



ST THOMAS
CE (VC) PRIMARY SCHOOL

Attendance Policy



Version	07/24
Name of Policy Writer	Kate Meade
Last Updated	September 2024
Next Review Due	July 2025

Contents Page

1. Introduction	Error! Bookmark not defined.
2. Legislation and Guidance	Error! Bookmark not defined.
3. Developing A Whole School Culture that Promotes High Attendance.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
4. Supporting all Pupils, incl. SEND, EBSA and those with Medical Needs.....	5
5. Areas of Responsibility	6
6. Key Inforion	10
7. Promoting Good Attendance	11
8. Authorised and Unauthorised Absence	11
9. Requesting Term Time Absence.....	12
10. Actions from Non-Attendance, including Sanctions.....	13
11. Attendance Data	14
12. Strategies for Intervention.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
13. Reducing Persistent and Severe Absence	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Appendix 1: Understanding your Child’s Attendance	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Appendix 2: Attendance Codes	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Appendix 3: Attendance Contract	Error! Bookmark not defined.

Introduction

Within St Thomas CE (VC) Primary School improving attendance is everyone's responsibility. Good attendance starts with pupils and families feeling positive about St Thomas; a place where pupils want to be and one that offers a calm, orderly, supportive environment. Barriers to attendance are often complex and our staff are fully committed to working with pupils and parents to build trusting partnerships to remove any issues as soon as they are identified.

St Thomas CE (VC) Primary School has a continual focus on the curriculum, behaviour, SEND, pastoral and mental health wellbeing to ensure that pupils are given every opportunity to thrive and achieve.

Attendance management is not solely the responsibility of school staff; our School Governors and Kirklees Local Authority are key partners to ensure there is a consistent, tenacious approach taken at all times.

Legislation and Guidance

This policy is based on the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on [working together to improve school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\)](#) and [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). The guidance is based on the following pieces of legislation, which set out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of the [Education Act 1996](#)
- Part 3 of the [Education Act 2002](#)
- Part 7 of the [Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006 \(and 2010, 2011, 2013, and 2016 amendments\)](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)

It also refers to:

- [School census guidance](#)
- [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)
- [Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools](#)

Creating a Whole School Culture for High Attendance

St Thomas CE (VC) Primary School recognises that good attendance is learned and crucial to student success. To promote a culture of good attendance, the school will:

- Make attendance a core part of its vision and daily life, alongside good behaviour.
- Address absence as a sign of broader issues, linking it to overall student welfare by integrating strategies for behaviour, attainment, special needs, safeguarding, and wellbeing.
- Ensure all staff understand the importance of attendance and communicate this clearly to students and parents, with appropriate training provided.
- Allocate resources, including pupil premium funding, to support attendance improvement.
- Set high expectations for attendance and regularly communicate them to parents and students, highlighting the impact on achievement and wellbeing.

- Appoint a senior leader responsible for championing attendance and working with students, parents, and external agencies.
- Promote the benefits of good attendance through school activities like assemblies and displays, with rewards for improvements where appropriate.
- Continuously review and update attendance strategies.
- Recognise that poor attendance can signal safeguarding issues, such as neglect or exploitation.

Supporting Pupils with SEND, EBSA, and Medical Needs

St Thomas CE (VC) Primary School is committed to supporting students who are absent due to mental or physical health issues or special educational needs (SEND). We will work closely with families and external services to make the school environment as welcoming as possible for students with emotionally based school avoidance (EBSA).

Some students may experience normal anxieties about school, such as worries about friendships, schoolwork, or tests. These students are still expected to attend regularly, as staying home may worsen their anxieties over time. School staff will communicate this expectation to parents and work with families to reduce anxiety and ensure attendance.

For students with complex barriers like long-term health conditions or SEND, the school's attendance goals remain the same as for all students, but with additional support as needed. Attendance data for these students will be regularly monitored in collaboration with the Governing Body and local authorities to ensure the necessary support is in place.

Part-Time Timetables

In some cases, a pupil's education may be split between school and another educational setting, as outlined by the Education Act 1996 and the Children and Families Act 2014. These absences will be recorded appropriately in the attendance register.

