



North Huddersfield Learning Community



ST THOMAS
CE (VC) PRIMARY SCHOOL

Attendance Policy



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1. INTRODUCTION AND STATEMENT OF INTENT

Regular school attendance is essential to ensure the best possible learning outcomes for all children and is necessary to promote better life chances. Our ethos encourages children to feel that their presence in school is important and that they are missed when they are absent or late.

There is a clear link between good attendance and high standards. For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly. Every child should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

There is now more Government pressure on schools than ever before to ensure the regular attendance of children in their school. There is a legal requirement for schools to set targets for improving school attendance.

This policy sets out the principles and guidelines by which we seek to raise attendance, improve punctuality, raise levels of achievement and to maximise opportunities both in school and in later life.

WHY REGULAR ATTENDANCE IS SO IMPORTANT:

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence disrupts teaching routines and may affect the learning of others in the same class. Ensuring every child's regular attendance at school is the responsibility of their parents/carers and permitting absence from school without good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

2. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

PROMOTING REGULAR ATTENDANCE and helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility – parents/carers, pupils and all members of school staff.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Give parents/carers details on attendance in our regular newsletters and on our websites.
- Report to parents/carers at least termly on their child's attendance and punctuality.
- Monitor whole school attendance continuously.
- Routinely celebrate good attendance.
- Reward good or improving attendance.
- Monitor the impact of any intervention strategies
- Offer support and targeted intervention to pupils and families, alongside the local authority attendance and pupil support officer/team.
- Run promotional events when parents/carers, pupils and staff can work together on raising attendance levels across the school.
- Share good attendance procedures and practice between the pyramid of schools

3. UNDERSTANDING TYPES OF ABSENCE

Every half day absence from school is coded by the school (not by parents/carers) as either authorised or unauthorised.

It is the parent/carer's responsibility to inform school before registration if their child will be absent and the reason for the absence.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily.
- Truancy before or during the school day.
- Being late to school after registers have closed.
- Absences which have not been clearly explained.
- Shopping trips, looking after other children or celebrating birthdays.
- Day trips and absence in term time which have not been agreed.

This type of absence can lead to the Local Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings.

Absences will only be authorised where a good reason is provided such as genuine illness or family emergencies.

Absence for religious observance, as advised by the DfE, can be authorised for up to 3 days over the school year.

Routine appointments should ideally be made outside of school hours. If an appointment during the school day is unavoidable children should only be out of school for the duration of that appointment.

Sickness Absence

Schools make the decision whether to authorise any reported absence due to illness. If there is doubt that an illness is genuine the absence will not be authorised. Where sporadic illness has become excessive school may request medical evidence for each and every subsequent period of absence. If absence extends beyond 5 days schools will require medical evidence explaining why the child is unfit to attend school.

Persistent Absenteeism (PA)

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more of their schooling across a school year for any reason. Absence at this level causes considerable damage to children's educational attainment and we need full the support and co-operation of parents/carers to tackle this.

All schools monitor absence thoroughly. Where a child's attendance is nearing 90% the school will work closely with parents/carers to determine reasons for this and agree strategies for improvement.

PA pupils are tracked and monitored in school and are discussed routinely with the Local Authority Attendance and Pupil Support Officer.

4. ABSENCE PROCEDURES

Each school follows rigorous First Day Calling procedures to monitor absences from school- ***please refer to your school's individual first day calling procedures.***

If a child is absent, parents/carers must:

- Inform school before registration that their child will be absent and the reason for their absence.
- Keep any absence to a minimum.

If a child is absent, school will:

- Telephone, text or email parents/carers on the first day of absence if we have not heard from them.
- Liaise closely with the Attendance and Pupil Support Service and take appropriate action to address poor attendance; this may include letters being sent home, home visits by the Attendance and Pupil Support Officer or meetings in school.
- Refer the matter to the Attendance and Pupil Support Service if attendance falls below 90% (where schools subscribe to this service).

Telephone Numbers

It is vital that school can contact parents/carers at all times. Please ensure that you inform school of any changes to your contact details and provide additional emergency contacts in case you are unavailable.

5. LATENESS

Lateness is unacceptable. Each time a child is late the lesson is disrupted both for that child and other pupils in the class. Frequent lateness causes children to miss valuable learning and they may not receive vital information about their school day.

Children will receive a late mark if they are not in class by the end of registration. This will be classed as an absence for that half day session.

If a child is frequently late parents/carers may be asked to meet with school or Local Authority staff to resolve the problem.

Parents/carers can approach school if they are having problems getting children to school on time.

Please refer to St Thomas Lateness procedures.

6. LEAVE OF ABSENCE IN TERM TIME

Taking a 'Leave of Absence' in term time will affect a child's schooling as much as any other absence; we expect parents to help us by **not** taking children away in term time. There is **no** automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time for any reason.

