

## **Policy & Procedure**

# **Thornton Primary School**



# **Attendance Policy 2025-2026**

This policy is reviewed every year and was agreed by the Governing Body of Thornton Primary School in Autumn 2025 **and will be reviewed again in Autumn 2026**

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Chair of Governors    Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Statutory Policy**

## **This policy has been updated following the new guidance DfE 'Working Together to Improve School Attendance' August 2024.**

### **Introduction**

Thornton Primary School is committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all its pupils and recognises this can only be achieved by supporting and promoting excellent school attendance for all. This is based on the belief that only by attending school regularly and punctually will children and young people be able to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. High attainment depends on good attendance and also supports pupils' social, emotional, mental and physical health and development. The whole school community – pupils, parents and carers, teaching and support staff and school governors – have a responsibility for ensuring good school attendance and have important roles to play. The purpose of the policy is to clarify everyone's part in this.

### **Aims**

This policy aims to show our commitment to meeting our obligations with regards to school attendance, including those laid out in the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on [working together to improve school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\)](#), through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- Setting high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all pupils
- Promoting good attendance and the benefits of good attendance
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence
- Building strong relationships with families to make sure pupils have the support in place to attend school

### **Legislation and Guidance**

This policy is based on the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on [working together to improve school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\)](#) and [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). The guidance is based on the following pieces of legislation, which set 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 \(and 2010, 2011, 2013, and 2016 amendments\)](#)

[The School Attendance \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2024](#)

[The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013 and the 2024 amendment](#)

It also refers to:

[School census guidance](#)

[Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)

[Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools](#)

## **School's roles and responsibilities**

All staff (teaching and support) at Thornton Primary School have a key role to play in supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and will work to provide an environment in which all our pupils are eager to learn, feel valued members of the school community and look forward to coming to school every day. Staff also have a responsibility to set a good example in matters relating to their own attendance and punctuality.

## **Governors' responsibilities**

The governing body has the following responsibilities:

- Setting high expectations of all school leaders, staff, pupils and parents/carers
- Take an active role in attendance improvement, support school to prioritise attendance and work together with leaders to set whole school cultures.
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- Making sure the school's attendance management processes are delivered effectively.
- Making sure the school has high aspirations for all pupils, but adapts processes and support to pupils' individual needs
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data and helping school leaders focus improvement efforts
- Making sure all staff receive adequate training on attendance

## **Senior Attendance Champion Responsibilities**

The designated senior leader (also known as the 'Senior Attendance Champion') is responsible for:

- Leading, championing and improving attendance across the school, helping to develop and maintain a whole school culture promoting good attendance.
- Setting a clear vision for improving and maintaining good attendance
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having a strong grasp of absence data and oversight of absence data analysis
- Regularly monitoring and evaluating progress in attendance
- Establishing and maintaining effective systems for tackling absence, and making sure they are followed by all staff
- Liaising with pupils, parents/carers and external agencies, where needed
- Building close and productive relationships with parents/carers to discuss and tackle attendance issues
- Creating intervention or reintegration plans in partnership with pupils and their parents/carers
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance is Sarah Acton (Headteacher).

## **Attendance Support Administrator's Responsibilities**

The Senior Attendance Champion is provided with day to day support in their role by the Attendance Support Administrator. They are responsible for:

- Supporting the Senior Attendance Champion in promoting high levels of attendance and helping to develop the school culture promoting good attendance.
- Completing accurate attendance registers and admission records.
- Liaising with the Attendance Support Officer
- Providing data to the Senior Attendance Champion and leadership team, to identify patterns and trends and understand which pupils and pupil cohorts to focus on.
- The Attendance Support Administrator is Karen Yates.

