

Dales Academy Trust
Together for Excellence

Thornaby Church of England Primary School

ATTENDANCE POLICY AND PROCEDURES

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ATTENDANCE POLICY

1. Vision Statement

Walking and learning with faith in the footsteps of Jesus

Statement of Intent

At Thornaby Church of England School we believe that regular school attendance cannot be overestimated. Regular attendance is vital to a good education. Securing it must therefore be a high priority of the school, governors, Local Authority, parents and the pupils themselves. By failing to attend school regularly, pupils lessen the impact of the education provided for them. Pupil absence may seriously disrupt the continuity of teaching for themselves and others.

The aim of Thornaby Church of England School is to facilitate our pupils' regular and sustained attendance at school by providing a full and efficient educational experience for all pupils.

Parents have a vital role to play and there is a strong emphasis on maintaining home-school links and good communication systems that can be utilised whenever there is concern about attendance.

2. School Attendance - The Statutory Framework

Education Act 1944 - Establishes the duty of parents to ensure regular attendance of pupils.

Education Act 1996 - Establishes the duty of LA's to enforce school attendance (Section 444). The Act states that "The parent of a child of compulsory school age registered at school and failing to attend regularly is guilty of an offence punishable by law".

Pupil's Registration Regulations 1986 - Establishes the criteria for the maintenance of Attendance Registers.

The Education (Pupils' Attendance Records) Regulations 1991.

Framework for the Inspection of Schools (OfSTED) - Sept 2014.

The Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 1997 (amended) provides the new registration categories of Approved Educational Activity. (Amending Regulation 3 (2), (3), (5) of the Education Regulations 1995).

Pupil Registration Regulations 1995 (Amended) gives schools discretionary powers to grant leave for the purpose of a family holiday in term time.

Education Act 2002 (Section 53) enables an overall absence target to be set, covering authorised and unauthorised absence, supporting school improvement and raising community awareness of the issue (September 2003)

Pupil Registration Regulations 2006, revokes previous Regulations of 1995 and the subsequent amendments of 1997 and 2001 (England only). It places a requirement on schools to put pupils on the admissions and attendance registers on the first day that they are expected to attend not, as previously, when they first attend.

3. Registration

- 3.1 There is a legal requirement upon schools to keep an attendance register on which, at the beginning of each morning and afternoon sessions, pupils are marked present or absent. The Education (Pupils Attendance Record) Regulations 1991 introduced a further requirement that attendance registers must show whether an absence of a pupil of compulsory school age is authorised or unauthorised. This is shown on our computer records.
- 3.2 Both staff and pupils should see the taking of registers as an integral part of the school day, as was indeed intended in law. Particular attention should be paid to accurate registration and to the preservation and security of registers.
- 3.3 Monitoring and encouraging attendance is an integral part of the Head teacher's role. Head teachers have primary responsibility for monitoring the attendance of pupils' in the class groups and for contacting home with concerns about attendance and punctuality also ensuring that class teachers collect notes explaining absences and maintain an accurate register of attendance.
- 3.4 In accordance with current legislation, each class in school has an attendance register. It is school policy that registers are completed electronically and submitted by 9:05a.m. and 1:05p.m.

It is our policy at Thornaby Church of England School to record a late mark for children who arrive at school after the school bell has rung and admittance is via the front door.

- 3.5 We believe that pupils arriving late seriously disrupt their work and that of others. Our policy is to encourage punctuality. Five minutes will be allocated for registration purposes at the beginning of each session. Children will be

recorded as being late once the bell has rung. Registers close at our school at 9:25 am, children arriving at school after this time will be recorded as absent in the register and an unauthorised registration code entered in the child's register. For health and safety purposes children are signed in at the main office and escorted to their classroom by a member of staff.

4. Absence

- 4.1 It is the parent's responsibility to inform school of the reason for a child's absence. We ask that parent telephone the school office before 9:30am each morning their child is absent to discuss the reason for the absence. Upon returning to school the child should present a note to the class teacher/office and medical evidence (e.g. prescription/ appointment card) where applicable.
- 4.2 It is a fact that parentally-condoned unjustified absence is a serious problem in some schools. This can be every bit as damaging as the more traditional forms of truancy.
- 4.3 **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 or personal contact) in relation to a particular absence does not, of itself, oblige the school to accept it if the school does not accept the explanation offered as a valid reason for absence. If, after further investigation doubt remains about the explanation offered - or where no explanation is forthcoming at all the absence must be treated as unauthorised. Where parentally condoned unjustified absence appears to be a problem in relation to a particular pupil, school will involve the Attendance Officer at an early opportunity.
- 4.4 An excessive amount of authorised absence can also seriously disrupt continuity of learning and encourage disaffection. We must be alert to emerging patterns of authorised absence. We may authorise absence retrospectively where we are satisfied as to the explanation offered. Absences of pupils of compulsory school age without valid reason or for which no explanation has been provided will be treated as unauthorised and school attendance procedures followed.
- 4.5 Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 provides that no offence is committed where a pupil of compulsory school age is prevented from attending school by reason of illness. If school is satisfied that a pupil is absent as a result of illness the absence will be treated as authorised.
- 4.6 Where we have reason to doubt the validity of an explanation offered in respect of a particular absence, further information will be requested by the teacher from the child's parents. If the school continues to be dissatisfied

