



St Thomas' Church of England  
Primary School

# Attendance Policy

**School Purpose and Vision Statement:**

**Within the love of God we Guide, Challenge, Inspire, Nurture**

A guiding light

Challenging minds

Inspiring hearts

Nurturing talents

Grounded in God's love

Amidst the ever changing tides of life

*"I am the way; the truth and the life" John 14 v6*

**Mission Statement:**

At St Thomas' we

**Guide:** lead, encourage and model by example through our Gospel values

**Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path**

**Psalm 119 v105**

**Challenge:** expect the best from the whole school community

**Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go**

**Joshua 1:7**

**Inspire:** promote creativity, spirituality, teamwork and ambition through a growth mindset

**Therefore encourage one another, build each other up, just as in fact you are doing**

**1 Thessalonians 5:11**

**Nurture:** love, value and care for everyone within our school family

**Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.**

**Colossians 3:12**

# St Thomas' Church of England Primary School

## Attendance Policy

**Our school Attendance Policy is underpinned by our school purpose and vision mission statement**

### **Rationale:**

At St Thomas' C of E Primary School we recognise that attending school regularly has a positive impact on learning, progress and therefore the best life chances for children. There is a clear connection between regular attendance and achievement. As attendance deteriorates, so does performance, achievement, friendship circles and self-esteem. We will encourage good attendance for all pupils, by offering an environment in which pupils feel valued and part of the school community.

Department for Education (DfE) guidance states that all schools should have effective systems and procedures for encouraging regular school attendance and investigating the underlying causes of poor attendance which should be set out in an attendance policy. These systems should be reviewed regularly and modified where necessary to reflect the circumstances of the school.

### **Aims**

We will

- Promote a culture across the school which identifies the importance of regular and punctual attendance.
- Make attendance and punctuality a priority for all those associated with the school; including pupils, parents, teachers and governors.
- Further develop positive and consistent communication between home and school.
- Set targets to improve individual and whole school attendance levels.

### **Rights, Roles and Responsibilities**

We will develop a procedural framework which defines agreed roles and responsibilities for

- Parents and carers
- Pupils
- School staff
- Governors

To complement this policy, and identify how we will deliver our aims in respect of regular and punctual attendance.

This procedural framework will include guidance on

- Registration
- Punctuality
- What constitutes unauthorised absence
- Leave of absence
- Systems for monitoring attendance and punctuality for individual pupils
- Systems for dealing with absence
- Criteria and systems for referral to and working with the Pupil Attendance Support Team and School Attendance Consultant
- Systems for monitoring whole school attendance and action planning
- Appropriate alternative curricular arrangements

### **Leave of Absence**

Following the September 2013 amendment to The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, schools cannot authorise any leave other than in exceptional circumstances. At St Thomas' C of E School the Headteacher is the person authorised by the 'proprietor' i.e. the governing body, to make this decision. If the leave is being requested for a holiday, approval should be obtained prior to making any bookings

Leave of absence **SHALL NOT** be granted unless:

- a request for leave has been made in advance, by a parent with whom the pupil normally resides, and
- the Headteacher considers that leave of absence should be granted due to the **EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES** relating to the request.

Additional information regarding leave of absence is included with the procedural framework.

### **Religious Absence**

The school will authorise one day of absence per religious festival, e.g. Eid, (i.e. the day set aside by the Religious Body of which the parent is a member) and this will be marked as 'R' in the register.

Parents must request any additional leave in advance and this can only be authorised if it is felt that exceptional circumstances apply (this would be marked in the register as 'C').

### **Use of Penalty Notices**

St Thomas' C of E Primary School may request that the Local Authority issue Penalty Notices in respect of unauthorised absence. This includes Leave of Absence which is taken without a prior request being made; and leave taken after a prior request has been made and parents have been informed that the period of absence would be classed as unauthorised but the leave is taken regardless of this

advice. St Thomas' C of E Primary School may also request that the Local Authority issue a Penalty Notice for days taken in excess of the agreed period of leave; without good reason. Parents also risk losing their child's school place if they do not return from leave, as agreed, and readmission cannot be guaranteed.

