

# THIRSK COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL

## ATTENDANCE POLICY

### Mission Statement

*At Thirsk Community Primary School, we are committed to developing and celebrating the individual strengths of each child, actively encouraging them to achieve their full potential in a safe, secure and caring environment. Everyone is an individual and everyone is important.*

### Introduction

This policy provides a framework and guidance for staff and parents to promote pupils' regular and punctual attendance at school, so that they can take advantage of the educational opportunities available, and thereby reach their full educational potential. High attainment depends on good attendance.

### Aims

To work in partnership with parents / carers to

- ensure that all statutory guidance for attendance is in place and is understood by all stakeholders.
- address situations which may impact upon attendance in order to ensure that the best possible levels of attendance can be achieved.
- remove any barriers to poor attendance and the resulting impact on pupils' life chances at the earliest possible opportunity.
- promote high levels of attendance and promote an understanding of the connection between excellent attendance and high achievement.
- ensure that all pupils have the opportunity to attend school feeling safe and secure.

### Attendance Procedures

#### Registration

It is important that pupils are punctual and arrive prepared for the day's learning. Registration takes place twice each day. Morning registration begins at 8.50am and afternoon registration begins at 1.00pm for infant pupils and 1.15pm for KS2 pupils. Registers are marked electronically using the school's eschools portal, according to the agreed symbols, see Appendix 1. Once completed, registers are printed daily by the office staff for reference during emergencies. In the event of electronic failure, paper registers are used.

Registers close at 9.15am and 1.15pm / 1.30pm.

Children arriving between 9.00 and 9.15am are given a late mark at the office and a slip to give to their class teacher to indicate that they have been marked in the register. Any child arriving after registers have closed at 9.15am will be given an unauthorised absence. This will be followed up by letter from the Headteacher, asking parents to notify school of the reason for the pupil's lateness.

#### Reporting of Absence

It is the duty of parents / carers to inform the school if a child is to be absent from school. Parents / Carers are asked to do so by 8.50am **each day** that a child is unwell and will not be attending school. Planned absences due to medical appointments should also be communicated to the school, with evidence being produced. It is recommended that any such appointments be made outside of school hours, if at all possible.

Following the closure of registration, if a child is absent without reason, parents are immediately contacted by office staff, as part of the school's safeguarding procedures. If no contact can be made, a letter is sent to parents / carers that day, asking for school to be informed of the reason for the child's absence. Where pupils are absent on consecutive days and parents have not informed school each day that the illness is ongoing, the

school will contact parents / carers on each day of absence, as part of its safeguarding procedures. The school continues to pursue 'N' absence codes until a satisfactory reason is provided. If no reason is given prior to the termly census collected by the Local Authority, the absence will be deemed unauthorised and will appear on the child's record as such.

Absence can only be authorised if:

- the pupil is ill or attending a medical appointment
- the pupil is absent with leave having been granted by the school
- there is a family bereavement
- the pupil is attending a religious festival

Unauthorised absence is when:

- no explanation is forthcoming from the parent / carer
- the school is dissatisfied with an explanation
- the pupil is absent for unexceptional circumstances such as birthdays, shopping trips or holidays.

### **Punctuality**

Pupils are expected to arrive at school on time each day. If they are late, it is disruptive to their own education and that of others in their class. Pupils who are persistently late, will be considered in the same way as others with patterns of persistent absenteeism.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

**The Headteacher will ensure that:**

- Pupils are registered accurately and efficiently.
- Parents or carers are contacted when reasons for absence are unknown or unauthorised.
- Pupil attendance and lateness are monitored regularly.
- A reward system for good attendance is implemented.
- School attendance statistics are reported to the LA and governing body.
- The LA officer is provided with registers of attendance and supports in following up long term absences.
- Pupils absent for long periods of time because of ill-health receive appropriate learning support.

**The Deputy Headteacher will ensure that:**

- any attendance giving cause for concern is raised with parents / carers and an improvement plan is implemented.
- persistent absenteeism (pupils whose attendance falls at or below 90%) is monitored closely and an improvement plan is implemented jointly with parents / carers.
- support is sought from appropriate agencies, e.g. the preventative services team in order to effect an improvement in attendance for pupils giving cause for concern.
- liaison takes place with the Learning Mentor with regard to individual pupil attendance concerns.
- data is shared with the LA Attendance Officer, as requested.

**All teachers will ensure that:**

- registers are completed accurately and promptly.
- attendance rates are shared with parents at parent consultation meetings.
- they promote good attendance by liaising with parents when a pupil's attendance falls below 93%.
- they inform the Deputy Headteacher if there is a problem that may lead to absences.

