



**Blackburn with Darwen L.A.**

St. Thomas's Centre

**Attendance for Learning Policy  
2024**

**Review Date: September 2025**

## **Rationale**

This Policy outlines the underlying philosophy, purpose, organisation and management of pupil attendance at St Thomas's. It aims to raise the profile of attendance in order to maximise the education opportunities and outcomes for all pupils.

To maximise attendance St Thomas's will establish an effective and efficient system of communication with pupils, parents and appropriate external agencies to provide mutual information advice and support.

## **Aims**

1. To ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled.
2. Promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence.
3. To use data effectively in order to identify groups of pupils and individuals whose absence causes concern and implement appropriate interventions.

We will also support parents to perform their legal duty to ensure their children attend regularly, and will promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

## **Legal Responsibilities Relating to School Attendance**

This policy meets the requirements of the school attendance guidance from the Department for education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on school attendance parental responsibility measures. These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting 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, 2016 amendments)

The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2024

Working together to improve school attendance 2024

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.

Under Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act, a parent is responsible for ensuring that a child of compulsory school age receives an efficient full-time education that is suitable to the child's age, aptitude and ability and any special educational needs a child might have.

## **Parental Responsibilities Relating to School Attendance**

Parents must:

- Contact St Thomas's on first day of absence to provide a reason for non-attendance prior to 9.00am or 12:10pm for pupils who attend afternoon sessions.
- Provide medical evidence for absences due to medical appointment or illness where appropriate or at the request of St Thomas's
- Update the school daily for non-attendance if the absence is expected to continue
- Not book holidays within term time. All holidays must take place within the allocated scheduled school holiday periods.
- To request any compassionate leave of absence in writing to the Headteacher using the appropriate LOA form
- Work with the school and any other agencies to resolve any barriers/difficulties which may affect regular school attendance

## **St Thomas's Responsibilities Relating to School Attendance**

The Headteacher together with the Assistant headteacher will be responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Supporting staff with registration and monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Work with the Attendance officer and safeguarding team to address persistent absence
- Support the Attendance Officer/ Pastoral Lead with arranging calls and meetings with parents to discuss barriers to learning that create attendance issues
- To offer support and strategies to young people, parents/carers in order for them to improve attendance
- Formalise support to ensure engagement in attendance contracts; with regular reviews and enforce attendance through statutory intervention

## **Registration and recording attendance**

### **Daily procedure**

- A daily attendance record is completed by class teachers during morning and afternoon registration sessions and is checked by the Attendance Officer and Pastoral team.
- Daily texts/calls/emails are sent to parents/carers when a pupil is absent.
- All authorised and unauthorised absence will be recorded with the appropriate attendance code
- Synergy is used to record attendance data, and all contact regarding punctuality and attendance.

Parents should ensure pupils arrive promptly to school at 8:45am. Morning registration is from 8:45 at 9.00am then lessons begin.

## **Following up on absence**

### **Day 1**

AM 9:30 and PM 12:30 – Text sent out on synergy to parents if pupils are not in school; request for parents to contact school with a reason for their child's absence.

### **Day 2**

If no response received day 1 or day 2 a phone call is made by attendance officer; to make initial contact and discuss reasons for absence/welfare check. Notification via email also to any pupil who has a social worker/youth justice worker to inform them of absence.

### **Day 3**

If no response received day 1-3 and attendance officer could not get through to parent on day 2 then a home visit is conducted by attendance officer / pupil support officer / pastoral lead or support staff.

### **Day 4**

If no response received day 1-4 and attendance officer did not see parent / child at home visit gets passed to AHT, pastoral lead, safeguarding to follow up.

### **Day 5**

On some occasions contact will have been established so a day 2 call / home visit etc was not triggered but if still no attendance then the attendance officer will do a home visit to assess if an attendance support plan is required.

**The Attendance officer also to inform the mainstream schools of dual rolled pupils that there has been 5 days of non-attendance and that the package could be at risk of failing. Requesting support from the base school with the pupil's attendance.**

#### **Day 6**

If no attendance following the Day 5 visit then it gets passed to AHT, pastoral lead, safeguarding to follow up. Discussions with parents, carers and external agencies to offer strategies to resolve barriers to attendance.

Attendance officer to post (note through door on home visits) – if no attendance after 5 days of AHT, pastoral lead, safeguarding intervention – then a first warning letter to be issued. Should non-attendance still continue then St Thomas's Centre will involve the Inclusion team.

**Dual rolled pupils' packages will end after 10 consecutive days of unauthorised absence. Medical packages will trigger a review with professionals involved and could result in the package ending.**

**Persistent and or severe absence may result in a Fixed Penalty Notice if parents fail to engage in the support available to improve their child's attendance in accordance with the Local Authority code of conduct.**

#### **Categorisation of Authorised and Unauthorised Absence**

The parent must provide an explanation for any period of absence from school. It is the responsibility of the Headteacher (or designated senior leader) to decide whether or not the absence will be authorised.

The school will usually authorise absences where a pupil is:

- Absent due to religious observance. This is limited to two days per period and must be requested in writing prior to absence. An 'R' code will be recorded.
- Unable to attend school due to illness. If a pupil without known medical needs has had 2 previous periods of illness, the school will only authorise further absences due to illness where medical evidence has been provided. (Parents/carers will be reminded about this via a letter or phone call after the 2<sup>nd</sup> period of illness).
- In need of emergency dental/medical appointments, parents/carers should endeavour to secure appointments outside of the school day. An appointment card should be supplied to the school prior to the appointment.
- Making reasonable adjustments to support a child's mental health needs. Where a flexible curriculum is put in place, to support a child, it must be agreed by parent/carer and reviewed regularly. The Headteacher will ensure that accurate records are kept, of which pupils have a flexible curriculum and the date of each review.

