

THAKEHAM PRIMARY SCHOOL

"Small School, Big Opportunities, Great Achievements"



Attendance Policy

Thakeham Primary School

Date approved by Full Governing Body: 02.09.21

Review Date: September 2022

Signed

Headteacher:

S. Norton

Chair of Governors:

Judith James

The Government expects:

- Schools and local authorities to:
 - promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence;
 - ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled; and,
 - act early to address patterns of absence.
- Parents to perform their legal duty by ensuring their children of compulsory school age, who are registered at school, attend regularly.
- All pupils to be punctual to their lessons.

To enable children to achieve all they are capable of, it is essential that they attend regularly and punctually.

All schools are expected to achieve an overall rate of **95% or above** attendance.

It is the responsibility of all school staff to be welcoming to children and their parents, creating an atmosphere where they both feel able to raise concerns and share any information that could affect children's attendance. Due regard will be given to the fact that a register is a legal document and, taking this into account, registers will be taken regularly and conscientiously at the beginning of both the morning and afternoon sessions. It is important that all children arrive at school punctually. If a child is late, s/he should report to the school office to be marked in and ensure that in case of emergency the school has an accurate head count. It is most important that parents discuss any problem with either the class teacher or the Headteacher so that appropriate help can be offered. Equally, if a child needs to leave school for a medical appointment during school hours s/he must be signed out, and in again on return, at the office. Parents/carers are asked to make every possible effort to make appointments out of school hours.

If a child is absent for the day, the school expects parents/carers to make contact as early as possible, giving the reason for the absence and the expected day of return. The register closes at 9am after which time a child is marked late. If no word is received from the parent/carer by 9:15am the school will contact the parent/carer on that day. The school follows up absences where no reasons are given. If the reasons for these absences remain unspecified they will be classed as unauthorised. **The local authority recommends that, unless there is prior agreement or good reason, should a pupil arrive more than half an hour late after the registration closes, this should be an unauthorised absence (U).**

Unauthorised absences

Unauthorised absences are when a pupil has been marked in the school attendance register as being absent from school without authority. It is only the Headteacher who can authorise absence for any reason from school.

This includes:

- any absence marked in the register as unauthorised ('O' or 'N' codes)
- persistent late arrival at school after the register has been taken ('U' codes)
- a holiday in term-time, which has not been authorised by the Headteacher ('G' codes).

It is the parents' legal responsibility to ensure their child's good school attendance and punctuality. The Leadership Team regularly review attendance of each pupil. If there are concerns for punctuality or attendance, the Headteacher will arrange to discuss these with the parents/carers to identify any barrier and agree strategies to improve the situation. If the situation does not improve the school will consider a referral to the Pupil Investigation Team. Should a child's attendance/punctuality still not improve, the parent/carer could be prosecuted under the 1996 Education Act. Alternatively an Education Supervision Order could be sought in the family proceedings court under the 1989 Children Act. Please

note 10 unauthorised absences (5 school days) in 10 weeks will result in a referral to the Pupil Entitlement: Investigation team who may issue a Fixed Penalty Notice.

If the leave is granted, they should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school. Examples of this would be:

- an organised educational course
- an organised sports competition or approved public performance
- a music or dance exam
- funeral of an immediate relative – 2 days
- religious observation on days officially set apart by the religious body to which the parents belong – 1 day
- close family wedding – 1 day
- medical appointments which cannot be arranged outside the school day.

A form obtained from the school office must be completed when withdrawal from learning is being requested (appendix 1). A meeting with the Headteacher must be arranged prior to completing and submitting the form. It is expected that the request is made 4 weeks before the absence and the Headteacher will aim to respond in 5 working days, indicating whether or not the absence has been authorised. Should the absence be unauthorised, a letter will be sent home (appendix 2) making the parent aware that should the absence go ahead as planned then this will be passed on to the Pupil Entitlement: Investigation team, resulting in a Fixed Penalty Notice (see below)

Fixed Penalty Notice

Parents/carers should be aware that STARS Network of Schools will follow the West Sussex County Council guidelines on issuing Fixed Penalty Notices (FPN) and unauthorised absence of 10 sessions or more (each half day counts as one session) which could result in the issuing of a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) by the County Pupil Entitlement: Investigation team. **On DfE guidance, any unauthorised holidays of five consecutive days or more will be referred to the County resulting in the issuing of a FPN.**

A Fixed Penalty Notice gives the parents/carers the opportunity to discharge themselves of their legal responsibility if a £120 fine is paid (per adult with parental responsibility for each child) within 28 days or £60 if paid within 21 days of the date the Notice was issued. Failure to pay the FPN may result in a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996. Parents/carers who are prosecuted for the non-payment of an FPN will receive a criminal record unless evidence is provided to show that no offence has been committed.

