Thornaby Church of England Primary School

Attendance Policy and Procedures 2026-2027

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' (July 2026 edition), including its National Framework for penalty notices, the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 and the Equality Act 2010. We are committed to:

- Promoting and modelling high attendance and its benefits.
- Ensuring equality and fairness for all, in line with our duties under the Equality Act 2010.
- 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.
- Recognising that absence is almost always a symptom of wider circumstances, listening to pupils and families to understand the barriers, and working in partnership with them to remove those barriers before considering legal intervention.
- Providing additional support and reasonable adjustments for pupils with health needs, special educational needs or disabilities, young carers and pupils with a social worker.

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 at governing body meetings, including benchmarking against local, regional, national and similar-school levels, and paying particular attention to pupil groups with historically lower attendance or entrenched barriers (for example pupils with long-term medical conditions or SEND, pupils with a social worker, young carers and pupils eligible for free school meals).

- 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.
- Ensuring this policy meets the expectations of the statutory guidance, is published on the school website and is reviewed regularly.
- Ensuring all staff receive adequate attendance training, including dedicated training for staff with a specific attendance role.

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.
- Communicating with pupils and parents regarding attendance expectations.
- Ensuring registers are kept accurately and retained for six years, and that required attendance returns are made to the local authority and the DfE.

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
- 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.
- Holding regular meetings with the parents of pupils who are vulnerable or persistently or severely absent.
- Liaising with the local authority's locality team (attendance).

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

Mrs Smith, Mr Perks and Mrs Anderson can all be contacted via the school office, on 01642 763060
By email: admin@thornaby.dalesmat.org
Or in person via the main reception

Mrs Clark is an independent Education Welfare Officer working with our school. She can be contacted via request at our main reception;
By telephone call: 07593229263
Or by email: jenniferclark@educationfive.co.uk

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, at the same time for all pupils.
- Undertaking attendance training appropriate to their role and understanding that absence is almost always a symptom of wider circumstances.

Parents are responsible for:

- Getting their children to school on time every day.
- Promoting good attendance with their children.
- Contacting the school by telephone call or in person to report their child's absence before 9.20am on every day of the absence
- Ensuring that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day.
- Providing accurate and up-to-date contact details including, where possible, more than one emergency contact number.
- Working with the school and telling us as early as possible about any barriers to attendance (for example health needs, caring responsibilities or special educational needs) so that support can be put in place.

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:

- Illness – where a pupil is too ill to attend school (Code I). Parents report the illness on each day of absence. See 'Illness and Medical Evidence' below.
- Medical or dental appointments which cannot reasonably be made outside the school day (Code M); pupils should attend before and/or after the appointment wherever possible.
- Days set aside exclusively for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong (Code R), with advance notice given to the school. This applies equally to all faiths. Requests linked to cultural observances are considered as requests for leave of absence for exceptional circumstances.
- Leave of absence granted by the school for exceptional circumstances, which can include a genuine family emergency where there is no alternative. Each case is considered individually (see 'Other requests for leave of absence' below).
- Other reasons authorised under the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024, such as an agreed temporary part-time timetable, or being unable to attend because of an unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absence:

- Parents keeping children off school unnecessarily or without reason.
- Absences which are not explained properly.
- Arrival at school after the register closes (Code U), unless a valid reason is accepted.
- Absence due to children's birthdays, looking after other children or shopping.
- Absence for day trips and holidays in term time where leave of absence has not been granted (Code G).
- Truancy

Persistent Absence (PA):

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

Severe Absence (SA):

- Child is missing from 50% or more of schooling (absent more than they are present). Severely absent pupils are the highest priority for support – see 'Persistent and Severe Absence' below.

