



Thornton Primary School

Attendance Policy

Rationale

At Thornton Primary School we recognise that attending school regularly has a positive impact on learning, progress and therefore the best life chances for children. We will encourage good attendance for all pupils, by offering an environment in which pupils feel valued and part of the school community.

The Department for Education (DfE) guidance states that all schools should have effective systems and procedures for encouraging regular school attendance and investigating the underlying causes of poor attendance which should be set out in an attendance policy. These systems should be reviewed regularly and modified where necessary to reflect the circumstances of the school.

Parents/carers have a legal responsibility to ensure their child attends school regularly. Where a child is unable to attend, parents/carers must notify the school on the first day of absence and on each subsequent day of absence, unless otherwise agreed. Failure to do so may result in the absence being recorded as unauthorised and may trigger safeguarding procedures.

Aims

We will:

- Promote a culture across the school which identifies the importance of regular and punctual attendance.
- Make attendance and punctuality a priority for all those associated with the school; including pupils, parents, teachers and governors.
- Further develop positive and consistent communication between home and school.
- Set targets to improve individual and whole school attendance levels.

Leave of Absence

Following the September 2013 amendment to The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, schools cannot authorise any leave other than in exceptional circumstances. In Thornton Primary School, the Headteacher is the person authorised by the 'proprietor' i.e. the governing body, to make this decision. If the leave is being requested for a holiday, approval should be obtained prior to making any bookings.

Leave of absence **shall not** be granted unless:

- a request for leave has been made in advance, by a parent with whom the pupil normally resides, and
- the Headteacher considers that leave of absence should be granted due to the **exceptional circumstances** relating to the request.

Additional Factors for Consideration



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Pupils attend school for a maximum of 190 days each academic year. Regular attendance is vital for your child's educational progress. The local authority expects that all parents/carers ensure their children attend school whenever possible. Absence during school time is largely prohibited by regulation and hinders academic progress. Even in exceptional circumstances, the following factors may be taken into account when considering an application for leave:

- Will leave at this point in time be detrimental to the pupil's education?
- Will he/she miss any national tests or examinations?
- Is his/her attendance a cause for concern?
- Is the proposed absence during the month of September or any other transition period?
- Has he/she already had leave during term time this year?
- Did he/she have leave of absence during term time in the previous school year(s)?
- Does he/she have any absences which have been recorded as unauthorised this year?

If work commitments are stated as supporting evidence towards an exceptional reason for requesting leave, parents will be asked to provide employer details and any additional evidence which shows why leave cannot be taken during the school holidays

Parents/carers who need to request leave during term time should complete an application form, available from the school office as soon as possible prior to the first proposed date of absence. The Headteacher will consider the request and advise in writing within 5 days whether the absence will be authorised or not. The Headteacher may request a meeting with parents/carers before any period of leave is authorised. To support the Headteacher in making this decision, they will utilise the Attendance Appendix, available on the school website.

Religious Absence

The school will authorise one day of absence per religious festival, e.g. Eid, (i.e. the day set aside by the religious body of which the parent is a member) and this will be marked as 'R' in the register.

Parents must request any additional leave in advance and this can only be authorised if it is felt that exceptional circumstances apply (this would be marked in the register as 'C').

NB: Whilst limiting the number of additional days authorised around a religious festival is not a legal requirement, schools may wish to consider this step if absence around the time of Religious festivals is an issue.

Use of Penalty Notices

In accordance with the current code of conduct, Thornton Primary School may request that the local authority issue penalty notices in respect of unauthorised absence. This includes leave of absence which is taken without a prior request being made; and leave taken after a prior request has been made and parents have been informed that the period of absence would be classed as unauthorised but the leave is taken regardless of this advice. Thornton Primary School may also request that the local authority issue a penalty notice for days taken in excess of the agreed period of leave; without good reason. Parents/carers also risk losing their child's school place if they do not return from leave, as agreed, and readmission cannot be guaranteed.