In rare, exceptional cases, a temporary part-time timetable may be provided to meet a pupil's specific needs. This timetable will:

- Be agreed upon by both the school and the pupil's parent.
- Align with the pupil's support, healthcare, or reintegration plan, with clear goals.
- Be regularly reviewed with the pupil and their parents to ensure it's in place for the shortest time possible.
- Include a set end date, with the expectation of a return to full-time education.

If the pupil has a social worker or an EHCP, the school will involve the relevant professionals to review the support in place. All part-time absences will be properly recorded (using codes X or C2).

AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY

Governors:

Governors work with school staff to ensure effective attendance strategies are in place. They receive regular reports on attendance, reasons for absence, and data on persistent absence, with a focus on SEND, disadvantaged, and vulnerable pupils. *Insert name* is the Governor responsible for attendance management.

Parents:

Parents are legally responsible for ensuring their child attends school regularly, except in cases like illness or pre-approved absence. Regular attendance supports the child's education, wellbeing, and future opportunities. Parents should:

- Ensure their child attends school daily
- Notify the school by 08:40 on the first day of any absence and provide updates
- Provide more than one emergency contact number
- Schedule appointments outside school hours whenever possible
- Follow any attendance agreements made with the school
- Seek support for maintaining good attendance
- Avoid booking holidays during term time

Headteacher:

Headteacher Kate Meade is responsible for:

- Implementing this policy
- Monitoring and reporting school attendance data
- Supporting staff in tracking individual attendance
- Reviewing the effectiveness of attendance strategies
- Collaborating with the attendance team and parents of SEND pupils to address barriers
- Communicating with the local authority for students with EHC plans and falling attendance
- Promoting high attendance and punctuality expectations

Designated Senior Leader for Attendance

Chris Boosey is the senior leader responsible for:

- Leading and improving school attendance
- Setting and monitoring attendance goals
- Overseeing absence data analysis
- Maintaining systems to address absence issues
- Working with students, parents, and external agencies to resolve attendance concerns
- Creating intervention and reintegration plans when needed
- Providing targeted support to pupils and families

Class Teachers

Class teachers must:

- Record daily attendance for morning and afternoon sessions using the correct codes
- Notify the office through Arbor/Integris
- Alert the Attendance Lead/Headteacher if a pupil's attendance drops or if concerns arise

- Communicate effectively with parents to address issues quickly
- Be aware of the impact of non-attendance, especially for vulnerable pupils

School Office Staff

Office staff will:

- Record absence calls from parents and update the school system
- Ensure accurate coding in Arbor/Integris
- Assist the Attendance Lead in working with families to support attendance

8. Pupils:

Pupils must attend school regularly. Older students who walk to school independently should ensure they arrive by 08:40. All pupils should engage in learning and seek help if they have any concerns.

Promoting Good Attendance

St Thomas CE (VC) Primary School is promoting and incentivising good attendance by:

- Awarding certificates
- Class rewards
- Whole school attendance incentives
- Individual action plans with personalised incentives

KEY INFORMATION

Lateness and punctuality

The school day at St Thomas CE (VC) Primary starts at **08:40am**

Late marks will be recorded for any pupils arriving after **08:50am**

Any pupils arriving after registers close at **9:30am** will not receive their morning mark and the absence is likely to be recorded as unauthorised

If a pupil continues to arrive late, Kate Meade, Headteacher will invite parents to a meeting to explore how to improve the situation and to ensure that lateness is not impacting on a child's right to a fulltime education. Lates and absences through poor punctuality will be picked up by school's own monitoring.

Authorised and unauthorised absence

If your child is ill and not well enough to attend school, please telephone or email school by 08:50am Please note: it is your responsibility to inform school and we kindly ask that you do not rely on school contacting you.

If your child has not been registered at the start of the day and you have not contacted school to explain your child's absence, school will telephone emergency contacts in order of priority to seek reason for absence.

The headteacher will allow pupils to be absent from the school site for certain educational activities, or to attend other schools or settings.