**All parents / carers are expected to:**

- ensure children attend school regularly and punctually.
- inform the school office of the reason for any absence by 9.00am on the first and subsequent days of absence.

- discuss planned absences with the school in advance.
- work closely with the school to resolve any concerns regarding their child's rate of attendance.

**The Governing Body will:**

- receive termly reports on attendance
- monitor the effectiveness of the policy

**Monitoring and Evaluating Attendance**

The Headteacher will provide data on pupil attendance on a termly basis. Data is evaluated together with the governing body to decide what action, if any, needs to be taken.

The Deputy Headteacher monitors individual pupils' attendance on a weekly basis. Pupils whose attendance rate is between 90 - 93% are monitored closely and parents are informed in writing that their child's attendance rate is giving cause for concern. Where a pupil's attendance is at the persistent absentee rate of at or below 90%, the Deputy Headteacher invites parents to a meeting in order to discuss reasons for absences, and to plan to improve attendance within a specified time limit, usually 4 weeks. Should difficulties persist, a referral will be made to the Prevention Service. Where there are ongoing medical concerns, the school will seek parental consent to involve the school nurse in supporting an improvement in attendance. In the first half of the Autumn term, flexibility is necessary due to the anomalies of calculating percentages.

When monitored, pupils' attendance is colour-coded:

- Green: above 96%
- Amber: 91 - 95%
- Red: below or at 90% (persistent absentee)

**Celebrating Good Attendance**

An attendance award is presented weekly in assembly. The class with the highest attendance receives the Attendance Trophy to display in their classroom, and is given an Attendance Ten award (a token for 10 minutes, which the class can use as they choose). The school's weekly attendance rate is published on the newsletter. Each half term, pupils who have 100% attendance receive an award. Those who achieve 100% for the whole year receive an additional award at the awards presentation in July.

**Long Term Absences**

Where a pupil is unable to attend school for an extended period of time, the school will work closely with their parents / carers to ensure that work is provided by the class teacher so that the pupil does not fall behind peers. Where necessary, an individual reintegration plan will also be created. This plan may include a phased return. In such circumstances, the school will also work closely with other agencies e.g. the school nurse or the Specialist Teacher for pupils with medical needs from the EMS SEBN linked to the school in order to support the pupil.

**Request for Leave of Absence**

Parents are requested to complete a 'Leave of Absence' form which is available from the school office, if they need to make a request for leave during term time. See Appendix 2.

**Parenting Contracts, Orders and Penalty Notices for Irregular Attendance**

See Appendix 2

**Equal Opportunities**

This policy applies equally to all children irrespective of age, ability, race, gender or disability. However, in some circumstances, the individual needs of some groups of children will be taken into account when monitoring their attendance, e.g. children with medical needs.

Headteacher:  
Chair of Governors:

Date: October 2015  
Date for review: October 2016

## **Appendix 1**

### **Absence Codes**

B	Educated off-site
C	Leave of absence authorised by the school
D	Dual Registration
E	Excluded
F	Extended Family Holiday (agreed)
G	Family Holiday (not agreed or days in excess of agreement)
H	Family holiday (agreed)
I	Illness (not appointments at dentist etc.)
L	Late (before register closes)
M	Medical/Dental/Sickness/Treatment
N	No reason provided
O	Unauthorised (not covered by other codes)
P	Approved sporting activity
R	Religious observance
S	Study leave (not normally applicable to primary phase)
T	Traveller Absence
U	Late (after registers close)
V	School journey/educational visit
W	Work experience (not normally applicable to primary phase)
X	Non-compulsory school age non attendance
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances
Z	Pupil not yet on roll
#	School closed to pupils

## **Appendix 2**

### **North Yorkshire Penalty Notice Code of Conduct**

#### **1. Legal Basis:**

Under Section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003, the Education Act 1996 was amended with the introduction of 2 new subsections under Section 444 (subsections 444A and 444B) which make it possible for Penalty Notices to be used as an alternative to prosecution in cases of unauthorised absence from school. The issuing of Penalty Notices must conform to all requirements of the Human Rights Act and all Equal Opportunities legislation.

#### **2. Rationale:**

The Local Authority (LA) has the responsibility, as determined by the Department for Education (DfE) for developing the Code of Conduct within which all partners named in the Act will operate. This is a requirement of

the Parental Responsibility Measures for School Attendance and Behaviour Statutory Guidance for Maintained Schools, Academies, Local Authorities and the Police (DfE November 2013).

