

**THAKEHAM PRIMARY SCHOOL**

"Small School, Big Opportunities, Great Achievements"



# Attendance Policy

## Thakeham Primary School

**Date approved by Full Governing Body: 28.09.20**

**Review Date: July 2021**

**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. Our school attendance target this year is 97%. Attendance is categorised into:

- **Green** (95% or above). Green is satisfactory.
- **Amber** (between 90% and 94.9%). Amber is a cause for concern.
- **Red** (less than 90%). Red is unsatisfactory and classed as persistence absence.

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. In order to keep parents/carers informed and to promote positive attendance, we issue termly attendance

letters in line with our graded attendance 'red', 'amber' or 'green' (see letters in appendix 1). 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 2). 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 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 3) 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.

### **Addendum: recording attendance in relation to coronavirus (COVID-19) during the 2020 to 2021 academic year**

We are required to submit attendance data to WSCC each half-term. Although we have termly attendance letters to update parents on their child's attendance, during the current COVID-19 pandemic, we will monitor attendance on an ongoing basis. This may involve contacting parents by letter to update them where there are signs before the end of a term, where attendance is a cause for concern (ie below 90%). It is hoped through this earlier intervention, that support can be secured to ensure an improvement in attendance. Should improvements not be seen, the steps outlined on page 2/3 of this policy will be followed.

#### **Purpose**

The DfE have published guidance and regulations<sup>1</sup> governing school attendance registers in relation to coronavirus (COVID-19) from 24 August 2020 for use in the 2020 to 2021 academic year. This should be read in conjunction with the wider guidance document which gives advice on other usual attendance duties and processes that remain in force.

#### **Attendance expectations**

From the start of the autumn term 2020 pupil attendance will be mandatory and the usual rules on attendance will 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

#### **New for 2020 to 2021 – not attending in circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19)**

Although school attendance is mandatory from the start of the autumn term, there are some circumstances where pupils cannot attend school due to coronavirus (COVID-19).

To make sure schools record this accurately and consistently, the DfE have made changes to the regulations<sup>2</sup> governing school attendance registers to add a new category of non-attendance – 'not attending in circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19)'.

This category must only be used to record sessions that take place in the 2020 to 2021 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 coronavirus (COVID-19) from Public Health England (PHE) and/or the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC)<sup>3</sup>
- prohibited by any legislation (or instruments such as statutory directions) relating to the incidence or transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19)

In line with the Secretary of State's expectation that no parent will be penalised for following official public health advice for their child not to attend a given session, this new category of non-attendance will not count as an absence (authorised or unauthorised) for statistical purposes.

## Attendance codes

From the beginning of the new academic year, in line with DfE regulations we will return to using the attendance and absence codes in use before the outbreak (set out on page 9 of the [attendance guidance](#)), in addition to the new category of 'not attending in circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19)':

- pupils not attending a session who meet the criteria for 'not attending in circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19)' should be recorded using code X<sup>4</sup>
- schools should continue to use code X for non-compulsory school aged pupils who are not expected to attend a session, as they did before the outbreak.

### Examples in which 'not attending in circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19)' could apply

In line with current legislation, and current guidance from PHE and DHSC, examples are as follows:

#### **Pupils who are required to self-isolate as they, or a member of their household, has symptoms or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19)**

View [stay at home: guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus \(COVID-19\) infection](#).

Pupils who have symptoms should self-isolate and get a test.

If a pupil tests negative and if they feel well and no longer have symptoms similar to coronavirus (COVID-19), 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, as would usually be the case. Code X should only be used up until the time of the negative test result. The attendance register will not retrospectively change due to a negative test result.

If a pupil tests positive, they should continue to self-isolate for at least 10 days from the onset of their symptoms. They should only return to school if they do not have symptoms other than a cough or loss of sense of smell or taste (anosmia). This is because a cough or anosmia can last for several weeks once the infection has gone. 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.

If someone in the pupil's household has symptoms, the household should self-isolate and the member of their household should get a test.

If the member of the household tests negative, the pupil can stop self-isolating and can return to school. Code X should only be used up until the time of the negative test result when the pupil can return to school.

If the household member tests positive, the pupil should continue self-isolating for the full 14 days from when the member of their household first had symptoms. Code X should be used during this period.

