



Attendance Policy

Member of Staff Responsible	Chief Executive Officer
Relevant guidance/advice/legal reference	
Approved by	Trust Board
Date of Policy	October 2022
Review Cycle	1 year
Date of Next Review	October 2023
Website	Yes (published annually)

This policy is based upon several principles:

- Good attendance is vital to pupil achievement and to develop a positive school ethos
- Government statistics show a direct link between under achievement and poor attendance at school
- Attendance contributes to pupils feeling fully included in the school community and developing a positive attitude towards education and lifelong learning.
- It is important for the school, parents/carers and pupils to work together to attain high levels of attendance and punctuality
- The school has a legal responsibility to follow up all absences
- It is a school rule that pupils must attend every day, unless there are exceptional circumstances

This attendance policy aims to raise and maintain levels of attendance by:

- Promoting a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure and valued
- Raising awareness of the importance of good attendance and punctuality
- Ensuring that attendance is monitored effectively and reasons for absences are recorded promptly and consistently

The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude and any special educational need they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent/carer to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school.

Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure that their child attends school regularly. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school.

The DfE has produced guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities: Working together to improve school attendance. This Attendance Policy reflects the key principles of this guidance.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance>

Promoting Regular Attendance

At Thomas Adams, we believe in developing good patterns of attendance and set high expectations for the attendance and punctuality for all of our pupils from the onset. It is a central part of our school's vision, values, ethos and day to day life. We recognise the connections between attendance, attainment, safeguarding and wellbeing.

The Deputy Headteacher for Behaviour and Personal Development is responsible for the strategic approach to attendance. The Attendance Officer carries out the operational duties with support from the Pastoral Team and Heads of Year.

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is the responsibility of parents/carers, pupils and all members of school staff.

To maintain our focus on attendance, we will:

- Send out parent/carer letters and leaflets highlighting the importance of attendance – for example: <https://www.thomasadams.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Get-your-child-to-school-leaflet-Feb-2022.pdf>
- Inform parents/carers of their child's attendance at least three times a year in reports
- Encourage parents/carers to monitor their child's attendance using the Arbor Parent App
- Contact parents/carers should their child's attendance fall below the school's target for attendance
- Celebrate excellent attendance by displaying and reporting individual and class achievements
- Reward individuals or groups who have good or improving attendance
- Refer poor attendance to the Education Welfare Officer or other agencies

Understanding Types of Absence

Every half day of absence from school has to be classified by the school (not the parent/carer), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required. Each half-day is known as a 'session'.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a justified reason like illness (although you may be required to provide medical evidence for your child before this is authorised), **urgent** medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable causes.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been given. Unauthorised absences are coded with an O code. This type of absence can lead to the school referring to the Local Authority (through the Education Welfare Officer) for penalty notices and/or legal proceedings.

Unauthorised absence includes the following, however, this list is not exhaustive:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily e.g. because they had a late night or for non-infectious illness or injury that would not affect their ability to learn
- Absences which have never been adequately explained to the Attendance Officer
- Children who arrive at school too late to get a 'U' mark on the attendance register to indicate they are in school for safeguarding purposes, however, this is counted as an absence for the session
- Shopping trips
- Family events
- Problems with the distance travelled to school
- Looking after children / family members or children accompanying siblings or parents/carers to medical appointments
- Their own or family birthdays
- Holiday taken during term time without leave – unauthorised absence will lead to a penalty notice being triggered by the Local Authority
- Day trips
- Other leave of absence in term time which has not been agreed.

School Attendance and the Law

By law, all children of compulsory school age must receive an appropriate full-time education (Education Act 1996). Parents/Carers have a legal duty to ensure their child attends regularly at the school where they are registered.

Parents/Carers may be recognised differently under education law, than under family law. Section 576 of the Education Act 1996 states that a 'parent', in relation to a child or young person, includes any person who is not a parent (from which can be inferred 'biological parent') but who has parental responsibility, or who has care of the child.

A person typically has care of a child or young person if they are the person with whom the child lives, either full or part time and who looks after the child, irrespective of what their biological or legal relationship is with the child.

Unauthorised absence may result in the school referring to the Local Authority for sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This may include issuing each parent with a Penalty Notice for £120, reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days or referring the matter to the Magistrates Court whereby each parent may receive a fine up to £2500 and/or up to 3 months in prison. If a parent is found guilty in court, they will receive a criminal conviction.

