

# Thorn Grove Primary School

## Attendance Policy



<b>Issue Date: Autumn 19</b>	<b>Review Date: Autumn 2021</b>	<b>Version:</b>
------------------------------	---------------------------------	-----------------

<b>Contents</b>	<b>Page</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Legal Framework for School Attendance</b>	<b>3</b>
<u>Legal Duties on Parents</u>	3
<u>Legal Duties on Schools</u>	4
<b>Absence from School</b>	<b>5</b>
<u>Authorised Absence from School</u>	5
<u>Illness</u>	5
<u>Medical/Dental Appointments</u>	5
<u>Leave of Absence</u>	6
<u>Family Holidays</u>	6
<u>Other Examples of Authorised Circumstances</u>	6
<u>Unauthorised Absences from School</u>	6
<u>Late Arrival at School</u>	7
<b>Roles and Responsibilities</b>	<b>7</b>
<u>The Governing Body</u>	7
<u>The Leadership Team</u>	8
<u>Teaching and Pastoral Support Staff</u>	9
<u>Parents</u>	9
<b>Managing attendance in school</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Legal Sanctions</b>	<b>12</b>
<u>Education Penalty Notices for Irregular Attendance</u>	13
<u>Education Penalty Notices for unauthorised leave of absence</u>	13
<u>Parent Contract referrals</u>	13
<b>Appendices</b>	<b>14</b>
1. <u>Escalation of Attendance Interventions</u>	14
2. <u>A) Pre-Referral LETTER 1 – Initial attendance contact letter</u>	18
<u>B) Pre-Referral LETTER 2 – Medical evidence required/legal duties</u>	19

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1. The right of children and young people to an education is enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and in UK Law. The opportunities provided by education are fundamental to enabling children and young people to reach their potential and lead happy and rewarding lives.
- 1.2. Evidence shows that there is a clear link between low levels of school attendance and poor outcomes for children and young people. This is not just in relation to academic achievement. Poor attendance also leaves children and young people at greater risk of neglect, social isolation and offending.
- 1.3. At Thorn Grove Primary School we believe that it is vital that attendance problems are followed up at an early stage, and we are committed to doing so, in partnership with parents and the Local Authority. We will work with families to address any barriers to attendance and ensure support is offered which addresses any underlying issues.
- 1.4. Thorn Grove Primary School recognises that the causes of poor attendance are diverse and that all responses to absence must take account of the specific needs and circumstances affecting the pupil concerned.

## 2. Legal Framework for School Attendance

### 2.1 Legal Duties on Parents

- 2.1.1 Parents are responsible for making sure that their children of compulsory school age receive a suitable full-time education. Children are of compulsory school age from the beginning of the term following their 5<sup>th</sup> birthday until the last Friday in June in the school year in which they reach the age of 16.
- 2.1.2 Under section 576 of the Education Act 1996 (EA 1996), the definition of parent includes natural parents or other people with legal parental responsibility (whether or not they live with the child), and anyone who has care of the child.
- 2.1.3 For children receiving full time education at a school, parents must ensure that attendance is regular. Regular attendance means attending at every timetabled session required by the school. Non-attendance will not go unchallenged and parents are accountable for any sessions that their children miss from school for **any** reason.

- 2.1.4 If a child of compulsory school age fails to attend regularly at the school at which they have been registered the parents may be guilty of an offence, and can be prosecuted by the Local Authority.

## 2.2 Legal Duties on Schools

Thorn Grove Primary School is required to:

- 2.2.1 Maintain and preserve accurate registers as required by regulations (Education (Pupil Registration)(England) Regulations 2006) and (*for maintained schools only*) make them available for inspection by the Local Authority. This includes:
- Monitor pupils educated Off-Site and ensuring that the school register mirrors the attendance information held by the off-site provision.
  - Have clear procedures for the closure of registers during each session.
- 2.2.2 Comply with legal requirements regarding adding or removing pupils' names to or from the school roll including ensuring that:
- Pupils' names are added to the school roll on the expected date of attendance.
  - Pupils' names are removed from roll only when one of the legal grounds in the Education (Pupil Registration) England Regulations 2006 is satisfied.
  - All removals from roll are reported to the Local Authority.
  - Information is shared and enquiries made jointly with the Local Authority in order to locate missing pupils.
- 2.2.3 Report pupils who fail to attend regularly to the Local Authority via regular meetings with the Education Welfare team. This includes both authorised and unauthorised absences. (In the case of pupils on part-time timetables, the Local Authority also requires a part-time timetable Notification Form to be completed).
- 2.2.4 Report Missing Pupils (pupils who are continuously absent for 10 days or more without reasonable explanation) to the Local Authority via the Children's Services Contact Centre.
- 2.2.5 Carry out all their functions with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all pupils at the school.

