

Attendance

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Contents

Attendance - Our Vision through our Values	2
Operating the Policy	3
Recording attendance.....	4
Request for leave of absence	8
Understanding types of absence	8
Penalty Notices for non-attendance and other legal measures.....	8
Other Absences	10

Attendance - Our Vision through our Values

At Thornden School, we believe attendance is just a statistic—it is a reflection of how our students experience school. We are committed to creating a culture where every child *wants* to come to school because they feel they *belong*, they know we *care*, they are encouraged to *aspire*, and they are supported to *succeed*. These values are not just aspirational—they guide our practice.

- **Belong** – Students are more likely to attend when they feel seen, known, and valued. From their first day, we ensure that all pupils feel part of our school community. Our tutor programme, student leadership opportunities, enrichment offer and mentoring through Thornden Champions all help build relationships that anchor students to school life. We understand that those who do not attend often feel disconnected—our job is to rebuild that connection.
- **Care** – We recognise that behind every attendance issue is a story. For some, it may be anxiety, SEND needs, or a complex home situation. Our pastoral and inclusion teams work proactively to understand and respond with compassion. We use early check-ins, CPOMS logs, HOY conversations, and the Thornden Hub to offer timely and layered support. We do not wait for a pattern of absence to emerge before stepping in—we act early, showing families that we are partners in their child’s journey.
- **Aspire** – We set high expectations for every student because we believe in their potential. Attendance is monitored because it is a gateway to opportunity. We build aspiration through curriculum content, with our whole-school emphasis on adaptive teaching, high participation and stretch-and-support strategies ensures students feel capable and successful in every lesson. Our curriculum builds aspiration through personal development, careers education, and texts that challenge stereotypes and widen horizons and by making explicit links between attendance and life chances. From Year 7 to Year 11, our message is clear: if you are in school, you are in a position to grow, lead, and shape your future. Attendance is not just about being present; it’s about being ready to grow.
- **Succeed** – Our aim is for every child to succeed—not just academically, but socially, emotionally, and personally. We use a robust tiered system of support, rooted in evidence-based interventions and structured around regular reviews. Success is not defined by perfection, but by progress. Our goal is long-term: sustainable, supported success for every learner. Whether a student is facing medical absence, mental health challenges, or SEND-related barriers, our systems are designed to guide them forward. We celebrate every improvement, however small, and continue to build personalised support for those who need it most.

Attendance is not just about being present—it is about feeling present, known, and supported.

By embedding attendance in every aspect of school life—from the curriculum to wellbeing, pastoral care to teaching practice—we ensure that our values of *Belong, Care, Aspire, and Succeed* are not just spoken, but lived and that we are working hard to close the gaps between our most vulnerable students and their peers with a renewed focus on SEND, disadvantaged and those with mental health-related absences.

Operating the Policy

2.1 Promoting good attendance

The foundation for good attendance is a strong partnership between the school, parents/carers and the child. The Home School Agreement contains details of how we will work with parents/carers and our expectations of what parents/carers will need to do to ensure a child achieves good attendance. To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Provide information on matters related to attendance on our website and via email if needed.
- Report to parents/carers on how a child is performing in school and share attendance and punctuality information.
- Contact parents/carers if a child is absent and parent/carers have not made us aware of this.
- Contact parents/carers if we have concerns about the attendance or punctuality of their child.
- Celebrate good attendance through our school awards (where appropriate)

2.1 Roles and responsibilities

Responsibilities of the school's attendance leader

Mr Thomas, Deputy Headteacher, will oversee, direct and co-ordinate the school's work in promoting regular and improved attendance and will ensure the attendance policy is consistently applied throughout the school. He will also ensure that attendance is both recorded accurately and analysed and that attendance issues are identified at an early stage with support put in place to deal with any difficulties. If absence is frequent or continuous, except where a child is clearly unwell, staff will discuss with parents/carers the need and reasons for the child's absence and will encourage them to keep absences to a minimum. A note or explanation from a student's home does not mean an absence becomes authorised. The decision whether to authorise an absence will always rest with the school and we will inform parents/carers if an absence is to be recorded as unauthorised.

Responsibilities of Attendance Administrators

- Ensure that all communicated absences are logged and recorded onto Arbor
- To contact parents of students who are absent but without reasons being given and flag any that contact cannot be made with to HOY and DSL
- Update Arbor to ensure all coding is correct and completed on registers

Responsibilities of Teachers

- Ensure that all students are registered accurately.
- Ensure that punctuality is promoted using the centralised detention system if students are late to lessons
- Promote and reward good attendance with students as appropriate.
- Liaise with the tutor/Head of Year on matters of attendance and punctuality.
- Communicate any concerns or underlying problems that may account for a student's absence.
- Support students with absence to engage with their learning once they are back in school.

