



THOMSON HOUSE SCHOOL

Thomson House School

Attendance Policy

Agreed by: **Governors' Education Committee**

Date: **June 2023**

Review Cycle: **Three years**

Review Date: **June 2026**

All the Thomson House School policies should be read in conjunction with the Equality Policy and Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

If you require a copy of this document in large print, Braille or audio format, please contact the School Business Manager



Thomson House School - Attendance Policy

Introduction

Parents have a **legal duty** to ensure that a child over the age of 5 attends school regularly and punctually. Thomson House School places great importance on attendance and punctuality. High levels of attendance have a positive correlation with high achievement – children who have the highest attendance levels have the highest attainment levels. At Thomson House we want every child to fulfil their potential.

The school monitors attendance and punctuality closely as evidence shows that poor attendance and punctuality data could be an indicator of safeguarding issues. At Thomson House School the safety of the children is paramount.

Aims and Objectives of this policy

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance on the process of notifying the school with regards to absence – whether due to sickness; medical appointments; other appointments; special leave; or holidays.

This policy also provides guidance on the submission of evidence to support a request for absence under exceptional circumstances; and guidance on what might be defined as exceptional circumstances.

Finally, this policy clarifies the consequences of taking absence in term time – for the child, the school and the parents – and also with regards to the Local Authority and the issuing of Fixed Penalty Fines.

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

- Part 6 of [The Education Act 1996](#)
- Part 3 of [The Education Act 2002](#)
- Part 7 of [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006 \(and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments\)](#)

Promoting Regular Attendance

At Thomson House School, we believe in developing good patterns of attendance and set high expectations for the attendance and punctuality for all our pupils from the outset. 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. Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is the responsibility of parents, pupils and all members of school staff.

To support us securing regular attendance for all pupils we will:

- Give parents/carers details on attendance in our newsletters
- Celebrate excellent attendance by displaying and reporting individual and class achievements
- Report to parents/carers on their child's attendance
- Contact parents/carers should their child's attendance fall below the school's target for attendance of 96%
- Communicate improving attendance to families who have been alerted to poor attendance

Notifying School of Absence due to Sickness

If a child is ill then parents are required to notify school by email (admin@thomsonhouseschool.org), by phone (0203 608 2080) or via our PA Connect app **each morning** of the absence, before 9.00am. Parents must give a clear reason for the absence, each day of the absence period – simply stating that they are unwell does not give a clear indication of the illness, and this may therefore be recorded as unauthorised.

After 9.30am, the school will, if a child has been marked absent in the attendance register (and one of the above means of contact with the school has not been made), phone parents to follow up on a child's whereabouts. In the case of Year 6 children who have been granted permission to walk to school, the school will call parents by 8.45am latest.

The school has a strict 48-hour policy if a child's absence is due to sickness and/or diarrhea. Please see the parent handbook for further guidance on this.

Notifying the school of Absence due to Medical Appointments

Ideally, we ask that parents make medical appointments **outside of school hours**. However, we are aware that this is not always possible and therefore we ask that prior to the event parents notify school of any medical appointments within school hours – via an email to the office (admin@thomsonhouseschool.org) and class teacher, or by phone (0203 608 2080). The pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary to reduce the impact of lost teaching time. When a parent collects a child from school early or delivers a child into school late, the parent needs to go via the office so that attendance registers can be updated accurately.

Notifying School of Absence for Any Other Reason

Any other request for absence in term time needs to be put in writing to the Head of School at least a week **before** the absence has occurred. The Head of School will give each request due consideration based on the criteria which allow for special leave and inform parents as to whether the absence will be authorised or unauthorised.

Request for leave to celebrate religious observances

Requests for absence in term time to celebrate religious festivals need to be put in writing to the Head of School at least a week before the event. Families can take up to three days of absence in term time, in any school year, for religious observances. This absence will be authorised by the Head of School.

Requests for Special Leave due to Exceptional Circumstances

Any request to take a child out of school, must be put in writing to the Head of School.. Children should NOT be taken out of school for holidays during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. There is no entitlement to any leave of absence for a holiday during term time. Thomson House School is in session for 36 weeks per year, so there are ample opportunities to take children on holiday during the remaining 16 weeks.

If the request is for special leave due to exceptional circumstances, then evidence in support of the request must be supplied at this point. Evidence may include, for example, medical reports, wedding/funeral invitations or reports from other professionals. The evidence will be taken into consideration by the Head of School. when assessing the request against the criteria to decide whether the leave will be authorised or not.

Exceptional Circumstances

Exceptional circumstances MUST be stated clearly in the request to the Head of School.. Examples of exceptional circumstances include:

- Weddings or funerals of close family members.
- Consideration will be given to religious festivals – up to 3 days in any one academic year.
- Where a holiday is recommended by qualified professionals as part of the rehabilitation of a parent's or a child's medical issue.

Understanding Barriers to Attendance

Whilst any child may occasionally have time off school because they are too unwell to attend, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any barriers preventing regular attendance are best resolved between the school, the parents and the child. If a parent thinks their child is reluctant to attend school, then we will work with that family to understand the root problem and provide any necessary support. We can use outside agencies to help with this, such as the School Nurse, Mental Health Support Team (MHST), or the relevant Local Authority team/s. Where outside agencies are supporting the family, you may be invited to attend a Team Around the Family meeting (TAF) to consider what is working well and what needs to improve. In addition to the above coordinated multidisciplinary intervention, THS can offer a range of levels of individualised support including home visits, organisational assistance, EWO involvement, community support, Breakfast Club offer, mentoring and mental health support where necessary. An early help plan will be agreed and subsequently reviewed in partnership with families and agencies.

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. High expectations of attendance remain however, 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.

The Consequences of Absence from School

The consequences of absence from school in term time must be considered carefully. The main consequences are:

- The negative impact on the child's learning through missed lessons.
- The missed learning/performing/sports opportunities by the child which are shared by the whole cohort.
- The negative impact on the child's attendance data record, which stays with them throughout their school life – and becomes particularly important when applying to other schools, including secondary schools.
- The poor message it is giving children with regards to the importance of school and education.
- The adverse effect on the child's attainment levels – direct correlation.
- The negative impact on the school's attendance data which is monitored by Ofsted.
- Parents may be required to attend meetings with the Education Welfare Officer who will closely monitor the child's attendance data through a series of meetings between the EWO, the parents and the school.

Legal sanctions

The school or local authority can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

If issued with a fine, or penalty notice, each parent must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority. Penalty notices can be issued by a headteacher, local authority officer or the police.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice may take into account:

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

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

Summary

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a duty to make sure that their children attend school, on time, every day. All school staff and the Governing Body are committed to working with parents and pupils.

Monitoring and review

This policy is monitored by the Education Committee of the governing body and will be reviewed every three years.

Date of Policy: June 2023

Date to be reviewed: June 2026

Appendix 1: attendance codes

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

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

Code	Definition	Scenario
Authorised absence		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma and traveller absence	Pupil from a traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
Unauthorised absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
N	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)

O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed

Code	Definition	Scenario
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody
Z	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
#	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day