Other valid reasons for **authorised absence** include (but are not limited to):

- Illness (including mental-health illness) and medical/dental appointments (see sections 4.2 and 4.3 for more detail)
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parent(s) belong(s). If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parent's religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Parent(s) travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travellers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and new travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision
- If the pupil is currently suspended or excluded from school (and no alternative provision has been made)

Other reasons the school may allow a pupil to be absent from the school site, which are not classified as absences, include (but are not limited to):

- Attending an offsite approved educational activity, sporting activity or visit or trip arranged by the school
- Attending another school at which the pupil is also registered (dual registration)
- Attending provision arranged by the local authority
- If there is any other unavoidable cause for the pupil not to attend school, such as disruption to travel caused by an emergency, a lack of access arrangements, or because the school premises are closed

Following Up Absence

Explained Absence

- **Attendance Code:** The correct attendance code will be recorded within five working days after the absence reason is confirmed.
- **Ongoing Contact:** The school will stay in contact with the family. A home visit will be conducted after three days of absence, or sooner if the pupil is vulnerable, has attendance concerns, or if the absence occurs around weekends or holidays.
- **Unsuccessful Welfare Checks:** If welfare checks fail, the unexplained absence protocol will be followed.

Unexplained Absence Procedure

- **Day 1:** On the first day of unexplained absence, the school will contact the pupil's parent. If no emergency contacts can be reached, a home visit will be made.

- **Absence Clarification:** The school will confirm whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised and update the attendance code, no later than five working days after the absence or upon the pupil's return.
- **Ongoing Absence:** If the absence remains unexplained, daily contact will be maintained, and welfare checks will be conducted. If the issue persists, the school will involve external agencies.
- **No Contact Protocol:** If no contact is made during home visits, the school will escalate the case to external services.
- **External Services Involvement:** Any agencies already involved with the pupil or family will be informed of the unexplained absence.
- **Support:** The school will offer support to the pupil and/or family to help improve attendance.
- **Referral to Partners:** If needed, the school will refer the pupil to external partners for additional support.

Requesting Leave of Absence During Term Time

The headteacher may only grant term-time leave under specific circumstances outlined in the 2024 school attendance regulations:

- Participation in a regulated performance
- Temporary, time-limited part-time timetables
- Exceptional circumstances

Leave of absence is granted at the Headteacher's discretion and is unlikely to be approved for family holidays. Leave requests should be submitted at least two weeks in advance using the school's request form, and supporting evidence may be required.

If the request is denied and the child is taken out of school, the absence will be marked as unauthorised and could result in a penalty notice. Leave for protest activities will not be granted.

Actions from non-attendance, including the use of Sanctions

St Thomas CE (VC) Primary School will make use of the full range of potential sanctions – including, but not limited to, those listed below to tackle poor attendance. Decisions will be made on an individual, case-by-case basis.

Penalty notices

The local authority can fine parents for the unauthorised absence.

Before issuing a penalty notice, the school will consider the individual case, including:

- Whether the national threshold for considering a penalty notice has been met (10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks)
- Whether a penalty notice is the best available tool to improve attendance for that pupil
- Whether further support, a notice to improve or another legal intervention would be a more appropriate solution
- Whether any obligations that the school has under the Equality Act 2010 make issuing a penalty notice inappropriate

A penalty notice may also be issued where parents allow their child to be present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification, during the first 5 days of a suspension or exclusion (where the school has notified the parents that the pupil must not be present in a public place on that day).

Each parent who is liable for the pupil's offence(s) can be issued with a penalty notice, but this will usually only be the parent/parents who allowed the absence.

The payment must be made directly to the local authority, regardless of who issues the notice. If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

If issued with a **first** penalty notice, the parent must pay £80 within 21 days, or £160 within 28 days.

If a **second** penalty notice is issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil, the parent must pay £160 if paid within 28 days.

A **third** penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within 3 years of the date of the issue of the first penalty notice. In a case where the national threshold is met for a third time within those 3 years, alternative action will be taken instead.

Notices to improve

If the national threshold has been met and support is appropriate, but parents do not engage with offers of support, the school may offer a notice to improve to give parents a final chance to engage with support.

Notices to improve will be issued in line with processes set out in the local code of conduct for the local authority area in which the pupil attends school.

