



## Thornhill Primary School Attendance Policy

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### 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. For a child to achieve their full educational potential a high level of school attendance is essential. We are committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all our pupils and endeavour to provide an environment where all pupils feel valued and welcome.

Parents and pupils play an important part in making our school successful. Every child has a right to access the education to which he/she is entitled. Parents and teachers share the responsibility for supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and punctuality for all. Every opportunity will be used to convey to pupils and their parents or carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance. For our children to take full advantage of the educational opportunities offered, it is vital your child is at school, on time, every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

The routines children develop around attendance and punctuality at school are the same as the expectations of any future employer in the world of work. High attainment, confidence with peers and staff, and future aspirations depend on good school attendance.

We believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is the 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:

1. 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
2. Children:
  - Planned assemblies and curriculum activities
  - Displays
  - 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**

A child not arriving at school where the parents have not informed the school is considered a **safeguarding** matter. This is why information about the reason for any absence is always required.

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.

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. 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.

### **Ten Days Absence**

We have a legal duty to report the absence of any pupil who is absent without an explanation for 10 consecutive days. If a child is not seen and contact has not been established with the named parent/carer, then the local authority is notified that the **Child is Missing in Education**. Staff from Access and Inclusion Service will visit the last known address and alert key services to locate the child.

Help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have up-to-date contact number and home address.

### **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 (this will be coded as an L on the register).

Children who arrive late but before 9.15am will be recorded in the register as an authorised late; those arriving after this time will be recorded as an unauthorised late (this will be coded as a U in line with the Department of Education guidance). This mark shows them to be on site, but is legally recorded as an unauthorised absence.

If a pupil is late due to a medical appointment, they will receive an authorised absence, coded M. Evidence of this appointment will be required i.e. hospital letter, appointment card for the absence to be coded as M.

**Where possible, doctors and dentist appointments are to be made outside of school hours or during school holidays.**

### **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 exceptional 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 Head Teacher 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**

Amendments to school attendance regulations were updated in September 2013:

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations state that Head Teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are **exceptional circumstances**. It is important to note that Head Teachers can determine the length of the authorised absence, as well as whether the absence is authorised at all. The fundamental principles for defining **exceptional** are **rare, significant, or unavoidable**.

If term time leave is taken without prior permission from the school, 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.

Taking holidays in term time will affect your child's education as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking children out during school time.

### **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
- 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:

**Amber Zone: 91% - 96%** - This percentage range indicates that improvement is needed so that your child can get the most of his/her education. If your child is in the amber zone we will send a warning letter informing you that this needs to be improved. A pre-referral meeting may be arranged with the Head Teacher and the Education Welfare Officer. Medical evidence will be required for any future absences, failure to do so will result in an unauthorised register mark.

**Red Zone – Under 90%** - This percentage range is a serious cause for concern. This is also known as the persistent absentee zone. Pupils who have such a low attendance figure are at risk of intervention by the Education Welfare Officer and can result in parents being issued with 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. Medical evidence will be required for any absences, failure to do so will result in an unauthorised register mark.

## **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, Administration Staff and the Head Teacher 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.

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 small prize. 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!