THAMESMEAD SCHOOL

Student Attendance, Absence & Punctuality Policy

Person Responsible	**P Watson**
Governors Committee	**Personal Development Behaviour and Welfare**
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1. Aims

Thamesmead School prides itself as a highly inclusive school and is committed to providing the best possible educational opportunities and outcomes for all students. We aim to provide a safe, caring, well-ordered environment, which allows the best possible teaching and learning to take place. Regular and punctual attendance is an essential prerequisite to effective learning. When children are not in school, they miss out on the educational opportunities, which the school has to offer. Statistics show that persistent absentees (those with attendance below 90%) fail to achieve 5 or more good GCSE grades or equivalent.

Students at Thamesmead School are expected to attend school every day unless they are ill or if there is an exceptional circumstance. 100% attendance will be widely celebrated.

The school is committed to giving the highest priority to attendance and punctuality as well as meeting its obligations with regards to school attendance by:

- Promoting excellent attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence.
- Ensuring every student has access to full-time education to which they are entitled.
- Acting early to address patterns of absence.

We will also support parents to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend regularly and will promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

Regular excellent attendance is attending school on each day the school is open for students unless there is an authorised reason to be absent. These authorised absences will not be expected and considered the exception rather than the given and at the discretion of the school. The expected attendance is every lesson, every day.

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the school attendance guidance from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on school attendance parental responsibility measures. These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- The Education Act 1996
- The Education Act 2002
- The Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2010
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2011
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2016
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.

This policy complies with our funding agreement and articles of association.

In accordance with The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 and Section 444 of the The Education Act 1996

3. School procedures

3.1 Attendance register

By law, all schools (except those where all students are boarders) are required to keep an attendance register, and all students must be placed on this register.

The attendance register will be taken at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark whether every student is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

Every entry in the attendance register will be preserved for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.
*See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

Students must arrive in school before **8.25am** on each school day.
The morning register will be taken at **8.30am** and will be kept open until **8.35am**
The afternoon register will be taken at **1:35pm** and will be kept open until **2.35pm**.

3.2 Sickness and unplanned absence

Parents must notify the school on the automated telephone system before **8.15am** or as soon as practically possible (see also section 6) every day of their child's absence. The notification will be passed to the Administrator for Attendance / Attendance Officer to make adjustments to the registers.

All absence notes and emails received by tutors should be forwarded immediately to the PCS Administrator for Attendance.

Absence due to illness will be authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness. If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask parents to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents will be notified.

3.3 Medical or dental appointments

Missing school for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence; advance notice is required for authorising these absences.

However, we expect parents to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the student should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary and catch up any missing work. Parents are required to notify the school in advance regarding any medical or dental appointments.

Applications for other types of absence in term time must also be made in advance. Information relating to whether the school can authorise such absences can be found in section 4.

3.4 Lateness and punctuality

A student who arrives late but before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code and the number of minutes late recorded.

A student who arrives after the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code.

Students that arrive after 8.30am will receive a 15-minute detention on the same day at the start of lunch. Students that arrive after 9.30am will receive a 60-minute detention for every hour missed. This will be considered as truancy in line with our behaviour policy. This time will be used to catch up any work from the lessons missed.

3.5 Following up absence

The school will follow up any absences to ascertain the reason, ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary, identify whether the absence is approved or not and identify the correct attendance code to use.

When a student does not attend school we will respond in the following manner:

- On the first day of absence, if no note or telephone call is received by 9.30am from the parent/carer a Schoolcomms text message will be sent
- If still absent on the second subsequent day, and no note or telephone call is received, a further Schoolcomms text will be sent

- Staff should advise the Pastoral and Curriculum support team if they are ever suspicious about a student's absence
- A weekly absence letter is sent out requesting reasons for absence
- Failure to comply with the expectations set by the Education Inclusion and may result in further action, this includes an application for an Education Supervision Order, or court prosecution.

3.6 Reporting to parents

Information regarding student's attendance record is available on the parent portal and included in written academic reports from the school.

4. Authorised and unauthorised absence

4.1 Granting approval for term-time absence

Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence to students during term time unless they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the Headteacher's discretion.

