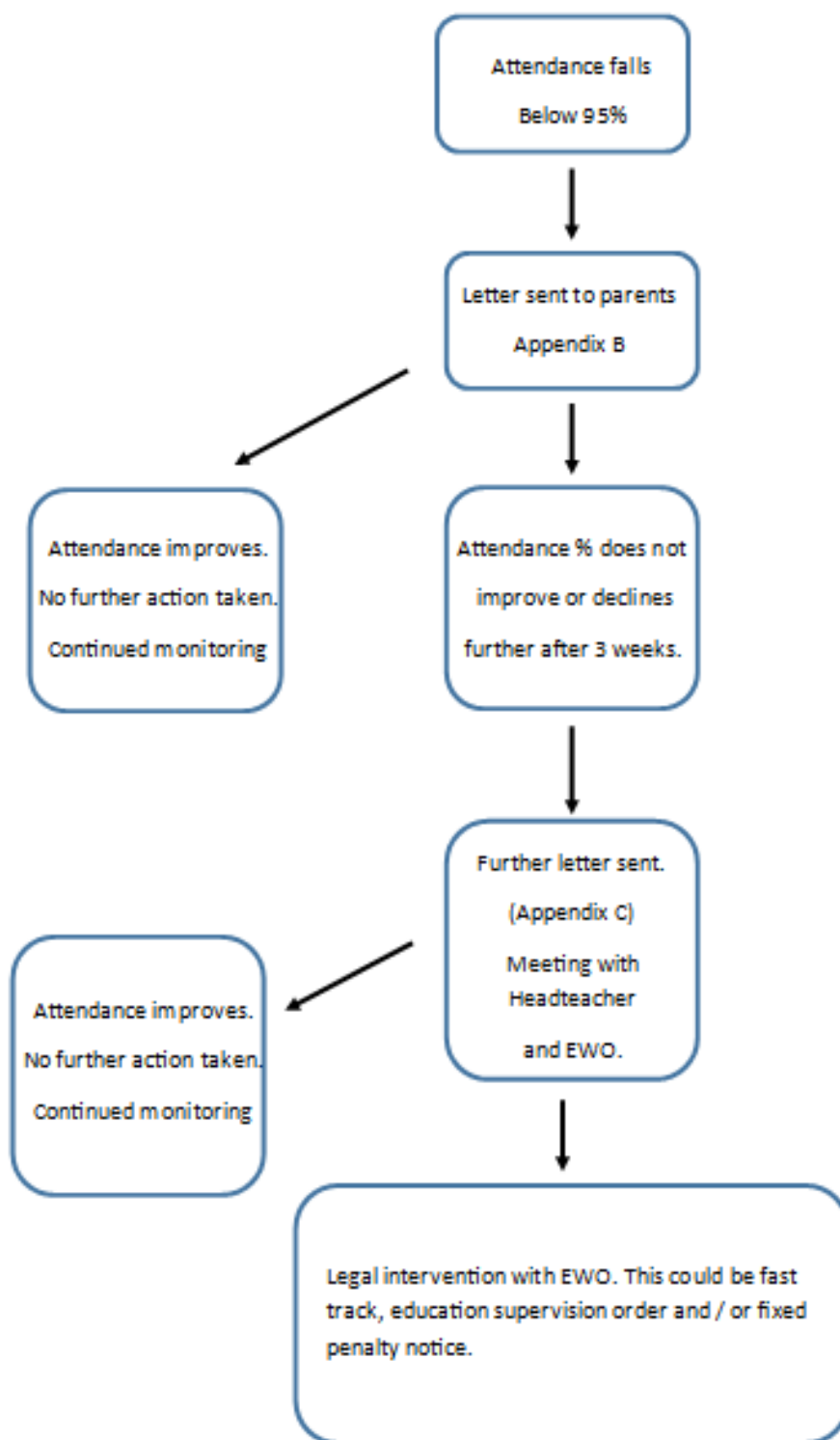
## **Related Policies**

These policies should be read alongside the school policies

- Safeguarding policy
- Behaviour policy



## Appendix A: Attendance Intervention Flow Chart



## Appendix B



### Thurston CE Primary Academy

Pond Field Road, Thurston,

Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, IP31 3FT

Telephone: (01359) 230444

E-mail: [admin@thurstonprimary.net](mailto:admin@thurstonprimary.net)

Headteacher: Mr J. Bayes B.A. Hons. QTS. NPQH.

Date

Dear Parents / Carers

**RE: <Child's Name>, <Class>**

At Thurston CE Primary Academy we encourage all children to aim for 100% attendance, as detailed in our attendance policy.

We are therefore concerned about <child's name> attendance which has dropped below 95% and is currently <attendance %>.

Please be aware that if your child's attendance continues to decline, we will require medical evidence to authorise future absences. Should attendance not improve the next step will be a meeting with myself to discuss the matter and a referral to the EWO (Education Welfare Officer).

