



Theale C of E Primary School

Attendance and punctuality policy

At Theale CE Primary School, the children come first. They are central to every decision made in school. We will ensure that our children are happy and successful. They will grow to be ambitious and resilient and their talents will be nurtured so they become highly skilled. Our children will be courageous and always behave with integrity.

“And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ This *is* the first commandment. And the second, like *it*, is this: ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.” *Mark 12: v 30-31*

“I have come that they may have life and that they may have it more abundantly.”
John 10:10

Published on public website	Yes
Author	Senior Leadership Team
Approved by	Governing Body
Date approved	Spring 2023
Date of next review	Spring 2024
Responsibility for next review	Senior Leadership Team

Guidance documents

The DfE attendance guidance document (May 2022) has been used as a basis for this policy. The original document can be found here: [Working together to improve school attendance \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/107146/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance.pdf)

The importance of school attendance

A child should come to school every day.

The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school.

Where parents decide to have their child registered at school, they have an additional legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly. This means their child must attend every day that the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the school.

A child should only be absent if the reason is unavoidable. Allowing a child to be absent without good reason is against the law and parents can be fined up to £1,000. Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents) as either authorised or unauthorised. This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason: e.g. illness or other unavoidable causes.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no request for absence has been granted. This includes:

- keeping children off school for trivial reasons,
- truancy,
- absences which have never been properly explained,
- late arrival at school too late (half an hour after the register closes),
- absences (for example a holiday) taken in term time, that are not an exceptional circumstance.

Providing a note may not be sufficient if the reason given is not “unavoidable”. Children should never be kept off school for reasons such as a birthday, absence of other children, or for a ‘treat’, problems with travel arrangements.

If there are attendance problems, the school will refer the child to the Education Welfare Officer (E.W.O.) from the Local Authority. The E.W.O. will try to resolve the difficulties by agreement, but if other ways of trying to improve a child’s attendance have failed, the E.W.O. can use court proceedings to prosecute parents or to seek an education supervision order on the child.

Parents may wish to contact the E.W.O. themselves for advice. They are independent from the school, and their telephone number is available at the school office, or from the Local Authority.

Consequences of poor attendance

This is essential for pupils to get the most out of their school experience, including their attainment, wellbeing, and wider life chances. The pupils with the highest attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 have higher rates of attendance over the key stage compared to those with the lowest attainment. At KS2, pupils not meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and maths had an overall absence rate of 4.7%, compared to 3.5% among those meeting the expected standard. Moreover, the overall absence rate of pupils not meeting the expected standard was higher than among those meeting the higher standard (4.7% compared to 2.7%). At KS4, pupils

not achieving grade 9 to 4 in English and maths had an overall absence rate of 8.8%, compared to 5.2% among those achieving grade 41. The overall absence rate of pupils not achieving grade 9 to 4 was over twice as high as those achieving grade 9 to 5 (8.8% compared to 3.7%).

For the most vulnerable pupils, regular attendance is also an important protective factor and the best opportunity for needs to be identified and support provided. Research has shown associations between regular absence from school and a number of extra-familial harms. This includes crime (90% of young offenders had been persistently absent) and serious violence (83% of knife possession offenders had been persistently absent in at least 1 of the 5 years of study).

Procedures

The school applies the following procedures in deciding how to deal with individual absences.

Illness and other legitimate reasons

If a child is absent from school, parents should contact the school by 9.00am on each day of absence, in person or by telephone. If a child is absent and no reason has been given, the school will contact the parents as soon as possible, always on the first day of absence. This is a safety measure. Absences will not be authorised without this procedure. Other reasons for absence must be discussed with the school each time. Absence may be granted in an emergency (e.g. bereavement) or for medical appointments unavoidably arranged in school time, provided a written explanation is received. When a telephone message has been received, the correct absence will be recorded in the register by the Office Staff. When a letter has been received from parents, the reason for absence will be noted in the register.

Requests for Leave of Absence during term time

From the 1st September 2013 amendments were made to the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations that removed the right of the Headteacher to grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. This includes the right to absence for holidays.

The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 make clear that headteacher may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.

The Code sets out 3 circumstances in which a **Fixed Penalty Fine** may be issued.

These are:

1. Where a pupil is present in a public place during school hours during the first five days of being excluded from school.
2. Where the pupil has had ten or more school days of unauthorised absence within any ten week school period.
3. Where a pupil has had 5 or more school days of unauthorised absence in a ten week school period and the unauthorised absence relates to a planned leave of absence e.g. holiday.