## **Parents/Carers Responsibilities**

- Ensure their child attends every day the school is open except when a statutory reason applies.
- Notify the school as soon as possible when their child has to be unexpectedly absent (e.g. sickness).
- Only request leave of absence in exceptional circumstances and do so in advance.
- Book any medical appointments around the school day where possible.
- Where pupils are becoming at risk of becoming persistently absent, work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance.
- Proactively engage with the support offered to prevent the need for more formal support.
- For identified persistently absent pupils, work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance.
- Proactively engage with the formal support offered – including any parenting contract or voluntary early help plan to prevent the need for legal intervention.
- For pupils with medical conditions or SEND with poor attendance, work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance.
- Proactively engage with the support offered.
- For parents with children who have a social worker, looked after pupils or previously looked after pupils, work with the school and local authority to help them understand the child's barriers to attendance – including the development of Personal Education Plans.
- Proactively engage with the support offered.

School will regularly update parents on their child's attendance.

## **Pupils' responsibilities**

All pupils should be aware of the importance of regular school attendance. If they are having difficulties that may prevent them from attending school regularly, they should speak to a trusted adult in school. For pupils of Primary School age, the main responsibility for attendance rests with the parents.

## **Registration**

The school is required to mark the attendance register twice each day: once at the start of the day and once during the afternoon session. Thornton Primary School uses electronic registration. Teachers or an authorised member of support staff will mark the register with a 'present' code or not present code. Staff in the office will check all not present codes and replace them if

necessary before uploading to the pupil database. Classroom teachers are responsible for completing the attendance registers.

The register will be called promptly at **8.50 am** and **1.00 pm** by each class teacher.

The registers will close at **9.20am** and **1.30 pm**. Any pupil who arrives **after** the closing of the register will count as **absent**. Pupils who arrive after 8.50am, but before 9.20am or 1.30 pm, will be counted as (L) late before register closes. This is a **present** code but will be dealt with under the school's policy on punctuality and lateness.

**Categorising absence**

A mark will be made in respect of each child during registration. Any child who is not present at this time will be marked unauthorised absent unless leave has been granted by the school in advance or the reason for absence is already known and accepted by the school as legitimate. Where a reason for absence is given and accepted by the school at a later stage, the register will be amended in such a way that the original entry and the amendment / correction are distinguishable. The decision about whether the absence should be authorised or unauthorised rests with the Head teacher.

Thornton Primary School recognises the clear links between attendance and attainment, and attendance and safeguarding children. It recognises that inappropriate authorisation of absence can be as damaging to a child's education as authorised absence, will potentially send a message to parents that any reason for non-school attendance is acceptable and can render children extremely vulnerable to harm. If absence is frequent or continuous, and except where a child is clearly unwell, staff at Thornton Primary School will therefore challenge parents about the need and reasons for their children's absence and will encourage them to keep absences to a minimum. A note or explanation from a pupil's home does not mean an absence becomes authorised. The decision whether or not to authorise an absence **will always rest with the school.**

Authorised absences is when school has accepted the explanation offered as satisfactory justification for the absence or given approval in advance for such an absence made on the form in Appendix 2. Unauthorised absences is when the school has not received a reason for absence or has not approved a child's leave of absence following a parents' request.

Some examples to support parents and carers:

Authorised absences	Unauthorised absences
genuine illness of the pupil; hospital/dental/doctor appointment for the pupil  major religious observances  visits to prospective new schools  external exams or educational assessments  For further examples see Appendix 1	shopping /day trip / visit to a theme park;  birthday treats  oversleeping due to a late night  looking after other children / other family member  appointments for other family members  holidays during term time

The school can, if needed, change an authorised absence to an unauthorised absence and vice versa if new information is presented. Any changes will be communicated to parents/carers. An example of this would be where a parent states a child is unwell but on return to school there is evidence that they have been on holiday.

Parents/carers should where possible book medical/dental appointments out of school hours. However, where this is not possible, we ask parents to return children to school or afterwards or send them in before the appointment.