2.2.6 Promote good attendance and identify patterns of poor attendance at an early stage.

### **3. Absence from School**

3.1 All absences must be recorded in the school register, and categorised as either authorised or unauthorised.

#### **3.2 Authorised absence from school**

3.2.1 Authorised absences are those which the school has determined are for a justifiable reason. This could be because a child is ill, or because of other exceptional circumstances. It is for the school, not the parents, to determine whether an absence should be authorised.

##### **3.2.2 Illness**

Parents are asked to contact school on every day that their child is unable to attend school, except where a doctor's report has been provided indicating an expected return date.

3.2.3 Where pupils miss a lot of school due to illness, Thorn Grove Primary will seek medical evidence before authorising absences. Where this arises we will write to parents to inform them of this requirement. If medical evidence is not produced the absences will not be authorised, and this could result in a referral to the Local Authority.

3.2.4 Where pupils are likely to miss more than 15 days of school, they may be entitled to educational provision from the Education of Sick Children Service, and it is the school's responsibility to ensure that a referral is made in appropriate cases. Thorn Grove Primary School will work in partnership with parents and health professionals to identify and refer pupils entitled to such provision in line with the Education for Sick Children Policy.

##### **3.2.5 Medical/Dental appointments**

Parents are requested wherever possible to make medical or dental appointments outside of the school day. Where this is not possible, pupils should attend school for part of the day, and whenever possible return to school after the appointment. The appointment card should be submitted to school as evidence.

3.2.6 Leave of absence may be given in exceptional circumstances such as family bereavement, or for other legitimate reasons such as an interview at another school or college. The absence should be restricted to the minimum

time required and parents are asked to request permission in advance in writing to the Headteacher.

### 3.2.7 Family Holidays

Parents should be aware that there is no right to time off school for a family holiday. Leave of absence for any reason is only granted in exceptional circumstances and is very unlikely to be granted for the purpose of a holiday.

### 3.2.8 Other examples of authorised circumstances include:

- Part-time timetables which may be agreed in exceptional cases, for example where medical issues prevent a pupil from attending full time or as part of a re-integration package.
- Where a pupil is absent from school due to an exclusion.
- Absence to take part in any day set aside exclusively for religious observance by the religious body to which the parents belong, including religious festivals.
- Study leave granted by the school for year 11 pupils approaching GCSE examinations.
- When traveller families are known to be travelling for occupational purposes and have agreed this with school, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending another school. In order to fulfil legal requirements, in such cases, pupils must attend school for at least 200 sessions in every 12 months.

## 3.3 Unauthorised Absences from School

3.3.1 Unauthorised absences are absences from school for which the school has not given permission, including arriving late at school after the registers have closed. Absence will not be authorised unless parents have provided a satisfactory explanation that has been accepted as such by the school.

3.3.2 Examples of unsatisfactory explanations include:

- A pupil's/family member's birthday
- Shopping for uniforms
- Having their hair cut
- Closure of a sibling's school for INSET (or other) purposes
- "Couldn't get up"
- Illness where the child is considered well enough to attend school
- Illness where parents have been asked to produce medical evidence but have failed to do so

- Leave of absence for holidays or other reasons taken without the authorisation of school
- Waiting for a place at a new school

### 3.4 Late Arrival at School

3.4.1 AM Registration begins at 8.50 a.m.; pupil arriving after this time will be marked as present but arriving late (L). The register will close at 9.30 a.m. pupils arriving after the close of register will be marked as late (U). This will not be authorised and will count as an absence for that school session.

3.4.2 On arrival after the close of register pupils must report to the main school reception.

## 4. Roles and Responsibilities

4.1 Thorn Grove Primary School believes that improved school attendance can only be achieved if it is viewed as a shared responsibility of the school staff, governors, parents, pupils and the wider school community.

4.2 As such, the Governing Body will:

4.2.1 Support and hold to account the leadership team regarding its obligations in relation to attendance.

4.2.2 Ensure that the legal duties in the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 and other attendance related legislation are complied with.

4.2.3 Ensure that the importance and value of good attendance is promoted to all school staff, pupils and their parents.

4.2.4 Monitor the school's attendance through termly reporting at governing body meetings.

4.2.5 Ensure that there is a named senior manager to lead on attendance and ensure that that manager is allocated sufficient time and resources.