Due to the nature of the school day, finishing at 2:35pm. The expectation is that medical appointments and other arrangements can be made after the school day to avoid missing lesson and learning time.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments – as explained in sections 3.2 and 3.3
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the student's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Traveller students travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a Traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school but it is not known whether the student is attending educational provision

4.2 Legal sanctions

Surrey County Council can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

If issued with a penalty notice, parents must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice ultimately rests with the Headteacher, following the local authority's code of conduct for issuing penalty notices. This may take into account:

- A number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- Where an excluded student is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute the parent or withdraw the notice.

5. Strategies for promoting attendance

Thamesmead School uses a number of strategies to ensure high levels of attendance from all students. This includes fortnightly attendance meetings between Head of Year and/or the Pastoral Manager and the Attendance Officer. Regular checks and communications between the tutor, the pastoral team and home. The school aims to communicate any concerns regarding attendance with parents and will hold Student Attendance Meetings (SAMs) in the event of attendance concerns. In the event of student's attendance falling below 93% the school may request medical proof to be provided for further absences.

The school aims to recognise and reward students with 100% attendance. This includes awarding house points, presenting certificates in assemblies and entering students into prize draws.

6. Attendance monitoring

School maintains attendance registers for all students on the school roll. Form tutors will take the register during the morning and afternoon registration.

All students will be marked using the appropriate attendance code (See Appendix 1)

- present /
- absent N
- engaged in an approved educational activity away from the school site (B, C, D, E, G, H, I, J, M, P, R, S, V and W).

These codes will also indicate if the absence is authorised or unauthorised

Students arriving during registration between 8:30am and 8:45am will be marked late by the Main Office as they enter school. This register is passed to the attendance officer to manually update AM registration. The attendance officer monitors student absence on a daily basis.

Parents are expected to call the school in the morning if their child is going to be absent due to ill health (see section 3.2). Parents are then expected to call the school each day a child is ill.

The school operates a first day response to absences and will contact parents if a student is absent from AM registration and no reason has been provided. This is part of the school's safeguarding responsibility.

If a student's absence is recognised as causing concern or drops below 96% parents will be contacted to discuss the reasons for this. If after contacting parents a student's absence continues to rise, we will consider involving an education welfare officer.
The persistent absence threshold is 10%. If a student's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 10%, the student will be classified as a persistent absentee.

Student-level absence data is collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. We compare our attendance data to the national average, and share this with governors.

7. Roles and responsibilities

7.1 The School Governing Body

The School Governing Body is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school on at least a termly basis. It also holds the Headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

7.2 The Headteacher:

- Ensure that everybody at school treats attendance, punctuality and accurate register marks as a priority.
- Ensure this policy is implemented consistently across the school, and for monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors at least 3 times a year.
- Promote the importance of good attendance to students and their parents.
- Support other staff in monitoring the attendance of individual students and agree recommendations to issue fixed-penalty notices, where necessary.

7.3 Administrator for Attendance:

- Monitors attendance data at the school and individual student level.
- Reports concerns about attendance to the Deputy Headteacher, Heads of Year and pastoral Managers as well as the Headteacher.

- Works with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence.
- Arranges calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues.
- Advises the Headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices.
- Notify the Local Authority (LA) of students who have poor attendance, leave school to be educated at home, go missing, or are excluded.
- Notify the LA of absence figures for the school and, where necessary, individual students via the PMOOE (Pupils Missing Out On Education).

7.4 Heads of Year and Pastoral Managers

Heads of Year will:

- Promote the importance of good attendance to students and their parents.
- Oversee the registration process and ensure that registers are completed accurately and punctually.
- The Heads of Year will work closely with the Pastoral Manager to identify students of concern and initiate any intervention or rewards.
- Liaise with the Education Welfare Service regularly.
- Reinforce good practice at briefings and meetings.
- Hold Student Attendance Meetings with carers and students with persistent or irregular attendance and/or punctuality.

7.5 House Leaders

House Leaders will promote and reward good attendance through the house system.

7.6 Form Tutors

Form Tutors will:

- Complete registers accurately and punctually (within the first 5 minutes of registration) daily.
- Record the number of minutes late for students arriving after the start of the registration.
- Forward any communication from a parent regarding the attendance of a student to the Attendance Officer.
- Inform the Head of Year of concerns relating to attendance .
- Follow up any suspicious or unexplained absence.
- Be alert to early signs of disaffection which could culminate in non-attendance and to report these concerns as soon as possible to the Head of Year.

