



Dated: October 2019
Agreed by Governors: October 2019
For review (minimum): October 2021
Non statutory

Attendance Policy

Written taking account of Isle of Wight Council v Platt case 2016
& the Supreme Court ruling on 6 April 2017

Rationale

For a child to reach their full educational achievement a high level of school attendance is essential. We are committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all our students and endeavour to provide an environment where all students feel valued and welcome. Parents/Carers and students play a part in making our school so successful. Every child has a right to access the education to which he/she is entitled. Parents/Carers and teachers share the responsibility for supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and punctuality for all. It is our duty to consistently strive to achieve a goal of 100% attendance for all children. Every opportunity will be used to convey to students and their parents or carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance. For children to take full advantage of the educational opportunities offered it is vital a child is at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. The routines children develop around attendance and punctuality at school are the same as the expectations of any future employer in the world of work. High attainment, confidence with peers and staff, and future aspirations depend on good attendance.

Good attendance is important because:

- statistics show a direct link between under-achievement and absence below 95% (see Appendix 1)
- regular attenders make better progress, both socially and academically
- regular attenders find school routines, school work and friendships easier to cope with
- regular attenders find learning more satisfying
- regular attenders are more successful in transferring between primary school, secondary school, and higher education, employment or training.

Operating the Policy

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 on how their child is performing in school and share attendance and punctuality information
- contact parents if a child is absent and parents have not made us aware of this.
- contact parents if we have concerns about the attendance or punctuality of their child.
- celebrate good attendance through our school awards (where appropriate)

2. Roles and responsibilities

Responsibilities of the school's attendance leader

Dr Evans, Assistant 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. She 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 or not 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 Teachers

- Ensure that all students are registered accurately.
- Ensure that punctuality is promoted through the use of the centralised detention system if students are late
- 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 by telephone on the first and subsequent days of absence, or by letter/email if a phone is unavailable
- 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

Legally the register must be marked twice daily. This is once at the start of the school day, 08:35, and again for the afternoon session at 13.35.

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, registration starts at 13:35 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 13:35 and before 13:40 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 have confirmed this with the school. Please be advised that, where possible, doctors and dentists 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 or 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 or 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 10 or more sessions of unauthorised absence due to lateness recorded in any 10 week period, the school will issue parents 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. If a child has had absence and their attendance level is falling towards 90% we will contact the parent/carers and look to find a solution with parent/carers before taking further action.

All our persistent absentee students and their parent/carers are subject to an Attendance Plan or home school contract and these may include:

- Attendance Reports
- Tutor/HOY monitoring
- Parent/Carer meetings
- Other individualised arrangements

It is important that on return from an unavoidable absence all students are made to feel welcome. This will include ensuring that the student is helped to catch up on missed work and brought up to date with any information that has been passed to the other students.

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 head teachers 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 head teachers 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 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 10 sessions (five days) 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 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 of 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 and 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, ie one Penalty Notice for each child to each parent.

Each Penalty Notice carries a fine of £60 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 £120 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 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, 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/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 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 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/Dr Evans 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 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 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 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, her 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