Responsibilities of students

- Attend every day unless they are ill or have an authorised absence.

- Arrive in school on time.
- Go to all registrations and lessons on time.
- Take responsibility for registering at the reception desk if they are late and have missed registration or are leaving the school site during school hours.
- Take responsibly for attending the detention if they have been given one for arriving to the lesson late.

Responsibilities of parents/carers

Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is a parent/carer's legal responsibility (Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act) and permitting absence from school that is not authorised by the school creates an offence in law.

Parents/carers should:

- Make sure that any absence is clearly accounted for using the online system on the first and subsequent days of absence
- Discuss with the Head of Year any planned absences well in advance and complete an appropriate 'Request for Absence Form'
- Support the school with the child in aiming for 100% attendance each year (see Appendix 1)
- Avoid taking the child out of school for non-urgent medical or dental appointments
- Only request leave of absence if it is for an exceptional circumstance.

Recording attendance

The school day is divided into two statutory sessions.

The **morning session** register is taken during **AM registration, which begins at 08:35**, and the **afternoon session** register is taken at the **start of Lesson 3, at 12.00**. These two registration points define the start of each statutory session and are used to determine pupil attendance in accordance with legal requirements.

Lateness/Punctuality

It is important to be on time at the start of the morning and afternoon school sessions and to lessons. The start of school/lessons is used to give out instructions or organise work. If a child is late, they can miss work time with their class teacher or getting vital information, cause disruption to the lesson for others, and it can be embarrassing leading to possible further absence. A centralised detention system has been implemented to address this concern.

- The school day begins at 08:30 with a warning bell and all students are expected to be in school at that time for the start of registration at 08:35.
- In the afternoon lessons start at 12.00 and students are expected to be in their registration classroom at this time.
- All lateness is recorded daily.
- For arrival after 09:05, students will be marked as unauthorised absence and coded U in line with Hampshire County Council and Department of Education guidance. This mark shows them to be on site but is legally recorded as an absence.
- Late arrival before 09:05 in the morning and after 12.00 in the afternoon will be recorded as a late and coded L.
- If a student is late due to a medical appointment, they will receive an authorised absence, coded M once parents/carers have confirmed this with the school. Please be advised that, where possible, doctors and dentist's appointments are to be made outside of school hours or during school holidays.

Students who are consistently late are disrupting not only their own education but also that of the other students. Ongoing and repeated lateness is considered as unauthorised absence and may be subject to legal action.

Parents/carers of students who have patterns of lateness will be contacted to discuss the importance of good time keeping and how this might be achieved. If lateness persists, parents/carers will be invited to attend the school and discuss the problem and support offered. If support is not appropriate or is declined and a child has 15 or more sessions of unauthorised absence due to lateness recorded in any 10-week period, the school will issue parents/carers with a Penalty Notice.

What to do if a child is absent?

A child not attending school is considered a safeguarding matter. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

If a child is absent, parents/carers must:

- Contact us as soon as possible on the first and every day of absence. If we do not have contact from parents/carers, a text will be sent.

Attendance is closely monitored and if absence is persistent, we will contact parents/carers and invite them into school and offer support if required.

- If unauthorised absence is in excess of 10% the school will seek advice from the Hampshire Attendance Legal Panel or fixed penalty notices may be issued.

Third day absence

Please note: If a child is not seen and contact has not been established with any of the named parents/carers, after three days of absence the school is required to start child missing in education procedures as set down by Hampshire County Council guidance. We will make all reasonable enquiries to establish contact with parents/carers and the child, including making enquiries to known friends, wider family.

Ten days' absence

We have a legal duty to report the absence of any student who is absent without an explanation for 10 consecutive days. If the child is not seen and contact has not been established with the named parent/carer then the local authority is notified that the child is at risk of missing. Children's Services staff may visit the last known address and alert key services to locate the child. To help themselves and their child, parent/carers should ensure the school always have an up-to-date contact number of at least two people.

Continued or ongoing absence

If a child misses 10% (three weeks) or more schooling across the school year, for whatever reason, they are defined as persistent absentees. Absence for whatever reason disadvantages a child by creating gaps in his or her learning. As such, we monitor all absence thoroughly and all attendance data is shared with the local authority and the Department for Education.

