

Thornton Primary School

Attendance Policy

2023-24

Approved by the Governing Body on
28th September 2023

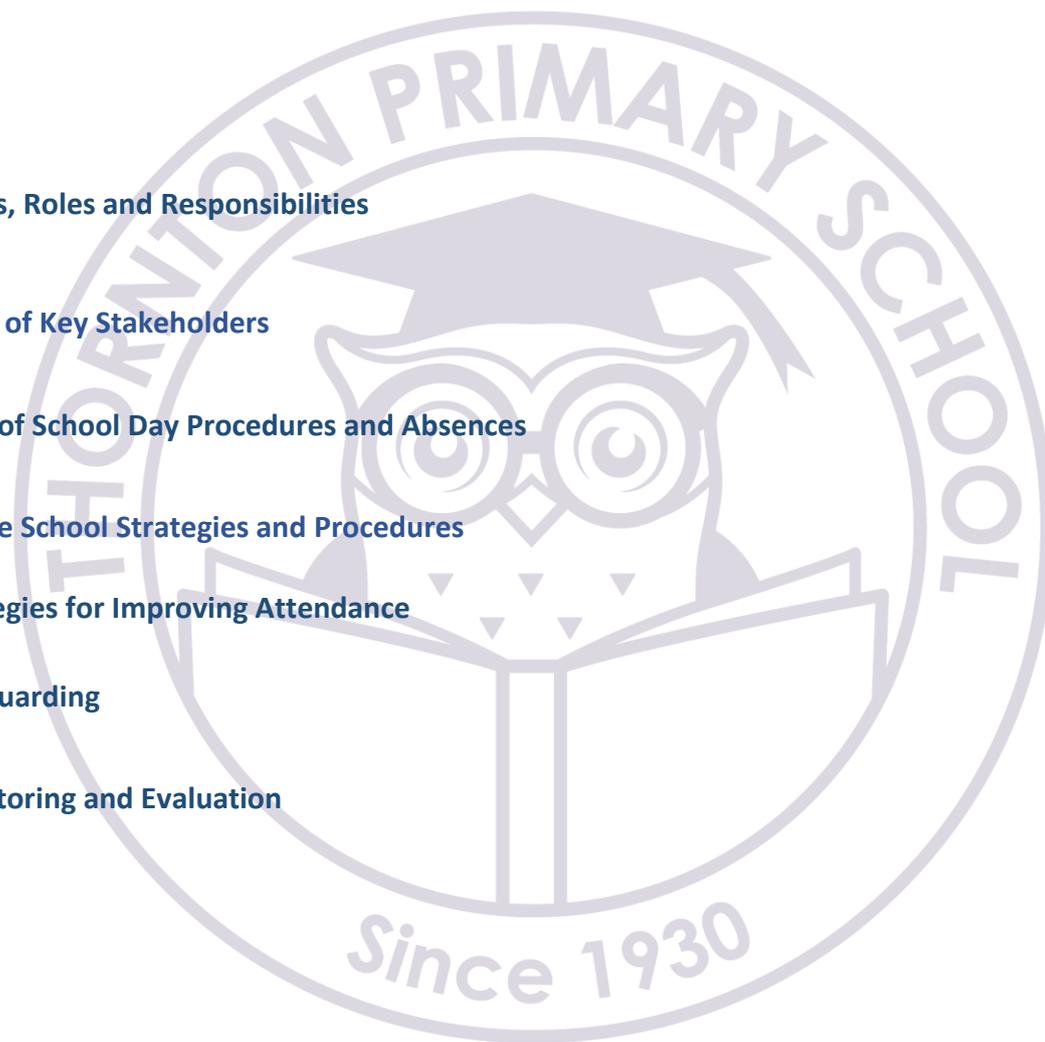
(Chair of Governors)

Date of next review: September 2024

Thornton Primary School

Attendance Policy

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Thornton Primary School

Attendance Policy

1. Aims

- Being at school every day is important to a child's education. They benefit from well-planned sequences of lessons designed to ensure that they make the best possible progress. If they are frequently absent this learning is disrupted and makes it difficult to keep up.
- Everyone that comes to Thornton is expected to aim for 97% attendance. We understand that everyone gets sick from time to time but minor coughs, colds or aches and pains should not stop a child from coming to school.
- To achieve this aim, we will work with parents and children, offering support in school and through support services where necessary. Where attendance is a concern for individual children/parents, they will also be set individual targets.