It is a requirement of the Code of Conduct that procedures are consistently applied and enforcement action is not duplicated. In order to support compliance with this requirement, and that any subsequent court action which may be necessary can be integrated within existing arrangements, this protocol places the main responsibility for issuing Penalty Notices with North Yorkshire Local Authority. Although the local authority administers the scheme for all schools in its area, including academies and free schools, the regulations make provision for a Head teacher (and other nominated school staff), the Police and authorised LA staff to issue Penalty Notices relating to unauthorised absence.

Parents and pupils are supported at school and LA level to overcome barriers to regular attendance through a wide continuum of assessment and intervention strategies including referral to the LA's Prevention and Support Service. Sanctions of any nature are for use only where parental co-operation in this process is either absent or deemed insufficient and there is a reasonable expectation that parents are able to exercise their responsibility more effectively. Sanctions are never used as a punishment, only as a means of enforcing attendance where there is a reasonable expectation that their use will secure an improvement.

### **3. Circumstances where a Penalty Notice may be issued:**

A Penalty Notice can only be issued in cases of unauthorised absence. No parent will receive more than two separate Penalty Notices resulting from the unauthorised absence of an individual child in any twelve-month period. In cases where families contain more

\*Throughout this document parent also refers to a person having parental responsibility or having care of the child

than one poor-attending pupil multiple issue may occur, but this will be the subject of careful consideration and co-ordination.

There will be no restriction on the number of times a parent/carer may receive a formal warning of a Penalty Notice if further unauthorised absence occurs within 15 days of the letter being sent.

The issuing of a Penalty Notice is considered appropriate in the following circumstances:

- Parentally-condoned absences including unacceptable reasons for absence (e.g. too tired after a late night, birthday treat)
- Leave of absence taken but not agreed as exceptional circumstances by the Head teacher when requested in advance e.g. for a family holiday
- Excessive delayed return from agreed leave of absence without prior school agreement (amounting to a minimum 10 unauthorised sessions)
- Persistent late arrival at school recorded as unauthorised absence (after the Register has closed).
- where parents allow their child to be present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification during the first five days of a fixed term or permanent exclusion (parents must have received prior notice of this by the school at the time of the exclusion and the days to which it applies)

### **4. Procedure for issuing Penalty Notices (with the exception of un-agreed leave of absence):**

The LA will issue Penalty Notices which will help to ensure consistent and equitable delivery, retain school-home relationships and allow cohesion with other enforcement sanctions.

Penalty Notices will only be issued by post and never as an on the spot action; this to satisfy that all evidential requirements are in place and to meet Health and Safety requirements.

The requests for the Local Authority to issue Penalty Notices can be from all schools, North Yorkshire Police and neighbouring LAs. The request will be acted upon provided that:

- All relevant information is supplied in the specified manner
- The circumstances of the pupil's absence meets all the requirements of this Code of Conduct
- Family circumstances are set against the likelihood of securing improved attendance by issuing a Penalty Notice (this to include any cases of possible multiple issue to any one family)
- The issue of a Penalty Notice does not conflict with other intervention strategies in place or other enforcement sanctions already being progressed

To ensure consistent delivery of Penalty Notices the following needs to be in place:

- Certificate of Absence - completed and signed by the Head teacher covering a period within the last four months with a minimum 10 sessions (5 school days) of unauthorised absence
- Witness Statement - supporting written evidence completed and signed by the Head Teacher/school practitioner including evidence that the school has supported the family to improve their child's attendance, i.e. home visits, meetings in school, referral to the Prevention and Support Service (after 1st April 2015) or other agencies

Documentation should provide evidence that the parent has not engaged with the support offered and has continued to fail to exercise their legal responsibility to ensure their child's regular and punctual attendance at their educational placement. This will support a prosecution should the penalty not be paid.

Where the request meets the criteria and it is established that an offence under Section 444 (1) Education Act 1996 has been committed the LA will:

- Issue a formal written warning to the parent/carer of the possibility of a Penalty Notice being issued
- In the same letter set a period of 15 school days commencing 3 school days following dispatch of the formal warning letter within which the pupil must have no unauthorised absence (to be sent by 1st Class Post)
- Issue a Penalty Notice through the post at the end of the 15 day period if the required level of improvement has not been achieved
- If the Penalty Notice remains unpaid the LA will progress a prosecution through the Magistrates Courts for the offence of failing to ensure their child's regular attendance. (not regarding the non- payment of the penalty notice although this will be used in evidence)

N.B. If a not guilty plea is entered by the parent then the initial hearing would be adjourned to prepare for trial when the Head teacher and or practitioner (s) may be summoned to give evidence regarding the unauthorised absence.

## **5. Procedure for Issuing Penalty Notices for unauthorised leave of absence taken in term time:**

Amendments to the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 removed references to 'family holiday' and 'extended leave' as well as the statutory threshold of 'ten school days'. The amendments make clear that head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances (requests for holidays in term time would not normally meet the criteria).

