



Thameside Primary School: Attendance Policy

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Policy reviewed by:	Sophie Greenaway
Key Changes:	- Added an 85% attendance threshold, with closer monitoring and authorisation of further absence only in exceptional circumstances. - Updated terminology from "persistent absentee" to "persistently absent pupil". - Added reference to severe absence (below 50%) and the additional support/intervention this may trigger. - Replaced "zero unauthorised absence" with "minimise unauthorised absence". - Strengthened wording around the impact of absence on learning and educational outcomes, rather than focusing solely on attendance percentages. - Slightly strengthened wording around the graduated response, making clear that legal action is considered after support and intervention have been explored.
Associated review documents	A guide for schools on communicating with parents about attendance (accessible version) - GOV.UK



Rights Respecting Schools

Thameside Primary School is a Rights Respecting School. School policies will respect the UN Convention on the rights of the child. The attendance policy links to:

Article 3: All organisations concerned with children should work towards what is best for each child

Article 28: Children have a right to a primary education.

Introduction

Every day in school matters. Missing school means missing valuable learning, friendships, experiences and opportunities to develop confidence and resilience. Even a small number of days absent can have a significant impact on a child's educational progress.

- The school has a strong commitment to working in partnership with parents to provide the best possible education for the children.
- The staff appreciate the support and co-operation of the majority of the parents in relation to attendance and punctuality – however, there are a number of pupils who have poor attendance records. Whilst we understand children will have some instances of authorised absence a significant few have persistent unauthorised absence.

As a school we take attendance and punctuality very seriously. Pupils need to attend regularly and on time if they are to take advantage of the opportunities for learning offered by the school curriculum.

Teachers cannot teach children who are not in school – and lost days mean lost learning. Governors, staff, parents and pupils should work together to ensure that the children make the best possible progress during their time in school. There is a clear and strong link between regular attendance and standards of attainment.

Days off school add up to lost learning

There are 175 non-school days every year.

That is 175 days to spend on family time, visits, holidays, shopping, appointments & household jobs

	10 days absence = 10 days missed education	19 days absence = 19 days missed education	29 days absence = 29 days missed education	38 days absence = 38 days missed education	47 days absence = 47 days missed education
190 Days for your child's education each year	180 days of education	171 days of education	161 days of education	152 days of education	143 days of education
100%	95%	90%	85%	80%	75%
Excellent Best chance of success. Gets your child off to a flying start.	Initial concern. Missed learning opportunities.	Worrying Less chance of success. Makes it harder to reach their potential	Not fair on your child Less chance of success Makes it harder to make progress Possible friendship issues Educational outcomes and life chances are affected		



1. Aims

Our school is committed to providing a high-quality education and enabling all pupils to realise their full potential. Regular attendance is vital. Every child has a right to access education and it is the shared responsibility of the school, parents, and external agencies to support this.

This policy aims to:

- Promote excellent attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence
- Ensure every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- Act early to address patterns of absence
- Work in partnership with families and external agencies to identify and overcome barriers to attendance

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the '[Working together to improve school attendance](#)' guidance from the Department for Education (DfE), published in May 2022 and updated in 2024. It also reflects the guidance from Brighter Futures for Children (BFfC), Reading's Local Authority education support service.

It is written in accordance with the following legislation:

- The Education Act 1996
- The Education Act 2002
- The Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (and 2013 amendments)
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 The governing board

The governing board is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school on at least a termly basis – this is reported to the governing body in the headteacher report. It also holds the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

3.2 The headteacher

The headteacher is the **Attendance Champion** and is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary



3.3 The Emotional Wellbeing, Behaviour & Welfare Officer

The EWBW officer works alongside the Attendance Champion (Headteacher) to provide day-to-day operational oversight of attendance matters:

- Supports the headteacher in monitoring attendance data across the school and at an individual pupil level
- Reports concerns about attendance to the headteacher
- Works with education welfare officers and other external professionals to tackle persistent absence
- Arranges calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Advises the headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices
- Supports families to ensure that children have good attendance at school, which is essential if they are to make good progress in their learning and maintain positive friendships with their peers.
- Is based in the The Family Hub, located in the room at the back of the school library.

For any enquiries about The Family Hub and to find out more about the support on offer, parents/carers can email: familyhub@thameside.reading.sch.uk

3.4 Attendance Support Worker (ASW) Team

We work closely with Reading LA's Brighter Futures for Children Attendance Support Worker Team and follow their graduated response model. This includes:

- Early Help Assessments where needed
- Use of Attendance Panel referrals
- Early engagement with families through school-based meetings
- Escalation to legal intervention (only after support strategies have been explored and where this is considered appropriate and proportionate).