They will include:

- Details of the pupil's attendance record and of the offences
- The benefits of regular attendance and the duty of parents under [section 7 of the Education Act 1996](#)
- Details of the support provided so far
- Opportunities for further support, or to access previously provided support that was not engaged with
- A clear warning that a penalty notice may be issued if attendance doesn't improve within the improvement period, along with details of what sufficient improvement looks like, which will be decided on a case-by-case basis
- A clear timeframe of between 3 and 6 weeks for the improvement period
- The grounds on which a penalty notice may be issued before the end of the improvement period

The St Thomas CE (VC) Primary School Attendance Team will ensure they look at each issue on a case-by-case basis, dealing sensitively with each family, yet remain fully compliant to their statutory responsibilities.

Attendance Data

St Thomas CE (VC) Primary School sets challenging targets that consider the school’s setting and context, historical data, current pupils, attendance data of similar schools, local and national data.

We have set an attendance target of **96%** and a persistent absence target of less than **15.2%** for 2024/25.

It may be that your child is set a personal target and if this is the case, school will ensure that there is regular contact and collaborative work.

Strategies for Intervention

‘Good’ attendance is deemed to be that where a pupil’s attendance is 96% or higher. For some pupils with medical/SEND needs, good attendance may be lower than this figure and this will be taken into consideration at all times to ensure both pupil and parents understand what ‘good’ attendance is for their circumstance.

Where barriers have been identified, supportive partnerships are key and all members of school will always work positively with families and aim to improve attendance.

First Day of Absence:	Parents should call the school to inform them of the reason for their child’s absence. If no contact is made by a specified time, the school will contact the parents.
Absences reaches 2-7 days	If attendance has been a previous concern, or we are very early in the school year and therefore at risk of not reaching attendance targets, an informal chat will be arranged to offer support if required
Absence reaches 8 days (equivalent to 95.5% attendance at the end of the school year):	The school will communicate the child's attendance figures to the parents and offer support if needed.
Absence reaches 10 days (equivalent to 94.9% attendance at the end of the school year):	The school will discuss the attendance with the parents to determine whether support is required and whether a school attendance meeting is appropriate.
Absence reaches 13 days (equivalent to 93% attendance at the end of the school year):	Parents will be invited to meet with the school’s Attendance Lead. An attendance target will be set, and external services may be invited to provide support, if appropriate.
Absence reaches 17 days (equivalent to 91% attendance at the end of the school year):	Parents will be invited into the school for a meeting. An Early Help referral will be offered, and parents may be asked to agree to an attendance contract to work together to improve their child's attendance.
Absence reaches 19 days (equivalent to 90% attendance at the end of the school year):	The pupil is now classed as a persistent absentee. The following actions may be taken: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A meeting with parents and professionals (if appropriate) • Implementation of an action plan or attendance contract • Issuing of a warning letter • A notice to improve or other legal interventions • Issuance of a fixed penalty notice

Attendance less 90%	Parent contract will be in place
Attendance less than 50%	Individual action plan will be in place

NB: St Thomas CE (VC) Primary School will use discretion for any of the above markers for pupils where SEND/medical/exceptional circumstance impacts on attendance.

Monitoring absence in the first half term of an academic year often results in a pupil’s attendance falling below these parameters. Where this is the case, St Thomas CE (VC) Primary School will use reasonable judgements and will not necessarily contact parents – instead attendance will be carefully monitored.

Reducing Persistent and Severe Absence

Persistent absence is when a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is when a pupil misses 50% or more. Reducing these absences is a key part of St Thomas CE (VC) Primary School's attendance strategy. The school will:

- Use attendance data to identify patterns and trends in persistent and severe absence.
- Address potential safeguarding concerns in line with *Keeping Children Safe in Education*.
- Hold regular meetings with parents of vulnerable or persistently/severely absent pupils to:
 - Discuss attendance and engagement.
 - Understand barriers to attendance.
 - Explain available support.
 - Outline consequences and sanctions for continued absence.
 - Review current interventions.
- Provide access to wider support services in collaboration with the local authority to remove barriers to attendance.
- Consider alternative solutions to re-engage pupils, taking into account the reasons for their absence.
- Implement sanctions when necessary.

Monitoring Arrangements

The Governors of St Thomas CE (VC) Primary School will review this policy annually or when new statutory guidance is introduced.