## **Reporting Absence**

Parents are asked to telephone or inform the school via Weduc by 9 o'clock on the first day of absence, indicating the reasons and likely length of time of the absence. If this telephone call is not received, Thornton Primary School has in place a system of first-day calling. This means that parents will be telephoned on the first day a pupil is absent without explanation to establish a reason for the absence. This helps to identify at an early stage pupils who do not have a good reason for absence. Where it is not possible to make contact with parents on the first day of absence, the school will try continue to try to make contact, attempting secondary contact points.

Parents/carers should continue to call the school on each day of absence, unless agreed otherwise.

If a pupil is considered vulnerable, or where attendance is already being supported, at the discretion of the Senior Attendance Champion, a home visit may be made.

## **Working Together to Improve School Attendance (WTISA)**

From August 19th, 2024, WTISA aims are statutory. New regulations came into force about unauthorised leave of absence from school. The aims of the changes are explained by DfE as follows:

- Make penalty notices more effective by ensuring they are only used in cases where they are the most appropriate tool to change parental behaviour and improve attendance.
- Prioritise the support first approach by expecting support to be used in cases where it is appropriate and using penalty notices in cases where support is not appropriate (e.g., a term time holiday) or support has not been engaged with.
- Improve consistency in the use of penalty notices across England by introducing a new national threshold of 5 days of unauthorised absences in a 10-week period. Please note that this is the equivalent of 10 sessions, a morning and afternoon count as 2 sessions and they do not need to run consecutively.
- Improve the deterrent effect of a penalty notice by increasing the amount of the fine and introducing a new national limit of 2 penalty notices within a 3-year period to break cycles of repeat offending.

## **Unauthorised Absences/Penalty Notices**

The school will only seek to use penalty notices through Leicestershire Local Authority

Before issuing a penalty notice, the school will consider the individual case, including:

- Whether the national threshold for considering a penalty notice has been met (10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks)
- Whether a penalty notice is the best available tool to improve attendance for that pupil
- Whether further support, a notice to improve or another legal intervention would be a more appropriate solution
- Whether any obligations that the school has under the Equality Act 2010 make issuing a penalty notice inappropriate

Each parent who is liable for the pupil's offence(s) can be issued with a penalty notice, but this will usually only be the parent/parents who allowed the absence.

The payment must be made directly to the local authority, regardless of who issues the notice. If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

If issued with a **first** penalty notice, the parent must pay £80 within 21 days, or £160 within 28 days.

If a **second** penalty notice is issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil, the parent must pay £160 if paid within 28 days.

A **third** penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within 3 years of the date of the issue of the first penalty notice. In a case where the national threshold is met for a third time within those 3 years, alternative action will be taken instead.

A penalty notice may also be issued where parents allow their child to be present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification, during the first 5 days of a suspension or exclusion (where the school has notified the parents that the pupil must not be present in a public place on that day). These penalty notices are not included in the National Framework, not subject to the same considerations about support being provided, and do not count towards the limit as part of the escalation process.

In these cases, the parent must pay £60 within 21 days, or £120. (See Appendix 3)

### Notices to improve

If the national threshold has been met and support is appropriate, but parents do not engage with offers of support, the school may offer a notice to improve to give parents a final chance to engage with support.

Notices to improve will be issued in line with processes set out in the local code of conduct for the local authority area in which the pupil attends school.

They will include:

- Details of the pupil's attendance record and of the offences
- The benefits of regular attendance and the duty of parents under [section 7 of the Education Act 1996](#)
- Details of the support provided so far
- Opportunities for further support, or to access previously provided support that was not engaged with
- A clear warning that a penalty notice may be issued if attendance doesn't improve within the improvement period, along with details of what sufficient improvement looks like, which will be decided on a case-by-case basis

- A clear timeframe of between 3 and 6 weeks for the improvement period
- The grounds on which a penalty notice may be issued before the end of the improvement period

### Collection and analysis of data

The Senior Attendance Champion will ensure that attendance data is complete, accurate, analysed and reported to parents and the governing body. (See para. above). The report should include commentary on the trajectory and the school target. The data will inform the school's future practice to improve attendance and prevent disaffection.