In exceptional circumstances a pupil may be granted authorised leave (see above). However, regardless of whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised, if after ten days the pupil fails to return and no contact can be made with the parents/carers, the school will make a referral to Pupil Entitlement: Investigation who will make reasonable enquiries and consult with the Child Missing Education Team (CME). If the school can make contact with the parents/carers, it will warn them, if possible in writing, that it will consider taking the pupil off roll if s/he does not return by an agreed date. If the pupil does not return within 20 days and no reasonable explanation is given, the school will consult with CME and, in line with DfE guidance, consider taking the pupil off roll. If taken off roll, parents/carers would need to reapply for a place through West Sussex County Council Admissions (North) on their return. A place cannot be guaranteed at the current school.

Genuine illness will be authorised, although the school reserves the right to ask for medical clarification if a child's medical absences are above the amount expected for a usually healthy child. If it has been necessary for a child to have extended absence due to illness, the school will work with the child, parents/carers and any other involved agencies to instigate a re-integration programme for that child.

STARS Network of Schools provide a broad, balanced curriculum, but for children to access the many opportunities that are provided, it is necessary for them to attend school regularly and punctually.

Attendance expectations (From DfE guidance July 2021)

Attendance is mandatory. The usual rules on attendance continue to apply, including:

- parents' duty to ensure that their child of compulsory school age attends regularly at the school where the child is a registered pupil
- schools' responsibilities to record attendance and follow up absence
- the ability to issue sanctions, including fixed penalty notices, in line with local authorities' codes of conduct
- the duty on local authorities to put in place arrangements for identifying, and to follow up with, children missing education

Not attending in circumstances relating to COVID-19

This category must be used to record sessions that take place in the 2021 to 2022 academic year where a pupil does not attend because their travel to, or attendance at, school would be:

- contrary to guidance relating to the incidence or transmission of COVID-19 from Public Health England (PHE), or its successor UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), and/or the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC)
- prohibited by any legislation (or instruments such as statutory directions) relating to the incidence or transmission of COVID-19

This category must only be used to record where a pupil is not attending for the reasons set out above. It should not be used to record any other type of non-attendance or absence - for example, where a parent or pupil is anxious about attending school because of COVID-19.

The [schools COVID-19 operational guidance](#) sets out when pupils should self-isolate and when they ought to be tested in the 2021 to 2022 academic year.

Examples in which 'not attending in circumstances relating to COVID-19' could apply

In line with current legislation, and guidance from PHE (and its successor the UKHSA) and DHSC, examples are as follows:

- Pupils who are required to self-isolate as they have symptoms or confirmed COVID-19
- Pupils who have symptoms of COVID-19, or have had a positive lateral flow device (LFD) test, should self-isolate and get a confirmatory polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test.
- If a pupil tests negative and if they feel well, they can stop self-isolating and return to school. If the pupil remains unwell following the test (such as with a different illness), then they should be recorded as code I (illness). Code X should only be used up until the time of the negative test result. Schools should not retrospectively change the attendance register due to a negative test result.

- If a pupil tests positive, they should continue to self-isolate in line with public health guidance. Code X should be used for the period of self-isolation until the test. After the pupil tests positive, they should be recorded as code I (illness) until they are able to return to school.

Pupils who are a close contact of someone who has symptoms or confirmed COVID-19

Pupils who are a close contact of someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 do not need to self-isolate. They should instead get a PCR test, and should only self-isolate if they test positive. If they do test positive, they should be recorded as code I (illness) until they are able to return to school.

Pupils who are required by legislation to self-isolate as part of a period of quarantine

As usual, parents should plan their holidays within school breaks and avoid seeking permission to take their children out of school during term time. Families should also consider that their child may need to self-isolate following trips overseas that require a period of quarantine. If a pupil is required to be in quarantine on arrival in, or return to, the UK, the school should use code X in the register.

Pupils who are clinically extremely vulnerable when shielding is advised

Clinically extremely vulnerable people are no longer advised to shield. All clinically extremely vulnerable pupils should attend their education setting unless they are one of the very small number of children and young people under paediatric or other specialist care who have been advised by their clinician or other specialist not to attend.

If shielding is advised nationally or in a local area again, by DHSC, PHE or UKHSA, then pupils who are clinically extremely vulnerable may be advised not to attend school. Non-attendance in accordance with guidance from DHSC, PHE or UKHSA should be recorded as code X.

Pupils who are self-isolating but who have not had a PCR test

In line with public health advice, pupils with symptoms must self-isolate and schools should strongly encourage pupils to take a PCR test. Where the pupil is unable to take a PCR test, the school should record the pupil as code X in the register.

Schools should follow up with families if they are not satisfied with the reason as to why the pupil is not in school. Schools can request supporting evidence from the family. Where the school is not satisfied with the reason given for absence, they may record this using one of the unauthorised absence codes, in line with the [school attendance: guidance for schools](#).

