

Attendance and Punctuality Policy

2023/2024

PARTNERSHIPS | OPPORTUNITY | INTEGRITY | EQUITY | EXCELLENCE | PEOPLE-CENTRED

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Consilium
Academies

1. Statement of Intent

Thornhill Academy is committed to ensuring all students achieve their full academic potential while developing the personal and social skills they need to start their lives as young adults. Data shows that there is a direct link between excellent school attendance and high levels of progress and achievement. We will work relentlessly towards an aspirational goal of 100% attendance for all students. Every student's minimum expected target for attendance is 96%. This means having no more than 10 school days of absence in the academic year.

Attendance and punctuality are key priorities for all students at Thornhill Academy. The aim of this Attendance Policy is to set out our expectations for students and staff involved with the attendance and punctuality processes. Academy attendance is subject to various education laws and this school attendance policy is written to reflect these laws and the guidance produced by the DFE.

We work in partnership with parent(s)/ carers ensuring they are aware of their legal responsibilities regarding their child's education and support children to achieve their maximum possible attendance, ensuring any problems are identified and acted on promptly.

Regular attendance is a prerequisite to a good education and therefore a key priority for the Academy.

2. Expectations and importance of Attendance

A student's progress is severely hampered if they do not regularly attend school. Time off school affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence seriously impacts their learning.

98-100%	Expected
95-97%	Satisfactory
Below 95%	A cause for concern
Below 90%	A serious cause for concern

To illustrate:

- 90% attendance is an average of one day out of school per fortnight over a school year.
- 90% attendance over 5 years at secondary school is half a school year missed.
- 80% attendance over 5 years at secondary school is the same as one whole school year missed.

What the Academy expects from Students:

- To attend regularly and on time.
- To be punctual to all lessons.
- To ensure that they register for all timetabled lessons.
- To ensure all messages and notes from parents/carers are taken to the Attendance Office.

What the Academy expects from Parents/Carers:

- To ensure their child attends the academy on those days it is open, dressed in full uniform and equipped to learn.
- To ensure their child attends every day the Academy is open unless they are too ill to do so.
- To avoid keeping their child away from the Academy for any reason other than illness or other authorised explanation.
- To provide up-to-date home, work, and emergency contact numbers
- To avoid arranging holidays during term time
- To immediately inform the Academy if their child is unable to attend (by 8.15am where possible), including the reason for absence and expected date of return.
- If no indication of a return date has been given, parents/carers should contact the Academy on each day of absence.
- To attend attendance meetings upon request.
- To provide medical evidence if requested.
- Arrange all holidays during the thirteen weeks of school holidays and not during term time.
- Support our school's procedures in promoting outstanding attendance for all and attend appropriate meetings in school to discuss their child's attendance.
- Work in partnership with the school, emphasising to their children the importance of respecting policies and procedures.

Parent(s)/carers can expect that the Academy will:

- provide the highest quality of education
- promote and encourage excellent attendance and punctuality
- raise awareness of the importance of excellent attendance with parents, around school and within the local community
- maintain an effective electronic registration system
- regularly monitor attendance and use data to identify emerging patterns of absence
- closely monitor the attendance of identified vulnerable groups of students
- address the causes of non-attendance
- work with parents, the Local Authority and external agencies to improve attendance
- make every effort to contact the parent/carer when a child fails to attend school and the school has not been notified of the reason for the absence
- provide work during a period of authorised absence, or on a student's return
- support students upon return to school after a period of absence
- include attendance data in appropriate school reports
- act promptly and confidentially when notified of a problem which could impact on attendance or punctuality
- comply with safeguarding regulations.

The Local Academy Board will:

- Attend Attendance Case Conferences when required.
- Agree attendance targets.

- Monitor and evaluate attendance statistics, the LAB will support areas for improvement to establish and maintain the best levels of attendance for all students. To assist with this, the Head Teacher will report to the LAB termly on attendance related issues.
- Identify a link member for Attendance.

3. Recognition of Good and Improved Attendance:

Thornhill Academy recognises the the importance of praise and reward for both good and improved attendance. All students are encouraged to realise the importance of good attendance and punctuality to enable them to achieve their full potential at school and their life goals. There is a monitoring system which incorporates rewards and consequences for students, and they must have excellent attendance and punctuality to be considered to take part in school trips.

4. Registration

The law requires the register to be taken twice a day – at the start of the morning session and once in the afternoon session. This is at 8.40am and 12.45pm.

