

Thornhill Primary School

Attendance Policy

January 2017

Introduction

The staff and Governors at Thornhill Primary School work really hard in order to encourage all children on roll to attend on time and every day when the school is in session, as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so. We believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is development of positive attitudes towards school. To this end we strive to make school a happy and rewarding experience for all children. We will reward those children whose attendance is very good. We will also make the best provision we can for those children who, for whatever reason, are prevented from coming to school.

Aims

We aim to:

- Help children to have a positive attitude towards school
- Encourage all children to attend school on time, every day
- Provide a safe, warm and welcoming educational provision that will ensure the needs of all children are met in order that they are happy to attend school regularly
- Ensure that all children, regardless of their age, ability, gender, ethnicity, culture or special educational or physical needs, are given an equal opportunity to attend school regularly
- Raise awareness, so that all children and parent/carers understand the importance of regular and punctual attendance
- Prepare children for adulthood by helping them to understand the importance of regular and punctual attendance
- Support children and their parents/carers effectively so that they are able to ensure regular and punctual attendance
- Work with a range of agencies to ensure effective and appropriate action is taken to support families to ensure that children attend school regularly and on time

Raising Awareness – the importance of Regular and Punctual Attendance

The school raises awareness with both children and parents/carers the importance of regular and punctual school attendance.

This occurs via a number of mechanisms

Parents/Carers:

- Weekly newsletters and other written communication
- School displays
- Regular weekly invitation to Celebration Assembly where awards for attendance are presented
- Direct communications with identified parents/carers

Children:

- Planned assemblies and curriculum activities
- Displays
- Competitions
- Reward systems (see below)
- Direct communications with identified children

Rewards for Good Attendance (see Appendix 1 for further details)

The children are regularly rewarded for regular and punctual attendance as part of the school's 'Attendance Reward System'

Pupil Absence

If a child is absent unexpectedly, the class teacher will record the absence in the register; as a result, the administration staff will endeavour to contact a parent/carer to confirm a reason for the absence (first day response).

If the school is unable to make contact with a parent/carer, on the child's return, a note should be sent to school, by the parent/carer, to explain the absence.

A note may be sent to the school prior to the day of attendance. For example, if a child has a hospital appointment.

If there is any doubt about the whereabouts of a child. The class teacher should take immediate action by notifying the school office. The school will then make immediate contact with the parent/carer, in order to check on the safety of the child.

There is a procedure that will be followed if a child is recognised as having unacceptable levels of attendance (below 90%) in order that children do not become PERSISTANT ABSENTEES; details are written below.

Initially, a letter will be sent to the child's parent/carer to inform them that there is a concern over their child's absence. This will give parents/carers time to improve their child's attendance.

If there is no improvement in the child's attendance, then our Attendance Officer will request that the child's parents/carer attend an Attendance Panel. The Attendance Officer and the Head Teacher will attend all of the Attendance Panels. These meetings will be an opportunity to discuss concerns over a child's attendance, offer support and set targets in order that the child's attendance improves.

In the event that a child's attendance continues to be poor, the Attendance Officer may issue a Fixed Penalty Notice.

NB Parents and carers should be aware that if their child's absence drops below 90% then any further absences will be recorded as 'unauthorised' unless they provide evidence to support the absence. Supporting evidence may include:

- An appointment card or letter
- A note from the GP/Practice Nurse (showing evidence of illness)
- A copy of a prescription made out for the child

When the evidence is presented a decision will then be made as to whether the absence will be authorised or not.

Pupil Lateness

Children who are late miss a great deal of the school curriculum and can feel uncomfortable about joining their class late; this can result in damage being caused to their self-esteem. Parents/carers are therefore required to bring their child(ren) to school on time every day. Morning registration is at 8.45am.

When a child is late they will need to enter the school via the main reception area. They MUST be accompanied by their parent or carer. Their lateness will be recorded in the 'Late Book' and a reason for the lateness will also be recorded.

Children who arrive late but before 9am will be recorded in the register as an authorised late; those arriving after this time will be recorded as an unauthorised late.

Requests for leave of absence

We believe that children need to be in school for all sessions, so that they can make the best progress possible. However, we do understand that there are circumstances where a parent may legitimately request leave of absence for a child. We expect parents/carers to contact the school at least a week in advance in order to request a leave of absence form. The Headteacher will then consider a number of factors related to the child's attendance in order to make a decision as to whether the absence will be authorised. The school will contact the parent/carer in the event that leave for absence is denied.

Requests for leave of absence for Holidays

With regard to parents/carers requesting leave of absence for a holiday, the staff and governors agree that the School will follow the Department of Education (DfE) amendments to legislation surrounding holidays in term time. The new regulations took effect from 1st September 2013 and the new law gives no entitlement to parents/carers to take their child on holiday during term time.

