

# Thackley Primary School

## Attendance Policy

May 2022

### Statement of intent

Thackley Primary School believes that in order to facilitate teaching and learning, good attendance is essential. Pupils cannot achieve their full potential if they do not regularly attend school.

Thackley Primary School is committed to:

- Ensuring parents follow the framework set in section 7 of the Education Act 1996, which states that: **“The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him/her to receive efficient full-time education suitable:-**  
**(a) to age, ability and aptitude and**  
**(b) to any special educational needs he/ she may have**  
**Either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.”**
- Promoting and modelling good attendance behaviour.
- Ensuring equality and fairness of treatment for all.
- Implementing our policies in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.
- Early intervention and working with other agencies to ensure the health and safety of our pupils.

### 1. Legal framework

This policy has due regard to legislation, including, but not limited to, the following:

- Education Act 1996
- Equality Act 2010
- Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (As amended)
- Children (Performances and Activities) (England) Regulations 2014
- Children and Young Persons Act 1963

This policy also has regard to non-statutory DfE guidance, including, but not limited to, the following:

- DfE (2020) ‘School attendance’
- DfE (2015) ‘Child performance and activities licensing legislation in England’
- DfE (2021) ‘Keeping children safe in education’
- DfE (2016) ‘Children missing education’
- DfE (2021) ‘Improving school attendance: support for schools and local authorities’
- DfE (2022) ‘Working together to improve school attendance’

This policy will be implemented in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Complaints Procedures Policy
- Child Protection & Safeguarding Policy

### 2. Roles and responsibilities

The governing board has overall responsibility for:

- Monitoring the implementation of the Attendance Policy and procedures of Thackley Primary School.

- Ensuring that the attendance policy, as written, does not discriminate on any grounds, including, but not limited to, ethnicity/national origin, culture, religion, gender, disability or sexual orientation.
- Handling complaints regarding this policy as outlined in the school's Complaints Procedures Policy.
- Having regard to 'Keeping children safe in education' (2021) when making arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

The Headteacher is responsible for:

- The day-to-day implementation and management of the Attendance Policy and procedures of the school.
- Ensuring all parents are aware of the school's attendance expectations and procedures.
- Ensuring that every pupil has access to full-time education and will act as early as possible to address patterns of absence.

Staff, including teachers, support staff and volunteers, are responsible for:

- Following the Attendance Policy and ensuring pupils do so too.
- Ensuring this policy is implemented fairly and consistently.
- Modelling good attendance behaviour.
- Using their professional judgement and knowledge of individual pupils to inform decisions as to whether any welfare concerns should be escalated.
- Where designated, taking the attendance register at the relevant times during the school day.

The attendance officer (Tina Denham) is responsible for informing the LA of any pupil being deleted from the admission and attendance registers if they:

- Are being educated from home.
- No longer live within a reasonable distance of the registered school.
- Have an authorised medical note.
- Are in custody for a period of more than four months and the proprietor does not reasonably believe they will be returning.
- Have been permanently excluded.

Parents are responsible for:

- Providing accurate and up-to-date contact details.
- Providing the school with more than one emergency contact number.
- Updating the school if their details change.
- The attendance of their children at school.
- Promoting good attendance with their children

Pupils are responsible for:

- Attending their lessons and any agreed activities when at school.
- Arriving punctually to lessons when at school.

### 3. Definitions

For the purpose of this policy, the school defines:

- **"Absence"** as:
  - Arrival at school after the register has closed.
  - Not attending school for any reason.

- An **“authorised absence”** as:
  - An absence for sickness for which the school has granted leave.
  - Medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall during school time, for which the school has granted leave.
  - Religious or cultural observances for which the school has granted leave.
  - An absence due to a family emergency.
  
- An **“unauthorised absence”** as:
  - Parents keeping children off school unnecessarily or without reason.
  - Truancy before or during the school day.
  - Absences which have never been properly explained.
  - Arrival at school after the register has closed.
  - Absence due to shopping, looking after other children or birthdays.
  - Absence due to day trips and holidays in term-time which have not been agreed.
  - Leaving school for no reason during the day.
  
- **“Persistent absenteeism”** as:
  - Missing 10% or more of schooling across the year **for any reason**.

#### 4. Training of Staff

The school will recognise that early intervention can prevent poor attendance. As such, staff will receive training in identifying potentially at-risk pupils as part of their induction.

Following this initial training, staff will receive regular and ongoing training as part of their development.

Staff will receive training to ensure they understand that increased absence from school could indicate a safeguarding concern, and know how such concerns should be managed.

#### 5. Pupil expectations

Pupils are expected to attend school every day and to keep their attendance at, or above, 96% throughout the year.