- Students are expected to arrive on site by 8.30am in order to be ready for the start of registration at 8.40am.
- The register will close at 9.10am, meaning that any pupils arriving after this time will be marked absent for the whole morning. The absence will be deemed unauthorised. As per the current school policy, 10 unauthorised absences will result in the issuing of a fixed penalty notice – this will include unauthorised absences due to late arrival after 9am. (An unauthorised absence for lateness is coded as “U”)
- Students arriving after the external gates are closed (8.40am) must enter through the late gate or main reception where students will be marked as late (L code) and will be spoken to by the Receptionist regarding the reasons for this.
- Registers close at 9.10am in the morning and 13.15pm in the afternoon, after which students will be marked as unauthorised absence unless a satisfactory explanation has been received.
- Students are registered at the start of every lesson of the day.
- Students who are consistently late are disrupting not only their own education, but also that of others. Where persistent lateness gives cause for concern, a meeting with the relevant staff will be arranged to discuss what support can be offered. This may include a meeting with the student parent/carer.
- The register is marked using the DfE Attendance and Absence Codes (see Registration System Section).

5. Authorised/Unauthorised Absence

The decision to authorise or not authorise any absence will always rest with the school. Only the Head Teacher (or their delegate) can authorise an absence from school. If there is no known reason for absence at registration, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised in the first instance.

Examples of authorised absence

- Genuine Illness
- Day of Religious Observance
- External examinations, where proof of examination is shown

Examples of unauthorised absence

- Excessive absence rates without supporting medical evidence
- Absence with no reason provided
- Truancy
- Absence due to birthdays, shopping including for school uniform, resting after a late night
- Family celebrations Inc. visiting relatives
- Looking after parents, siblings, family or pets, minding the house/waiting in for workmen
- Late arrival after registers have closed
- Medical / Dental Appointments

We ask that all medical and dental appointments are made for out of school hours. If this is not possible, an appointment card/ parent's note must be shown to the school office before any student may leave the school premises. Where possible an appointment card or letter should be shown to the office in advance. If it is an emergency appointment, please contact the school on the day of the appointment to advise us of the time of the appointment and the arrangements for your child leaving the school premises.

*Please be aware that if we have not seen any evidence or received a phone call from a parent/carer regarding an appointment we will not allow a student to leave the premises.

Leave of Absence

Government guidance states that “head teachers may not grant leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances”.

- If a parent/carer wishes to take their child out of school during term time they must complete a leave of absence request form. The request for leave must come from the parent with whom a child normally resides and has parental responsibility. All forms should be returned to the Attendance Manager.
- Parents/carers will be notified in writing if their leave of absence has been approved or declined. If the leave of absence is declined and a parent still takes their child out of school, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and the case may be referred to the local authority Legal Intervention Team.
- No Leave of Absence requests will be authorised for the purpose of a holiday.

Holidays in term time – If parent/carers remove their child from the academy for the purpose of a family holiday without permission a Local Authority Penalty Notice will be applied for by the academy, which will lead to a fine. We do encourage holidays to be taken during the 13 weeks school leave allocated throughout the academic year.

6. Responding to Absence

First Day Absence – Parent/carers are expected to contact the school as soon as possible on the morning of the first day of absence and on each day of absence thereafter. Reasons for the absence should be given along with an anticipated date for return during the initial call. It is at the discretion of the academy whether the pupil is marked as an authorised or unauthorised absence. The school operates a “First Day Response System.” Parents/carers will be contacted by their Head of Year but if this fails then a home visit may take place. A courtesy home visit may also take place where contact has already been made by parents.

Second Day Absence - If there has been no communication as to why a student is absent, a second call will be made by the Head of Year to establish the reason for absence.

Third Day of Absence – A member of staff will visit the family home. A “contact card” will be left

requesting immediate contact if there is no one at home.

Five Day Absence – If there has been no contact or no reason for absence a safe and well visit will be carried out requesting immediate contact and parents/students are invited into school.

Continuing Absence - If the absence continues and the child's attendance level drops below 95%, home visits will continue and the Attendance Escalation process will be activated.

Ten Day's Absence - The Local Authority will be notified regarding any student who is absent without an explanation for 10 consecutive days. The Police and/or Education Welfare Officer will be asked to conduct a welfare check if we are concerned.

Penalty Notices – A referral to the Local Authority may result in the issue of a Penalty Notice*. A fixed penalty will be issued where a child has been absent and the absence has not been authorised by the school, or where the pupil has persistently arrived late after the register has been closed (after the register has closed - U code).

- The Penalty Notice will be issued where there are 20 or more half day sessions (equivalent to ten school days) of unauthorised absence in the previous and/or current term.
- Overt Truancy
- Overt Lateness after 9am
- Parental Condoned Absences
- Holidays in Term Time (only in exceptional circumstances) not authorised by the Headteacher.

*A fixed penalty notice is £60 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days or £120 per parent, per child if paid after 21 days but before 28 days. Failure to pay a fixed penalty notice could lead to prosecution in a Magistrates Court.