In all cases of self-isolation, we ask parents to inform us immediately about the outcome of a test. We do not require evidence of negative test results or other medical evidence before admitting children or welcoming them back after a period of self-isolation.

### **Pupils who are required to self-isolate because they are a close contact of someone who has symptoms or confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19)**

View [stay at home: guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus \(COVID-19\) infection](#) and [NHS test and trace](#) guidance.

Pupils may not have symptoms themselves but may be required to self-isolate if they are a close contact of someone with coronavirus (COVID-19).

The [NHS test and trace](#) guidance states that a person should self-isolate for 14 days if they have had recent close contact with a person who has tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19). In the event of a confirmed coronavirus (COVID-19) case in the school community, the local health protection team will provide advice on who this applies to, advising them to self-isolate for 14 days since they were last in close contact with the person that has tested positive when they were infectious. Code X should be used for these pupils during this period.

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

View guidance on [how to self-isolate when you travel to the UK](#).

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<sup>5</sup>. If a pupil is required to be in quarantine on arrival in, or return to, the UK, code X should be used in the register.

### **Pupils who are clinically extremely vulnerable in a future local lockdown scenario only**

View [guidance on shielding and protecting extremely vulnerable persons from Covid-19](#).

Shielding advice for all adults and children paused on 1 August 2020. This means that even the small number of pupils who will remain on the shielded patient list can return to school, as can those who have family members who are shielding.

If in future, rates of the disease rise in local areas, children still on the shielding list (or family members still on the shielding list) from that area, and that area only, may be contacted by the government and advised to stay at home and shield during the period where rates remain high. Families will receive a letter if they are required to shield again that parents will be able to share with the school. Non-attendance in accordance with guidance from PHE or the DHSC should be recorded as code X.

We will contact parents of pupils who are shielding when measures in the local area are lifted and shielding is paused again, to set out the expectation that they can return to school. Code X should not be used for sessions after the pupil has been advised to return to school.

### **Local lockdown**

If rates of the disease rise locally, we may need to prevent some pupils from attending. We will follow PHE or DHSC guidance on what measures are necessary in the event of local lockdown.

Where attendance is to be limited to certain groups, 'not attending in circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19)' - code X - should be used for pupils who are asked not to attend.

### **Remote education**

If a pupil is not attending school due to circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19), the DfE expects schools to be able to offer them access to remote education. We will keep a record of, and monitor engagement with this activity.

### **Data collection**

Collection of school attendance data as part of the school census will resume in January 2021, collecting data for the autumn term 2020. Subject to the necessary legislation being made, from January 2021, the census will collect attendance codes in addition to absence codes.

Further information will follow on what, if any, additional attendance data will be required during the 2020 to 2021 academic year to monitor the impact of coronavirus (COVID-19) and support the government's planning.

1. [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Coronavirus\) \(Amendment\) \(No. 2\) Regulations 2020 ↵](#)
2. [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) \(Coronavirus\) \(Amendment\) \(No. 2\) Regulations 2020 ↵](#)
3. And their equivalents in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland if a pupil attending a school in England resides there. ↵
4. Code X is not counted as an absence in the school census. ↵
5. [The Health Protection \(Coronavirus, International Travel\) \(England\) Regulations 2020 ↵](#)



## Appendix 1

Dear Parents/Carers,

### Red Attendance Letter xxx Term

The Government collects data from schools on every child's attendance three times a year. The DfE expect all schools to set themselves challenging and ambitious objectives to reduce absence. Our school target is 96%.

Further to our meeting on xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx in line with our school Attendance Policy, this letter is to inform you of «forename»'s attendance so far this academic year. . Attendance is categorised into:

- Green (95% or above). Green is satisfactory
- Amber (between 90% and 94.9%. Amber is a cause for concern
- Red (less than 90%). Red is unsatisfactory

Since the start of the academic year 2017-2018 (07.09.17), «forename» has achieved «percentage\_attendance»%. **This is classed as unsatisfactory.**

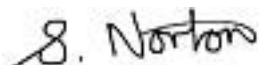
Research shows that children with good attendance make better progress in school. It is difficult for young children to learn when they miss lessons and it can make friendships difficult too.

We do recognise that young children do become ill; particularly when they first start school. In some cases children suffer from chronic conditions. Please inform us if your child has a medical condition that you have been advised will affect their attendance at school.