Appendix 1

Understanding your child's attendance – time missed per percentage

Percentage Attendance at the end of a school year.	The pupil will miss
95%	1 day a month, Almost 2 weeks a year 2 and half months between years 7 – 11 3 and half months between Reception and Year 6
90%	1 half day a week, 2 days per month 1 month in a school year 5 months between years 7 – 11 7 months between Reception and Year 6
85%	1 and half days a fortnight, 3 days per month Almost 1 and half months in a school year Almost 8 months between years 7 – 11 11 months between Reception and Year 6
80%	1 day a week, 1 week in every 5 weeks Over 2 months in a school year 1 year between years 7 – 11 1 year and 2 months between Reception and Year 6

The DfE's studies demonstrate that pupils who consistently attend school are more likely to pursue higher education and secure better employment opportunities.

Higher attendance rates lead to improved academic performance, as pupils have more opportunities to engage with classroom **materials**, participate in discussions, and receive timely feedback from teachers.

According to the DfE's data, pupils with good attendance records are more likely to achieve better grades – which demonstrates the critical role attendance plays in fostering a positive learning environment.

The DfE's research goes beyond academic metrics, highlighting the impact of attendance on pupils' social and emotional well-being. Regular school attendance fosters a sense of belonging and connection within the school community.

Pupils who attend school regularly are more likely to develop positive relationships with peers and teachers, enhancing their overall emotional resilience and mental health.

Appendix 2

The following codes are taken from the DfE's [guidance on school attendance](#).

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
Attending a place other than the school		
K	Attending education provision arranged by the local authority	Pupil is attending a place other than a school at which they are registered, for educational provision arranged by the local authority
V	Attending an educational visit or trip	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised or approved by the school
P	Participating in a sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
W	Attending work experience	Pupil is on an approved work experience placement
B	Attending any other approved educational activity	Pupil is attending a place for an approved educational activity that is not a sporting activity or work experience
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
Absent – leave of absence		
C1	Participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad	Pupil is undertaking employment (paid or unpaid) during school hours, approved by the school

M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
J1	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
S	Study leave	Pupil has been granted leave of absence to study for a public examination
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
C2	Part-time timetable	Pupil is not in school due to having a part-time timetable
C	Exceptional circumstances	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
Absent – other authorised reasons		
T	Parent travelling for occupational purposes	Pupil is a 'mobile child' who is travelling with their parent(s) who are travelling for occupational purposes
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
I	Illness (not medical or dental appointment)	Pupil is unable to attend due to illness (either related to physical or mental health)
E	Suspended or excluded	Pupil has been suspended or excluded from school and no alternative provision has been made
Absent – unable to attend school because of unavoidable cause		
Q	Lack of access arrangements	Pupil is unable to attend school because the local authority has failed to make access arrangements to enable attendance at school

Y1	Transport not available	Pupil is unable to attend because school is not within walking distance of their home and the transport normally provided is not available
Y2	Widespread disruption to travel	Pupil is unable to attend because of widespread disruption to travel caused by a local, national or international emergency
Y3	Part of school premises closed	Pupil is unable to attend because they cannot practicably be accommodated in the part of the premises that remains open
Y4	Whole school site unexpectedly closed	Every pupil absent as the school is closed unexpectedly (e.g. due to adverse weather)
Y5	Criminal justice detention	Pupil is unable to attend as they are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In police detention • Remanded to youth detention, awaiting trial or sentencing, or • Detained under a sentence of detention
Y6	Public health guidance or law	Pupil's travel to or attendance at the school would be prohibited under public health guidance or law
Y7	Any other unavoidable cause	To be used where an unavoidable cause is not covered by the other codes
Absent – unauthorised absence		
G	Holiday not granted by the school	Pupil is absent for the purpose of a holiday, not approved by the school
N	Reason for absence not yet established	Reason for absence has not been established before the register closes

O	Absent in other or unknown circumstances	No reason for absence has been established, or the school isn't satisfied that the reason given would be recorded using one of the codes for authorised absence
U	Arrived in school after registration closed	Pupil has arrived late, after the register has closed but before the end of session
Administrative codes		
Z	Prospective pupil not on admission register	Pupil has not joined school yet but has been registered
#	Planned whole-school closure	Whole-school closures that are known and planned in advance, including school holidays