4.2.6 Contribute and participate in initiatives to promote good attendance across the school.

#### 4.3 The leadership team will:

- 4.3.1 Ensure that the legal duties in the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 and other attendance related legislation are complied with.
- 4.3.2 Return school attendance data to the Local Authority and the Department for Education as required.
- 4.3.3 Respond to requests for information and recommendations from the Local Authority in relation to specific compliance issues.
- 4.3.4 Actively promote the importance and value of good attendance to pupils and their parents and the wider staff team.
- 4.3.5 Ensure that there is a whole school approach which reinforces good school attendance.
- 4.3.6 Ensure good teaching and learning experiences that encourage all pupils to attend and to achieve.
- 4.3.7 Monitor the implementation of the Attendance Policy and ensure that the policy is reviewed annually.
- 4.3.8 Ensure that all staff are aware of the Attendance Policy and adequately trained to address attendance issues.
- 4.3.9 Report the school's attendance and related issues through termly reporting to the Governing Body and on a half termly basis to the lead governor for attendance.
- 4.3.10 Ensure that attendance data is collected and analysed frequently to identify causes and patterns of absence.
- 4.3.11 Monitor the implementation of the Attendance Escalation Interventions (See Appendix One).
- 4.3.12 Interpret the data to devise solutions and to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions.
- 4.3.13 Develop a multi-agency response to improve attendance and support pupils and their families.
- 4.3.14 Ensure all interventions around attendance are accurately recorded and documented.

#### 4.4 Teaching and pastoral support staff will:

- 4.4.1 Actively promote the importance and value of good attendance to pupils and their parents.
- 4.4.2 Contribute to a whole school approach which reinforces good school attendance.
- 4.4.3 Contribute to the provision of good teaching and learning experiences that encourage all pupils to attend and to achieve.
- 4.4.4 Ensure that the legal duties in the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 and other attendance related legislation are complied with.
- 4.4.5 Implement the Attendance Escalation Interventions in relation to individual pupils (See Appendix One).
- 4.4.6 Actively work with the Education Welfare team to identify pupils with poor attendance and agree strategies to improve attendance.
- 4.4.7 Work with other agencies such as Stockport Family to implement strategies to improve attendance and to support pupils and their families.
- 4.4.8 Contribute to the evaluation of school strategies and interventions.
- 4.4.9 Accurately record and document interventions around attendance.

#### 4.5 Parents will:

- 4.5.1 Ensure their child attends regularly as required by law.
- 4.5.2 Ensure school has up to date contact information including:
  - Parents' and pupils' addresses
  - Parents' telephone numbers and email addresses
  - Telephone numbers for emergency contacts
  - Details of new addresses and schools in the event of a move away from the area
- 4.5.3 Comply with the school's absence procedures by:

- Telephoning school on every day that their child is unable to attend school due to illness (except where a doctor's report has already been provided indicating an expected return date).
- Requesting leave of absence only in exceptional circumstances and in advance by writing to the Headteacher.
- Providing medical or other evidence in relation to absence if required by the school.
- Arranging medical or dental appointments to take place outside school hours wherever possible.
- Not taking family holidays in term time.
- Not taking leave of absence for any reason without prior agreement.
- Raise any issues or concerns which may impact on attendance with school staff at the earliest opportunity.
- Attend meetings with school staff to discuss concerns if requested by the school.
- Work in partnership with school and other agencies to address any attendance problems.
- Encourage good routines at home to ensure children have good sleep patterns and are prepared for school each day.
- Take an active interest in their child's educational progress and instil the value of education and good attendance.

## **5. Managing attendance in school**

5.1 Thorn Grove Primary School recognises that poor attendance is often a sign of wider difficulties in a child's life whether at home or at school. Parents should make school aware of any difficulties or changes in circumstances which may affect their child's attendance or behaviour at school, such as bereavement, divorce/separation, or incidents of domestic abuse. This will help the school identify any additional support which may be required.

5.2 Thorn Grove Primary School will use the Attendance Escalation Interventions (Appendix 1) to ensure that every pupil with attendance concerns receives a red, amber or green rating and that an appropriate response is made to address the situation.

5.3 Thorn Grove Primary School recognises that some pupils are more likely to require additional support to attain good attendance – for example, pupils with special educational needs, those with physical or mental health needs, migrant and refugee pupils and looked after children.

