



ATTENDANCE POLICY

INTRODUCTION

Attendance and punctuality is vital to the well-being and future prospects of all our children. At Thomas's Academy we recognise that statistically pupils whose attendance falls below 95% achieve significantly less well than their peers. Children are expected to attend for the full 190 days of the academic year, unless there is a good reason for absence.

There are two types of absence:

Authorised - where the Academy approves pupil absence e.g. absence due to sickness of child.

Unauthorised - where the Academy will not approve absence e.g. holidays during term, all day absences for appointments that were only in the morning, persistent absences for illness where no medical proof has been provided.

This policy applies to all pupils across the Thomas's Academy including children of non-statutory school age.

REWARDS AND INITIATIVES

Thomas's Academy takes significant steps to ensure that all pupils are encouraged and that good attendance and punctuality is recognised and celebrated. The Head teacher encourages high attendance and excellent levels of punctuality through class assemblies and encouraging a competitive spirit between classes. Informal praise and formal awards should both be used and supported by all School Staff. Attendance and punctuality awards include an annual trip to Kidzania, tickets to which are awarded to all pupils with 100% attendance each term.

ABSENCE PROCEDURES

First Days of Absence

If a child is absent, parents must call the school office by 9am on the first day of the absence stating a reason or email the absent email: absent@academy.thomas-s.co.uk. The Admin Officer will then decide whether to authorise the absence, and the reason for absence will be recorded electronically. It is expected that a degree of detail is recorded, not just "child sick".

If contact explaining the child's absence fails to be made by parents or carers, then the Attendance Officer will contact the home by telephone on the first day and every day thereafter until contact has been made with the parent.

If the school is unable to make contact within 3 days, the Attendance Officer will take further steps to ascertain the whereabouts of the child including contacting outside agencies where necessary.

If your child constantly has unauthorised absences, whether recorded as unauthorised by the school or because the parent has not informed the school, then we are legally bound to contact the LBHF's Initial Child Assessment Team (ICAT) who deal with safeguarding issues. They require us to contact them if your child has more than 10% unauthorised absences during a six week period.

COVID- 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 we record this accurately and consistently, there are changes to the regulations governing school attendance registers to add a new category of non-attendance – 'not attending in circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19)'.

This category is only 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)³
- 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.

The Academy's Protocol

- Pupil absence rates are reviewed monthly by the Attendance Team. When attendance rates fall below 95% for the year to date, or if there are regular periods of unexplained absence, the SAO and DHT, will send a 'Below 95% Attendance Alert' to parents (See end of policy), informing them of our concern and asking them to present any additional medical evidence if applicable.
- If attendance falls below 92%, the Head Teacher will invite parents in to discuss the reasons for the absences and consider possible solutions.

- Any child with attendance between 85% and 92% will remain under our focus until a sustained improvement is seen. Where there is little or no improvement, a fixed penalty notice may be issued and/or court proceedings instigated. Pupils who have less than 90% attendance with any period of unauthorised absence within a 6 week period will receive a warning letter. This letter will state the student's overall attendance percentage and that if there is no improvement in attendance, normally within the subsequent 3 week period then a fixed penalty notice will be issued.
- If a child's attendance drops to 90% or below, with at least 10% unauthorised absence then they will qualify for a referral to ICAT (Initial Child Assessment Team) at the local authority.. Attendance is a statutory requirement of every parent/carer, therefore no parental permission needs to be granted to make this referral.
- Those pupils with attendance below 85% are classed as 'Persistent Absentees' and as such receive particular attention. This may include home visits from the Head Teacher and a close analysis of the factors affecting attendance.

Absence for Medical Reasons

Parents must make every effort to arrange medical appointments outside school hours. If it is necessary for a child to be out of school for this reason, the child should be returned to school directly after the appointment.

If your child is absent because of illness and the absence is more than 5 days then we will require a doctor's note to confirm this.

Leave of absence during Term Time

A pupil's absence during term time can seriously disrupt their continuity of learning. Not only do they miss the teaching provided on the days they are away, they are also less prepared for the lessons building on that after their return. There is a consequent risk of underachievement, which the school and parents must seek to avoid.

Schools will not authorise family holidays during term time. Holiday dates are published a year in advance; therefore, the Academy does not see any reason for parents to take their child(ren) out of the Academy during term time.

In exceptional circumstances the Head teacher will consider each case on an individual basis. Leave should **not** be taken without first discussing the circumstances with the Head teacher. Parents wishing to request leave of absence should Request a copy of the Thomas's Academy Attendance Policy and complete a written request via email to head@academy.thomas-s.co.uk or complete the Request for Leave of Absence Form at the back of the policy.

In considering whether or not to authorise leave of absence, the School will consider each case individually, taking into account a child's overall attendance and the reason for the leave. The Head teacher may request a meeting with parents to discuss the proposed leave and may request further documentation such as travel itineraries etc. The school will not authorise a leave of absence where the requested period of absence covers a statutory assessment e.g. KS1 and KS2 SATs.