#### 6. Pupils at risk of Persistent Absence (PA)

The school will ensure it provides support to pupils at risk of persistent absence (PA), in conjunction with all relevant external authorities, where necessary.

The SLT will:

- Monitor the implementation and quality of escalation procedures and seek robust evidence of the escalation procedures that work.
- Attend or lead attendance reviews in line with escalation procedures.
- Establish robust escalation procedures which will be initiated before absence becomes a problem by:
  - Sending letters to parents.
  - Having regular reviews.
  - Engaging with LA attendance teams.
  - Using fixed penalty notices.

The governing board will engage in attendance panels when required to reinforce messages.

Where a pupil at risk of PA is also at increased risk of harm, the school will work in conjunction with all relevant authorities, e.g. social services, to support the pupil in line with the school’s duty of care.

Where a pupil becomes at risk of PA, the school will:

- Welcome pupils back following any absence and provide catch-up support to build confidence and bridge gaps.
- Meet with pupils to discuss patterns of absence, barriers to attendance, and any other problems they may be having.
- Establish plans to remove barriers and provide additional support.
- Lead regular check-ins to review progress and the impact of support.
- Make regular contact with families to discuss progress.
- Consider what support for re-engagement might be needed, including for vulnerable groups.

The school attendance system will be used to give an accurate and informative view of attendance, reasons for absence and patterns within groups, including:

- Children in need
- LAC
- Pupils who are eligible for FSM
- Pupils with EAL
- Pupils with SEND

## **7. Absence procedures**

Parents are required to contact the school office as soon as possible on the first day of their child's absence. This may be a telephone call, email, message left on the school answer machine or in person at the school office.

A text or phone call will be made to the parent of any child who has not reported their absence on the first day that they do not attend school. Please see our 'First Day Calling Procedures'.

The school will always follow up any absences in order to:

- Ascertain the reason for the absence.
- Ensure the proper safeguarding action is being taken.
- Identify whether the absence is authorised or not.
- Identify the correct code to use to enter the data onto the school census system.

If a child's absence falls below 90% the school will write to parents to make them aware of their child's attendance figures and make them aware that monitoring is taking place. The school will inform the LA, on at least a half termly basis, of the details of pupils who fail to attend regularly, or who have missed 10 school days or more without authorisation.

Children with an attendance of 90% or less will be discussed with the Headteacher and the LA Attendance Officer. The parents may be invited into school for a meeting.

Where a pupil has not returned to school for 10 days after an authorised absence, or is absent from school without authorisation for 20 consecutive school days, the school may remove the pupil from the admissions register if the school and the LA have failed to establish the whereabouts of the pupil after making reasonable enquiries.

## **8. Attendance register**

Designated staff members will take the attendance register at the start of each school day and at the start of the afternoon session. This register will record whether pupils are:

- Present.
- Absent.

- Attending an approved educational visit.
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

The school will use the national attendance codes to ensure attendance and absence are monitored and recorded in a consistent way. The following codes will be used:

- / = Present in the morning
- \ = Present in the afternoon
- L = Late arrival before the register has closed
- C = Authorised absence
- E = Excluded but no alternative provision made
- H = Authorised holiday
- I = Illness
- M = Medical or dental appointments
- R = Religious observance
- B = Off-site education activity
- G = Unauthorised holiday
- = Unauthorised absence
- U = Arrived after registration closed
- N = Reason not yet provided
- X = Not required to be in school
- T = Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence
- V = Educational visit or trip
- P = Participating in a supervised sporting activity
- D = Dual registered – at another educational establishment
- Y = Exceptional circumstances
- Z = Pupil not on admission register

When the school has planned in advance to be fully or partially closed, the code ‘#’ will be used for the relevant pupils who are absent. This code will also be used to record year groups who are not due to attend because the school has set different term dates for different years, e.g. induction days.

All amendments made to the attendance register will include the original entry, the amended entry, the reason for the amendment, the date of amendment and the name and role of the person who made the amendment.

Every entry received into the attendance register will be preserved for three years.

## **9. Attendance Team - School**

If they are persistently absent, pupils will be referred to the school attendance team who will attempt to resolve the situation through discussion with the parent, target setting and monitoring. If the situation cannot be resolved and attendance does not improve, the attendance team will work alongside the LA Attendance Team to issue sanctions such as prosecutions or penalty notices to parents.

The school attendance team will monitor and analyse attendance data regularly to ensure that intervention is delivered quickly to address absence, and will provide regular reports to staff to enable them to track the attendance of pupils and to implement attendance procedures.

## **10. Lateness**

The school will regard punctuality as of the utmost importance and lateness will not be tolerated.