Frequent Absence – It is the responsibility of the tutors, Heads of Year, Attendance Officer and to be aware of and bring attention to any emerging attendance concerns. Where there are two or more separate instances of absence and attendance is below 95% in an academic year, a request for medical evidence will be issued for any future absence to be authorised.

Intervention takes place for all students with attendance below 95%. In cases where a student begins to develop a pattern of absences, the parent/carer is alerted by letter and the Attendance Manager, Operational Safeguarding Lead, Head of Year or Early Help worker will work with the student and their family.

The academy will refer to the Safeguarding Lead or the police where there is cause for concern. In other cases the school will seek advice from the Local Authority Education Welfare Officer. Where all support and intervention fails, the parents and child will be asked to present themselves to the Local Academy Board.

6. Intervention strategies for Improving Attendance – Staged Response

96% and above – No intervention, keep it up!

Stage 1 (Usually 95% or below) - Letter sent home advising parent/carer attendance is below minimum expected level of 96%. These letters are sent throughout the year.

Stage 2 (Usually 93% or below) – Serious Concern letter sent with opportunity for parent/carer to complete a feedback form. Parent/Carer will be invited to an Attendance Meeting due to there being no improvements in attendance.

Stage 3 (Usually 92% or below) – If the previous intervention strategies have not improved your child's attendance, your child will be placed on a monitoring period for 4 weeks.

Stage 4 (Usually 90% or below) – Parent carer will be referred to the Local Authority Legal Intervention Team. This could result in a penalty notice being issued or Prosecution.

**Please be aware that every child's attendance is looked at on an individual basis. This may result in students escalated through stages. If your child suffers from a medical condition that may affect their attendance the intervention/support strategies put in place would differ from those above provided supporting medical evidence was provided.*

Stage	Letter issued
Stage 1 < 95%	Stage 1 letter Issued - Shares the link between life chances and attendance. Traffic lights the student's attendance, 95% expectation reinforced.
Stage 2 Further absence	Stage 2 letter Issued - Informs medical evidence now needs to be supplied. Form included to be filled in regarding details of absence. Follow up phone call offered.
Stage 3 Further absence	Stage 3 letter Issued - Early Help offer and threat of legal action. Attendance Action plan included to be signed by parent.
Stage 4 Further absence	Stage 4 letter Issued – Referral to LA for PNE/ Parenting Contract/ Education Supervision Order and referral to Early Help

7. Persistent Absence

Any student whose attendance is less than 90% is classed as being a persistent absentee (PA). Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects. Students with persistent absence are routinely monitored by the Pastoral team with actions tracked and regularly reviewed. As part of this process regular home visits are scheduled with frequent contact made by both the Attendance and Safeguarding teams. This will ensure interventions are put in place to support students and their families to increase attendance and ensure the student no longer misses out their entitlement to valuable learning.

8. Attendance Coding

Each school day is split into two sessions, the morning (AM) and the afternoon (PM). /&\=/ is used in the morning and \ is used in the afternoon. Both these marks mean that your child was present and on time.

B= educated at another place e.g. off-site

D= educated at another site and dual registered e.g. a long-term managed move V = School trip or another educational visit

L = late to school before registers close U = late to school after registers close. This is an authorised absence.

M = medical appointment. Please try and make these out of school hours whenever possible.

R = Religious Observance i.e. EID

I=ill these marks are used when you have told us that your child is ill and school are satisfied that your child is too ill to attend. Please do not assume your child has an authorised absence just because you telephoned to inform us. If your child's attendance is low and you have received an attendance letter, we may require further information.

C = absence for exceptional circumstances e.g. funeral J = Interview e.g. college interview

W = Work Experience

P = Approved sporting activity

S = Study Leave

N = is used for an absence with No reason given (it is important you inform us of your child's absence as soon as possible on the first day of absence otherwise this code will change to O)

O = is used when we have not received any reason for your child's absence. These O marks shows that we have been unable to get hold of you and that you have not told us why your child was off school. O is also recorded where school feel there is not a good enough reason for your child to be absent. This is an unauthorised absence reported in the child's attendance certificate.

G = Unauthorised leave in term time. The G mark is used if a parent takes their child out of school during term time.

Statutory Requirements, the Law and the Local Authority

- Registers are legal documents; regulatory requirements placed on schools regarding the keeping of registers are to be found in the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006.
- Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that parents/carers are responsible to ensure their child receives a suitable education.
- Under section 444 of the Education Act 1996, a parent who fails to ensure their child attends the school at which they are registered, is guilty of an offence.
- The Academy works together with the relevant Local Authority to ensure that parents/carers fulfil their responsibility. There are a range of legal sanctions that may be imposed for dealing with unauthorised absence: Penalty Notices, Parenting Contracts and Orders, Education Supervision Orders or referral to the Magistrates Court which can recommend fines (up to £2500) or up to 3 months in prison.