Parents/carers must understand that by taking children out of school they are making a choice to miss out on part of their child's education.

Parents/carers choosing to take their child out of school during term time must complete a 'Leave of Absence Request Form' (available from the School Offices) and return it to the Head Teacher **before** making any travel arrangements; failure to do so could result in the child(ren) being removed from the school register and being referred to the Children Missing Education Team (CME). The form is available from the school office and proof of travel must be provided with a defined return date.

Head Teachers may only authorise Leave of Absence in exceptional circumstances.

Following any Leave of Absence, if a child does not return on the date given to school, school will use first day calling procedures. The Schools within the Pyramid cannot take children off roll while they are on requested Leave of Absence, unless the Leave of Absence exceeds 21 days. After the 21st day of unauthorised term time absence, a child will be taken off roll, even if school have been informed of a future return date as this is an avoidable absence.

The North Huddersfield Learning Community Head Teachers uphold the Local Authority expectations regarding Leave of Absence as these are in line with the DfE guidance. All requests from parents and carers are considered by individual schools in line with these guidelines and the North Huddersfield Learning Community schools will uphold any decisions made the Local Authority.

It is the policy of North Huddersfield Learning Community to request a Fixed Penalty Notice for every pupil taking an unauthorised Leave of Absence in term time of 5 consecutive days (10 school sessions) or more.

If parents/carers take their child(ren) out of school during term time, and this has not been authorised by the Head Teacher, they may be fined **£60.00** if paid within **21 days**, rising to **£120.00** if paid after **21 days but within 28 days**. **All penalties are issued to both parents for each child taking an unauthorised 'Leave of Absence'**. Failure to pay the Fixed Penalty Notice could result in the local authority commencing legal proceedings against you for the offence of not ensuring your child's regular school attendance. If found guilty, parents may be fined up to £1000 and they may receive a criminal record.

Parents/carers who also choose to repeatedly take their children on unauthorised Leave of Absence (3 or more occasions in their time as a student at school) may be directly prosecuted under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996. If found guilty, they may be fined up to **£1000** and **receive a criminal record**.

Religious Observance

Pupils may take leave of absence for up to 3 days within a 12 month period for religious observance. This applies where a religion other than Christianity is practiced and when the day falls on a usual school day.

7. ATTENDANCE AND PUPIL SUPPORT SERVICE

Many schools have an Attendance and Pupil Support Officer (APSO) who visits schools regularly to look at attendance data and discuss concerns with staff.

If attendance and/or punctuality drop to an unacceptable level a referral may be made to the APSO. The APSO will then make contact with the family to discuss any issues that may be preventing full school attendance and to work together to ensure improvement.

Failure to sustain improved attendance could result in Fixed Penalty Notices being issued or referral to the Magistrates Court.

8. SUMMARY

Schools are committed to working in partnership with parents/carers, children and families to ensure a high a level of attendance. However parents have a responsibility to minimise absence; this includes illness, medical appointments and Leave of Absence. Persistent absence could result in further action being taken. Parents/carers should report absence as soon as possible providing a valid reason. Arriving at school on time every day will help you and your child establish good routines: lateness results in learning opportunities being missed. Good attendance and punctuality is crucial to ensure positive educational outcomes.