- The school day starts at **8.45am**. Pupils should be in their classroom at this time.
- Registers are marked by **9:00am**. Pupils will receive a late mark if they are not in their classroom by this time.
- The register closes at **9:15am**. Pupils will receive a U mark if they arrive late after the register has closed.
- After lunch, the register closes 15 minutes after the start of the afternoon session. Pupils will receive a mark of absence if they are not present or a late mark if they arrive in their classroom after this time

## **11. Term-time leave**

The school will require parents to observe the school holidays as prescribed; therefore, the headteacher will be unable to authorise holidays during term-time in most cases. The headteacher will be only allowed to grant a leave of absence in exceptional circumstances. Applications will be made in advance and the headteacher will be satisfied by the evidence which is presented, before authorising term-time leave. The headteacher will determine the amount of time a pupil can be away from school during term-time. Any leave of absence is at the discretion of the headteacher. Any requests for leave during term-time will be considered on an individual basis and the pupil's previous attendance record will be taken into account.

Requests for leave will not be granted in the following circumstances:

- Immediately before and during assessment periods
- When a pupil's attendance record shows any unauthorised absence
- Where a pupil's authorised absence record is already above 10 percent for any reason

If parents take their child out of school during term-time without authorisation from the headteacher, they may be subject to sanctions such as penalty fines.

## **12. Leave during lunchtimes**

Parents may be permitted to take their child away from the school premises during lunch times with permission from the headteacher – it is at the headteacher's discretion as to whether a pupil will be allowed to leave the premises.

Parents will submit a written request, outlining the reasons for their child to leave the premises during lunch time – this request will be submitted to the headteacher. The headteacher will consider the request and will invite the parent into the school for a discussion regarding any concerns, as well as the timely return of their child at the end of lunch time and their child's behaviour when not on the school premises. The headteacher reserves the right to grant or refuse a request and will inform the parent in writing of their decision.

Pupils will leave the school premises within 10 minutes of the start of lunch and will return no later than 5 minutes before the end of lunch.

Parents will be required to meet their child at the school office when taking them off the premises – the pupil will be signed out and back in using the InVentry system at the school office. No pupil will leave the premises before the member of staff has given their permission.

The headteacher reserves the right to withdraw their permission at any time – this may occur, for example, where there are attendance concerns. Any decision to withdraw permission will be in writing, explaining the reasons for the headteacher's decision. If permission is withdrawn, parents will not be entitled to appeal the decision. Parents will be able to withdraw their request at any time – the request will be submitted in writing to the headteacher.

Permission will be updated on a termly basis – letters will be sent to parents at the beginning of each term to confirm whether they would like their request to continue.

### **13. Truancy**

Truancy will be considered as any absence of part, or all, of one or more days from school, during which the school has not been notified of the cause behind such absence.

All staff will be actively engaged in supporting the regular attendance of pupils, and understand the importance of continuity in each pupil's learning.

All pupils are expected to be in their classes on time, where the teacher will record the attendance electronically. Any pupil with permission to leave the school during the day must sign out at the school office and sign back in again on their return.

Immediate action will be taken when there are any concerns that a pupil might be truanting. If truancy is suspected, the headteacher is notified, and they will contact the parent in order to assess the reasons behind the pupil not attending school.

The following procedures will be taken in the event of a truancy:

- In the first instance, a letter of warning will be sent to the parents of the pupil, informing them of the truancy and stating that any future occurrences could result in further action being taken.
- If any further truancy occurs, then the school will consider issuing a penalty notice.
- A penalty notice will be issued where there is overt truancy, inappropriate parentally-condoned absence, excessive holidays in term-time and persistent late arrival at school.

The DSL will be involved where an instance of truancy may be linked to a safeguarding concern. Any safeguarding concerns will be dealt with in line with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

### **14. Missing children**

Pupils are not permitted to leave the school premises during the school day unless they have permission from the Headteacher.

The following procedures will be taken in the event of a pupil going missing whilst at school:

- The member of staff who has noticed the missing pupil will inform the Headteacher immediately.
- The office staff will also be informed as they will act as a point of contact for receiving information regarding the search.
- A member of staff will stay with the rest of the class, and all other available members of staff will conduct a thorough search of the school premises as directed by the Headteacher.
- The following areas will be systematically searched:
  - All classrooms
  - All toilets
  - The lockers
  - The staffroom
  - The library
  - The ICT Suite
  - The Learning Mentor's room
  - The school grounds
- Available staff will begin a search of the area immediately outside of the school premises, and will take a mobile phone with them so they can be contacted.
- If the pupil has not been found after 10 minutes, then the parents of the pupil will be notified.

- If the parents have had no contact from the pupil, then the police will be contacted.
- The missing pupil's teacher will produce a written report for the Headteacher, describing all circumstances leading up to the pupil going missing.
- If the missing pupil has an allocated social worker, is a Child Looked After (CLA), or has any special educational needs and disabilities, then the appropriate personnel will be informed.