Partnership Working



Thornton Primary School will work with the Pupil Attendance Team, the School Attendance Consultant and other support agencies as appropriate to ensure regular attendance at school. The criteria for referral and areas of responsibility for staff is set out in the procedural framework.

Monitoring, Analysis, Action Planning

Thornton Primary School will use electronic systems for monitoring attendance at both individual pupil and whole school level. We will analyse patterns and trends of non-attendance to inform future action planning and target setting in respect of whole school attendance matters. Whole school attendance is discussed at each Standards and Effectiveness Committee so that school governors are fully aware of attendance percentages. This is then compared to other schools both locally and nationally.

Persistent Absence (PA)

The minimum attendance level which is expected at our school is 96%. A pupil becomes a persistent absentee when their attendance falls below 90% at any point during the school year; whether the absences are authorised or unauthorised. Absence at this level can damage any pupil's educational prospects and may be detrimental to their emotional wellbeing so we expect parents' full support and co-operation to address this.

At Thornton Primary, we monitor all absence thoroughly, therefore any pupil whose attendance indicates they are likely to reach the PA threshold will be prioritised and parents will be informed of this promptly. Pupils who are persistent absentees are tracked and monitored carefully and the attendance procedures will be followed.

Families will be supported in this via school's robust systems for managing persistent absence. This support may involve the need for parents/carers, and children of an appropriate age, to agree to a parenting contract. Due to the seriousness of persistent absence status, it is highly likely that such cases will be referred to a local authority attendance team (Pupil Attendance Team). Furthermore, absence data for individual pupils who are classed as persistent absentees are reported to the Department for Education; along with whole school absence figures.

Severe Absence (SA)

Severe absence is when a pupil misses 50% or more of their schooling across the school year. Sometimes such absence may be due to, for example, a long-term medical condition preventing full attendance at school, though even in such circumstances the pupil is still entitled to a suitable full-time education. However, absence at this level will usually require more intensive support and intervention by the school and, if required, the local authority.

Monitoring the attendance of pupils who are educated off site

The attendance of all pupils who are educated off site, or those who are dual registered, will be monitored in accordance with the procedures outlined within the procedural framework.



Whole School Attendance Policy Procedural Framework

This document forms part of Thornton Primary School's Whole School Attendance Policy. It sets out the rights, roles and responsibilities for parents/carers, pupils, school staff and governors; and the systems and procedures in place to identify how the school will deliver its aims in respect of regular and punctual attendance. It will be reviewed annually.

Rights, Roles and Responsibilities

Thornton Primary School believes that it is important that parents and carers, pupils, school staff and governors all work in partnership to encourage good attendance for all pupils. The following is a summary of the rights, roles and responsibilities for individual groups of stakeholders.

Parents and Carers

- Ensure the child(ren) in their care attend school regularly and punctually.
- **Contact the School Office on the first day of absence before 9:30am, providing the reason for absence and expected date of return.**
- **Maintain daily contact with the school on each subsequent day of absence, unless otherwise agreed with the school, to provide updates on the child's condition and expected return.**
- Avoid leave in term time wherever possible. Where this is not thought possible, contact the school as soon as possible prior to the first proposed day of absence to request authorisation.
- Advise the school immediately if they become aware of problems with attendance.
- Co-operate with the school in promoting and improving attendance (e.g. attending meetings, participating in parenting contracts and supporting agreed intervention/action plans).

Pupils

- Attend school regularly and punctually.
- Adhere to systems for late registration, signing out and signing in.
- Acknowledge behaviour needed out of school to ensure good attendance e.g. early bedtimes and getting uniforms ready the night before.

School Staff



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The Headteacher has overall responsibility for ensuring that there are appropriate and efficient systems in place to promote and support the school attendance policy, that these are adhered to and training is given where appropriate. The Headteacher is also responsible for liaison with individual families, the School Attendance Consultant and the Pupil Attendance Team to ensure appropriate support is given where attendance concerns are identified and for liaison with the local authority and DfE to ensure that the school conforms to all statutory requirements in respect of attendance.