3.5 Class teachers

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office.

3.6 School admin staff

School admin staff are expected to take calls from parents about absence and record it on the school system.

4. Recording attendance



4.1 Attendance register

We will keep an attendance register, and place all pupils onto this register.

We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

All symbols can be found on your child's registration certificate. If you need a copy, please contact the school office.

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Pupils must arrive in school by 8.45am (8.50am for EYFS) on each school day.

In the morning, the register will be taken at 8.55am and will be kept open until 9.25am and any child arriving after this time will be recorded as having unauthorised absence.

The afternoon register will be taken following the conclusion of each year group's staggered lunchtime.

4.2 Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent/carers must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence by 9.15am or as soon as practically possible (see also section 7).

Parents/carers should contact the school office on 01189 375551 or admin@thameside.reading.sch.uk to report their child(ren)'s absence.

We will mark absence due to illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

As a regularity, the school may ask the pupil's parent/carers to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/carers will be notified of this in advance.



For information on preventing the spread of diseases and for recommended periods for children to be kept away from school please see:

["Guidance on infection control in schools and other childcare settings"](#)

4.3 Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment.

Parents/carers should contact the school office on 01189 375551 or admin@thameside.reading.sch.uk to let us know about medical appointments and a green absence request form may be allocated, depending on the length of the appointment.

However, we encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

The pupil's parent/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Go to section 5 to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

4.4 Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code (L)
- After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code (A)

If a pupil arrives late it is very disruptive for the other children, the teacher and can be distressing for the child him or herself. Children should be ready to enter school at 8.45am (8.50am in EYFS) and be ready for the register by 8.55am.

If a child arrives at school late, the parent/carer must sign their child into school on arrival and give a reason for the lateness. If a child arrives late for school and they are a Year 5 or 6 child who travels to school alone, they will be asked for the reason for their lateness and parents/carers informed. Having a documented reason for lateness means that the school can help to address any barriers to coming to school on time and put in support for families to ensure children are receiving their full education entitlement.

In the first instance, class teachers will speak to parents/carers about punctuality issues and, if there is no improvement, the EWBW will contact the family with oversight from the head teacher. This may then lead to the school requesting Education Welfare Service support if, despite support, no progress is seen.

4.5 Following up absence



SEND, SEMH or health-related absences are always approached with a trauma-informed and child-centred mindset, ensuring a supportive and understanding approach that puts the child's needs first.

Where any child we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, the school will:

- Admin staff will follow up on a child's absence with a same-day phone call to the parent or carer to establish the reason for the absence
- Ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- Identify the correct attendance code to use

4.6 Reporting to parents

Attendance is reported annually to parents/carers in the written end-of-year report.

4.7 Children Missing Education (CME) and Vulnerability

The school is committed to safeguarding the welfare of all pupils and recognises that poor or irregular attendance can be a safeguarding concern in itself. Thameside Primary School monitors attendance closely, particularly for vulnerable pupils, including those with SEND, SEMH needs, or known safeguarding risks.

Persistent absence or a sudden drop in attendance may be an indicator of wider issues, including neglect or abuse. In such cases, school staff will follow the guidance set out in Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) and the school's own safeguarding and child protection policy. Concerns will be escalated to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and other agencies, including social care, where appropriate.

If a pupil is absent for 10 consecutive school days without authorisation and the school has been unable to make contact with the family or establish the child's whereabouts, a Child Missing Education (CME) referral will be submitted to Brighter Futures for Children (BFfC), in line with local authority protocols.

Before making a CME referral, the school will carry out reasonable enquiries, which may include:

- Attempting direct contact with the parent/carers and emergency contacts
- Visiting the family home where appropriate
- Liaising with other professionals or agencies involved with the family
- Completing and submitting the local authority's CME checklist

A child will not be removed from roll until the CME referral has been completed and confirmation received from BFfC.

In all cases, the school will act in accordance with:

- **Children Missing Education Statutory Guidance (September 2016)**
- **Keeping Children Safe in Education (latest publication)**
- **Brighter Futures for Children CME procedures and referral processes**

The school maintains a CME log (via CPOMS, our secure online safeguarding and wellbeing system) and ensures that all concerns and referrals are appropriately documented.



Parents are asked to support both their child and the school by ensuring their child attends regularly and on time, so that we can maintain high levels of attendance and ensure the highest possible levels of attendance and minimise unauthorised absence. The governors and staff at Thameside greatly appreciate the support and co-operation of all families in this matter.

5. Authorised and unauthorised absence

5.1 Approval for term-time absence

The headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to pupils during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the headteacher's discretion.