Promoting Good Attendance

We support and promote good attendance in a number of ways including;

- Supporting Pupils at school – 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, (including access to EBSA Horizon's Family training portal), 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 a recognition badge, half termly raffle for those 96% plus as well as 100% and termly prizes for 100%. Recognition also celebrates improvements in attendance, not only 100% attendance, and is used sensitively so that no pupil is disadvantaged by absence caused by illness, disability, caring responsibilities or other circumstances outside their control.
- Whole-school culture – attendance is part of our Christian vision and values and of everyday school life (assemblies, displays and class routines). All staff receive training and communicate consistently with pupils and parents, and we regularly remind families how attendance affects learning and wellbeing, including the short- and long-term consequences of poor attendance.

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 morning register is taken at 8.50am at the same time for all pupils. The afternoon register is taken at 12.45pm for Reception and KS1 and at 1pm for KS2. The register is open for the same length of time in every session and never for more than 30 minutes. A child who arrives after the register has opened but before it closes is recorded as late (Code L), and the number of minutes late is recorded. A child who arrives after the register has closed is recorded as absent for that session using Code U (unauthorised), unless a valid reason is accepted, such as a medical appointment. A 'U' mark means that children do not receive a present mark for that session, therefore impacting negatively on their attendance. Sessions recorded as unauthorised, including arriving after the register has closed, count towards the national threshold for penalty notices (see below).

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 or in person, on the first day of absence by 9.20am and each day after of absence 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.

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.
- 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, the Attendance Team will action safeguarding procedures (this may include contact with the police and/or social care).
- When children are off school due and reasons of illness given, the Attendance Team may visit the home address to see the child. If the child is not going to be at home parents must inform the school where they are staying (ie with grandparent with address provided). If a visit is carried out and the child is not seen the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.
- Where there has been no response from telephone calls or home visits and a child remains absent without explanation, the school will refer the matter to the local authority as a Child Missing from Education. Once reasonable enquiries to locate the pupil have been made in line with the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 the child may be removed from the school roll.
- Where a pupil has a social worker or youth offending team worker, the school will inform them of any unexplained absence.
- Every absence is recorded with the correct national code. Where the reason for an absence is unexplained, the correct code is entered as soon as the reason is established and no later than 5 working days after the session.
- The school makes the statutory attendance return to the local authority for any pupil of compulsory school age who has been absent for 10 continuous school days with an unauthorised code, and a sickness return where a pupil is expected to miss 15 or more school days through illness.

Lateness

The school policy is to encourage punctuality and to actively discourage lateness as it can be disruptive to all children and their learning. Persistent lateness is followed up with the family in the same supportive way as other absence, to understand and address the cause. Any pupils arriving after the gate is closed MUST report to the school office.

Holidays in Term Time

- The DfE does not consider a wish for a family holiday or other leisure or recreation to be an exceptional circumstance, so leave for a holiday in term time will not normally be granted and the absence will be recorded as unauthorised (Code G). The Headteacher may grant leave of absence for exceptional circumstances. Every request is considered individually, taking account of the specific facts and background, and the school does not operate blanket policies under which leave is granted automatically in response to particular circumstances or events. Requests for leave of absence must be made in advance, by a parent the pupil normally lives with, on a Leave of Absence Form which can be obtained from the school office PRIOR to the absence. When a 4-day Leave of Absence request has been made and the child is unable to attend on day 5 due to illness, the Attendance Team may visit the home address to see the child. If a visit is carried out and the child is not seen the absence will be recorded as unauthorised, which may result in a fine being issued.

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. Each request is considered individually, and the length of any leave is decided by the school.
- 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. This applies equally to pupils of all faiths and beliefs.
- 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.
- Other permitted leave – the school can only grant leave in the circumstances set out in regulation 11 of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024: regulated performance or employment

abroad (under licence), an interview for another school, a temporary time-limited reduced timetable, or exceptional circumstances.

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 unauthorised. Implications for absence that is unauthorised follows the National Framework for penalty notices and Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council's local code of conduct for issuing them.