We will use a Tiered Approach to helping students access their education, which works as such:

Attendance Support and Intervention Pathway – Thornden School

BELONG – Tier 0: Creating Connection Before Concern

Tier 0 is the foundation of our attendance strategy. It ensures that every student feels a genuine sense of belonging *before* attendance becomes a concern. Through inclusive teaching, the Thornden Tutor Reading Programme, personal development lessons, and our wide-ranging enrichment offer, students are surrounded by opportunities to connect, succeed, and be seen. Belonging starts with relationships—with tutors, peers, and the wider school community. When students feel they belong, they are far more likely to attend, engage, and thrive.

Area	Our Practice	How it Supports Attendance
High-Quality Adaptive Teaching	The <i>Thornden DNA</i> promotes structured, high-participation teaching in every classroom. Staff use adaptive strategies, targeted questioning, and scaffolding to ensure every learner is engaged.	Students who feel successful in lessons are more likely to attend. Adaptive teaching reduces academic anxiety and prevents disengagement—particularly for SEND and disadvantaged students.
Thornden Tutor Reading Programme	Every year group participates in carefully chosen shared texts (e.g. <i>The Bone Sparrow</i> , <i>Ghost Boys</i> , <i>Trash</i>) which highlight empathy, identity, resilience, and inclusion.	Builds emotional connection and discussion around key themes of justice, belonging, and aspiration. The routine of tutor reading enhances structure and enjoyment in school life.
Curriculum Audits for Access and Representation	Annual audits of <i>SMSC</i> , <i>British Values</i> , and <i>Diversity & Inclusion</i> ensure our curriculum is inclusive, culturally responsive, and reflects the identities and needs of our learners.	Students see themselves reflected in what they learn and how they learn it. Feeling seen and valued strengthens their connection to school and their willingness to engage.
Personal Development Programme	Every student receives timetabled PD lessons and weekly tutor sessions on mental health, wellbeing, RSE, careers, and life skills.	Teaches students how to manage stress, build confidence, and access support. PD lessons often link directly to attendance themes: motivation, relationships, anxiety.
Enrichment & Belonging	Students are offered broad access to enrichment (sports, trips, arts, leadership), with barriers actively reduced for disadvantaged students (e.g., funding, equipment).	Builds community, increases motivation to attend, and gives every student a reason to be in school beyond the academic day.
Tutor and Mentoring Systems	Tutors monitor attendance patterns, complete check-ins, and build relationships. The <i>Thornden Champions</i> mentor disadvantaged and vulnerable students.	Relationships are central to early intervention. Tutors and mentors spot the signs of attendance concerns before patterns become entrenched.
Interventions and Support	The Wellbeing Den and HOY offer daily support for students with anxiety, EBSA, or emotional needs. Space for calming, check-ins, and reintegration. Thornden Hub ensure a range of interventions are offered.	Offers safety and structure for those with high anxiety or school-based avoidance, reducing the need for full absence. Our Thornden Hub of experts ensure that referrals triaged quickly and appropriately and ensure collaborative and joined up working.

This universal offer is not an afterthought—it is our foundation.

It ensures our most vulnerable students receive built-in support *before* they hit 90% or less. It reduces the need for escalation and increases the sense of shared purpose between home and school.

CARE – Tier 1: Compassionate Early Intervention

Our approach to attendance begins with care. Tier 1 represents our earliest opportunity to notice, connect, and support—because small patterns often signal larger stories. When a student begins to miss sessions, we do not wait for a crisis; we act with compassion and intent. Whether it is a missed registration or a series of unexplained absences, each step—daily contact, initial letters, and wellbeing check-ins—is grounded in our commitment to understanding the individual behind the data. We recognise that absence is often linked to emotional, social, or practical challenges. That’s why we ensure every Letter 2 trigger includes a pastoral response—not simply a notification. Tutors, Heads of Year, and the Wellbeing Team check in with students to listen, reassure, and intervene if needed. This relational approach helps families feel supported rather than judged, and ensures students know that their presence matters. At Thornden, we act early because we care deeply - early action prevents escalation and reinforces the message: *you are noticed, and you are not alone.*

Tier	Trigger	Action	Lead
1.1	1–2 missed sessions (unexplained)	Daily absence text/email to parents/carers	Attendance
1.2	10 missed sessions (per term term)	Letter 1 sent home	Attendance
1.3	15 missed sessions (total)	Letter 2 sent home and Tutor / HOY / Wellbeing Check In	Attendance