Review Annually

Appendix 1

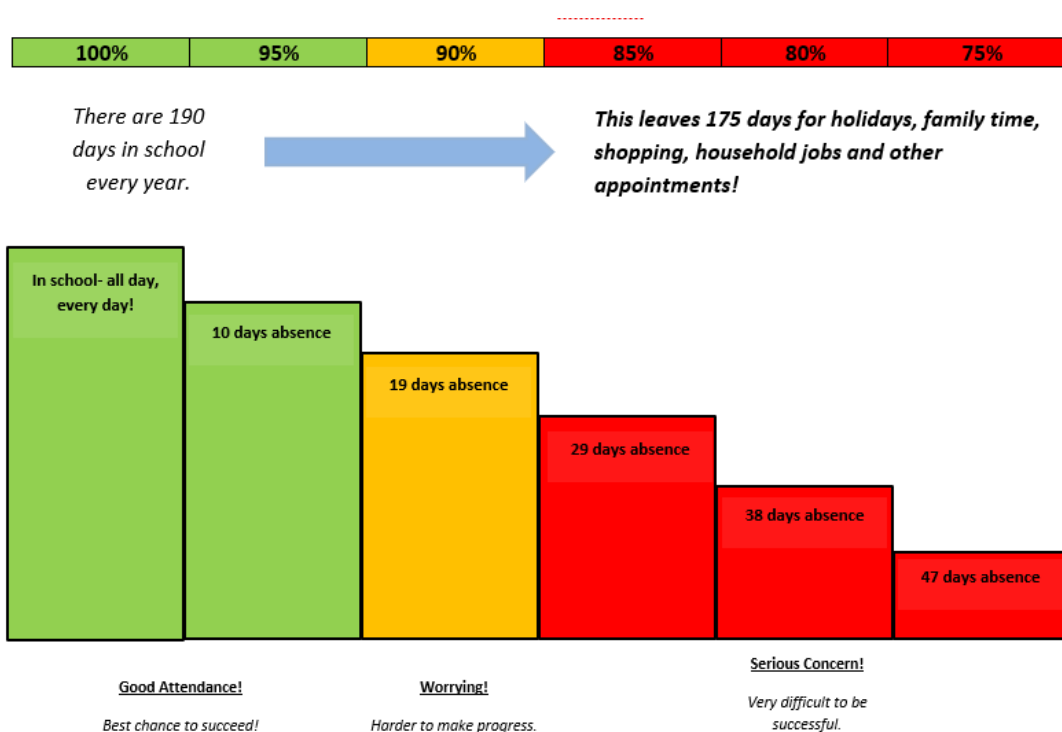


Promoting Good Attendance at St Thomas:

Key Contacts		Contact Details
Headteacher	Kate Meade	01484 226557 parents@stthomas.org.uk
Strategic Leader for Attendance	Jane Bray (AHT - Inclusion)	
Key Contacts (for day to day enquiries)	Diane Kane Holly Comber	
Safeguarding & Family Support	Danielle Johnson	

St Thomas has an attendance target of 96%

Attendance is presented as a percentage figure, but the diagram below relates this to a number of days off:



Roles & Responsibilities

We all have a role to play in ensuring that our pupils achieve good attendance:

Parents/Carers	School	Governors	Local Authority
Ensure their child attends every day the school is open except when a statutory reason applies.	Have a clear school attendance policy on the school website which all staff, pupils and parents understand.	Take an active role in attendance improvement, support their school to prioritise attendance, and work together with leaders to set whole school cultures.	Have a strategic approach to improving attendance for the whole area and make it a key focus of all frontline council services.
Notify the school as soon as possible when their child has to be unexpectedly absent (e.g. sickness).	Develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of good attendance.	Ensure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties.	Have a School Attendance Support Team that works with all schools in their area to remove area-wide barriers to attendance.
Only request leave of absence in exceptional circumstances and do so in advance.	Accurately complete admission and attendance registers.	Ensure school staff receive training on attendance.	
Book any medical appointments around the school day where possible.	Have robust daily processes to follow up absence.		Provide each school with a named point of contact in the School Attendance Support Team who can support with queries and advice.
	Have a dedicated senior leader with overall responsibility for championing		Offer opportunities for all schools in the area to share effective practice.

At St Thomas we apply a model of celebrate, engage and support! We recognise that there can be genuine reason for absence and our intention is to support families to improve attendance.

	3 day absence	5 days absence	7 day absence	10 day absence	13 days absence	16 days absence	19 days + absence
TERM 1	ENGAGE	MONITOR	FACILITATE SUPPORT	FORMALISE SUPPORT	ENFORCE	ENFORCE	ENFORCE
TERM 2	ENGAGE	ENGAGE	MONITOR	FACILITATE SUPPORT	FORMALISE SUPPORT	ENFORCE	ENFORCE
TERM 3	ENGAGE	ENGAGE	ENGAGE	MONITOR	FACILITATE SUPPORT	FORMALISE SUPPORT	ENFORCE

ENGAGE	MONITOR	FACILITATE SUPPORT	FORMALISE SUPPORT	ENFORCE	19 days +
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concerning levels of child absence. Internal monitoring. Informal chat and check ins Early intervention considered as a preventative measure. Possible early help support offered. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Serious concerns regarding attendance. Stage 1 letter sent to parents. Meeting with Attendance Lead. Explore barriers and implement a programme to remove barriers. Early help support reviewed or offered. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The child is a high risk of Persistent Absence. Stage 2 letter sent to parents. Attendance Leader meeting with parents . Review of early help and intervention programmes. Invite parents to sign school contract Consider the support of external services. Safeguarding concerns should be recorded 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The child is at serious risk of Persistent Absence. Stage 3 letter sent to parents. Formal warning notice sent to parents. Parenting contract or supervision order considered at this stage. Safeguarding concerns should be shared Involve school APSO Continued internal and external programmes of support. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Major Concerns All avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with. The school will now enforce attendance through statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education. Review of all support and offer of support to be reviewed. Safeguarding concerns should be reviewed Continued support of the child and family. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The child is now considered a Persistently Absent child. Persistent absence is when a pupil enrolment's overall absence equates to 10 per cent or more of their possible sessions. Over an academic year this equates to 19 days. At this stage the child will be PA for the remainder of the school year.. The child and family will continue to be supported

Help & Support *The school fully recognises that families may experience unavoidable, adverse events during the course of an academic year that impact negatively on school attendance. In these cases, the school encourages families to liaise with the Safeguarding Team in school, who will endeavour to provide help, guidance and support. Ensuring good attendance is a partnership between home and school.*

Promoting & celebrating regular attendance

“Don’t Miss A Day!”