2. Rights, Roles and Responsibilities

- Every member of staff in school is responsible for ensuring good attendance punctuality of all children.
- The Attendance Officer and Senior Leadership Team (SLT) specifically work to improve children's attendance, including the Pastoral Manager and the School Nurse.
- Parents/carers have a legal duty to send their children to school each day that school is open, and school has a legal duty to monitor and report the attendance of all children. In accordance with LA policy, leave of absence in term time is only granted in exceptional circumstances. Each case is reviewed by the Headteacher on its merits, and records of leave are kept for individual children. It is school policy that no holiday or extended holiday absence is authorised under any circumstances.
- School believes a partnership approach to attendance is vital: SLT, governors and the attendance team will work with parents/carers and pupils, and support services where necessary, to achieve the best possible outcomes for pupils.

3. Roles of Key Stakeholders

Governors

- To monitor progress towards school targets for attendance.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of the Attendance Policy

Senior Leadership Team

- To ensure that effective systems are in place to accurately record individual pupil, group and whole school patterns.
- To discuss and disseminate to class teachers the attendance of children whose attendance is causing concern.
- To analyse attendance codes to inform action planning.
- To contact parents and meet with them to discuss how their child's attendance could be improved, providing support for the parent or child where appropriate.

- To ensure that those children with expected attendance, or improving attendance, are rewarded as outlined in the policy.
- To ensure appropriate support and intervention for pupils with low attendance to reduce impact on learning.
- To feedback to Governors and provide information for them to evaluate the success of the policy and practice.
- To follow the FAST-track to Attendance procedure which is the legal process schools should use to tackle ongoing unauthorised absence
- To follow the Leave in Term Time (Legal) Process for cases of unauthorised leave in term time of 10 days or more or 4 days of continuous G codes and 12 sessions of other unauthorised absence prior to that.

Attendance Team / Administration Staff

- To prepare, manage and co-ordinate the use of the attendance module in SIMs.
- To prepare attendance reports when requested by the Headteacher.
- To record names of pupils who arrive late via the Inventory System. Pupils late after 9.30am will receive a 'U' mark meaning they are considered absent for that session.
- To record reasons for absence on the system.
- To send a text message, and then, if necessary, call parents on first day of absence if no reason has been given, ensuring that priority is given firstly to those children considered 'vulnerable'.
- To ask parents for evidence of illness if required and record on pupil's attendance.
- Follow the Local Authority 'Children Missing in Education' guidelines if required.

Class Teacher

- To provide an accurate record of the attendance of each child in their class, completing the register twice daily at the designated time.
- To promote good attendance, which may include questioning children and/or parents/carers as to reasons for absences when the child has known absence concerns
- To notify the Senior Leadership team should a child's attendance cause a concern.
- To ensure that children who experience difficulties with attendance and/or punctuality receive targeted support to minimise the impact on their learning.

4. Start of School Day Procedures and Absences

The bell goes for the start of the school day at 8.30 a.m. The last bell goes at 8.45 a.m. Class teachers register children in class at 8.50 a.m. If a child arrives after 9 a.m. they are marked as late. Children who arrive late or after the register has closed, report to the main reception, where they sign in using Inventory, our electronic system. Children who are late after 9:30 a.m. receive a 'U' mark, meaning they are considered absent for that session.

Absence

Every half day absence from school has to be classified by the school, (not by the parents) as either 'authorised' or 'unauthorised'. This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required.

Authorised Absence

An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for legitimate reasons and the school has received notification from a parent/carer. ☒ Only the school can authorise an absence. Parents/Carers do not have this authority. Consequently, not all absences outlined by parents/carers will be classified as authorised.

Unauthorised Absence

An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent/carer.

If a child is absent

- Parents/Carers are asked to let the school know if their child is going to be absent. The absence is recorded on SIMs for all telephone messages received regarding a child's non-attendance at school.
- After the close of registers, the Attendance Officer then checks the absence list for accuracy by visiting each classroom to ensure children marked absent have not arrived into class late without their attendance being recorded.
- Where children are absent for registration, and school has not been notified of an absence, parents/carers are telephoned by the Attendance Officer. All reasons for absence are recorded onto our SIMs system.
- Text messages are sent immediately to parents/carers that are unreachable when contacted by telephone in the first instance.
- If the school believes there might be a Safeguarding concern regarding a child's absence, the school may carry out a 'safe and well' check at the known address for that child; this is likely to be carried out by at least one Designated Safeguarding Lead alongside another member of staff.
- If there is no response from the 'safe and well' visit, the school may follow any of the following procedures:
 - Contact other Emergency Contact numbers to see if they know of the whereabouts of the child and to request that they try and contact the parent/carer and request that they contact the school to explain the child's absence
 - Contact the Police and ask for them to carry out a check on the property
 - Contact CASS to outline the situation and request advice
 - Contact the Child Missing in Education Team to outline the situation and request advice, potentially completing a referral to the team.