### **When can a penalty notice be issued?**

Parents of a registered pupil whose child fails to attend school regularly are committing an offence under section [444\(1\) Education Act 1996](#).

A pupil must have had a minimum of **5** school days (10 sessions) lost to unauthorised absence( including lateness) during the current term or **7** school days (14 sessions) in 2 consecutive terms before a Penalty Notice is considered.

- Penalty notices can be issued where with governing body approval, the school attendance policy contains reference to the school's use of PN's with regards to unauthorised absences and unauthorised holidays.
- Penalty notices can be issued where parents have been given an opportunity to improve their child's attendance but failed to do so
- Penalty notices can be issued in cases of holidays taken in term time without school permission, or excessive delayed return from an extended holiday without prior school permission

### **Partnership Working**

St Thomas' C of E Primary School will work with the Pupil Attendance Support Team, the School Attendance Consultant and other support agencies as appropriate to ensure regular attendance at school. The criteria for referral and areas of responsibility for staff will be set out in the procedural framework on attendance.

### **Monitoring, Analysis, Action Planning**

St Thomas' C of E Primary School will use electronic systems for monitoring attendance at both individual pupil and whole school level, and will analyse patterns and trends of non-attendance to inform future action planning and target setting in respect of whole school attendance matters.

### **Persistent Absence**

The minimum attendance level which is expected of all primary aged pupils nationally is 96%. It is when attendance falls below this level that school will consider whether it is appropriate to offer support in order to improve the situation. Both local and central government pay particular attention to reducing the number of pupils who fall into the persistent absence category (PA). A pupil becomes a persistent absentee when their attendance falls below 90% at any point during the school year; whether the absences are authorised or unauthorised. When attendance nears this level children miss significant amounts of schooling; meaning that their educational progress is put at risk. We need parents' full support in ensuring that attendance does not reach this level. However, if for any reason a child's attendance does fall into this category parents will be asked to do all they can improve the situation.

Families will be supported in this via school's robust systems for managing PA. This support may involve the need for parents, and children of an appropriate age, to agree to a parenting contract. Due to the seriousness of PA status it is highly likely that such cases will be referred to a local authority attendance team (Pupil Attendance Support Team). Furthermore, absence data for individual pupils who are classed as persistent absentees are reported to the Department for Education annually; along with whole school absence figures.

### **Monitoring the attendance of pupils who are educated off site**

The attendance of all pupils who are educated off site, or those who are dual registered, will be monitored in accordance with the procedures outlined within the procedural framework.

### **Review of Whole School Attendance Policy**

St Thomas' C of E Primary School will review this policy and the associated procedural framework annually.

When the word parent/parents are used in this policy we mean:-

- All natural parents, whether they are married or not;
- Any person who has parental responsibility for a child or young person; and,
- Any person who has care of a child or young person i.e. lives with and looks after the child.

**Last review date:** January 2017

**Next review date:** January 2018 (or sooner if legislation changes)

## **WHOLE SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY PROCEDURAL FRAMEWORK**

This document forms part of St Thomas' C of E Primary School's Whole School Attendance Policy. It sets out the rights, roles and responsibilities for parents/carers, pupils, school staff and governors; and the systems and procedures in place to identify how the school will deliver its aims in respect of regular and punctual attendance. It will be reviewed annually.

### **Rights, Roles and Responsibilities**

St Thomas' C of E Primary School believes that it is important that Parents and Carers, Pupils, School Staff and Governors all work in partnership to encourage good attendance for all pupils. The following is a summary of the rights, roles and responsibilities for individual groups of stakeholders.