We define 'exceptional circumstances' as:

- A major family event such as the wedding or funeral of a close relative
- Serious or terminal illness of a close relative
- Significant family trauma has occurred and it is believed that a break is in the child's best interests.

We may also consider:

- The leave would be of unique and significant emotional, educational or spiritual value to the child e.g. music exams, visits to prospective schools

In making a decision, the headteacher will weigh the above criteria against the child's record and educational progress to minimise the risk of any negative impact. The headteacher will take into account:

- Previous attendance
- Attainment and progress
- Ability to catch up on any work missed
- Any impending tests, assessments or significant school events
- The frequency of any other requests for leave.

These circumstances are not viewed to be 'exceptional':

- Holidays being cheaper during term-time
- Birthdays
- Shopping trips
- When a child is ill either side of a school holiday without a letter from a doctor
- Parental illness (unless the parent is hospitalised suddenly, for example)

The school will always consider each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:



- Illness and medical/dental appointments (see sections 4.2 and 4.3 for more detail)
- Religious observance – where one day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a Traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision.

5.2 Reducing persistent absence

If persistent absence is identified as a concern, the EWBW officer will:

1. Send an Attendance Matters letter home
2. Invite the family in for a meeting, which may include the headteacher too
3. Arrange a home visit
4. Send a letter from the school and the ASW with an invitation to an Attendance Panel meeting where the Family Hub lead and the ASW will work together with the family to improve attendance.
5. Legal proceedings/sanctions are initiated by the school, in conjunction with the Attendance Support Worker, for non-attendance.

Attendance below 85%

Where a pupil's attendance falls to 85% or below, the school will have significant concerns about the impact of absence on the pupil's education. At this level, attendance will be monitored closely and any request for further absence will be subject to increased scrutiny.

The school will not authorise further absence unless there are exceptional circumstances that make attendance impossible or unreasonable. Examples may include hospital treatment, a medical emergency, or other exceptional situations supported by appropriate evidence.

5.3 Penalty Notices for Unauthorised Absence

The school, in line with local authority guidance, may request that a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) be issued to parents for unauthorised absences, where the child is of compulsory school age.

Reading Borough Council has instructed all schools to issue FPNs where a child has 10 or more sessions (equivalent to 5 full school days) of unauthorised absence during term time.



If a penalty notice is issued:

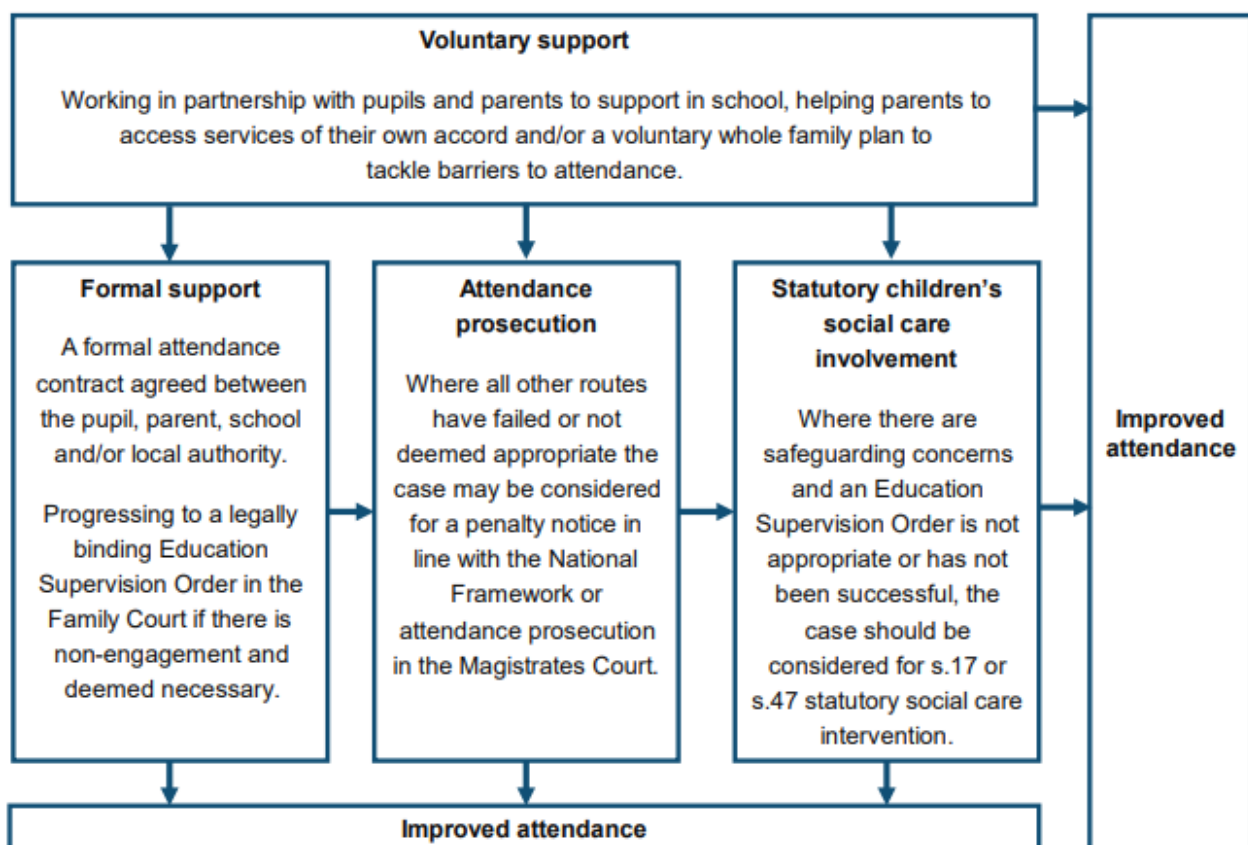
- **Each parent** may receive a fine **for each child** with unauthorised absence.
- The fine is £80 if paid within 21 days, or £160 if paid within 28 days.
- Payment must be made directly to the local authority.