ASPIRE – Tier 2: Ambition Through Support and Personalisation

At Tier 2, we remain relentlessly aspirational for every student. Persistent absence—particularly at the point of 20 or 30 missed sessions—does not diminish our belief in a child’s potential. Instead, it signals the need for a personalised and ambitious plan that removes barriers and restores confidence. The Personalised Attendance Support Plan (PASP) process enables us to take a holistic view of each student’s needs, strengths, and aspirations. Whether through changes to classroom routines, targeted mentoring, or wellbeing check-ins, our aim is to create the conditions for re-engagement—not just with attendance, but with success in school life. Every strategy trialled at this stage reflects our belief that students can thrive when the right scaffolds are in place. We do not lower expectations; we reframe the path. By ensuring that interventions are bespoke and rooted in a deep understanding of the student’s context, we continue to raise the bar—empowering students to move forward confidently, attend more consistently, and access the full curriculum and enrichment opportunities that support their long-term goals.

Tier	Trigger	Support Action
2.1	20 missed sessions or pattern of concern	HOY contact home
2.2	30 missed sessions	Letter 3 – Invite for a Personalised Attendance Support Plan meeting with family based on student profile.

SUCCESS – Tier 3: Removing Barriers So Students Can Thrive

At Tier 3, our focus is on helping students succeed through tailored, often intensive, support. When attendance has not improved after earlier interventions, we review each case with care, ensuring the next steps are both proportionate and purposeful. With the right scaffolds in place and the right professionals involved, we work to build a pathway back to attendance, achievement, and long-term success.

Tier	Trigger	Escalation Action
3.1	40 missed sessions	PASP reviewed; consider next steps Request for medical evidence
3.2	50 Missed Sessions	Further PASP Parental Review Meeting to consider next steps

Request for leave of absence

Amendments to school attendance regulations were updated and enforced from September 2013: The Education (Student Registration) (England) Regulations state that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Further clarity has been made available following the Supreme Court ruling on 6 April 2017. It is important to note that headteachers can determine the length of the authorised absence, as well as whether absence is authorised at all. The fundamental principles for defining exceptional are rare, significant, or unavoidable, which means the event could not reasonably be scheduled at another time. There is, however, no legal entitlement for time off in school term time to go on holiday and in the majority of cases holiday will not be authorised. Parents/carers wishing to apply for leave of absence need to fill in a request for absence form (available from School Reception or our website) in advance and before making any travel arrangements.

If term-time leave is taken without prior permission from the school, the absence will be unauthorised.

Taking holidays in term time will affect a child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents/carers to help us by not taking children out during school time at any time of year.

Understanding types of absence

Students are expected to attend school every day for the entire duration of the academic year, unless there is an exceptional reason for the absence. There are two main categories of absences:

- **Authorised absence:** is when the school has accepted the explanation offered as satisfactory justification for the absence or given approval in advance for such an absence. If no explanation is received, absences cannot be authorised
- **Unauthorised absence:** is when the school has not received a reason for absence or has not approved a child's leave absence from school after a parent's request. This includes:
 - Parent/carers giving their children permission to be off school unnecessarily, such as for shopping, birthdays, to look after siblings
 - truancy before or during the school day
 - absences which have not been explained.

A 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 they have been on holiday.

Penalty Notices for non-attendance and other legal measures

In education law, parents/carers are committing an offence if they fail to ensure the regular attendance of their child of compulsory school age at the school at which the child is registered, unless the absence has been authorised by the school.

Legal measures for tackling persistent absence or lateness

Thornden School will use the full range of legal measures to secure good attendance. Legal measures will only be considered when there is unauthorised absence and where the student has been:

- Absent for 10 or more half-day sessions (five school days) of unauthorised absence during any 100 possible school sessions – these do not need to be consecutive
- Persistently late (coded U) for up to 15 sessions after the register has been closed
- Persistently late before the close of the register (coded L), but the school has met/attempted to meet with parents/carers and has clearly communicated via email/letter that they will categorise as

unauthorised any further lateness (code O), and where the threshold of 10 sessions (five days) has been met

- Absent for any public examinations of which dates are published in advance
- Absent for any formal school assessments, tests or examinations where the dates have been published in advance

The following legal measures may be used for students at compulsory school age who are registered at a school:

- Parenting contracts set at Education Planning Meetings
- Parenting orders
- Penalty Notices
- Education Supervision Orders
- Prosecution

If a child's unauthorised absence meets any of the above criteria and the family or child do not require any agency support to improve the attendance, then a Penalty Notice is issued for either:

1. 10 sessions of unauthorised absence or lateness in any 10-week school period.
2. One or more sessions of unauthorised absence during a public exam, formal school assessment or testing where dates are published in advance.