#### **Parents and Carers**

- Ensure the child(ren) in their care attend school regularly aiming for 96% or higher and punctually
- If the child(ren) is/are absent to inform the school office or class teacher on the first day of absence and provide a reason for the absence
- If the child(ren) is/are absent for more than 1 day, to inform the school office of the continued absence and update as to the reason for the absence daily
- To avoid leave in term time wherever possible. Where this is not thought possible, contact the school as soon as possible prior to the first proposed day of absence to request authorisation
- To advise the school, by contacting the school office, immediately if they become aware of problems with attendance
- To co-operate with the school in promoting and improving attendance e.g. attending meetings, participation in Parenting Contracts and supporting the school in agreed intervention/action plans
- Adhere to systems for late registration, signing out and signing in

#### **Pupils**

- Attend school regularly aiming for 96% or higher and punctually
- Adhere to systems for late registration, signing out and signing in
- Acknowledge behaviour needed out of school to ensure good attendance e.g. early bedtimes and getting uniforms ready the night before

#### **School Staff**

The Headteacher has overall responsibility for ensuring that there are appropriate and efficient systems in place to promote and support the school attendance policy, that these are adhered to and training is given where appropriate. The Headteacher is also responsible for liaison with individual families, the School Attendance Consultant and the Pupil Attendance Support Team (PAST) to ensure appropriate support is given where attendance concerns are identified and for liaison with the

Local Authority and DfE to ensure that the school conforms to all statutory requirements in respect of attendance.

However, St Thomas' C of E Primary School believes that all staff have responsibilities and a role to play in promoting good attendance by:

- Providing a welcoming atmosphere for children
- Providing a safe learning environment
- Ensuring an appropriate and responsive curriculum
- Providing a sympathetic response to any pupil's concerns
- Being aware of factors that can contribute to non-attendance
- Being aware of the role all staff can play in ensuring attendance is seen as important for all pupils
- Adherence to the systems and procedures in place within school to promote good attendance and highlighting any concerns to the Headteacher
- Apply the Attendance Policy consistently
- Bring regular "lates" or any attendance issues to the attention of parents/carers
- Participation in training regarding school systems and procedures
- Willingness to communicate with children and parents about attendance
- Completion of the attendance registers in accordance with the legislation and under the direction of the Headteacher

Some staff will have specific individual responsibilities to support the attendance policy.

### **Governors**

- Ensure compliance with The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, as amended
- Adopt an Attendance Policy and review it annually
- Agree targets for attendance at St Thomas' C of E Primary School
- Ensure that they receive reports from the Headteacher regarding school attendance as part of the school monitoring or school profiling exercise
- Where the school is not meeting its attendance target, or when the Governors believe there is cause for concern, to require a review of the systems and procedures in place to promote good attendance
- To promote the strong link between attendance and educational attainment to parents and pupils where appropriate and ensure that the school attendance policy and procedures are communicated effectively
- Authorise the Headteacher (or other designated person) to consider and make decisions regarding leave of absence requests.
- Work with the Headteacher in establishing criteria against which leave requests will be considered. This is important to ensure the process is equitable and consistent

## **Procedures**

Pupils requiring admittance to school after registration periods must go to the **main school office**.

The school office is responsible for maintaining the signing in/out book. This must contain details of name, class, time admitted/time released, reason for lateness/early departure and name of supervising adult. Therefore, children arriving after registration an entry must be placed in the signing in book before a late pupil is admitted or released.

## **Late Registration**

In accordance with current guidance, the attendance registers are closed at 9:00am. This means that any pupil who arrives after the registration period (8.55 to 9.00am) will be given a late mark (L) in the register. This code is classed as a present mark, but displays that the pupil arrived late for school. Any pupil who arrives after 9:00am but before the register has officially closed (9:15 am) will be given a "late after registers closed" mark (U) in the register. This code is classed as an unauthorised absence but displays that the pupil was physically present in school for part of the session.

In addition to using the L and U codes, office staff may also use the facility within the SIMS attendance module to record the number of minutes late for each pupil, on each occasion. This facility will allow school staff to monitor and manage developing patterns of lateness more effectively and make a clear link between lateness and missed curriculum; and share such information with parents.

The fact that the U code is classed as an unauthorised absence means that when it is used pupils are likely to be missing significant amounts of schooling; putting their educational progress at risk. For this reason the use of this code will be considered as serious as any other unauthorised absence and will attract the interest of external agencies, including referral to the local authority attendance team and consideration of the use of legal measures, in just the same way as any other absence.