There is no longer any entitlement in law for pupils to take time off during the term to go on holiday. In addition, the Supreme Court has ruled that the definition of regular school attendance is 'in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school'.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 were amended in September 2013. All references to family holidays and extended leave have been removed. The amendments specify that the Head of a school may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are 'exceptional circumstances' and they no longer have the discretion to authorise up to ten days of absence each academic year.

At Thomas Adams, leave of absence shall not be granted in term time unless there are reasons considered to be exceptional by the Headteacher, irrespective of the child's overall attendance. Only the Headteacher (not the Local Authority) may authorise such a request. All applications for Leave of Absence must be made in writing on the form which can be found on the school website. Where a parent removes a child when the application for leave has been refused or where no application was made to the school, the issue of a penalty notice will be requested by the school.

<https://www.thomasadams.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Request-form-for-Leave-of-Absence-in-Term-Time.pdf>

At Thomas Adams, 'exceptional circumstances' will be interpreted as being of unique and significant emotional, educational or spiritual value to the child which outweighs the loss of learning time.

We will not agree leave during term time under any of the following circumstances:

- At any time in September. This is a crucial transition time for all pupils to settle into their new classes at the start of the academic year
- During assessment and test periods (including internal school tests / assessments) in the school calendar affecting your child
- When a pupil's attendance record already includes any level of unauthorised absence or they have already been granted authorised leave within that academic year
- Where a pupil's attendance record falls below 95%

Whilst any child may occasionally have time off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents/carers and the child. If a parent/carer thinks that their child is reluctant to attend school, then we will work with that family to understand the problem and provide the necessary support. We can use internal support systems and/or outside agencies to help with this.

If leave of absence is authorised, the school will not provide work for the children to do during their absence. It is the responsibility of the child to catch up with any work missed due to absence.

Persistent Absence (PA)

A pupil is defined by the Government as a 'persistent absentee' (PA) when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason; this can be authorised or unauthorised absences. Absence at this level will cause considerable disruption to any child's education and we need a parent's/carer's fullest support and cooperation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence, and the reasons that are given, rigorously. If a child is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark, we will inform parents/carers immediately. PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully. We also combine this with academic tracking where absence affects attainment. All of our PA pupils and their parents/carers are subject to a school-based meeting where a plan is agreed. The plan may include internal support and/or external agencies.

An attendance target of 100% will be set and parents/carers will be contacted regularly if this target is not being met. We will do this until your child's attendance falls within acceptable limits.

When ongoing medical issues prevent good attendance, a meeting will be held with health professionals, parents/carers and the school to determine next steps.

Absence Procedures

If a child is absent from school, the parent/carer must follow these procedures:

- Contact the school **on the first day of the absence before 9am and each subsequent day of the absence before 9am**. The school has an answerphone available to leave a message if nobody is available to take your call or you can email attendance@thomasadams.net. Alternatively, parents/carers can drop into school personally to speak to the office staff. If we do not hear from you, we will contact you requesting information. If your child has not been at school for 2 days, and no contact has been made, we will make a home visit and, if necessary, contact the police or social care.
- Contact the school on every further day of absence, again before 9am
- Ensure that your child returns to school as soon as possible

If your child is absent, we will:

- Telephone or text on the first day, and every subsequent day of absence if we have not heard from you. We may also visit you, if we have not heard from you
- If we are unable to make contact with parents/carers by telephone, we will telephone emergency contact numbers, send letters home and a home visit may be made in the interests of safeguarding
- Make a home visit to ascertain the safety of the child if we have concerns for their welfare
- Contact the police at the end of the first day's absence if we do not know the child's whereabouts
- Write to parents/carers if your child's attendance falls below 96%
- Invite parents/carers in to school to discuss the situation with our Attendance Officer or the Deputy Headteacher if absences persist
- Arrange a formal school attendance meeting if attendance deteriorates following the above actions
- A referral will be made to the Local Authority if no contact has been made with parents by the 10th day of the absence (or sooner if deemed appropriate), your child will be considered 'missing from education' after the 20th day of absence.

If absence continues, we will:

- Write to you if your child's attendance is below 95%, or where punctuality is a concern
- Invite you into school to discuss the situation with the Attendance Officer and Deputy Headteacher, or the Headteacher if absence persists
- Create a personalised action / support plan to address any barriers to attendance
- Offer signposting to other agencies or services for support if appropriate
- Refer the matter to the Local Authority for relevant sanctions if attendance deteriorates following the above actions.

Local Authority Referrals

Parents/Carers are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with staff in resolving problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the child to the Education Access Team at the Local Authority. Our Education Welfare Officer works with school, families and other professionals to reduce persistent absence and improve overall attendance. If attendance does not improve, legal action may be taken in the form of a Penalty Notice or prosecution in the Magistrates Court.