A Fixed Penalty Fine may be issued to each parent liable for the offence. Where a Fixed Penalty Fine is issued, payment will be £60 if paid within 21 days. If not paid within 21 days the Penalty is automatically increased to £120 if paid within 28 days. If payment is not made within 28 days, each parent or carer will be summonsed to appear in Court for an offence under Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996. The full Code of Conduct is available to view on the Council's website at www.westberks.gov.uk (schools section).

The school's policy is to only authorise requests for leave of absence in exceptional circumstances and only for pupils whose attendance in the previous twelve months was above 96%. All requests for leave must be made in person completing Appendix A at least three weeks in advance. A meeting may be held with the Headteacher to discuss the request if necessary.

The Headteacher has full authority to grant or deny a request based upon previous attendance and potential impact on the child/ren's attainment. Parents will be informed of the decision.

Exceptional circumstances (although not an exhaustive list) could include:

- family circumstances (compassionate leave which could include):
 - parents returning from an overseas posting (service and civilians),
 - parents who are serving members of the armed or civilian services (e.g. police),
 - formal respite for vulnerable families involving children being away from home,
 - bereavement,
 - life limiting illness of either a pupil or close family member,
 - significant family events – for example a wedding of immediate family member (please note in the case of a family event or religious observance only the day of the event will be authorised),
- examinations – e.g. ballet or music,
- religious/cultural reasons,
- visiting a new school.

The Headteacher reserves the right to refer to the Governing Body, or its Chair, for consultation. The Headteacher and Education Welfare Officer will talk to those parents who persistently take their holidays in term time, reminding them of the disruption to their child's education.

No leave of absence will be granted during assessment periods.

Extended Periods of absence

Extended periods of absence beyond six weeks can result in pupils being taken off roll and the Local Authority being informed that the child is missing from school. If children are taken off roll parents, on return, will be required to re-apply for a place through West Berkshire Admissions.

Absence monitoring

The Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher will write to parents termly to notify them of their child's attendance record. If the child's attendance is between 96% and 90%, Appendix C will be sent reminding parents of the important of school attendance. If the child's attendance is below 90%, the following procedure will be followed.

Persistent absence

1. Parents will receive a letter (Appendix D) and will be reminded of their legal duty and of the school's policy and expectations.
2. If attendance does not improve, the Headteacher will invite parents to a meeting to discuss ways in which the school can support the family in getting the child to school every day.
3. If persistent absence from school continues, the Headteacher has the right to not authorise any absence without the support of medical evidence.
4. The Headteacher will refer the family to the Education Welfare Officer when a child continues to be absent (unauthorised) for:
 - nine full days over a six week period,
 - 18 sessions over a six week period,
 - 15% unauthorised absence in an academic year,
 - ten consecutive days with no reason for absence.

The Education Welfare Officer will take the absence issue on as a case and investigate why a child has been absent on the dates given. This investigation could result in parents receiving a warning notice. Alternatively, a fixed penalty fine could be issued per child to each adult who has parental responsibility.

Punctuality/lateness

Children must attend on time to be given a mark for a session, unless the lateness is unavoidable. Parents are expected to ensure that children are present at registration. A record will be kept in the School Office of all latecomers. The Headteacher will write to parents of children who are persistently late (Appendix E), in order for them to come to school on time and this may result in referral to the EWO.

The registers will remain open until 8.45am each day. Where a child arrives after the register has been taken in class but before 9.30am the session will be marked as late. For children arriving after this time without an authorised reason, the session will be marked as unauthorised.

The Legal framework

Under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, parents and carers of children of compulsory school age are required to ensure that they receive efficient full-time education, whether by regular school attendance or otherwise. It is the parents' responsibility to ensure that their children arrive at school on time.

The Government has introduced new provisions, contained in section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 for use by LAs to tackle poor attendance at school. Parents/Carers may be issued with a Penalty Notice, as an alternative to prosecution, if their child has unauthorised holiday absence of ten half day sessions or more during a ten school week period or 20 half day sessions from school in a ten school week period and these absences are unauthorised. The fine is £60 if paid within 21 days rising to £120 if paid within 28 days. Fines are issued per parent/carer per child. Failure to pay could/will result in summons to court.

Summary

The school has a legal duty to promote good attendance. The school has a duty to make your child's time at school interesting and worthwhile. Parents have a duty to make sure their children attend. The school is committed to working with parents as to the best way to ensure as high a level of attendance as possible.