Requests for Leave of absence/extended leave

The Governing Body have agreed that holidays will not be permitted during term time. Parents/carers should be strongly discouraged from arranging holidays here or abroad, or visits to their country of family origin, during term time. If they do go then they need to provide school with a copy of the tickets for both the outward journey and the return journey, as well as updated contact details for whilst they are abroad, including telephone numbers and addresses for where they will be residing.

Information regarding this is available to parents during the school induction process and as enquiries are made by parents/carers regarding leave in term time. Following attendance guidelines issued by Birmingham City Council, the school will follow procedures whereby parents might be issued with a Penalty Notice should a child's leave of absence reach levels as indicated in the guidelines.

https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/info/50157/education_legal_intervention_referral/690/pupil_attendance_advice_for_schools_and_professionals

5. Whole School Strategies and Procedures

- Whole school pupil attendance data is reviewed, analysed and acted upon on at least a weekly basis.
- When a child has attendance below 90% they have 'Persistent Absence' which is a sign of parental neglect. Children with such low attendance are at risk of academic underachievement.
- However, it is equally important for the school to identify those children whose attendance is between 90% and 95% as this may easily fall into the 'persistent absence' category. As such, the school includes these children in their monitoring process and procedures.

- The school has clear procedures and triggers for action based upon data analysis and contextual information for attendance, and pupil attendance is monitored for perceived absence risk:
 - 'Low-Risk' pupils are those that are considered to be only a minor concern with regards absence; they are likely to have attendance between 90% and 96%, or have lower attendance due to a single case of 'Leave in Term Time' which has affected their attendance. There will be no evidence of patterns emerging in attendance, and historical attendance has been good.
 - 'Mid-Risk' pupils are those that the school is more concerned about with regard to absence; they are likely to have attendance between 80% and 90%, and there are regular absences over time. The school may also have spotted patterns emerging in the days that the child is having off school, or there is evidence of unauthorised absences occurring. It may also have been the case that the child's attendance in previous years had been a cause for concern.
 - 'High-Risk' pupils are those who are concerning the school greatly with regards to their attendance; they are likely to have attendance below 80% with frequent absences over time. Despite regular conversations being had with the parent/carer of the child, there does not appear to be a rapid increase in attendance. There is often examples where the child has been registered as unauthorised because staff in the school do not acknowledge the reason for absence given as being accurate.
 - The absence risk identified by Senior Leaders and the Attendance Team will determine how to best support improving the pupil's attendance.
 - For low-risk absence concerns, the School Nurse, Pastoral Manager, Heads of Year and Senior Leaders will intervene on a case by case basis to establish how the child can be supported in improving their attendance.
 - For mid-risk absence concerns, a general attendance letter expressing concern is sent when a pupil's attendance falls below 90%. Where relevant, written medical evidence is requested to be shared with school for any further periods of illness. If attendance fails to improve to above 90%, a second letter is sent inviting parents/carers to a meeting with Senior Leaders. They discuss the reasons for absence and offer support and guidance in order to improve the child's attendance.
 - For high-risk absence concerns, an individual attendance action plan is put in place by senior leaders which may trigger a range of responses e.g.
 - Further meeting requested by Heads of Year linking pupil progress and attendance.
 - Home visit made by Senior Leaders/DSLs and/or Inclusion Team
 - Early Help put in place with the family to provide additional support
 - Pupils/parents placed on the Attendance Fast Track programme resulting in legal actions
 - Referral made to Children's Services

- The LA policy is followed which supports allowing authorised absence for Religious observance. The guideline states "A school must treat absences as authorised when it is due to Religious Observance." Any other days taken for travelling or continuing celebrations will not be authorised by the school.

6. Strategies for Improving Attendance

- In order to maintain the high importance of attendance, throughout the year there are:
 - Weekly reflections on attendance during assemblies.
 - Year group attendance competitions are displayed on the display board in the dining hall.
 - Attendance figures published in the school newsletter.
 - Visits by SLT to classes with high attendance to praise and reward them.
- School follows a positive approach to attendance and employs a range of strategies to improve and maintain attendance.