Promoting regular attendance and helping to create a pattern of good attendance is everybody’s responsibility- parents, pupils, governors and all members of the school staff. To help us all focus on this, we will:

- Monitor whole-school attendance continuously, keeping parents/carers updated on whole-school attendance through our weekly newsletters, on our web site and around the school buildings.
- Report to parents and carers at least termly on their child’s attendance and punctuality.
- Routinely celebrate good attendance
- Reward good or improving attendance
- Run promotional events when parents, pupils and school staff can work together on raising attendance levels across the school.

At St Thomas School, our attendance reward systems are organised into weekly, half-termly and annual rewards, so that all pupils have regular opportunities to be rewarded for good or improving attendance:

	Rewards
Weekly	<p>In our Singing celebration assembly attendance figures will be presented.</p> <p>Any class meeting its target will receive a movie token</p> <p>6 movie tokens = a movie afternoon</p> <p>For any class that achieves 100% attendance in a given week, they will be rewarded with an extra play time.</p>
Termly	<p>Pupils who achieve 100% attendance within a term will receive a letter of commendation.</p> <p>All pupils who achieve 96%+ attendance will be entered into a prize draw (per Key Stage) to win a prize for their family, e.g. a cinema, bowling or meal voucher.</p>

Punctuality

The school day begins at 8:40am and ends at 3:10pm each day.

Anyone arriving at school after 8:50am will be classed as ‘late’ and this will be recorded on the register. Pupils who are routinely late for school miss out on vital teaching time and they often arrive feeling anxious and embarrassed to enter a classroom that has already settled for the day. The table below shows how much teaching time is lost if a child is regularly late:

Number of minutes late per day	Number of days lost learning over a year
5 minutes	3.4 days
10 minutes	6.9 days
15 minutes	10.3 days
20 minutes	13.8 days



One Day Late

**These things happen.
We do understand but
please be aware you
child may have missed
learning time...**

3 + lates in a week

**You will receive a
school reminder text.
Please consider
making changes to
your travel
arrangements...**

Repeated lateness

**A formal letter will be
sent outlining clear
expectations...**

Repeated lateness +

**A formal meeting will
be held and a parental
contract introduced.**

Lateness causes disruption to the class and the late pupil misses learning time. However, we recognise there may be individual circumstances which need an adapted response. Our first commitment is care and nurture for all pupils. Supportive measures can be implemented through communication with families.



Absence from School

Any absence from school affects the pattern of a child's schooling, and where this becomes a regular occurrence it will seriously affect their learning and development. The school accepts that there are occasions when pupils are not able to attend school, and in these instances the school will treat the absence as authorised. Unauthorised absences, on the other hand, are absences that the school does not consider reasonable. Further examples are detailed below:

Authorised Absences may include	Unauthorised Absences may include
Genuine illness (although mild illnesses such as a common cold, a sore throat or a headache should not be a reason for pupils to be kept at home).	Holidays in term time
Hospital or Dental appointments (although routine appointments such as 'check-ups' should be arranged out of school hours)	Late, after registers have closed
Bereavement (at the discretion of the Headteacher)	Taking the rest of the day off, before or after a medical appointment
Religious Observance (no more than 3 days per year)	Staying at home to care for relatives
Approved leave in term time where there are exceptional circumstances, as agreed by the Headteacher	Birthdays, weddings or anniversaries
	Transport issues
	Going shopping
	Unexplained absence where parents have not contacted school

If a child is absent, parents/carers should contact school as soon as possible before 9:00am to report their child's absence, as well as their expected date of return. Parents can contact school via telephone (01482 226 557)

Where parents/carers have not been in touch to report their child's absence, the office team will attempt to make contact with the family and will follow our absence procedures.



Day One Absence

**Make contact with
primary carer**

Day Two Absence

**If contact cannot be
made with primary
carer –work through
emergency contact list**

Day Three Absence

**If contact cannot be
made with primary
carer carry out home
visit**

Day Five Absence

**Contact Police for
welfare visit**

Day 10 Absence

**Refer to Child Missing
in Education Team**

***Short but crucial request. Please keep us in the loop about
your child's absences! Phone or email before 9am.***