Parents and any other agencies will be informed immediately when the pupil has been located.

When the pupil has been located, members of staff will care for and talk to the pupil to ensure they are safe and well.

The Headteacher will take the appropriate action to ensure the pupils understand they must not leave the premises, and sanctions will be issued if deemed necessary.

The Headteacher will carry out a full investigation, and will draw a conclusion as to how the incident occurred. A written report will be produced, and policies and procedures will be reviewed in accordance with the outcome where necessary.

## **15. Religious observances**

The school will take advice from local religious leaders of all faiths to establish the appropriate number of days of absence required for religious festivals. Parents will be required to inform the school in advance if absences are required for days of religious observance.

## **16. Appointments**

As far as possible, parents will attempt to book medical and dental appointments outside of school hours. Where this is not possible, proof of the appointment should be shared with the school office.

If the appointment requires the pupil to leave during the school day, they will be signed out at the school office by the adult who collects them. Pupils will attend school before and after the appointment wherever possible.

## **17. Modelling, sport and acting performances/activities**

The school will ensure that all pupils engaging in performances/activities (whether they, or another person, receives payment or not), which require them to be absent from school, understand that they will be required to obtain a licence from the LA which authorises the school's absence(s).

Additional arrangements will be made by the school for pupils engaging in performances or activities that require them to be absent from school to ensure they do not fall behind in their education – this may involve private teaching. These arrangements will be approved by the LA who will ensure that the arrangements are suitable for the pupil.

The pupil will receive education that, when taken together over the term of the licence, amounts to a minimum of three hours per day that the pupil would be required to attend a school maintained by the LA issuing the licence. This requirement will be met by ensuring a pupil receives an education:

- For not less than six hours a week; and
- During each complete period of four weeks (or if there is a period of less than four weeks, then during that period), for periods of time not less than three hours a day; and
- On days where the pupil would be required to attend school if they were attending a school maintained by the LA; and
- For not more than five hours on any such day.



Where a licence has been granted by the LA and it specifies dates of absence, no further authorisation will be needed from the school. Where an application does not specify dates, and it has been approved by the LA, it is at the discretion of the headteacher to authorise the leave of absence for each day. The headteacher will not authorise any absences which would mean that a pupil's attendance would fall below 96 percent. Where a licence has not been obtained, the headteacher will not authorise any absence for a performance or activity.

## **18. Young carers**

The school understands the difficulties that face young carers, and will endeavour to identify young carers at the earliest opportunity, as well as through their time at the school. A caring and flexible approach will be taken to the needs of young carers and each pupil will be examined on a case-by-case basis, involving other agencies if appropriate.

The school, in conjunction with relevant authorities, will implement support for pupils who are young carers, to encourage their sustained and regular attendance at school in line with the school's expectations.

## **19. Monitoring and review**

The school monitors attendance and punctuality throughout the year.

Thackley Primary School's attendance target is 97 percent.

This policy is reviewed every three years by the Headteacher; the next scheduled review date for this policy is **May 2025**.

## APPENDIX

### Attendance Monitoring Procedures

Thackley Primary School has adopted the following attendance monitoring procedures, to ensure that pupils' attendance meets the expected standard, and effective intervention is provided where pupils' attendance falls below the standard:

1. 'First Day Calling Procedures' - Contact is made with parents on the first day of absence for any pupil absence not reported. 'N' codes are used to indicate that the pupil is absent for a reason not yet provided; these N codes are reported to the attendance team daily.
2. Contact is made to the parents of any pupils marked using the N code. Any N codes not established after a week are recorded as an unauthorised absence.
3. If a pupil's attendance falls below 90 percent, a letter is sent home explaining that the pupil's attendance is now being monitored, and the Learning Mentor contacts the parents to discuss this.
4. The pupil's attendance is monitored for two weeks and, if attendance does not improve after this time, parents are required to attend a meeting in school with the Learning Mentor to discuss the issue and to set targets for their child. If parents are unwilling to cooperate, or are genuinely unable to attend, a referral may be required to the Local Authority Attendance Team who may then conduct a home visit.
5. After the two-week monitoring period, and if targets are met, a letter is sent home from to congratulate the pupil and their parents on improving attendance. Monitoring and communication with the parents continues until attendance stabilises to 96 percent.
6. If targets are not met, the Learning Mentor makes a referral to the Local Authority Attendance Team. A longer monitoring period is established and a fixed-penalty notice may be issued.
7. Attendance data is collated every half term by the Attendance Team for the Leadership team. Attendance data is presented to the Governors at each FGB Meeting.

## Stage One – School Attendance Staged Intervention Model