## **Authorised and Unauthorised Absence**

In every instance it is the Headteacher who determines whether an absence is recorded as authorised or unauthorised. This decision is made based on information provided by parents/carers. However, because the register is a legal document, the Headteacher has responsibility to ensure that it is completed accurately and in accordance with the legislation. For this reason it is not sufficient for an absence to be recorded as authorised based entirely on information provided by parents/carers. Therefore, there may be occasions when it will be necessary for parents to provide evidence of reasons for absence before authorisation is granted. For example, in the case of absence due to illness or medical appointment, evidence may be requested in the form of: sight of a prescription, prescribed medication, a medical appointment card or similar.

The school office is responsible for maintaining records of reason and length of absence.

- Parents/Carers are required to contact the school office or class teacher on the first day of absence, advising of the reason for the absence and expected return date; if known.
- Where information is provided to the class teacher they are responsible for passing this information to the school office
- Where a verbal message is taken by school office staff this should be noted in the register and the class teacher informed
- Where a written note is received by the class teacher this should be returned to the school office with the register
- Where the absence is for several days, the Parent/Carer is responsible for informing the school office of the continued absence and updating them as to the reason for the absence on a regular basis
- Where the absence is for several days without explanation, or the reason provided is unsatisfactory, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and will be addressed with parents promptly. Schools have a responsibility to report such absence to the Local Authority after a period of 10 school days, or sooner if appropriate
- The reason for absence should be linked directly to the pupil (e.g. illness or medical appointment of/for the child). Reasons for absence relating to parents or siblings may not be authorised

If a child is absent and no contact has been made by the family, the school office will contact the family on the first day of absence phone or text message or MyED. If contact cannot be made the Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher should be informed and, in the case of prolonged or repeated absence without justification being given, the Headteacher will determine whether a referral to the Pupil Attendance Support Team should be made.

The Headteacher is responsible for determining what is classed as authorised and what is classed as unauthorised absence.

Examples of authorised absence:

- Medical or Dental appointments, which relate directly to the pupil and unavoidably fall during the school day
- Illness of the pupil
- Leave which has been authorised by the Headteacher due to exceptional circumstances

Examples of unauthorised absence:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily for example minor ailments, such as a headache or slight head cold
- Repeated absence will require us to request medical evidence from the doctor's surgery, for example an appointment card.
- truancy before or during the school day
- absences which have never been properly explained
- children who arrive at school after the register has closed
- shopping, looking after other children, haircuts or birthdays
- day trips and leave in term time which have not been agreed
- days that exceed the amount of leave agreed by the Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher

The school office is responsible for inputting the appropriate absence code on the electronic register. Where they are not certain whether an absence is authorised or not they should seek advice from the Headteacher.

Office staff may also use the comments facility within SIMS in order to log specific reasons for absence. This facility will allow school staff to monitor and manage developing patterns of absence more effectively and share such information with parents.

### **Signing Out**

The school office is responsible for overseeing the procedure for releasing children where parents/carers have requested and been granted leave during the school day.

The child(ren) can only be released to a parent or authorised carer/family member. When an authorised adult is picking up a child within school time the school office is responsible for ensuring that they complete and sign the school signing out book (see above for details of requirements). The school office is responsible for inputting the appropriate absence code on the electronic register.

When a child leaves the school site after the morning or afternoon register has been taken, the original mark must remain in the register and the signing in/out book should be referred to during an evacuation situation to ensure all pupils can be accounted for.

### **Leave of Absence**

Following the September 2013 amendment to The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, schools cannot authorise any leave other than in exceptional circumstances. At St Thomas' C of E Primary School the Headteacher is the person authorised by the 'proprietor' i.e. the governing body, to make this decision. If the leave is being requested for a holiday, approval should be obtained prior to making any bookings.

Leave of absence **SHALL NOT** be granted unless:

- a request for leave has been made in advance, by a parent with whom the pupil normally resides, and
- the Headteacher considers that leave of absence should be granted due to the **EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES** relating to the request.