Penalty notices can be issued by the headteacher, a local authority officer, or the police. When considering whether to issue a penalty notice, the following factors may be taken into account:

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

If payment is not made within 28 days, the local authority may proceed with prosecution.

Providing support first before attendance legal intervention



6. Strategies for promoting attendance

To promote good attendance, Thameside Primary School:



- Provides a vibrant, inclusive and enriching curriculum and environment where children feel safe, valued and motivated to attend school every day. We recognise that positive attendance is supported by strong relationships, a sense of belonging and engaging learning experiences.
- Works with families to break down barriers which may be leading to poor punctuality or attendance.
- Delivers clear messages about expectations, routines and consequences to new pupils and families through including this policy in our school welcome pack and through our admission/transition events
- Uses physical presence to reinforce routines and expectations on arrival and departure with our Senior Leadership Team positioned on all of our gates
- Regularly communicates expectations for attendance and punctuality with staff, pupils and parents
- Highlights great attendance in end of year reports
- Engages with the external professionals supporting our families to promote attendance and report non-attendance
- Monitors whole school data regularly to identify the attendance of particular groups and the impact of interventions made by the EWBW
- Develops good support for children with medical conditions (including the use of individual healthcare plans), mental health problems and special educational needs (SEND)
- Ensures that parents fully understand the demands and responsibilities of elective home education
- Hosts termly Attendance Celebration Days where the whole school is rewarded if termly targets are met
- Bespoke termly targets and targeted praise for improvement for some families
- Establishes, implements and monitor robust arrangements to identify, report and support children missing in education (CME).

While attendance awards are part of our strategy, we are mindful not to discourage or disadvantage children with genuine health or SEND-related absence.

7. Attendance monitoring

Children already identified as having below-good attendance will be contacted by the school office and/or the Family Hub Lead on the **first day of absence**.

We analyse attendance data regularly and work proactively with families to address emerging concerns. This includes:

- Early identification of absence patterns
- Use of Pre-Attendance Panel meetings
- Parent Contracts or Attendance Support Plans
- Referral to Brighter Futures for Children (BFfC), where necessary

We also submit attendance data to Brighter Futures for Children in line with local requirements.

A pupil's parent/carer is expected to call the school in the morning if their child is going to be absent due to ill health (see section 4.2).

If a pupil's absence lasts more than two days, the school will contact the parent/carer to discuss the reasons for this. Where absence continues to rise after this contact, the school will consider involving an Education Welfare Officer and follow their advice.

The persistent absence threshold is 10%. If a pupil's overall absence rate reaches or exceeds this level, they will be classified as a persistently absent pupil.



A pupil whose attendance falls below 50% is considered to be severely absent. In these circumstances, the school will work with the family and relevant external agencies to provide intensive support and address barriers to attendance.

Thameside Primary School collects and stores attendance data for internal purposes in order to:

- Track the attendance of individual pupils
- Identify whether particular groups of children's absences may be a cause for concern
- Monitor and evaluate those children identified as being in need of intervention and support

8. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum annually by the head teacher. At every review, the policy will be approved by the full governing board.

9. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- > Child protection and safeguarding policy
- > Relationships and Behaviour policy

S Greenaway, July 2026