We appreciate that there are many circumstances that can affect a child's attendance at school. If we can support your child in making sure their attendance improves then please do make an appointment with the school office to come and see me and discuss how we can help.

Yours sincerely

John Bayes

Headteacher

## Appendix C



### Thurston CE Primary Academy

Pond Field Road, Thurston,

Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, IP31 3FT

Telephone: (01359) 230444

E-mail: [admin@thurstonprimary.net](mailto:admin@thurstonprimary.net)

Headteacher: Mr J. Bayes B.A. Hons. QTS. NPQH.

Date

Dear Parents / Carers

**RE: <Child's Name>, <Class>**

At Thurston CE Primary Academy we encourage all children to aim for 100% attendance, as detailed in our attendance policy.

We are therefore extremely concerned about <child's name> attendance whose attendance is <attendance %>. This means that <child's name> has missed xx days of school and xx sessions have been authorised. This follows our concerns, raised in a letter on XXXX.

We are concerned about the impact this is having on <child's name> progress, as we know that as attendance declines so does your child's chances of achieving the best possible outcomes whilst also affecting their emotional wellbeing.

We are therefore inviting you to a Prevention Meeting with myself on XXXX, the Education Welfare Officer has been notified of this meeting and may choose to attend. We are keen to work with you to support your child in making sure that their attendance improves.

However, should you decline to attend, please be aware that a legal intervention will ensue in liaison with the Education Welfare Officer and this could be a Fast Track, an Education Supervision Order and/or a fixed penalty notice.

Yours sincerely

John Bayes

Headteacher

## Appendix D



### Thurston CE Primary Academy

Pond Field Road, Thurston,  
Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, IP31 3FT

Telephone: (01359) 230444

E-mail: admin@thurstonprimary.net

Headteacher: Mr J. Bayes B.A. Hons. QTS. NPOH.

### APPLICATION FOR LEAVE OF ABSENCE FOR EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES

Please be aware that we are unable to authorise any absence from school, except in exceptional circumstances. In line with Suffolk County Council advice, the Academy's policy is that all absences should be taken in school closure periods unless there are very strong reasons otherwise. If your request for absence is refused and your child has absence during term time for 8 sessions or more, you may be liable for a fine in accordance with Suffolk County Council guidelines. A penalty notice may be issued if this request is denied, payable **per child, per parent of £120 if paid within 28 days but reduced to £60 per child, per parent if paid within 21 days.**

<b>I request that you consider authorising leave of absence for my child/children as below:</b>		
<b>Name of Child/Children</b>	<b>Dates of Birth</b>	<b>Class</b>
<b>First day of absence:</b>	<b>Last day of absence:</b>	
<b>Number of days requested:</b>		
<b>Reason for requesting absence in term time:</b>		
Supporting evidence attached	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____ (state document attached)
(please tick)		
<b>If you have a child/children at another Suffolk school, for whom you have also requested this absence, please give details below:</b>		
<b>Name of Child/Children</b>	<b>School attended</b>	
<b>Signed: Parent/Carer</b>	<b>Date:</b>	

#### Headteacher's Decision

<u>Request for absence:</u> <input type="checkbox"/> Authorised <input type="checkbox"/> Unauthorised	<u>Penalty Notice to be issued:</u> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
<b>Signed:</b> _____ <b>Headteacher</b>	<b>Date:</b> _____

#### *For school use*

Attendance to date %	Number of Authorised absence	Number of Unauthorised absence
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## Appendix E Register Codes

Code	Description	Meaning
/	Present (AM)	Present
\	Present (PM)	Present
B	Educated off site (NOT Dual registration)	Approved Education Activity
C	Other Authorised Circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code/description)	Authorised absence
D	Dual registration (i.e. pupil attending other establishment)	Approved Education Activity
E	Excluded (no alternative provision made)	Authorised absence
F	Extended family holiday (agreed)	Authorised absence
G	Family holiday (NOT agreed or days in excess of agreement)	Unauthorised absence
H	Family holiday (agreed)	Authorised absence
I	Illness (NOT medical or dental etc. appointments)	Authorised absence
J	Interview	Approved Education Activity
L	Late (before registers closed)	Present
M	Medical/Dental appointments	Authorised absence
N	No reason yet provided for absence	Unauthorised absence
O	Unauthorised absence (not covered by any other code/description)	Unauthorised absence
P	Approved sporting activity	Approved Education Activity
R	Religious observance	Authorised absence
S	Study leave	Authorised absence
T	Traveller absence	Authorised absence
U	Late (after registers closed)	Unauthorised absence
V	Educational visit or trip	Approved Education Activity
W	Work experience	Approved Education Activity
X	Non-compulsory school age absence	Not counted in possible attendances
Y	Enforced closure	Not counted in possible attendances
Z	Pupil not yet on roll	Not counted in possible attendances
#	School closed to pupils	Not counted in possible attendances