As from September 2013 if parents/carers take their child on holiday, without it being previously authorised by the Head Teacher, the absence will be reported to the Access and Inclusion Team. The team no longer issues the parents/carers with an initial warning but will proceed directly to issue the £60.00 Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN).

All other aspects of the process remain the same:

- If a child accrues 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence over a 12-week period a school may request the Access and Inclusion Service to issue a FPN of £60.00 to each parent.
- If this £60 is not paid within 21 days, it increases to £120.00.
- If this £120.00 is not paid within 28 days, the Access and Inclusion Service will then prosecute the parent(s) in the local magistrate's court. On conviction the parent(s) can be fined up to £1000.00.
- FPNs are issued on the basis of one per parent per child per 10 unauthorised absences.

Long-term absence

When children have an absence that means they will be away from school for over five days, the school will do all it can to send work home (where appropriate) so that they can keep up with their school work.

If the absence is likely to continue for an extended period, or be a repetitive absence, the school will work with a range of support services so that arrangements can be made for the child to be given tuition outside school.

Partnership with the Access and Inclusion

The school warmly welcomes the support of the Access and Inclusion Team. The school is advised by Access and Inclusion when issues relating to attendance arise; the school takes action based on the advice given.

Access and Inclusion work hard to support the school in order to improve the school's attendance figures; regular activities include:

- Carrying out register checks
- Organising late patrols

- Accepting referrals
- Organising attendance panels
- Supporting parents/carers to help them improve their child's attendance
- Agreeing fixed penalty notices where appropriate
- Taking court action as required

Repeated Absences

There is a procedure that will be followed if a child is recognised as having unacceptable levels of attendance; details are written below:

Initially a letter will be sent to the child's parent/carer to inform them that there is a concern over their child's absence. The depth of concern will be indicated by the contents of the letter (the number of the letter in the particular sequence will be indicated on the letter.) Usually after the third letter in the sequence, if there is still no improvement in the child's attendance, then a referral will be made to Access and Inclusion. As a result, Access and Inclusion will contact the parent/carer and request their presence at an Attendance Panel. Both Access and Inclusion and the Headteacher will attend the Attendance Panels. These meetings will be an opportunity to discuss concerns over a child's attendance with the parent/carer, offer support and set targets in order that the child's attendance improves.

In the event that a child's attendance continues to be poor, the school may issue a Fixed Penalty Notice (a fine for unauthorised absence). Access and Inclusion may also begin court proceedings, as the Governors, supported by the LA, reserve the right to consider taking legal action against any parents/carers who repeatedly fail to accept their responsibility for sending their children to school on a regular basis.

Attendance Records

As denoted in legal documentation, the Governing Body is responsible for making sure the school keeps an attendance register that records which pupils are present at the start of both the morning and the afternoon sessions of the school day. The register will also indicate whether an absence was authorised or unauthorised.

The school will keep accurate records on file for a minimum period of three years.

Definitions

Authorised Absence

An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent/carer. For example, if a child has been unwell and the parent writes a note or telephones the school to explain the absence.

Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents/carers do not have this authority. Consequently, not all absences supported by parents/carers will be classified as authorised. For example, if a parent takes a child out of school to go shopping or celebrates a birthday during school hours, this will not mean it is an authorised absence.

Unauthorised Absence

An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of both the school and a parent/carer.

Therefore the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent/carer.

Monitoring and Reporting

Class teachers, admin staff and the Headteacher will be responsible for monitoring attendance on a daily basis; all parties will take appropriate action in terms of:

- Recording attendance and absence
- Reporting concerns about a child's absence

It is the responsibility of the Governors to monitor the school's overall attendance. The Governing Body also has responsibility for this policy, and for ensuring that it is carried out. The Governors will therefore examine all the available information, and seek to ensure that our attendance figures are as high as possible.

This policy will be reviewed by the Governing Body every two years, or earlier if considered necessary.

Agreed by Governors: January 2017

Date of Review: January 2019

Appendix 1

Attendance

Thornhill Primary School

At Thornhill Primary School we are committed to providing the best possible education for our pupils. We understand that if a child's attendance is poor, then this will have a long lasting affect on their progress in school. Therefore, to encourage regular school attendance a reward system will be used.

The Attendance Reward System

- In Friday assembly any class with attendance over 99% will be allowed to attend school the following Monday in 'non-uniform' clothes.
- At the end of each term the children with 100% attendance will be awarded a certificate. At the end of the academic year children with 100% attendance will be awarded a certificate and a prize.

We know that parents understand the reasons for making sure that children are on time and that they attend every day. Similarly, picking children up on time is just as important. This ensures that children are given the correct message about punctuality, we are preparing children for life!