Illness and Medical Evidence

When pupils are too ill to attend school parents should contact the school on each day of absence. Medical evidence is only needed in a minority of cases. The school does not require evidence for every illness absence and does not operate blanket rules requiring medical evidence. The school may ask for reasonable evidence where it has genuine and reasonable doubt that a pupil is too ill to attend, or where a pupil's health needs are complex, long-term or frequently recurring and the school needs to understand them in order to provide the right support or reasonable adjustments.

When a pupil is reported a being ill for three days or more a home visit may be undertaken by our Attendance Team to see the child and offer any support/ establish more detail about the possible length of absence. If children are not being looked after at home whilst unwell (due to for example parents work commitments) parents will be asked to provide the location of the child so a visit may be carried out to that address. Should the child not be seen the absence may be recorded as unauthorised.

Pupils who feel anxious or worried about attending, for example about friendships, schoolwork or changes in mood, are still expected to attend regularly, because time away can make anxiety worse. Staff work with the pupil and family to ease those worries in school. Where a pupil has a long-term physical or mental health condition, we work with the pupil, parents and other agencies to agree support and reasonable adjustments (including, where appropriate, a time-limited phased return) and review them regularly.

Pupils Who May Need Additional Support

Special educational needs and disabilities (SEND): we work with parents to agree attendance support that fits the pupil's needs, including reasonable adjustments to routines, uniform, transport or lunchtime arrangements where these are a barrier. Where a pupil has an education, health and care (EHC) plan, we tell the local authority if attendance falls or if barriers to attendance relate to the pupil's needs.

Young carers: young carers are recorded in the school census. Where caring responsibilities may be contributing to absence, we work with the pupil and parents to understand the barriers and put support in place, including through local early help and, where appropriate, a young carer's needs assessment by the local authority.

Pupils with a social worker or youth offending team worker: we tell them about any unexplained absence.

Reduced timetables: used only in very exceptional circumstances where it is in the pupil's best interests, and never to manage behaviour. A reduced time timetable is agreed with parents, is part of a wider support or reintegration plan, has regular review dates and an end date, and is recorded in the register with the correct code.

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.

Support comes first wherever it is appropriate. Before a penalty notice is considered, the school and local authority consider whether support has been offered, engaged with and been effective. Where the national threshold has been met and support is appropriate but has not worked or been engaged with, a Notice to Improve may be issued as a final opportunity for the parent to engage with support and improve attendance. Notices to Improve and penalty notices may also be used where support would not be appropriate, for example for an unauthorised holiday in term time.

The national threshold is 10 sessions of unauthorised absence within a rolling period of 10 school weeks. The sessions do not need to be consecutive, they can be any mix of unauthorised absence (including arriving after the register has closed), and the 10 weeks can span different terms or school years. Penalty notices are issued in line with the National Framework and the local code of conduct set by Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council.

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 considered, such as an attendance contract, an education supervision order or prosecution in the magistrates' 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. However, we encourage and support the attendance of all our pupils whether they are statutory school age or not as we believe that strong routines and patterns of behaviour including regular attendance are beneficial to all children.

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-on-Tees Borough Council to ensure attendance is high.

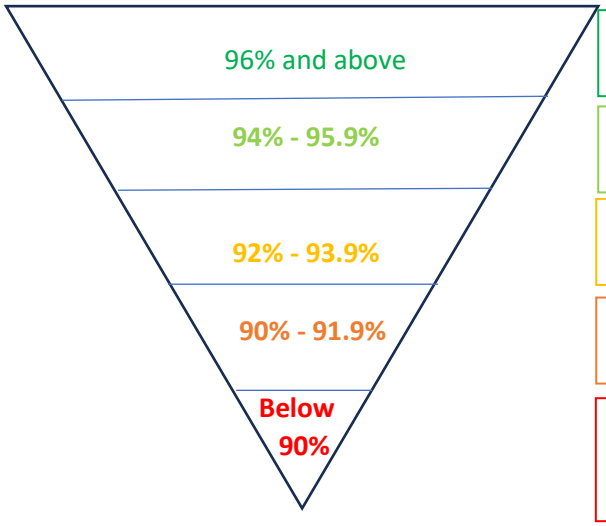
Referral to the Local Authority

Referral to the Local Authority 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 10 continuous school days and the absence is unauthorised.
- the intervention by the school has failed to secure a pupil's regular attendance.
- a pupil is persistently or severely absent and has barriers to attendance that need a joint response from the school, the local authority and other partners.