5.4 Thorn Grove Primary School will implement a range of strategies to identify cases requiring support including:

- 5.4.1 Regular attendance monitoring meetings between the lead attendance officer and relevant teaching staff and, at agreed periodic intervals, with the school's designated Education Welfare team member.
  - 5.4.2 Regular analysis of attendance data by the leadership team and governing body.
- 5.5 Thorn Grove Primary School will implement a range of strategies to provide support to pupils and families including:
- 5.5.1 Early contact with parents by telephone/text – school will attempt to make immediate contact with parents whenever a child is absent without explanation.
  - 5.5.2 Attendance letters – Thorn Grove Primary School will notify parents in writing if there are attendance concerns and offer support. Where the offer of support is not taken up and/or those concerns persist, school will notify parents in writing that absences will only be authorised if medical evidence is provided.
  - 5.5.3 Meetings in school – school will invite parents to meetings in school at an early stage to discuss attendance concerns.
  - 5.5.4 Home visits – school staff will visit pupils' homes to check on a pupil's welfare and/or offer support to improve attendance.
  - 5.5.5 Early Help Assessments – school will use Early Help Assessments to support families in identifying barriers to good attendance and attainment and put in place plans to overcome them.
  - 5.5.6 Team Around the School – After appropriate action by school and where internal interventions have not been successful, pupils and families requiring further support around attendance will be referred to the Team Around the School (TAS). The TAS includes representatives from services working with children and families in Stockport so that appropriate support can be allocated.
  - 5.5.7 Referrals to the Education Welfare team – the school will refer cases to the Education Welfare team who offer a range of measures to improve attendance including Parent Contracts and Education Penalty Notices (see below).
  - 5.5.8 Thorn Grove Primary School will also consider a range of other strategies to improve individual pupils' attendance including:

- Whole School Strategies – Thorn Grove Primary School will promote good attendance using a range of initiatives including:
  - Rewards systems
  - Restorative approaches
  - PSHE activities
  - Whole school assemblies
- Attendance Panels – parents and pupils may be invited to discuss attendance at attendance panels consisting of pastoral staff, senior staff and governors.
- Reintegration Support Packages – where a pupil has missed a significant amount of school a reintegration package can be arranged in consultation with parents and pupils so to ensure a smooth return to school.
- Part-time timetables – in exceptional circumstances where a pupil is unable to manage full time attendance a temporary part-time timetable may be put in place.
- Alternative provision – in exceptional circumstances where it is felt that a pupil’s needs may be better served outside of the mainstream curriculum; referrals may be made to alternative education providers.

## 6. Legal Sanctions

6.1 Regular school attendance is a legal duty on parents and carers. If a parent fails to ensure their child attends school regularly, they are guilty of an offence under section 444(1) or (1A) Education Act 1996.

6.2 A parent who commits this offence may be liable to prosecution in the Magistrates’ Court and, depending on which offence they are convicted of, may be liable to a fine of up to £2500 or a term of imprisonment of up to three months.

6.3 Although school will offer support in addressing attendance issues, it will also refer pupils whose attendance fails to improve, or who take leave of absence from school without agreement, to the Education Welfare team within Stockport Council. This can take several routes:

6.3.1 Education Penalty Notices – Education Penalty Notices are fixed penalty notices issued by Stockport Council of £60 per parent per child. These are payable within 21 days and rise to £120 if paid between 22-28 days. If unpaid after 28 days, the parent will be prosecuted for the offence of failing to ensure regular school attendance. Penalty Notices are issued in accordance with Stockport Council’s Code of Conduct.

6.3.2 Education Penalty Notices for Irregular Attendance

Before being issued with an Education Penalty Notice, parents will receive a written warning. This gives them an opportunity to avoid a fine by ensuring that no unauthorised absences – including late after the close registration marks – are recorded against their child during the next 15 school days. The minimum criteria for sending such a warning is 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a three month period.

6.3.3 Education Penalty Notices for unauthorised leave of absence

Education Penalty Notices may also be issued where a pupil is taken out of school for five days or more without the school's consent – such as for a term time holiday. In these cases, the fine is sent by the Council without an initial warning being issued.

6.3.4 Parent Contract referrals – a Parent Contract is an agreement which usually involves the school, parents, members of the Local Authority Education Welfare team and, in some cases, the pupil. The agreement sets out the actions required by all parties to overcome the barriers to improved attendance. Compliance with the contract and the progress of improving attendance are reviewed regularly at Parent Contract Review Meetings. Should a parent fail to participate and/or fail to ensure that attendance improves, prosecution in the Magistrates' Court is likely to ensue.