Children Missing in Education

Where a child is not attending school, has moved without a forwarding address or school, or cannot be traced, or contact made with the parent/carer, the school is required to inform the Local Authority that the child is missing. A home visit and investigation will commence carried out by social care, health and police.

Pupils will not be removed from the school roll until notified by the Local Authority that their enquiries are complete.

A referral will be made to the Local Authority if no contact has been made with parents/carers by the 20th day of the absence (or sooner if deemed appropriate), at which point your child will be considered to be 'missing from education'.

Lateness

Poor punctuality is not acceptable and can contribute to further absence. If a child misses the start of the day they miss work and do not spend time with their Form Tutor getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons, can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage further absence.

Good timekeeping is a vital life skill which will help our children as they progress through their school life and out into the wider world.

How we manage lateness:

Registers are taken at the start of everyday in Form Time which is held from 8:45am to 9:05am. Your child will receive a late mark if they are not in school by the school start time (8:45am). Children arriving after this time are required to come in to the school through the front entrance (Main Reception) and sign in using the Inventory system, providing a reason for their lateness.

The school will send home text messages to keep parents/carers informed of lateness issues.

The morning register will be closed at 8:55am. In accordance with Regulations, if your child arrives after this time they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will **NOT** count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence (U code). This means that parents face the possibility

of a Penalty Notice if the problem persists. If your child has a persistent late record, you will be asked to meet with one of the Pastoral Team, the Head of Year, the Attendance Officer or the Deputy Headteacher.

You can approach us at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

We expect parents/carers and staff to encourage good punctuality by being good role models for the children.

We celebrate and reward good individual and group/class punctuality.

Understanding Barriers to Attendance

Some pupils face greater barriers to attendance than their peers. These can include pupils who suffer from long-term medical conditions or who have special educational needs and disabilities, or other vulnerabilities. However, high expectations of attendance remain and we will work with families and pupils to support improved attendance whilst being mindful of the additional barriers faced. We can discuss reasonable adjustments and additional support from external partners where appropriate.

For more information, please contact the Attendance Officer or the Deputy Headteacher (Behaviour and Personal Development).

Deletion from Roll

For any pupils leaving, other than at the end of Year 11, parents/carers are required to complete a 'Mid-Term Transfer Form', which can be obtained from the Headteacher's PA. This form provides us with essential information to ensure that we know and safeguard the whereabouts of all of our pupils, even those who leave us. Pupils cannot be deleted from the school roll without this information and will be classed as absent until we have confirmation that they are safe and attending another school.

It is important that parents/carers keep school updated with current address and contact details for key family members in case of an emergency.

Under Pupils Regulations 2006, all schools are now **legally required** to notify their Local Authority of every new entry to the admission register **within five days** of the pupil being enrolled. In addition to this, every deletion from the school register must also be notified to the Local Authority, as soon as the ground for deletion has been met in relation to that pupil, and in the event no later than the time at which the pupil's name is deleted from the register. This duty does not apply when a child's name is removed from the admission register at a standard transition point – when the pupil has completed Year 11.

Absence Data

We use data to monitor, identify and support individual pupils or groups of pupils when their attendance needs to improve. Persistently absent pupils are tracked and monitored carefully. We also combine this with academic tracking as increased absence affects attainment.

Summary

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance.

Equally, parents/carers have a duty to make sure that their children attend school, on time, every day.

It is important that all relevant parties accept and fulfil their responsibilities:

Pupils' Responsibilities

- To attend school
- To arrive to school on time and follow school procedures for registration, particularly if arriving late for any reason
- To arrive at school with the correct equipment and uniform
- To discuss any issues that might deter them from attending school with an adult

School's Responsibility

- To monitor attendance and absences (authorised and unauthorised) as we have a legal responsibility to do so
- To investigate any problems that may lead to non-attendance and support re-integration
- To keep parents/carers informed of attendance issues
- To work closely with the Education Welfare Officer / Local Authority when a pupil's absence is a cause for concern.

Parents'/Carers' Responsibilities:

- To ensure that their children attend school and are punctual. Absences should only be for genuine illness or exceptional circumstances. Leave of absence for exceptional circumstances must be applied for from school using the relevant form which can be found on the website.
<https://www.thomasadams.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Request-form-for-Leave-of-Absence-in-Term-Time.pdf>
- To provide school with a current telephone / mobile number and email address for contact
- To inform the school on the first day of their child's absence and each subsequent day
- To ensure that their children arrive at school with the correct equipment and uniform
- To be aware of their legal responsibilities.