

Thornaby Church of England Primary School



Attendance Policy and Procedures 2024-2025

Mission Statement:

Recognising its historic foundation, the school will preserve and develop its religious character in accordance with the principles of the Church of England and in partnership with the Church at Parish and Diocesan level.

The School aims to serve its community by providing an education of the highest quality within the context of Christian belief and practice. It encourages an understanding of the meaning and significance of faith and promotes Christian values through the experience it offers to all its pupils.

Walking and learning with faith in the footsteps of Jesus

Statement of Intent

At Thornaby Church of England Primary School, we believe that regular attendance is vital for academic success and personal growth. Securing it must therefore be a high priority of the school, governors, Local Authority, parents and the pupils themselves. We're committed to ensuring that every student has the opportunity to learn and thrive in a supportive environment.

Our dedicated Attendance team work closely with families to address any barriers to attendance and provide the necessary support. Through regular communication, incentives, and engaging activities, we encourage students to attend school every day, ready to learn and participate.

We believe that every absence matters; each day in school is an opportunity for growth and achievement. Together, we strive to foster a culture of attendance excellence, where every student feels valued, supported, and motivated to reach their full potential.

Aims

This policy is based on the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance 'Working together to improve school attendance' (updated from 19 August 2024) and 'School attendance parental responsibility measures'. We are committed to:

- Promoting and modelling high attendance and its benefits.
- Ensuring equality and fairness for all.
- Ensuring this attendance policy is clear and easily understood by staff, pupils and parents.
- Intervening early and working with other agencies to ensure the health and safety of our pupils.
- Building strong relationships with families to overcome barriers to attendance.
- Ensuring parents follow the framework set in section 7 of the Education Act 1996, which states that the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause them to receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude, and to any SEND they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.
- Regularly monitoring and analysing attendance and absence data to identify pupils or cohorts that require more support.

Responsibility

The Governing Body has overall responsibility for:

- Monitoring the implementation of this policy and all relevant procedures across the school.
- Promoting the importance of good attendance through the school's ethos and policies.
- Working with the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) to set goals for attendance and providing support and challenge around delivery against those goals.
- Regularly reviewing attendance data.
- Ensuring that this policy, as written, does not discriminate on any grounds, including, but not limited to, ethnicity/national origin, culture, religion, gender, disability or sexual orientation.
- Handling complaints regarding this policy as outlined in the school's Complaints Procedures Policy.
- Having regard to 'Keeping children safe in education' when making arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

The Headteacher is responsible for:

- The day-to-day implementation of the policy.
- The overall strategic approach to attendance in school.
- Ensuring that all parents are aware of the school's attendance expectations and procedures.
- Ensuring that every child has access to full time education and will act promptly to address any patterns of absence.
- Analysing and monitoring attendance and implementing any interventions.

- Communicate with pupils and parents regarding attendance.

The designated Senior Leader (also known as the 'senior attendance champion') is responsible for:

- Leading, championing and improving attendance across the school.
- Setting a clear vision for improving and maintaining good attendance.
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes.
- Having a strong grasp of absence data and oversight of absence data analysis.
- Regularly monitoring and evaluating progress in attendance alongside the Attendance Team – every four weeks.
- Establishing and maintaining effective systems for tackling absence and making sure they are followed by all staff.
- Liaising with pupils, parents/carers and external agencies, where needed.
- Building close and productive relationships with parents to discuss and tackle attendance issues.
- Creating intervention or reintegration plans in partnership with pupils and their parents/carers.
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families.
- Liaising with the Local Authority Attendance Officer when all attempts to improve attendance have failed to have impact.

The designated Senior Leader responsible for attendance is Mrs Smith (Deputy Headteacher) alongside the Attendance Team - Mr Perks and Mrs Anderson.

Staff are responsible for:

- Following this policy and ensuring pupils do so too.
- Ensuring this policy is implemented fairly and consistently.
- Modelling good attendance behaviour.
- Using their professional judgement and knowledge of individual pupils to inform decisions as to whether any welfare concerns should be escalated.
- Where designated, taking the attendance register at the relevant times during the school day.

Parents are responsible for:

- Getting their children to school on time every day.
- Promoting good attendance with their children.
- Telephone call to the school to report their child's absence before 9.20am on the day of the absence (and each subsequent day of absence), as well as advise when they are expected to return.
- Ensuring that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day.
- Providing accurate and up-to-date contact details.
- Providing the school with more than one emergency contact number.
- Updating the school if their details change.

Pupils are responsible for:

- Attending school every day, on time
- Being prepared for the demands of that day.
- Informing a member of staff of any problems they are experiencing which may impinge on their ability to attend school and access their education.

Definitions

Authorised absence:

- An absence for sickness for which the school has granted leave.
- Medical or dental appointments which cannot be made out of school time, for which the school has granted leave.

- Religious or cultural observances for which the school has granted leave.
- An absence due to a family emergency (where there is no alternative but for the child to absent from school.)

Unauthorised absence:

- Parents keeping children off school unnecessarily or without reason.
- Absences which are not explained properly.
- Arrival at school after the register closes.
- Absence due to children's birthdays, looking after other children or shopping.
- Absence due to day trips and holidays in term time.
- Truancy

Persistent Absence (PA):

- Child is missing from 10% or more of schooling across the year.

Promoting Good Attendance

- Supporting Pupils – Pastoral support to help with home to school transition, reintegration support after a period absence, personalised support (e.g. sensory, calm areas, drawing and talking, 1:1 pastoral/Nurture input), regular check ins from Class Teacher and if needed the school's Learning Mentor during the school day.
- Relationships with parents – regular discussions, support from SLT/Attendance Team at drop off time, messages home, attendance techniques shared with parents, emotional support at times of stress, home visits to support parents when applicable.
- Celebrating success – Phase weekly attendance percentages shared and celebrated in Collective Worship, weekly 100% attendance raffle for Hot Chocolate with SLT, half termly raffle for those 96% plus as well as 100% and termly prizes for 100%.