Attendance is monitored by year group, class group and by reasons for absence. It is also analysed by gender, ethnicity, pupils with special educational needs and those who are vulnerable to poor attendance.

Accurate attendance returns are made to the DfE within the stipulated time frame.

### Systems and strategies for managing and improving attendance

Attendance has a very high profile at Thornton Primary School and is regularly discussed at assemblies and in classes. Parents are regularly reminded in newsletters and school meetings about the importance of good attendance and its links to attainment.

### Support First Approach

The Senior Attendance Champion/ Head teacher is responsible for the management of attendance, policy and systems to ensure that the school intervenes where attendance becomes a concern at an early stage.

When attendance has started to drop, parents will be sent an **initial letter** for information purposes, informing them of the current percentage of their child's attendance.

Where there is an emerging pattern of a pupil's absence (or absence falling lower than 95%) the school will send **Letter 1** to parents, to seek partnership working to improve attendance. If on the next monitoring cycle (daily and formally in 4-week intervals), attendance has not improved, **Letter 2** may be issued. A request may be made to hold a meeting with parents to discuss the reasons for the absence and support that could be offered. Advice may be sought from the school's Education Welfare Officer at this stage.

Should attendance not improve despite support being offered, the school may request to see 'medical evidence' of a pupil being unwell for any further absences. This can include a text message from the GP, a prescription or a hospital letter.

Letter 3 will be issued if attendance continues to decline after 4 weeks (or before if necessary) of the parent consultation meeting or following letter 2. At this stage, a referral to the Education Welfare Officer may be made for support. A parent contract or voluntary early help plan to prevent the need for legal intervention may be agreed. At this stage, a referral to Leicestershire Local Authority Inclusion Service may also be made.

The Senior Attendance Champion reserves the right to escalate through the process of letters and meetings on a case-by-case basis.

## **Pupils at risk of becoming persistently absent**

The school will work with each identified pupil and their parents/ carers to understand and address the reasons for absence, including any in-school barriers to attendance. Where out of school barriers are identified, the school will signpost and support access to any required services in the first instance. If the issue persists, the school will take an active part in the multi-agency effort with the Local Authority and other partners.

## **Pupils whose absence has become persistent**

Where absence becomes persistent (attendance of 90% or less), the school will put additional targeted support in place to remove any barriers. Where necessary, this includes working with partners. Where there is a lack of engagement, the school will hold more formal conversations with parents and be clear about the potential need for legal intervention in future. Where support is not working, being engaged with or appropriate, the school will work with the Local Authority on legal intervention. Where there are safeguarding concerns, the school will intensify support through statutory children's social care and may make regular home visits. The school is also committed to working with other schools in the local area, such as schools previously attended, the schools of any siblings, or feeder secondary schools.

## **Irregular attendance – penalty notices**

Pupils are expected to arrive at school on time every day. It is very disruptive to their own education, and that of others in their class, if they are late. Pupils who arrive after the register closes will be marked absent for the whole session (a session being a morning or an afternoon). This absence will be unauthorised unless the school is satisfied that there is a legitimate reason for the pupil to be late (in this case, the absent mark will be changed to a late mark). A pupil who is persistently absent by reason of lateness will be dealt with in the same way as other student with an emerging pattern of absence. Penalty notice fines will be considered by the Head teacher, where there have been 10 sessions of absence in a 10-week period. A session is 1 mark for the day e.g. a full day carries 2 marks- morning and afternoon. Penalty notice fines will be issued to each parent, for each child who is absent. See Appendix 3 for more information.

## **My child is avoiding coming to school, what should I do?**

Children are sometimes reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best tackled through partnership with the school, parents/carers and of course, in discussion with the child. If a child is reluctant to attend school, excusing their absence or giving in to pressure from them to be excused from school, is rarely a long-term solution. On the contrary, this gives the impression that attendance does not matter and may make school avoidance more of a problem.