then the absence will be treated as unauthorised

- 4.7 Where there is doubt about the authenticity of absence attributed to illness, School will seek the advice and support of the School Health Service or may wish to seek permission from the child's parent to consult with their GP. If a pupil is absent for a prolonged period or the school notices a pattern emerging, early contact will be made with the Attendance Officer and/or the School Health Service.
- 4.8 We encourage where possible parents to only take children out of school for dental and medical appointments where this is an emergency or essential (i.e. planned hospital appointment). Leave for medical or dental appointments will be given (i.e. the absence will be authorised) where confirmation has been received from the parent (either in person, in writing or by a telephone call) or on production of an appointment card.

Persistent Absence

A pupil is defined as persistently absent if their attendance falls below 90% **for whatever reason**. School monitors attendance every four weeks. When attendance falls below 96% parents are advised by letter. If the pupil's attendance further deteriorates, the Attendance Team will invite parents in for a meeting to discuss ways that school can help them to improve their child's attendance. If however the pupil's attendance does not improve and no medical evidence has been provided school will refer to the local authority. Ten or more sessions of unauthorised absence within a six week period will result in a penalty warning letter. The Local Authority will closely monitor the pupil's attendance. If attendance does not improve following the warning letter a fixed penalty notice letter will be issued.

Penalty Notice Procedures

To be read alongside Stockton-on-Tees, Penalty Notice Procedures for Attendance and Exclusion June 2017.

The Local Authority can issue a Penalty Notice for several different criteria:

- In cases of unauthorised leave of absence for the purpose of a family holiday for at least 10 school sessions (5 school days)
- In cases of parents condoning absence identified through a truancy patrol
- A minimum absence of 10 sessions (5 school days) which are classed as **unauthorised** during any period of 6 school weeks

Penalty notices will be issued by the Local Authority working in partnership with the school. Penalty notices will not be issued without fair notice, good reason and evidence taken from the school registers.

Failure to ensure your child's attendance is an offence under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996. If the reasons given for your child's absence from

school are not satisfactory then the Local Authority may take legal proceedings against parents for your failure to comply with the law. This may result in:

- A Penalty Notice requiring the payment of a penalty of up to **£120**, failure to pay the penalty due will result in prosecution before Teesside magistrates Court
- Prosecution under Section 444 (1) Education Act 1996, where if convicted you may be fined up to **£1,000**
- Prosecution under Section 444 (1a) Education Act 1996, where if convicted you may be fined up to **£2,500 and/or 3 months imprisonment**

5. Reporting of Absence Procedure

- 5.1 Once we receive a reason for an absence, we may authorise that absence by inserting the correct symbol on the computer records.

Reporting reasons for absence by telephone, verbally to a member of staff or a note are all acceptable. We expect that parents will contact the school by and report the reason for absence on the first day of absence before 9:30am. Thornaby Church of England School operates a first day calling system. If we have not received a reason for absence by 9:30am on the first day of absence a member of school staff will contact the home contact number to try to ascertain the reason for absence. If no contact is made then the Parent Support Adviser (PSA) will make a visit to the family home. Where concerns continue and no contact is made a referral will be made to the Local Authority Attendance and Exclusion Team under children missing education/ attendance procedures.

- 5.2 The class teacher will keep all notes and notes of telephone messages and a note of any verbal explanations, dated, in the child's central file.
- 5.3 Where a pupil is present for registration but then has to attend an appointment, the school need take no action beyond recording the fact that (for the purpose of emergency evacuation) the pupil, although registered, is not physically present. Similarly the school must note the presence of a pupil (again for purposes of emergency evacuation) who was not there when the register was being taken but returns later from an appointment. The office staff will make a note in the electronic register as to the times the child came or left so that there is information on the child's whereabouts in the event of emergency evacuation. Parents must sign their child in and out of the building.
- 5.4 Where a there has been no response from telephone calls or home visits and a child remains continuously absent for two weeks a Child Missing from

Education referral will be initiated with the Local Authority.