Attendance Expectations

The school has high expectations for children's attendance and punctuality with an aspirational goal of at least 97%. Children are expected to attend school, on time, every day that they are required to be at school and attend the full day.

The school day starts at 8.45am when the children enter the building (gates open at 8.35am). The register closes at 8.55am and all children must be in school by close of register. If a child fails to be in school by 8.55am, they will be recorded as late. Children will receive an unauthorised late mark if they arrive in school after 9.20am. A 'U' mark means that children do not receive a present mark for that session, therefore impacting negatively on their attendance.

Reporting Absences

It is a parent's responsibility to inform school of the reason for a child's absence as soon as possible. Parents are expected to contact the school office, by telephone, on the first day of absence by 9.20am giving as much information as is available. A conversation will take place where needed if it is considered the child may be able to attend. Parents must contact each day that a child is absent.

If a parent does not contact the school office to explain a child's absence, the following procedure will take place:

- Phone call to the parent asking for reasons for absence by 10am. If no answer, message will be left asking for immediate contact to be made with school by telephone. This will be followed up by a text message. Please note parents are to only respond by telephoning the school – not by text.
- If no contact made by 11am, a visit will be made to the home by members of the Attendance Team.
- If contact is not made at the home, Attendance Team will action safeguarding procedures (this may include contact with the police and/or social care).

- When children are off school due to illness, the priority for the school remains as safeguarding. Therefore, an unannounced home visit will be made to the home if there is any question over the safety of the child.
- Where 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.

Registration

All schools must keep an attendance register on which, at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session, pupils are marked present or absent. Using the appropriate national attendance and absence codes from the School Attendance (Pupil Registration, England) Regulations 2024, registers must state whether an absence is authorised or unauthorised.

Lateness

The school policy is to encourage punctuality and to actively discourage lateness as it can disrupt lessons. If a child is late and misses registration, a late mark will be recorded. If a child arrives after 8.55am the child will be recorded as late (with the number of minutes being recorded) and if they do not arrive until after 9.20am, then the lateness will be marked as unauthorised. Any pupils arriving after the gate is closed at 8.55am MUST report to the school office.

Holidays in Term Time

A family holiday in term time is not an exceptional circumstance and will be recorded as an unauthorised absence. Some exceptional circumstances may be authorised, but this is at the discretion of the Headteacher. Requests for leave of absence should be made on a Leave of Absence Form which can be obtained from the school office PRIOR to any holiday being taken.

Other requests for leave of absence:

- Family bereavements – the Headteacher has the discretion to authorise absence to attend funerals or associated events. Any request will be dealt with sympathetically.
- Days of Religious Observance – absence of a pupil for participation in a day set aside exclusively for religious observation by the religious body to which the parents belong can be classed as authorised. Advance notice should be given to the school.
- Family Circumstance – It is for school to determine whether an absence in this category should be authorised or not dependent on the circumstances of the particular case. Only exceptional circumstances will be sanctioned through discussion with the Headteacher.

Applying for Leave of Absence

All requests for Leave of Absence should be made on the relevant form available from the school office. A reply will be sent stating whether the absence will be authorised or not authorised. Implications for absence that is unauthorised follows the Stockton Borough Council policy regarding the issuing of penalty notices.

Penalty Notice Procedures

The headteacher (or someone authorised by them), local authority or the police can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age, by issuing a penalty notice. The decision whether to issue the penalty will take into account whether the national threshold has been met – namely 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks – as well as other factors. Each parent, who is liable for the pupil, can be issued with a penalty notice. The payment must be made directly to the local authority, regardless of who issues the notice. If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

If issued with a first penalty notice, the parent will be charged at £160, reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days. If a second penalty notice is issued, the parent must pay £160 if paid within 28 days. A third penalty notice will not be

issued to the same parent for the same child in this rolling 3-year period and an alternative legal sanction will be given, this may include prosecution in the magistrate court.

Legal School Age

Parents are responsible for making sure that their children of compulsory school age receive a suitable fulltime education. This can be by regular attendance at school, at alternative provision, or otherwise (e.g. the parent can choose to educate their child at home). A child reaches compulsory school age on or after their fifth birthday. If they turn 5 between 1st September and 31st December, then they are of compulsory school age on 31st December. If they turn 5 between 1st January and 31st March, they are of compulsory school age on 31st March and if they turn 5 between 1st April and 31st August, they are of compulsory school age on 31st August.

School Attendance Orders

If it appears to the local authority that a child of compulsory school age is not receiving a suitable education, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise, then they must begin procedures for issuing a School Attendance Order. The order will require the child's parents to register their child at a named school. If they fail to comply with the order the parent can be prosecuted.

Prosecutions by local authorities

If a child of compulsory school age fails to attend regularly at a school at which they are registered or at a place where alternative provision is provided for them the parents may be guilty of an offence and can be prosecuted by the local authority. Only local authorities can prosecute parents and they must fund all associated costs. Local authorities have the power to prosecute parents who fail to comply with a school attendance order (section 443 of the Education Act 1996) or fail to ensure their child's regular attendance at a school (section 444 of the Education Act 1996). As a school, we work closely with Stockton Borough Council to ensure attendance is high.

Referral to the Local Authority Attendance Officer

Referral to the Local Authority 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.

Attendance Procedures

We have an aspirational target of 97% for all pupils. Below outlines our procedures when attendance is below 96%