Where leave of absence has been granted, the pupil must return no later than the agreed date of return. Penalty Notices (PN) will be issued where a child returns to the School after the agreed date, whatever the reason for the late return. In cases where there is more than one pupil in the family, a PN will be issued for each child. Penalty Notices (PN) are currently £60 for each child (£120 if not paid within 28 days).

Parents who take their child(ren) out on holiday without the School's permission may be issued with a PN. In cases where there is more than one pupil in the family, a PN will be issued for each child and each parent.

Unexplained Absences and Changing Schools

- For children who have above 10% of unauthorised absences or where we don't know of the child's whereabouts after several failed attempts at trying to contact family in the last 6 weeks, then a referral to the Initial Child Assessment Team (ICAT) on 0208 753 6610
- If the child is not knowingly on roll at any school, then Kyria Parsons, Lead Advisor at ACE 020 8753 6797 must be informed if the child cannot be located and is classed as missing from education.
- All steps will be taken by the school to ascertain the student's whereabouts and documentation should be kept on this process. The protocol's followed are outlined in the 'Orange Folder' - the reference manual from the tri-borough ACE team (found in SLT Office).
- It is important that if families decide to send the child/children in their care to a different school or choose to home school, they inform Thomas's Academy staff as soon as possible. A pupil will not be removed from this school roll until the following information has been received and investigated:
 - The date the pupil will be leaving this school and starting the next;
 - The name and address of the new school; the new home address, if it is known;
 - This school receiving communication from the new school that the child has now been enrolled there

The Academy will send an electronic copy of the pupil's school record, including attendance reports, to the new school, to be followed by their paper file. If a parent/carer appears to have removed their child from school or the child has completely stopped attending without providing the above information, the family will be referred to Family Support and then likely upscaled to Social Services.

Punctuality:

Pupils who are consistently late disrupt not only their own education but also that of others. The School day begins at 8.50 a.m. and all pupils are expected to be settled and ready for registration at 9.00 a.m. Those pupils arriving after 9.00 a.m. but before the close of registration will be marked as late (L) by the Admin Officer.

After 9.30 a.m. pupils will be marked with (U) and recorded as absent for the (am) session. Parents will then be asked to provide a reason for the absence; this will determine whether the absence is recorded as authorised or unauthorised.

In cases of persistent lateness, the parent/carer(s) will be issued a letter to improve punctuality from DHT and will be invited to meet with the Head teacher to seek a resolution.

Any parent/carer of a child who records more than 5 U codes in any one half-term will be issued with a fixed penalty notice. This will be preceded by a warning letter to the parent/carer after the 3rd U is recorded in the School register informing of the consequences of reaching a 5th U in the register.

See also: Safeguarding Children Policy

This policy will be reviewed annually		
Review: September 2019	By:	Miles Chester & The Personnel, Policies and Safeguarding Committee
Latest review: October 2020	By:	Clare James (DHT) and Laura Goddard (SAO)

APPLICATION FOR LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Please read the following information before you complete the request.

As you aware it is the policy of the school not to allow any holiday or extended leave during term time. However, if you wish to request leave of absence you need to read the following advice and complete the form below.

This form must be completed 3 weeks prior to the requested leave of absence. Each request for absence will be considered individually and we will take into account:

- The pupil's previous attendance history;
- The time of the year regards any public or internal examinations;
- Attendance and punctuality in the current academic year;
- The nature of the request and whether any other requests have been made.

A Penalty Notice may be issued to each parent for each child should a pupil take leave of absence without permission.

Full name of pupil:	Class:
Address:	
Telephone number:	

Reason for request for leave of absence:		
Intended dates of absence:		
Name of parent/carers:	Signature:	Date:

<u>For Office Use only:</u>	
Form to be submitted to Head teacher along with Registration Certificate	<input type="checkbox"/>
Agreement given Yes/No	
Appropriate letter to be prepared for return to parent/carers and given to Head teacher for signature.	
Signed:	Date:



Below 95% Attendance Alert (Pre-Covid)

Dear Parent / Carer,

You will be aware that Thomas's Academy takes pupil attendance very seriously. Attendance and punctuality is vital to the well-being and future prospects of all our children. At Thomas's Academy children are expected to attend for the full 190 days of the academic year, unless there is a good reason for absence.

We track the attendance of every child each week, and this analysis has highlighted a concern with your child's attendance.

(Child's Name) has had attendance of **(% attendance)** so far this year.

Please let us know if there are any particular reasons for this low level of attendance, or if there is any additional medical evidence that you would like us to be aware of.

As outlined in our Attendance Policy, we will continue to monitor your child's attendance, and if attendance falls below 92%, the Educational Welfare Officer will invite you to the school to discuss the reasons for the absences and consider possible solutions.

A real focus on ensuring that your child comes to school every day will help turn this issue around very quickly and will have a very positive impact on your child's education.

I appreciate your support in this matter.

Yours Sincerely,

Clare James
Deputy Head teacher