Thornton Primary School believes that all staff have responsibilities and a role to play in promoting good attendance by:

- Provide a welcoming atmosphere for pupils and a safe learning environment, particularly for those returning to school following a period of absence.
- Be aware of factors that can contribute to poor attendance and punctuality.
- Recognise that absence is a symptom of other issues impacting a pupil's welfare and can be a warning sign of safeguarding concerns.
- Adhere to the procedures in place within school to promote good attendance.
- Promote the link between attendance and educational attainment to pupils and parents.
- Complete attendance registers in accordance with the legislation and under the direction of the head teacher.
- Raise concerns about attendance with the head teacher, Mr Ashcroft or Family Learning Mentor, Mrs Brown.

Some staff will have specific individual responsibilities to support the attendance policy and these are outlined in the procedures section of this framework.

Governors

- Ensure compliance with The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024.
- Agree an attendance policy and review it annually or more frequently if required.
- Agree targets for attendance at Thornton Primary.
- Where the school is not meeting its attendance targets, or when the governors believe there is cause for concern, instigate a review of school's attendance procedures.
- Authorise the head teacher (or other designated person) to make decisions regarding leave of absence requests.
- Work with the head teacher in establishing equitable and consistent criteria against which leave requests will be considered.

Procedures

Registration

Morning Registration is between 8:45am and 9:15am.



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Afternoon Registration is between 12:15-12:20pm for children in Pre-School. 12:45-12:50pm for children in Reception. 12:45-12:50pm for children in Years 3-Year 6 . 1pm-1:05pm for children in Years 1 and Year 2.

Each Class Teacher or their nominated representative is responsible for marking children present or absent in the register at morning and afternoon registration. The registers must be completed promptly to avoid discrepancies between classes. The Class Teacher must ensure that the marked register, plus any notes received regarding absence, is returned to the school office by 9.10am and 1.10pm

The School Office is responsible for entering attendance on the electronic register and for inputting absence codes on a weekly basis.

Late Registration

Pupils requiring admittance to school following registration periods must go to the Main Entrance and request entry via the School Office. They must be brought into school with an adult if they are in Pre-School-Year 4 or if they are in Year 5/6 and a 'walk to and from school' form has not been completed.

The School Office is responsible for maintaining the signing in/out of children who arrive late/are collected early using the Inventory Sign-In System. For safeguarding reasons, parents/carers must sign their child in if they are late and the school gates are closed. This must be inputted into the Inventory Sign-In System before a late pupil is admitted or released.

In accordance with current guidance, the attendance registers are closed at 9:15am and 30 minutes after individual classes start their afternoon learning. This means that any pupil who arrives after the registration period but before the registers are closed will be given a late mark (L) in the register. This code is classed as a present mark, but displays that the pupil arrived late for school. Any pupil who arrives after the registers have closed but before the end of the session will be given a "late after registers closed" mark (U) in the register. This code is classed as an unauthorised absence but displays that the pupil was physically present in school for part of the session.

In addition to using the L and U codes, office staff may also use the facility within the SIMS attendance module to record the number of minutes late for each pupil, on each occasion. This facility will allow school staff to monitor and manage developing patterns of lateness more effectively and make a clear link between lateness and missed curriculum and share such information with parents.

The fact that the U code is classed as an unauthorised absence means that when it is used pupils are likely to be missing significant amounts of schooling; putting their educational progress at risk. For this reason, the use of this code will be considered as serious as any other unauthorised absence and will attract the interest of external agencies, including referral to the local authority Pupil Attendance Team (PAT) and consideration of the use of legal measures, in just the same way.

Types of absence

Every half-day absence from school is classified by the school as either authorised or unauthorised. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required from parents/carers.

Authorised absences



Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies, or other unavoidable causes or exceptional circumstances.

The NHS has guidance to help parents assess if their child is well enough to attend school: [Is my child too ill for school? - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk).