The issuing of a Penalty Notice applies only to the deliberate taking of leave of absence in term time, where the head teacher has deemed on application that the reason given did not meet the criteria for exceptional circumstances, and, where it can be clearly demonstrated that the parent/carer understood that permission had not/would not be given.

If parents/carers have not applied in advance then, by default the absence is not agreed, as leave of absence cannot be approved retrospectively. This must have created a period of unauthorised absence in the last 4 months of at least 10 sessions (or 5 school days). The absence can be in one block or accumulated over the 4 month period.

If the leave of absence is agreed, the Head teacher should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school. Any leave taken in excess of this period is deemed in itself to be unagreed absence and can be liable to a Penalty Notice being issued if the excess absence amounts to 10 sessions or more.

The Head teacher should contact the LA to issue a Penalty Notice sending all relevant documentation no more than two weeks following the taking of the unauthorised leave. The following documentation needs to be submitted:

- Certificate of Absence (Un-agreed Leave) - for the period in question completed and signed by the Head teacher
- Witness Statement - completed and signed by the Head teacher
- Leave of Absence Application Form and reply to the parent (if possible)

Where a parent fails to pay a Penalty Notice issued in these circumstances, the LA will pursue a prosecution of the parent under the Education Act 1996 s444 (1) and will present the case in court. The evidence provided by the Head teacher will be laid before the magistrates regarding the unauthorised absence which triggered the penalty notice in this instance.

#### **6. Procedure for Issuing Penalty Notices for being present in a public place during the first five days of exclusion (fixed term or permanent):**

Section 103 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 places a duty on parents in relation to an excluded pupil; a parent has to ensure that their child is not present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification during the first five days of each and every fixed period or permanent exclusion. A public place means any highway or any place to which the public have access. N.B. School premises are not a public place for this purpose (Section 547 Education Act 1996).

Section 105 allows for a Penalty Notice to be given to a parent who may be guilty of an offence under Section 103. The notice enables the parent to pay a penalty as a way of discharging liability for the offence of failing to ensure that their child is not present in a public place on the days specified in the notice given to them by school. The parent must have been notified of their duty by the school at the time of exclusion and the days to which it relates.

To issue the Penalty Notice evidence would be required, either through eye witness testimony in the form of a Witness Statement, or proven evidence from a CCTV system.

The following documentation needs to be submitted to the LA:

- Proof of notification to parent (s) and the means of delivery as above
- Witness Statement including evidence of where the child was seen and the parent having no reasonable justification for their child being in a public place

#### **7. Procedure for withdrawing Penalty Notices:**

Once issued, a Penalty Notice will only be withdrawn in the following circumstances:

- Proof has been established that the Penalty Notice was issued to the wrong person
- The use of the Penalty Notice did not conform to the terms of this Code of Conduct

## **8. Payment of Penalty Notices:**

Arrangements for payment will be detailed on the Penalty Notice. Payment of a Penalty Notice discharges the parent's liability for the period in question and he/she cannot subsequently be prosecuted under other enforcement powers for the period covered by the Penalty Notice. Penalty Notices can be issued per parent per child in accordance with DfE Guidance.

Payment of a Penalty Notice within 21 days is £60 and payment after 21 days but within 28 days is £120. Part payments will not be accepted. A letter will be sent to the parent of the intent of the LA to pursue legal action if the Penalty Notice remains unpaid following the expiry date of the payment time scale.

The LA retains any revenue from Penalty Notices to cover enforcement costs i.e. administration, collection or processing in the event of non-payment.

## **9. Non-payment of Penalty Notices:**

Non-payment of a Penalty Notice will trigger the prosecution process under the provisions of the Education Act 1996, s444 (1).

## **10. Policy and Publicity**

The utilisation of Penalty Notices as a sanction will be included the LA's School Attendance - Advice and Requirements of all schools for consideration of Legal Enforcement by the Local Authority. All School Attendance Policies will need to include information on the utilisation of Penalty Notices and this will be brought to the attention of all parents.

## **11. Reporting and Review**

Reports by the LA will be made at regular intervals to Head teacher groups and North Yorkshire Police on the deployment and outcomes of Penalty Notices. An annual monitoring report to Executive Members on the work of the LA and review of the Code of Conduct will include data on this. The LA will review Penalty Notice use at regular intervals and amend the general enforcement strategy as appropriate.

For advice contact: Julie Parrish (Attendance and Enforcement Officer) Tel: 01609 798013  
Kate Flinton (Attendance and Enforcement Officer) Tel: 01609 532508

October 2015