CLASS ATTENDANCE AWARDS

- **Class Attendance Award (Weekly):** 100% or 97% and above attendance award - Weekly class certificate awarded by SLT and promoted in the school newsletter, as well as a voucher to spend on class playtime equipment.
- **Best Class Attendance Award (Half Termly):** The class who has the highest attendance in the school for each half term will be rewarded with a voucher to spend on class playtime equipment. In line with the school's promotion of British Values, they will vote to decide how to spend it (e.g. on new class resources. a picnic or a VIP cinema experience)! This has a positive impact on raising whole school attendance.
- **Magic 20 Raising Class Attendance Award (Termly):** This initiative targets classes with the poorest attendance across the school. Identified classes are invited to participate in the initiative that challenges them to attend school for 20 consecutive days and are awarded with a certificate and a small prize upon successful completion. This has a positive impact on raising whole school attendance.
- **Most Improved Class Attendance Award (Termly):** The class with the most improved class attendance, once successfully completing the magic 20 class initiative, is also awarded a voucher. Again, in line with the school's promotion of British Values, they will vote to decide how to spend it (e.g. on new class resources. a picnic or a VIP cinema experience)! This has a positive impact on raising whole school attendance.

INDIVIDUAL PUPIL ATTENDANCE AWARDS

- **Magic 20 Raising Attendance Award (Termly):** Children with attendance previously below 90% are invited to a special celebration assembly and awarded a prize and certificate if they attend school for 20 consecutive days.
- **Magic 20 Raising Punctuality Award (Termly):** Children with poor punctuality are invited to a special celebration assembly and awarded a prize and a certificate if they attend school on time for 20 consecutive days.
- **Attendance Golden Ticket Initiative (Termly):** Children are awarded a Golden Ticket when they achieve the following Attendance targets:

Autumn Term Bronze Award – Children who achieve the school target of 97% are awarded a certificate and a treat (pantomime, magic show, VIP cinema experience or a disco).

Spring Term Silver Award – Children who achieve 98% and above attendance are awarded a certificate and a treat (pantomime, magic show, VIP cinema experience or a disco).

Summer Term Gold Award- Children who achieve 100% attendance for the whole academic year are attend a special attendance award celebration assembly, and also enjoy an attendance trip.

WORKING WITH OUR PARENTS

it is the parents'/carers' responsibility to ensure that their child comes to school. We talk to our parents/carers about how they can make sure their children are fit enough to come to school during the Induction meetings at the beginning of the academic year; this session is supported by the School Nurse who outlines how to support their child at home to prevent absence from school, as well as outlining when it might or might not be necessary for a child to be kept off school.

Attendance figures for individual children are discussed with parents during termly parents' evenings and are published on the end of year reports. They are also used to support meetings with parents when there are individual concerns around attendance.

7. Safeguarding

When a child is not at school there can be a safeguarding risk. The Safeguarding of pupils is Thornton's highest priority. Please see the Safeguarding Policy for general safeguarding issues and procedures.

The attendance of all children considered vulnerable or potentially vulnerable will be checked on a daily basis by a nominated member of staff (Attendance Officer, and then a DSL who is either a member of SLT or Pastoral Manager) to safeguard the children and to maintain an up to date analysis. If no contact can be made by the school, the DSL will assess if further action is required, this may include making a home visit or contacting external agencies.

When attendance falls below 90% without any reasonable circumstances, or there is a pattern of continual absence on certain days, the case will be referred to the DSL.

All attendance related concerns are logged on the school's safeguarding system CPOMS.

All applications for holiday/extended leave will be assessed in terms of safeguarding risks. This particularly includes the risk of FGM (female genital mutilation) or being exposed to radicalisation or extremism (see The Prevent Strategy). Any applications considered high risk would be referred to the DSL.

In certain circumstances, if it was felt that a child was at risk of harm, there may be a need to contact other agencies without first contacting parents, such as Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). This decision is a legal obligation, not a personal decision, to safeguard ALL children.

Children with health needs who cannot attend school

Please see the statutory guidance that the school follows for this group of pupils:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/269469/health_needs_guidance_-_revised_may_2013_final.pdf

8. Monitoring and Evaluation

- Absence is monitored daily via telephone calls for all absences where the school has not been notified and text messages.
- Reports are in place to track weekly figures for attendance, punctuality and persistent absence and paper copies of these are stored in a folder located in the main school office.
- Weekly overviews are monitored for each class, as well as individuals within those classes.
- Termly analysis is made of data for attendance, punctuality and persistent absence. This includes analysing for different groups including gender, DA and SEND. This analysis will influence future action taken.
- This policy will be reviewed every year, or earlier if considered necessary.