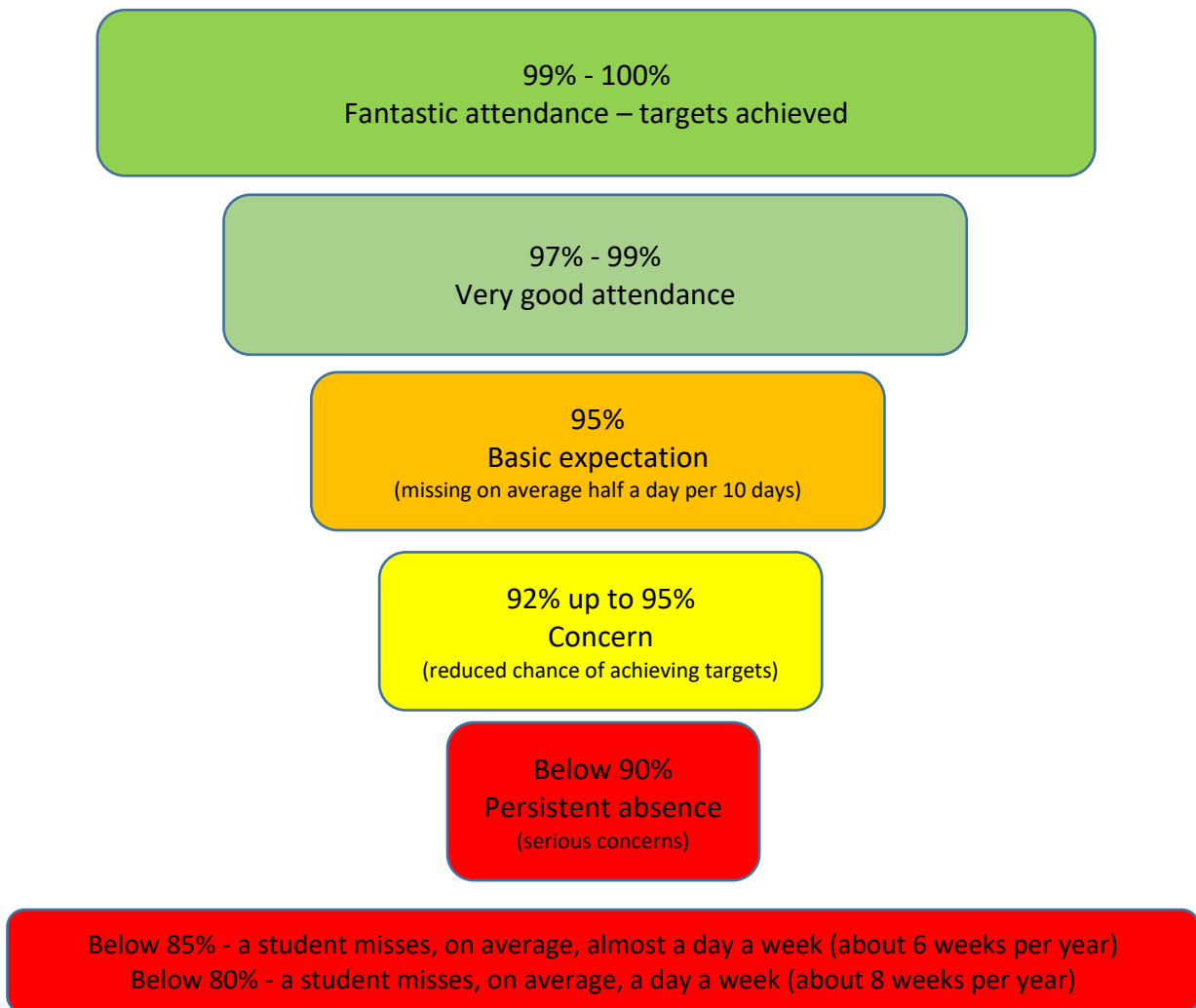
School registers are legal documents. We will ensure compliance with attendance regulations by keeping attendance records for at least three years. Computer registers will be preserved as electronic back-ups.

APPENDIX 1

Our attendance objective is to sustain above National Average at 95% attendance.

Attendance is directly linked to achievements and is essential in supporting success throughout school.

Any student below 90% is deemed by the government as being persistently absent, missing 4 or more weeks a year. For any student whose attendance is below 90%, parents/carers will be sent a letter and invited to a meeting with the Head of Year to set short term targets.



Expectations:

Thornden School has a duty to provide appropriate education for all students who attend. Parents/carers have a legal obligation to ensure that their children receive an education by regular attendance at school.

Parents/carers must ensure that a reason for absence is reported to school. This can happen in several ways:

- Telephone the school on the first day of absence
- Telephone on each subsequent day of absence.
- Sending in a letter with the child upon return to School, or via a note written in the student's planner.

A medical note is required from a registered GP upon regular illness from school.

As a Safeguarding procedure we will text parents if a student does not register in the morning