Criteria for using disaggregated register for individual pupils

- Receiving regular medical intervention
- Where a pupil is unable to attend in a specific period due to additional needs

#### **Holidays**

St Thomas's Centre does not encourage holidays to be taken in term time. In line with the Department for Education's guidance permission for holidays will only be granted in exceptional circumstances. A holiday request form must be completed at least 2 weeks prior to a holiday and will only be granted if there are exceptional circumstances.

Where a pupil is taken out of school for the purpose of a holiday in term time or where an extended absence has been taken without permission, the parent/carer of the pupil could be

issued with a Penalty Notice. This is an imposed fine by the Local Authority, per parent per child. (We will consult other schools where siblings attend and the family will be issued a notice for all the children). If the notice remains unpaid after 28 days the Local Authority could commence proceedings under section 444(1) of the 1996 Education Act in the Magistrates Court. This may result in the parent(s)/carer(s) having a criminal record, any conviction will appear on a CRB check which could adversely affect employability.

#### **School Systems for Promoting and improving overall attendance and punctuality**

- Implement a range of rewards for pupils with high levels of attendance and those improving attendance. Each provision has a range of rewards aimed at maintaining good attendance. This can include attendance certificates, draws and end of term trips.
- Ensure that all pupils have a regular attendance / punctuality discussion with their tutors.
- Overt promotion of attendance in the classrooms, displaying attendance material at focal points within the school.
- Relate attendance issues directly with pupil attainment and the school's ethos and culture.
- Work proactively to engage with parents and carers to resolve any difficulties which may be affecting school attendance, through parents' meetings, pupil reviews and home-school agreements.
- Conduct home visits if necessary, for safeguarding purposes.
- Referrals to CME as appropriate.
- Provide appropriate support to pupils to ensure successful reintegration following long term absence; time limited phased returns.
- Staff have clear defined roles ensuring consistency in carrying out designated attendance tasks.

#### **Attendance monitoring and reducing persistent absence**

- Early identification of at-risk pupils through effective analysis of data.
- Appropriate support and intervention identified and provided for each pupil
- Action planning and robust reviewing procedure for all pupils at risk.
- Effective communication with parents of at-risk pupils to ensure they understand the impact and level of absence.
- Listening to pupils/parents to understand barriers to attendance and facilitating support to overcome the barriers inside and outside of school.
- Liaising with mainstream schools when monitoring attendance.
- In conjunction with the Local Authority and the Inclusion team use a full range of strategies, including legal interventions and Penalty notices, to support improvement in attendance.
- Discuss persistent absent pupils at school safeguarding meetings with DSL.
- Thorough assessment of need, and where appropriate, the use of multi-agency approaches to support families and pupils to improve attendance.

#### **Using data effectively in order to identify groups of pupils and individuals whose absence causes concern and implement appropriate interventions.**

- Maintain an effective system of electronic registration, ensuring it is accurate and timely.
- Ensure consistent use of a systematic approach to gathering, analysing and monitoring attendance and punctuality.
- With support from the Local Authority, continue to develop methods of data analysis.
- Identify patterns and trends for various cohorts on a half termly basis.
- Plan and implement targeted support for pupils incorporating regular reviews to ensure effectiveness.

<b>Designated provision staff (including teachers, support staff and pastoral Lead) DAILY</b>	<b>Pastoral Leader in conjunction with Attendance Officer</b>	<b>Attendance Officer and Assistant Head with responsibility for Attendance</b>
<p>Electronically record statutory attendance during registration.</p> <p>Monitor attendance and punctuality of provision.</p> <p>To contact parents with concerns about poor attendance and punctuality to school.</p>	<p>Monitor provision group statutory registers.</p> <p>Support tutors to monitor attendance and punctuality of classes during am/pm registration.</p> <p>Ensure attendance and punctuality is raised regularly at provision meetings and through assemblies.</p> <p>Implement reward strategy for attendance and punctuality conjunction with attendance officer.</p> <p>Attend regular meetings with Attendance Officer and Assistant head with responsibility for attendance.</p> <p>Communicate and discuss attendance concerns with parents, requesting medical evidence if appropriate/seeking support of external agencies/Inclusion team.</p> <p>Respond to data for QA meetings.</p> <p>Communicate with relevant external agencies regarding attendance and punctuality.</p>	<p>Collate and analyse whole school and specific cohort data to identify trends and inform strategic planning.</p> <p>Meet regularly with pastoral leads and agencies to address attendance issues.</p> <p>Keep abreast of any new guidance or legislation pertaining to attendance.</p> <p>Work closely with partner agencies to support the needs of pupils and families whose attendance is of concern.</p> <p>To conduct assessment of need and plan appropriate intervention working with the Inclusion team.</p> <p>To produce termly reports for Management Committee</p> <p>To action whole school attendance reporting to parents.</p> <p>Challenge and take direct statutory action with parents who fail to ensure that their children attend school regularly, using the correct procedures and policies in accordance with the code of conduct of the Local Authority.</p>