Remember to phone the school office before 9am to let us know if your child is ill. Please also note, 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). 10 unauthorised absences (5 school days) in a 10 week period will result in a referral to the Pupil Entitlement: Investigation team who may impose a Fixed Penalty notice fine. The same applies to absence due to holiday for the same period of time.

Please contact me if you would like to discuss your child's attendance further.

Yours sincerely



Mrs S. Norton  
Headteacher

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Dear Parents/Carers,

### Amber Attendance Letter xxx Term

The Government collects data from schools on every child's attendance three times a year. The DfE expect all schools to set themselves challenging and ambitious objectives to reduce absence. Our school target is 96%.

In line with our school Attendance Policy, this letter is to inform you of «forename»'s attendance so far this academic year.. Attendance is categorised into:

- Green (95% or above). Green is satisfactory
- Amber (between 90% and 94.9%. Amber is a cause for concern
- Red (less than 90%). Red is unsatisfactory

Since the start of the academic year 2017-2018 (07.09.17), «forename» has achieved «percentage\_attendance»%. **This is classed as a 'cause for concern'.**

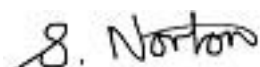
Research shows that children with good attendance make better progress in school. It is difficult for young children to learn when they miss lessons and it can make friendships difficult too.

We do recognise that young children do become ill; particularly when they first start school. In some cases children suffer from chronic conditions. Please inform us if your child has a medical condition that you have been advised will affect their attendance at school.

Remember to phone the school office before 9am to let us know if your child is ill. Please also note, 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). 10 unauthorised absences (5 school days) in a 10 week period will result in a referral to the Pupil Entitlement: Investigation team who may impose a Fixed Penalty notice fine. The same applies to absence due to holiday for the same period of time.

Please contact me if you would like to discuss your child's attendance further.

Yours sincerely



Mrs S. Norton  
Headteacher

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Dear Parents/Carers,

### Green Attendance Letter xxx Term

The Government collects data from schools on every child's attendance three times a year. The DfE expect all schools to set themselves challenging and ambitious objectives to reduce absence. Our school target is 96%.

In line with our school Attendance Policy, this letter is to inform you of «forename»'s attendance so far this academic year. Attendance is categorised into:

- Green (95% or above). Green is satisfactory
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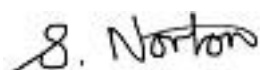
Since the start of the academic year 2018-2019, «forename» has achieved «percentage\_attendance»%. Congratulations! This is a wonderful achievement!

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your support in ensuring «forename»'s regular attendance at school. Research shows that children with good attendance make better progress in school. It is difficult for young children to learn when they miss lessons and it can make friendships difficult too.

We do recognise that young children do become ill; particularly when they first start school. In some cases children suffer from chronic conditions. Please inform us if your child has a medical condition that you have been advised will affect their attendance at school.

Remember to phone the school office before 9am to let us know if your child is ill. Please also note, 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). 10 unauthorised absences (5 school days) in a 10 week period will result in a referral to the Pupil Entitlement: Investigation team who may impose a Fixed Penalty notice fine. The same applies to absence due to holiday for the same period of time.

Yours sincerely



Mrs S. Norton  
Headteacher

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# 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** Our School target is 97%.

## 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 <b>school</b> 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 96.8%**

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	Green Amber Red	More than 95% 85% to 95% Less than 85%	Satisfactory Needs Unsatisfactory

## 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 3**

Date

Dear,

**Request of absence in School Time:**

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

As a result of the change in legislation regarding holidays in term time, I am unable to authorise your request for this absence. Therefore, if the holiday takes place as planned and will be equivalent to 10 school sessions or more, I will have no alternative but to pass the matter to the Pupil Entitlement Investigation team, who will issue a Fixed Penalty Notice. I am enclosing a copy of the guide to Fixed Penalty Notices for your information and if you have any questions at all, please do not hesitate to contact me.

If.....is absent from school between .....and ....., this will be recorded as an unauthorised period of absence on his/her school record.

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  
2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Centenary House  
Worthing  
West Sussex  
BN13 2QB

### **Email:**

[FPN.PEI@westsussex.gov.uk](mailto: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.