Contact your child's teacher immediately and be open about your worries. Your child could be avoiding school for a number of reasons – difficulties with school work, friendship issues, family difficulties. It is important that we identify the reason for your child's reluctance to attend school and work together to tackle the problem. In some cases, you may find it helpful to discuss the circumstances of your child's difficulties with another professional such as a doctor or Early Help. The pastoral team at Thornton Primary School are able to work with multi agencies and can sign post families to the right service if families are open and honest about the worries and concerns they have. Parents/ carers can also self-refer to the [Family Help team at Leicestershire Local Authority](#) or [Family Lives](#), who offer free support and parent mentoring on any aspect of parenting for those living in Leicestershire.

### **Support for pupils with medical conditions or SEND with poor attendance**

As an inclusive school, Thornton Primary School maintains the same ambition for attendance for all pupils. The school will ensure joined up pastoral support and where required, will put in place additional support and reasonable adjustments, such as an individual healthcare plan if applicable. The school will ensure the provision outlined in the pupil's EHCP is accessed. The school will work with wider services and external partners, making timely referrals, as required.

### **Conclusion**

Regular school attendance is a necessary contributor to ensuring successful outcomes for pupils

- attendance at school supports children's emotional and social health and development
- the school curriculum teaches children to be healthy
- schools and the LA have a statutory duty to promote the safety and welfare of children
- the best way to safeguard children is to ensure they attend school regularly
- good school attendance supports children in reaching their maximum potential and enjoying the fulfilment this brings
- membership of a school community builds confidence, gives children a sense of belonging and teaches them to contribute to and be responsible for the well-being of others
- good school attendance supports engagement in further education, employment or training in the future, which in turn helps to support a prosperous and fulfilling life-style

### **Equality Statement**

At Thornton Primary School, we actively seek to encourage equity and equality through our teaching. As such, we seek to advance the equality of opportunity between people who share any of the following characteristic:

- gender;
- ethnicity;
- disability;
- religion or belief;
- sexual orientation;
- gender reassignment;
- pregnancy or maternity.

The use of stereotypes under any of the above headings will always be challenged.

### **Inclusion**

Our school is an inclusive school. We aim to make all pupils feel included in all our activities. We make all our teaching fully inclusive. We recognise the entitlement of all pupils to a balanced,

broadly-based curriculum. We have systems in place for early identification of barriers to their learning and participation so that they can engage in school activities with all other pupils. We acknowledge the need for high expectations and suitable targets for all children.

## **Appendix 1: Other Types of Absence**

### Religious observance

Where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the student's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart.

### Absence through child participation in public performances, including theatre, film or television work and modelling

Parents of a child performer can seek leave of absence from the school for their child to take part in a performance. Authorisation will be at the Head's discretion, and they will wish to discuss with you the nature and frequency of the absence and how learning will continue if absence occurs. Any absence recorded as part of a child's participation in a public performance is recorded as C, an authorised absence.

### Absence through competing at regional, county or national level for sport

Parents of able athletes can seek leave of absence from the school for their child to take part in regional, county, national and international events, and competitions. Authorisation will be at the discretion of the headteacher(s), and they will then discuss the nature and frequency of the absence with you and how learning will continue if absence occurs. Permission for your child to leave early or arrive late to attend coaching and training sessions is also at the discretion of the headteacher(s) and is not likely to be approved if it is a regular event unless the sports club or association is providing an education tutor as part of their coaching.

### Gypsy, Roma, Traveller and Showman families

The absence of a child from a Traveller family that has left the area may be authorised if the absence is for work purposes only and it is believed that the family intends to return. To ensure the continuity of learning for Traveller children, dual registration is allowed. That means that a school cannot remove a Traveller child from the school roll while they are travelling. When the Traveller is away, the home school holds the place open and records the absence as authorised through the T code. Distance learning packs for Traveller children are not an alternative to attendance at school.