### **Additional Factors for Consideration**

Pupils attend school for a maximum of 190 days each academic year. Regular attendance is vital for your child's educational progress. The Local Authority expects that all parents/carers ensure their children attend school whenever possible. Absence during school time is largely prohibited by regulation and hinders academic progress. Even in exceptional circumstances, the following factors may be taken into account when considering an application for leave:

- Will leave at this point in time be detrimental to the pupil's education?
- Will he/she miss any national tests or examinations?
- Is his/her attendance a cause for concern?
- Is the proposed absence during the month of September or any other transition period?
- Has he/she already had leave during term time this year?
- Did he/she have leave of absence during term time in the previous school year(s)?
- Does he/she have any absences which have been recorded as unauthorised this year?
- Is the proposed absence during any organised special weeks in school

If work commitments are stated as supporting evidence towards an exceptional reason for requesting leave, parents will be asked to provide employer details and any additional evidence which shows why leave cannot be taken during the school holidays

Parents/Carers who need to request leave during term time should complete an application form, available from the school office as soon as possible prior to the first proposed date of absence. Leave will only be authorised if the circumstances are deemed exceptional by the Headteacher. The Headteacher will consider the request and advise in writing within 5 days whether the absence will be authorised or not. The Headteacher or the Deputy Headteacher may request a meeting with parents before any period of leave is authorised.

The school takes unauthorised absence seriously and, particularly in the case of repeated unauthorised absences, will undertake further liaison with the family, pupil, the School Attendance Consultant and the Pupil Attendance Support Team as appropriate. Furthermore, St Thomas' C of E Primary School may request that the Local Authority issue Penalty Notices in respect of unauthorised absence. This may include leave which is taken without a prior request being made; and leave taken after a prior request has been made and parents have been informed that the period of absence would be classed as unauthorised but the leave is taken regardless of

this advice, particularly where attendance is or will fall below 96% for the current academic year. St Thomas' C of E Primary School may also request that the Local Authority issue a Penalty Notice for days taken in excess of the agreed period of leave; without good reason. Parents also risk losing their child's school place if they do not return from leave, as agreed, and readmission cannot be guaranteed.

The school office is responsible for recording leave requests in the electronic register and will retain copies of correspondence regarding requested leave of absence for 3 years. They will also be responsible for highlighting to the Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher if absence continues after the notified period. In this instance the Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher will undertake further liaison with the family, pupil, the School Attendance Consultant and the Pupil Attendance Support Team as appropriate and a Penalty Notice may be considered.

### **Monitoring, Analysis and Action Planning**

The Governors have determined that the Headteacher has overall responsibility for the monitoring, analysis and action planning of school attendance. The Headteacher is also responsible for ensuring that data is returned promptly to the Local Authority and DfE within deadlines. However, it is expected that the day to day implementation of this will largely rest with the class teachers who take the register and highlight causes for concern and the school office who are responsible for maintaining the school records on attendance and for highlighting causes for concern.

The Deputy Headteacher will review the attendance records at least once every half term to check that there are no outstanding causes for concern and that codes are being applied consistently. In addition, the Attendance Lead will address specific concerns as they arise.

The Headteacher is required to review this Whole School Attendance Policy and Procedure Framework annually and to report on attendance matters to the Governors termly. The Governors will also review the Attendance Policy at least annually to ensure that it continues to meet the school circumstances.

If there is a trend of worsening attendance in a particular group of pupils, discussions should be held between the Headteacher and appropriate staff to identify Action Plans to reverse the trend. It should also be reported to the Governors at the next full Governor's meeting.

St Thomas' C of E Primary School also uses whole school incentive and reward schemes in order to raise the profile of; and promote good levels of attendance and punctuality. These schemes will be reviewed by the children via school council, staff through staff meetings and Governors' through the Working Party and changed when needed be to ensure that children remain interested and motivated. These will be communicated to parents.

## **Monitoring the attendance of pupils who are educated off site**

When pupils are **dual registered**, their registration status will acknowledge this. For sessions when a dual registered pupil is expected to attend St Thomas' C of E School the usual attendance procedures will be followed. When this pupil is expected to attend the other establishment our registers will display the D code (Dual Registration). As the Main School we retain responsibility for dual registered pupils. Therefore, the other establishment will be contacted regularly in order to ensure that this placement continues to be successful.