Attendance Procedures

We have an aspirational target of 97% for all pupils. Below outlines our procedures when attendance is below 96%. These steps are a minimum: we contact families earlier where a pattern of absence or lateness is emerging, and follow the steps in 'Using Data to Target Support' and 'Persistent and Severe Absence' below.



96% and above	Best chance of academic success and in-line with national expectations
94% - 95.9%	Conversations held between class teacher and parents to discuss attendance concerns - recorded on cPoms.
92% - 93.9%	Attendance is a cause for concern. Telephone call by Attendance Team – conversation recorded on cPoms.
90% - 91.9%	Letter to parents explaining close monitoring and for an improvement to be made within the next 4 weeks.
Below 90%	Serious cause for concern. Meeting with Attendance Team and an Attendance Plan to be written. Possible LA involvement.

Using Data to Target Support

Poor attendance is habitual, so early identification matters. Each week we look at attendance and punctuality for individual pupils, classes and year groups to spot early signs of a problem, going beyond the headline figure. Each half term, term and year we look for patterns, including the days and absence codes where attendance is weakest, and compare our attendance with local, regional and national levels and with similar schools.

We track pupil groups including pupils with special educational needs or disabilities, pupils with a social worker or who are looked after, young carers, pupils eligible for free school meals, and any group whose attendance is, or has historically been, lower than their peers'. This analysis is used to plan actions for individual pupils and groups, and is shared with class teachers, the SENCo, the Designated Safeguarding Lead, the Governing Body and the local authority.

We share attendance information regularly with parents including the amount of learning time missed and its impact, rather than a percentage figure alone. For example, 90% attendance is about one day missed every fortnight.

Persistent and Severe Absence

Absence is almost always a symptom of wider circumstances. When we spot a pattern, we talk with the pupil and family to listen to and understand the barriers, then agree together how the school and others will remove them. We put in additional support or reasonable adjustments for barriers in school and help families to access support voluntarily for barriers outside school, for example through a voluntary early help assessment or whole-family plan.

A pupil who misses 10% or more of school (about one day or more a fortnight) is persistently absent. A pupil who misses 50% or more is severely absent. In cases of severe absence, we agree a joint plan with the local authority and other partners, and consider whether an education, health and care plan, alternative provision or a whole-

family plan is needed. We remain alert to safeguarding concerns, and if severe absence for unauthorised reasons continues after all support has been put in place, a children's social care referral will be considered.

Where voluntary support is not working or is not being engaged with, parents are invited into school to meet with our education welfare officer where a more formal meeting will include and attendance improvement plan. This plan will be reviewed and parents will have regular contact from our education welfare officer. Where attendance does not improve following this intervention a referral may be made to the local authority for enforcement procedures.

Pupils returning after a long or unavoidable absence are supported to rebuild confidence and catch up, with a reintegration plan agreed with the pupil and family where needed.

Publication, Equality and Review

This policy is published on the school website. Parents receive it with their joining information and are reminded of it at the start of each school year and whenever it is updated.

In developing and applying this policy we have considered our duties under the Equality Act 2010, including making reasonable adjustments for pupils with a disability, and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The policy is applied fairly and consistently, while always taking account of the individual needs of pupils and families who face specific barriers to attendance.

The policy is reviewed at least annually and whenever the statutory guidance changes.

Date approved by the Governing Body: October 2026 Next review date: October 2027