**Appendix 2****REQUEST FOR LEAVE OF ABSENCE FORM****A GUIDE FOR PARENTS**

The school will consider every application individually; its policy is NOT to grant leave of absence other than in the most exceptional circumstances. Time off school for family holidays **is not a right**.

An application must be made in writing, with appropriate evidence, **in advance** of the intended request for leave of absence.

The law states that schools should not authorise leave of absence unless:

- ✓ An application has been made **in advance** by the parent with whom the pupil normally resides AND
- ✓ The Head teacher considers that there are exceptional circumstances relating to the application.

Special circumstances do not include the circumstances such as:

- wanting to take a family holiday;
- cheaper cost of holiday;
- availability of the desired accommodation;
- poor weather experienced in school holiday periods;
- overlap with beginning or end of term.
- Friends or family organising a holiday without realising when school holidays fall.
- Taking a Friday off to avoid traffic when going away for the weekend.
- A day off for a special occasion (e.g. Birthday)

The school will respond to all requests for a leave of absence in writing giving the reasons for the decision.

**No absences will be authorised:**

During the week of, or the week before Year 6 SATS for any reason other than illness.

**In brief, the regulations mean that:**

- Parents cannot demand a leave of absence as an automatic right.
- The headteacher may ask for additional information before making a decision.
- The headteacher will not apply blanket policies to approve/reject all applications.
- All requests must be considered on their own merits but there must be special circumstances before the request is granted.
- Extended periods of absence will only be granted in exceptional circumstances.
- Leave of absence may be granted for special circumstances that are a 'one off' special event, this is at the discretion of the headteacher.

## REQUEST FOR LEAVE OF ABSENCE FORM

Please **complete all shaded boxes on this form**

Name of School	<b>Thornton Primary School</b>
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Name of Child(ren)	Year Group(s)

Name of Parent(s)/Carer(s)

Please state the reason for the leave requested. Please give as much information as possible. The Headteacher may request additional information before making a decision.

**Dates requested:** .....**until** .....

<p style="color: purple; text-align: center;"><u>Signature</u> of Parents/Carers with Legal Responsibility for the Child</p>	Date

✂-----

----- *For office use only*

Child(ren)'s name(s)

Dates Requested	
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	Authorised	Not Authorised		Subject to further information from parents
THIS <u>ABSENCE REQUEST</u> IS				

**Reasons** for the decision\*

	Name	Signed		Date
<b>Head teacher</b>				

\*please refer to the 'Guide for Parents'

Appendix 3

# Penalty Notices for unauthorised absences: What you need to know about the changes.

With the introduction of the new National Framework for Penalty Notices, the following changes will come into force for unauthorised absences that occur after 19<sup>th</sup> August 2024.

### 5 Consecutive Days of Term Time Leave.

Penalty Notice fines will be issued for term time leave of 5 or more consecutive days, and for fewer days where this has happened before.

### 10 Sessions of Unauthorised Absence in a 10-week period.

Penalty Notice fines will be considered when there have been 10 sessions of absence in a 10-week period.

### Per Parent, Per Child

Penalty Notice fines will be issued to each parent, for each child who was absent.

For example: 3 siblings absent for term time leave will result in each parent receiving 3 separate fines.

#### First Offence

The first time a Penalty Notice is issued for Term Time Leave or irregular attendance the amount will be:

£160 per parent, per child when paid within 28 days.

Reduced to £80 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days.

#### Second Offence (within 3 years)

The second time a Penalty Notice is issued for Term Time Leave or irregular attendance the amount will be:

£160 per parent, per child when paid within 28 days.

(No option to pay at £80 level)

#### Third offence and Any Further Offences (within 3 years)

The third time an offence is committed for Term Time Leave or irregular attendance a Penalty Notice will not be issued. The case will proceed to the Magistrates' court.

Magistrate's fines can be up to £2,500 per parent, per child.



Please consult your school's attendance policy and speak with your school if you are thinking of taking your child out of school during term-time. It is likely you will need to make a written request to take your child out of school and any leave of absence will need to be agreed by your Headteacher before it is taken.