When pupils are **Present at an Approved Off-Site Educationally Activity** school will decide which of the following codes is most suitable:

Code B – Educated off site

Code J – Interview

Code P – Supervised sporting activity

Code V – Educational visit or trip

The Headteacher is responsible for the pupil's education and wellbeing during these sessions. Therefore, before any of these codes are used school must ensure that the following criteria are met:

- \*that the activity is broadly educational in nature,
- \*it is suitable for the pupil's age and ability,
- \*it will complement the pupil's curriculum,
- \*it is taking place during the session for which the approved off-site educational activity code is being used, and
- \*that suitable supervision arrangements are in place

## **Criteria and Systems for referral to and working with the School Attendance Consultant and the Pupil Attendance Support Team**

The Headteacher/Deputy Headteacher is responsible for ensuring consistent referral of regular or unjustified absence. The criteria for referral are outlined in the systems below.

In addition to the above, the Headteacher/Deputy Headteacher can discuss general attendance matters with the Local Authority School Attendance Consultant. The purpose of such discussions would be to:

- Monitor progress towards targets, highlighting any concerns and identifying any action required
- To receive guidance on latest best practice
- To receive information about local and national trends and benchmarking
- To discuss whether current attendance policy and procedures are effective

## **School System for dealing with concerns about Lateness and Absence**

The school office is responsible for advising the Headteacher/Deputy Headteacher of pupils who are persistently late or absent as issues arise.

The class teacher is also responsible for raising concerns about lateness or absence of class members to the Headteacher/Deputy Headteacher as issues arise.

In addition, the Deputy Headteacher will use electronic systems to monitor the attendance of individual pupils at least once per half term.

Once concerns have been raised:

- The Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher, Inclusion Manager or Class teacher will discuss the matter informally with the pupil.
- Parents/guardians will receive a letter outlining the number of lates/absences the pupil has received. This will also be notification of that a monitoring period will commence.
- If a significant improvement is not made at the end of the monitoring period then parents/guardians will be asked to come to school for a meeting to discuss the next steps. These may include agreeing to a parenting contract which will include the setting of targets and will be reviewed regularly.
- When persistent lateness is an issue this will be communicated to parents via letter, text or a meeting in school as appropriate.
- If lateness/absence persists, and school procedures fail to promote the required level of improvement, the Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher will contact the Pupil Attendance Support Team who will attend meetings with the family and Headteacher as appropriate and help school determine whether any further interventions are required. These interventions may include consideration of the use of legal measures and penalty notices.
- Incentive and reward schemes will be used for individual pupils, as appropriate.

## **Alternative curricular arrangements (pupils who are unwell)**

If school is notified that a pupil will be absent for an extended period the Headteacher will liaise with the family and other support services to determine whether it is appropriate to make arrangements for educational provision to be provided at home or at an alternative venue.

## **School System for reintegrating pupils who have had long term absence**

When a pupil has been absent from school for an extended period, the Headteacher, the class teacher and other support services will liaise with the family to ensure that a smooth reintegration is achieved.

## **Communication of Attendance Policy and Procedure**

It is important that the School's Policy on Attendance is communicated to all the stakeholders and that parents, pupils and staff know the procedures and systems that are in place to implement it.

The Governors have determined that:

- The Attendance Policy will be placed on the School Website
- Details of the Policy and the procedure for requesting absence in term time, and signing in and out of school will be disseminated as part of the new parent induction process e.g. induction package, talks to new parents
- Reference to the School Attendance Policy regarding leave during term time is to be made clear when the school calendar of dates is sent out each year
- The Headteacher will ensure that staff receive training regarding their responsibilities in relation to the Attendance Policy and Procedures
- The Headteacher will provide a summary of attendance and causes for concern at least annually to the Governors
- Details of the absence record of the school will be communicated as part of the School Profile/Prospectus
- Attendance will be reported to parents mid year via attendance letters and annually via the end of year report which will include a certificate of attendance, where applicable
- Attendance will be rewarded weekly as a class and termly as individuals.
- Celebrate punctuality and good attendance with specific punctuality and attendance weeks throughout the year
- Display attendance rewards at focal points
- Raise awareness on newsletters and/or attendance specific letters.

Policy written by D. Dugdale June 2017

To be reviewed by June 2018 (or sooner if legislation changes)