Remote education

If a pupil is not attending school because their attendance would be contrary to government guidance or legislation around COVID-19, we expect schools to offer them access to remote education. Schools should keep a record of, and monitor engagement with, this activity, but this does not need to be tracked in the attendance register.

Thakeham Primary School

Request for Absence in School Time



Pupils are **only** in school for 190 days each year.

There are 175 other days for holidays and other activities.

80% attendance represents **1 day off a week.**

90% attendance represents **1 day off per fortnight.**

All schools are expected to achieve an overall rate of **95% or above attendance**

Guidance:

There is **no** entitlement to any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional and compelling circumstances.

- The application should be made following a meeting with the Headteacher in advance and at least five days before the first day of absence if possible.
- Please use a separate form for each child and each absence.

Parent/Guardian to complete this section:

Name of child:	Class:	
Is this the first request for absence this academic year?	Yes / No	
Do you have a child at another STARS school? Yes/No	School:	
First Day of Absence:	Number of school days requested:	
Final day of Absence:		
Reason: <i>Please give information about your request for absence.</i>		

Signed:

Date:

School Office to complete this section:

Our School Attendance Target is 97%

Last Academic Year Attendance	%	Green Amber Red	Green Amber Red	More than 95% 85% to 95% Less than 85%	Satisfactory Needs Unsatisfactory
Current Attendance:	%	Green Amber Red			

Head Teacher to complete this section:

Your request is **approved** and the absence as set out above is authorised.

Your request is **not approved**. If the pupil is absent as proposed above, it will be recorded as **unauthorised** for the following reason:

Signed:

Dated:

Appendix 2

Date

Dear,

Request of absence in School Time:

Thank you for your recent application requesting a period of absence in school time for
..... fromto

In line with our school Attendance Policy and in line with national guidelines, I am unable to authorise this request and the absence will be recorded as unauthorised on his/her school record. If the holiday takes place as planned and will be equivalent to 10 school sessions or more (5 days or more), I will need to pass the absence details to WSCC Pupil Entitlement Investigation team, who may issue a Fixed Penalty Notice.

I am enclosing a copy of the guide to Fixed Penalty Notices for your information and a copy of our school policy. If you have any questions at all, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Mrs S. Norton
Headteacher

Can I appeal?

There is no statutory right of appeal once a Notice has been issued.

Can I be prosecuted if I pay the Fixed Penalty Notice?

You cannot be prosecuted for the period of absence identified in the Fixed Penalty Notice. You may subsequently be prosecuted for further periods of unauthorised absence from school. Each case is considered on an individual basis.

**** REMEMBER ****

For absences other than unauthorised holidays in term time School staff would much rather work with parents/carers to resolve poor attendance than resort to enforcement actions like Fixed Penalty Notices or Court

Pupil Entitlement: Investigation

Fixed Penalty Notice Team
West Sussex County Council
2nd Floor Centenary House
Worthing
West Sussex
BN13 2QB

Email:

FPN.PEI@westsussex.gov.uk

Pupil Entitlement: Investigation

Advice Line:

03302 228200

A BRIEF GUIDE TO

Fixed Penalty Notices

Sections 444 Education Act 1996

Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003

Crime and Disorder Act 1998

This leaflet offers you a brief summary about the Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN) scheme and what it could mean for you.

What is a FPN?

It is a fine given for unauthorised absence from school, rather than the matter being brought before the courts. It is issued per parent, per child. Please note **only** a Head Teacher can authorise absence from school.

Who issues them?

In West Sussex the Local Authority issues them through the Pupil Entitlement: Investigation

When are they used?

When a pupil has a minimum of 10 school sessions recorded as unauthorised in a 10 school week period; a school day is two sessions AM and PM.

This includes; any absence marked in the register as unauthorised.

Persistent late arrival at school after the register has been taken and is recorded as an unauthorised absence.

A holiday in term time which has not been authorised by the Head Teacher. The Government has directed Head Teachers may only grant leave for a holiday in exceptional circumstances.

FPNs can also be used during the first 5 days of exclusion. Parents are made aware of the consequences by letter when a child is excluded from school.

Please note

If the school refers a period of absence that is longer than 15 consecutive school days; Pupil Entitlement: Investigation may consider a FPN is not appropriate.

In these instances the matter may instead be brought directly before the Courts.

How much is the FPN?

The FPN is for £120 and 28 days are given for you to settle the Penalty.

If the FPN is paid within the first 21 days the amount payable is reduced to £60.

How do I pay?

The information on how to pay is included on the FPN. Payment cannot be made in part or by instalments.

What happens if I don't pay?

If you don't pay within the 28 days the Authority will consider instigating a prosecution in the Magistrates Court for the offence of poor school attendance. If proven this could result in a fine of up to £1000 per parent per child and/or a parenting order or a community service order and also costs.