This includes where a student has unauthorised absence due to either:

- Non-approval of a parent/carer's request for leave of absence, or
- A holiday that has been taken without permission.

Parents/carers will be warned of the likelihood of a Penalty Notice being issued for unauthorised absence via a letter, through the request for absence request form, and through the school's attendance policy and website. The Penalty Notice is a fine that is issued to each parent/carer who condoned (or was responsible for the child) during the period of unauthorised absence for which the fine has been issued. For each case of unauthorised absence, the school will decide whether a Penalty Notice is issued to one or more parents/carers for each child. NB: This could mean four Penalty Notices for a family with two siblings, both with unauthorised absence for holiday, i.e. one Penalty Notice for each child to each parent.

Each Penalty Notice carries a fine of £80 if paid within 21 days of the Penalty Notice being posted. If the fine is not paid within 21 days the penalty is automatically increased to £160 if paid within 28 days. If the fine remains unpaid Hampshire County Council will consider prosecution for the non-attendance. Payment methods are detailed on the Penalty Notices themselves. Penalties are to be paid to Hampshire County Council and revenue resulting from payment of penalties is used by the County Council to help cover the costs of issuing Penalty Notices and/or the cost of prosecuting recipients who do not pay.

Please note: If parents/carers pay the Penalty Notice and their child has further unauthorised absences additional legal action will be taken. For example, in the event that a Penalty Notice has previously been served due to unauthorised holiday, should the child have any future unauthorised leave this will result in further legal action for the parents/carers, such as prosecution or an Education Supervision Order. For further information parents/carers can request a leaflet from their school and should visit Hampshire County Council's website at: www.hants.gov.uk/education/hias/learning-behaviour-attendance/attendance-guidance-forparents/carers/possible-penalties.

Other Absences

A child is trying to avoid coming to school. What should I do?

Children are sometimes reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents/carers and the child. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and may make things worse.

Parents/carers should contact a child's tutor/Head of Year immediately and openly discuss their worries. A child could be avoiding school for a number of reasons – difficulties with school work, bullying, friendship problems, family difficulties. It is important that the school identifies the reason for a child's reluctance to attend school and work together to tackle the problem. In some cases, parents/carers may find it helpful to discuss the circumstances of their child's difficulties with another professional.

Leavers

If a child is leaving the school (other than when leaving at the end of Year 11) parents/carers are asked to:

Give the tutor/Head of Year comprehensive information about their plans, including any date of a move and the new address and telephone numbers, their child's new school and the start date when known. This should be submitted to our school in writing.

If students leave and the school does not have the above information, then the child is considered to be a child missing in education. This requires schools and local authorities to then carry out investigations to try and locate the child, which includes liaising with Children's Services, the Police and other agencies. By giving us the above information, these investigations can be avoided.

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

Parents/carers of a child performer can seek leave of absence from school for their child to take part in a performance. They must contact the Head of Year to discuss the nature and frequency of the work, whether the child has a valid performance licence and whether education will be provided by the employer during any future leave of absence. It is, however, down to the headteacher's discretion as to whether to authorise this and they will wish to discuss with parents/carers 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/carers of able sportsmen and women can seek leave of absence from school for their child to take part in regional, county, national and international events and competitions. It is, however, left to the discretion of the school as to whether to authorise this and we may wish to discuss with parents/carers the nature and frequency of the absence and how learning will continue if absence occurs. Permission for the child to leave early or arrive late to attend coaching and training sessions is also at the discretion of the headteacher and are considered on an individual basis.

Study leave

We believe that a students' needs are best met if they attend school every day in the period leading up to examinations. For internal examinations in Years 10 and 11, students will attend school every day and exams will be allocated as part of their timetable. For public examinations in Year 11, students will be expected to

attend all lessons and will only be granted study leave for a particular subject when they have sat their exam. The specific arrangements for these examination periods will be communicated with parents/carers through the Newsletter. The school will work within the legal requirements.

Teenage pregnancy

Support will be directed to keeping a student in school and, wherever possible, their return to full-time education as soon as possible after the birth. A student who becomes pregnant should be allowed no more than 18 weeks' authorised absence to cover the time immediately before and after the birth of the child. After that time, any absence should be treated as unauthorised.

Record preservation

School registers are legal documents. We will ensure compliance with attendance regulations by keeping attendance records for at least six years. Computer registers will be preserved as electronic back-up.