6. **Holidays in Term Time**

'Head teachers should not grant leave of absence unless there are exceptional circumstances. The application must be made in advance and the head teacher must be satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances based on the individual facts and circumstances of the case which warrant the leave. Where a leave of absence is granted, the head teacher will determine the number of days a pupil can be away from school. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the head teacher's discretion'. (School Attendance Advice Oct 2014) Parents do not have an automatic right to take their children out of school for holidays in term time. In the main holidays in term time will not be granted. Discussion with Governors will take place regarding granting of holidays in exceptional circumstances.

Parents are strongly urged to avoid taking family holidays during term time due to the disruption and impact of the missed education on the child.

If parents feel that exceptional circumstances apply to their family then they should complete a Holiday Form, which they may obtain from the main office, if they intend to remove their child from school for this purpose. It should be completed and returned to the school office who will send it to the head teacher for individual consideration. The parent will be written to by the head teacher with the confirmation as to whether the holiday absence is granted. The Head teacher will then make a decision, on whether the leave can be lawfully authorised and will do so only if there is genuine, exceptional and urgent reasons for a child to be absent during term time.

If the holiday absence is not authorised parents will receive leave of absence request warning letter. Referral will be made to the Local Authority for a fixed penalty notice to be issued if the absence goes ahead. Where a Penalty Notice is applied it is a £60.00 charge, per parent, per child. The Penalty Notice is payable to the Local Authority within 21 days, after that the penalty doubles to £120.00, per parent, per child eg for two parents with two children this will be £120 per parent ie £240. Parents have a further seven days to pay the penalty, if payment is not received on day 28, the matter is referred to court. This could result in a much higher fine and/or 3 months imprisonment.

7. **Categorising Absence**

Our policy deals in general with the categories of absence and cannot cover every eventuality. It will be necessary on occasion to exercise reasonable discretion when investigating some absences.

Some Key points: -

- registered pupils of compulsory school age are required by law to be in school;
- whilst it is right that schools should recognise that individual pupils and families have problems the aim should always be to expect regular attendance;
- lateness should be actively discouraged;
- where a pupil is absent without prior authorisation an explanation is required. If one is not forthcoming (for whatever reason) it must be treated as unauthorised and the register recorded accordingly;
- schools are not obliged to accept parental notes where there is reason to doubt the validity of the explanation offered;
- explanations such as minding the house, looking after other children, or shopping trips within school hours will not normally be acceptable reasons for absence;
- parents should not expect, or be led to expect, that, as of right, schools will agree to family holidays during term time. Each application will need to be considered on its merits;
- even where absence is authorised, schools should be alerted to emerging patterns of absence, which may seriously disrupt continuity of learning.
- in promoting regular attendance, schools should work closely with the Local Authority Attendance and Exclusion Team.

8. Punctuality

- 8.1 It is Thornaby Church of England School's policy to actively discourage late arrival. A pupil arriving late may seriously disrupt not only his or her continuity of learning but also that of others. In recognition of local circumstances (such as bad weather or occasional public transport difficulties), we may keep registers open for a reasonable period.
- 8.2 For registration to mean anything at all, a firm line must be taken on late arrivals. To do otherwise undermines the whole purpose of registration and may serve to encourage other pupils to arrive late. Particular attention will be paid to emerging patterns of late arrival.
- 8.3 Where a pupil does arrive late and misses registration, his or her presence on site will still need to be noted for purposes of emergency evacuation. Anyone arriving late must report to the main office and will be escorted to their class by a member of staff.
- 8.4 In responding to lateness, we will of course need to take account of the individual circumstances of each case. Every half term the attendance team discuss any pupil who has been late more times than the number of weeks (equating to one lateness per week). In some instances enquiries may reveal

that the late arrival stems from difficulties at home or other genuinely unavoidable circumstances. A letter is sent asking parents to improve their child's punctuality. If at the next half termly review lateness has still not improved parents are asked to attend an in-school meeting with members of the attendance team to discuss ways to improve punctuality. Further action may be taken if there is still no improvement at the next review.

9. Attendance Procedures

Intervention at School Level

Stage 1 - Monitor

This section describes the role of school in relation to improving attendance.

- 9.1 The Class Teacher has primary responsibility for monitoring attendance of the pupils in the class group and for collecting notes explaining absence, maintaining an accurate register and informing the Head teacher with concerns about attendance and punctuality.
- 9.2 Thornaby Church of England School operates a first day response to absence system and where this has failed to make contact with the parent of the absent child a home visit will be the next step.