7.7 Class Teachers

Class teachers will:

- Complete class registers for every lesson at the start of the lesson (within the first 5 minutes of registration).
- Record the number of minutes late for students arriving after the start of the lesson.
- Follow up any suspicious or unexplained absence.
- Inform the Form Tutor/Head of Year/Pastoral Manager/Curriculum Leader/Subject Leader of concerns relating to attendance.

7.8 Pastoral and Curriculum Support Office
Pastoral and Curriculum Administrative Support

- To complete all aspects of the administration of the SIMS attendance module.
- To record all reasons for absence in the register.
- To monitor and support in all aspects of attendance and punctuality.
- To alert staff responsible of all concerns.
- To liaise with Inclusion Officer and Department of Child Employment.
- To support Leadership staff and Educational Inclusion in running reports and analysing data.
- To support and advise carers in all aspects of attendance and punctuality.
- To follow up any unexplained non-attendance.

8. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Deputy Headteacher (Pastoral). At every review, the policy will be shared with the governing board.

9. Links with other policies

- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Behaviour for Learning Policy
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Children with Health Needs Who Cannot Attend School Policy
- Complaints Policy Procedure
- Educational Visits Policy
- Equality Policy and Objectives
- Exclusions Policy
- Home Visits and Procedures Policy
- SEND Policy

Appendix 1: attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Student is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Student is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Student arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Student is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Student is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Student has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Student is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Student is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Student is on a work experience placement

Code	Definition	Scenario
Authorised absence		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Student has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Student has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Student has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances

I	Illness	School has been notified that a student will be absent due to illness
M	Medical/dental appointment	Student is at a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance	Student is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Year 11 student is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence	Student from a Traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
Unauthorised absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Student is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
N	Reason not provided	Student is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for student's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Student arrived at school after the register closed

Code	Definition	Scenario
X	not attending in circumstances relating to coronavirus	Use this category where a pupil doesn't attend because their travel to, or attendance at, school would be: Against guidance from Public Health England (PHE), the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) and/or the Department of Health

		and Social Care (DHSC) relating to the incidence of coronavirus or its transmission Prohibited by any legislation or statutory directions relating to the incidence or transmission of coronavirus In this case, this category will not count as absence (either authorised or unauthorised) for data collection purposes. This code should not be used for any other type of non-attendance – for example, if a parent or pupil is anxious about attending school because of COVID-19. You should still use code X for pupils of non-compulsory school age who aren't expected to attend a session
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or student is in custody
Z	Student not on admission register	Register set up but student has not yet joined the school
#	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day

Appendix 2: Attendance Process Ladder

Level 1		
Action	Responsible	Date Actioned
Phone calls on each day of absence if reasons are vague / concerning	Tutor	
Informal chat with student on return to school if any concerns	Tutor	
Informal chat with parent if any issues / followed with letter / email confirming discussions and any actions	Tutor	
Flag any concerns to SEN / MH team / HOY and Attendance Lead	Tutor	
Level 2 (90%-95%)		
Action	Responsible	Date Actioned
Phone call with parent to discuss any issues/ why absences are continuing	Tutor	
Attendance Letter 1 sent - circa 90 - 95%	HOY via Attendance Officer (SPE)	
Regular check ins with student	Tutor	
Rewards and recognition for improvements	Tutor	
Flag any concerns to SEN / MH team / HOY and Attendance Lead (via MTL Meeting)	HOY	
Level 3 (85%- <90%)		
Action	Responsible	Date Actioned
Parent meeting with HOY (SAMs)	Tutor / HOY	
Attendance letter 2 sent: Medical Evidence (can be given in meeting)	HOY via Attendance Officer (SPE)	
Liaison with any external agencies / MHST / SEN / other schools. All options explored.	HOY	
Level 4 (<85%)		
Action	Responsible	Date Actioned
Medical Evidence letter reminder home (if needed)	Attendance Officer (SPE)	
Inclusion Officer/HSLW - potential to send Early Intervention Letter		
Inclusion Officer/HSLW - potential to do an Attendance Panel with parents		
Referral warning	HOY	

Timetable changes / Managed Moves / appropriate referrals made	HOY	
Level 5		
Action	Responsible	Date Actioned
Attendance meeting with parent and child	HOY	
Referral to Inclusion	HOY via Attendance Officer (SPE)	