Unauthorised absences

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable or justifiable. If school has followed its attendance procedures and a pupil continues to have unauthorised absences, the school may seek advice from the local authority School Attendance Support Team or request legal interventions from the School Attendance Legal Team. Examples of unauthorised absences are:

- Parents/carers keeping their child off school unnecessarily.
- Absences which are not explained satisfactorily.
- Pupils who arrive at school after the register has closed and without a legitimate reason (see section 4.2).
- Days off for shopping, birthdays or looking after other children.
- Day trips and other leave in term time which have not been agreed by the head teacher.
- Days that exceed an amount of leave agreed by the head teacher.

It is the head teacher's responsibility to decide if an absence is authorised or unauthorised and, if there is any uncertainty relating to an absence, school may request further confirmation from parents before an absence is authorised. For absence due to illness, this may be in the form of:

- Sight of an appointment for your GP or for the hospital, clinic, etc.
- Sight of prescribed medication or prescription for medication.
- Sight of medical notes/records.
- A letter from a medical professional such as a specialist or consultant.

Parents should not ask their doctor (GP) to provide "sick notes" to excuse absence.

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school for other reasons. If your child is reluctant to attend it is better to speak to school as soon as possible to resolve the issue, rather than trying to cover up their absence, or give in to pressure to let them stay at home. As a school, we will always work with parents (and external agencies as appropriate) to understand and address the reasons behind absence. We will also ensure that the voice of the child is heard, along with their parents' views.

The School Office is responsible for maintaining records of reason and length of absence.

- Parents/carers must contact the School Office on the first day of absence before 9:30am, providing a clear reason for the absence and, where possible, the expected date of return.
- Parents/carers must also contact the school on each subsequent day of absence, unless an alternative arrangement has been agreed (e.g. for a medically evidenced longer-term illness).



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- Where information is provided to the Class Teacher they are responsible for passing this information to the School Office.
- Where a verbal message is taken by School Office this should be noted in the register and the class teacher informed.
- Where a written note is received by the Class Teacher this should be returned to the School Office.
- Where the absence is for several days, the parent/carer is responsible for informing the school of the continued absence and updating them as to the reason for the absence on a regular basis.
- Where the absence is for several days without explanation, or the reason provided is unsatisfactory, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and will be addressed with parents promptly. Schools have a responsibility to report such absence to the local authority after a period of 10 school days, or sooner if appropriate.
- The reason for absence should be linked directly to the pupil (e.g. illness or medical appointment of/for the child). Reasons for absence relating to parents or siblings may not be authorised.

If a child is absent and no contact has been made by the family by 9:30am, the following procedures will be carried out:

- The school's Family Learning Mentor or member of the office team makes a phone call home to find out the reason for absence.
- If no answer is received, the Family Learning Mentor will continue to call until 10:30am.
- If there is still no answer, the Family Learning Mentor will make a home visit to find out why the child is not in school.
- If there is no answer at home when the Family Learning Mentor arrives a call is made to the Headteacher who will then decide on the next appropriate action.

The School Office is responsible for inputting the appropriate absence code on the electronic register. Where they are not certain whether an absence is authorised or not, they should seek advice from the Headteacher.

Office staff may also use the comments facility within SIMS in order to log specific reasons for absence. This facility will allow school staff to monitor and manage developing patterns of absence more effectively and share such information with parents.

Signing Out

The School Office is responsible for overseeing the procedure for releasing children where parents/carers have requested and been granted leave during the school day.

The child(ren) can only be released to a parent/carer or authorised carer/family member. When an authorised adult is picking up a child within school time the School Office is responsible for ensuring that they use the Inventory Sign-In system. The School Office is responsible for inputting the appropriate absence code on the electronic register.

When a child leaves the school site after the morning or afternoon register has been taken, the original mark must remain in the register and the Inventory Sign-In system should be referred to during an evacuation situation to ensure all pupils can be accounted for.