Stage 2 - Attendance Concerns

- 9.3 Home is contacted by phone if no reason for absence is received by the school office by 9:30am
- 9.4 A record is kept by the school of all contacts and conversations relating to reasons for absence from school.
- 9.5 PSA monitors pupil attendance and identifies any pupil below 96%. These parents/carers are sent a letter advising them that they need to provide medical evidence for any further absence to be authorised.
- 9.6 Parents/ carers are encouraged to visit the school to discuss attendance and strategies for improvement.
- 9.7 Attendance of pupils calculated at 96% and under is reviewed regularly (every 4 weeks and at the end of each half term) and appropriate action taken if attendance remains a concern. The Attendance team will meet to review the progress of these pupils. A follow-up letter is sent every four weeks to those parents whose child's attendance is below 96%. This will be a positive letter noting improvement or a letter advising them of close monitoring and a need to see improvement or they will be required to attend

a meeting with the school's attendance team.

9.8 If improvement is not seen over the next four weeks the CAF procedure will be initiated and the parent invited in to meet with the head teacher, PSA and attendance team. It is important to establish the reason for poor attendance, the general health of the pupil, home circumstances etc. The parent will then be given a target for the pupil's attendance, which is higher than their normal attendance rate to be achieved over an agreed timescale. All pupils with less than 96% attendance are regularly monitored.

9.9 If attendance has improved, then a letter of commendation is sent home and the pupil returns to stage 1

9.10 If attendance has not improved then options include:

(i) Contact home to discuss attendance either by letter or phone. If contacted by phone or in person areas of concern should be discussed with the parent and appropriate advice and support offered. For example, if the parent reports absence to be due to a recurring medical condition such as asthma the school could offer assistance by putting the parent in touch with the School Health Service and suggesting a referral be made.

(ii) A formal letter will be sent to attend a meeting with the school Attendance Team to investigate what support can be given to improve the child's attendance. Targets for improvement will be set. If support is not taken or the child's attendance does not improve then a referral is made to the LA.

(iii) Referral to the Local Authority Attendance Officer

9.11 The Head teacher will prioritise the list of pupils to be referred to the Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council Attendance Officer. These circumstances include:

(i) When Thornaby Church of England School despite several attempts by phone and also by letter is unable to make contact with the parent.

(ii) If attendance has fallen below 85% and the absence is unauthorised.

(iii) When school has offered all support available but attendance fails to improve.

(iv) When the school has reason not to accept the parents justification for absence on a regular basis.

10. The Role of the Attendance Officer

10.1 The role of our designated Attendance Officer is to:

- liaise, where appropriate, between home and school;
- investigate irregular attendance or lateness which may give rise to concerns that a child may be at risk;
- complete a regular register check and provide school with advice on strategies to improve attendance;
- provide advice and support to parents through the initiation of attendance procedures
- work with children who are experiencing problems with Attendance and/or punctuality and/or are preparing to transfer to secondary school
- assist school in setting attendance targets;

10.2 Referral to the Attendance Officer

Referral to the Attendance Officer will be made in the following circumstances:

- the absence is regular and/or repeated and therefore affecting the child's education;
- when a pupil has been absent for two consecutive weeks and the absence is unauthorised;
- the intervention by the school has failed to secure a pupil's regular attendance.

Referrals can only be made through the Head teacher. A referral form will be completed for each pupil and given to the Attendance Officer.

The Attendance Officer will meet with the head teacher fortnightly and progress reports on referrals made reviewed and discussed.

11. Rewarding Good Attendance and Punctuality

11.1 As well as taking appropriate action against parents who fail to secure the regular attendance of their children, we will take steps to reward good attendance and punctuality at Thornaby Church of England School.

Attendance is discussed with the whole school each Monday in collective worship and class attendance is rated in a traffic light system. This attendance rate is then prominently displayed both in the hall and in each class room and is judged against the school attendance target of 96%

Thornaby dollars are received by any class surpassing the attendance target. The class with the highest attendance for the week receives \$5, second \$4, third \$3. If a class has 100% attendance they receive \$10 and a cake to

share. Thornaby dollars are banked and saved for a range of rewards that classes can select when they have saved enough dollars.

Attendance and punctuality is also rewarded through the giving of stickers to children who have had a full week's attendance.

12. School Targets

To enable school to achieve targets systems have been set in place to :

- Provide and interpret detailed and robust data on school attendance.
- Develop a strategic target setting culture.
- Develop a monitoring mechanism to ensure targets both on a school and individual pupils level are being met.
- Publish targets and achievement around school
- To inform parents on a termly basis of their child's attendance percentage

Reviewed October 2012

Reviewed November 2014 - to be reviewed November 2016

Reviewed January 2016

Reviewed June 2018

Reviewed September 2019