Use of Penalty Notices



Legal interventions may be sought if providing support to improve attendance is not appropriate (eg for an unauthorised holiday in term time), or has not been successful or engaged with. In accordance with the Lancashire code of conduct, we may request that the local authority issue penalty notices for unauthorised absences that include:

- Leave of absence which is taken without a prior request being made.
- Leave taken after a request has been declined.
- Days taken in excess of an agreed period of leave, without good reason.
- Other unauthorised absence that meets the required threshold, including sessions marked as late after the register has closed (code U).

On 19 August 2024 new penalty notice arrangements came into force, with changes to the cost of a penalty notice and to the thresholds at which penalty notices may be requested by school. The DfE now requires that schools **must** consider if a penalty notice is appropriate when the thresholds are met. The changes to be aware of are:

- Penalty notices will be charged at £160 per parent per child. This will reduce to £80 if paid within 21 days.
- Any second penalty notice issued to the same parent for the same child within a rolling 3-year period will be issued at the rate of £160 to be paid within 28 days with no option for a discounted rate.
- The threshold at which a penalty notice must be considered is set at 10 sessions (equivalent to 5 days) of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10-school week period. This may include absences as a result of arriving late after the register closes. The 10 school weeks may span different terms or consecutive school years.
- A maximum of two penalty notices may be issued to a parent for the same child within a rolling 3-year period, so at the 3rd (or subsequent) offence(s) another course of action will need to be considered, such as prosecution or one of the other attendance legal interventions.
- If a school requests a penalty notice for absences other than unauthorised holidays, including being late after the register has closed, the local authority School Attendance Legal Team may issue a Notice to Improve to parents. A Notice to Improve is a final opportunity for parents to engage in support and improve attendance before a penalty notice is issued. If the national threshold has been met and offers of support have not been engaged with by parents or have not worked, a Notice to Improve may be issued to give parents a final chance to engage with support and improve their child's attendance.

The code of conduct for penalty notices and information and FAQs for parents can be found on the Lancashire County Council [education penalty notice webpage](#)

Monitoring the attendance of pupils who are educated off site

When pupils are **dual registered**, their registration status will acknowledge this. For sessions when a dual registered pupil is expected to attend Thornton Primary School the usual attendance procedures will be followed. When this pupil is expected to attend the other establishment, our registers will display the D code (Dual Registration). As the Main School, we retain responsibility for dual registered pupils. Therefore, the other establishment will be contacted regularly in order to ensure that this placement continues to be successful. When this is not the case, appropriate action will be taken.



When pupils are **Present at an Approved Off-Site Educationally Activity** school will decide which of the following codes is most suitable:

Code B – Educated off site Code P – Supervised sporting activity Code V – Educational visit or trip

The Headteacher is responsible for the pupil's education and wellbeing during these sessions. Therefore, before any of these codes are used, school must ensure that the following criteria are met:

- The activity is broadly educational in nature.
- It is suitable for the pupil's age and ability.
- It will complement the pupil's curriculum.
- It is taking place during the session for which the approved off-site educational activity code is being used.
- Suitable supervision arrangements are in place.

Criteria & Systems for referral to and working with the School Attendance Consultant and Pupil Attendance Team

The Headteacher is responsible for ensuring consistent referral of regular or unjustified absence. The criteria for referral are outlined in the systems below:

In addition to the above, the Headteacher or Family Learning Mentor, can discuss general attendance matters with the School Attendance Consultant. The purpose of such discussions would be to:

- Monitor progress towards targets, highlighting any concerns and identifying any action required.
- Receive guidance on latest best practice.
- Receive information about local and national trends and benchmarking.
- Discuss whether the current Attendance Policy and procedures are effective.

School System for dealing with concerns about Lateness and Absence

The School Office is responsible for advising the Headteacher of pupils who are persistently late or absent as issues arise.

The Class Teacher is also responsible for raising concerns about lateness or absence of class members to the Headteacher as issues arise.

In addition, the Headteacher will use electronic systems to monitor the attendance of individual pupils at least once per half term. This enables staff to target attendance improvement efforts to the pupils or pupil cohorts who need it the most.

Meetings are held between the Headteacher and Family Learning Mentor twice each half-term to discuss attendance. The following support is put in place for parents/carers and their child/ren who has/have poor attendance:



- At the beginning of each half term, the Family Learning Mentor reviews whole School attendance along with the Headteacher.
- Letters are sent home from the Family Learning Mentor for any child where attendance and/or punctuality is a concern and below 96%.
- Updated letters will be sent each half term until attendance is above 96%.
- If poor attendance persists, the Headteacher then sends home a separate letter.
- 1:1 sessions take place with older children to promote the importance of being at School and to understand their own attendance.
- If there is still no improvement in attendance, the Headteacher and Learning Mentor arrange to meet with the child's parents/carers.
- If there is no significant improvement parents are offered a meeting with the Headteacher, a parent contract or a referral to the Pupil Attendance Support Team (PAST).
- If attendance continues to fall, a penalty notice is considered.
- The Early Help Assessment (EHA) process and/or referral to other agencies and services, including School Nurses and Primary Mental Health Workers, if appropriate.

Alternative provision and use of directions

There is a range of circumstances when pupils might be required to access educational provision at a venue other than their main school. The main reasons are:

- Pupils who have been permanently excluded or suspended for a period of more than 5 days.
- Pupils unable to access provision at their main school for medical reasons.
- Pupils required to attend another venue for the purpose of improving behaviour, either on a temporary basis or with a view to making a permanent move to the alternative provision (via a managed move).

When a pupil is required to attend alternative provision for the purposes of improving behaviour, the governors of the main school must issue a written direction or notice informing all parents of the alternative provision which their child is required to attend. Where a pupil is required to attend alternative provision for other reasons, the issuing of a written direction is considered best practice.

Pupils who are unable to attend school for medical reasons

The introduction of new statutory guidance on 1st September 2014 places much more emphasis on the role of governing bodies in ensuring that pupils with medical conditions are able to fully access education in the same way as other pupils. A key element of this responsibility is reducing the amount of time missed by these pupils; whether their condition is short or long term. The school will work with parents and other relevant professionals to minimise absence for reasons of ill health. This may be as a result of specific practices or resources used within school or by sourcing more appropriate provision at another establishment. When education is to be provided at an alternative location, this will always be done via the use of a direction (please see the relevant section of this policy).

Pupils refusing to attend school



At Thornton Primary, we believe that every child has a right to a full-time education, and we would not accept "school refusal" as a reason for non-attendance. In such cases, we will work with parents and their children to identify the reasons why their child may be reluctant to attend school and agree specific strategies to support him/her.

We may request advice from the School Attendance Support Team and, with consent, make referrals to other external partners such as the Children and Family Wellbeing Service or Primary Mental Health Workers, as appropriate, to try to ensure the correct support is secured for the child and their family.

School System for reintegrating pupils who have had long term absence

When a pupil has been absent from school for an extended period, the Headteacher, the Class Teacher and other support services will liaise with the family to ensure that a smooth reintegration is achieved

Communication of Attendance Policy and Procedure

It is important that the school's policy on attendance is communicated to all the stakeholders and that parents, pupils and staff know the procedures and systems that are in place to implement it.

The governors have determined that:

- The Attendance Policy will be placed on the school website.
- Details of the policy and the procedure for requesting absence in term time, and signing in and out of school will be disseminated as part of the new parent induction process e.g. induction package, talks to new parents.
- Reference to the school Attendance Policy regarding leave during term time is to be made clear when the school calendar of dates is sent out each year.
- Summary of responsibilities under the Attendance Policy will be contained in the home/school agreement.
- Staff responsibilities will be contained in the Staff Handbook.
- The Headteacher will ensure that staff receive training regarding their responsibilities in relation to the Attendance Policy and procedures.
- The Headteacher will provide a summary of attendance and causes for concern to the governors during termly meetings.
- Details of the absence record of the school will be communicated as part of the School Prospectus.
- Attendance and punctuality will be included in newsletters on a regular basis.

Date: September 2025

Review Date: September 2026

Signed: David Ashcroft, Headteacher



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