Appendix A

Theale C of E Primary School

LEAVE OF ABSENCE REQUEST FORM

The Department for Education has advised schools to only authorise leave of absence in 'exceptional' circumstances, therefore the school will not approve any absence in term time, except in such circumstances. The Headteacher will determine whether the reason given for requesting leave of absence is exceptional or not. Please also note that there is no automatic right to take holidays in term time nor will your child/ren's overall attendance affect the Headteacher's decision.

Please complete the section below and return to school at least one month before the requested absence. The school will endeavour to respond to your request within five working days. Please note that taking your child away during the school term is detrimental to their educational progress and extra work will not be given to children not in school.

If leave of absence is taken without approval, this information will be passed to our Education Welfare Officer.

Pupil's name **Date of Birth**

Year/Class

Reason for leave of absence in term time (**This must be completed**). If the absence is for religious observance, please include the name and contact details of your place of worship.

.....
.....
.....
.....

Absence Period from (1st day of absence) **to** (return date to school)
.....

Number of school days to be missed

Sibling details Name(s) / School(s)
.....

Full Name of Parent / Carer 1

Full Name of Parent / Carer 2

Signature/s of Parent/s / Carer/s
.....

Date:

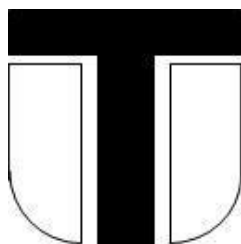
School use only

Has leave of absence already been taken this school year? Yes No

This request for leave of absence is Approved Not Approved

Signed: **Name:** **Date:**

Appendix B



Theale C of E Primary School

Englefield Road, Theale, Berkshire RG7 5AS

Telephone: 0118 9302239

e-mail: office@theale.w-berks.sch.uk

website: www.thealeprimary.co.uk

Headteacher
Mrs C.V. Morley

Date

Dear parent/carers,

Each term we are writing to parents letting them know the attendance percentage that their child has attained using the traffic light system, where we have concerns about levels of attendance.

	Percentage	Comment
Green	96% and above	Congratulations, your child has attained strong attendance so far this academic year. Please keep this up.
Amber	90% to 96%	Your child is below our 96% attendance threshold. We understand this may be due to a couple of days of sickness absence. We hope their attendance picks up.
Red	Below 90%	Your child's attendance is well below the 96% threshold. An improvement must be made. You may be invited to meet with me and your case may be referred to the Education Welfare Officer.

Your child's percentage attendance up to and including **date** is:

Full Name
Between 96% and 100%

Thank you for supporting us and your child by promoting high levels of attendance. Pupils who attend school regularly are more likely to achieve well academically; have better mental and physical health and be in long term employment as an adult.

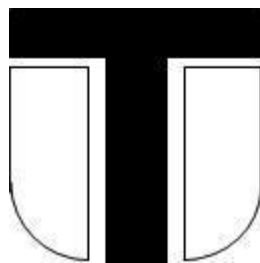
We look forward to continuing to see your child in school every day and helping them achieve success in all areas of the curriculum.

Yours sincerely,

K. Holehouse

Miss K Holehouse. Deputy Headteacher

Appendix C



Theale C of E Primary School

Englefield Road, Theale, Berkshire RG7 5AS

Telephone: 0118 9302239

e-mail: office@theale.w-berks.sch.uk

website: www.thealeprimary.co.uk

Headteacher
Mrs C.V. Morley

Date

Dear parent/carers,

Attendance Statement:

Below 96% Attendance: FULL NAME (CLASS)

Each term we are writing to parents letting them know the attendance percentage that their child has attained using the traffic light system, where we have concerns about levels of attendance.

	Percentage	Comment
Green	96% and above	Congratulations, your child has attained strong attendance so far this academic year. Please keep this up.
Amber	90% to 96%	Your child is below our 96% attendance threshold. We understand this may be due to a couple of days of sickness absence. We hope their attendance picks up.
Red	Below 90%	Your child's attendance is well below the 96% threshold. An improvement must be made. You may be invited to meet with me and your case may be referred to the Education Welfare Officer.

Your child's percentage attendance up to and including **DATE** is as follows:

Your attendance percentage is

???%

We hope that every child in the school will work towards an attendance target of 96% and above. Please be aware that we monitor attendance regularly and will make contact with you at any point if we feel that your child's attendance pattern needs to be looked into for any reason.

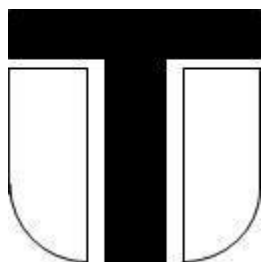
Yours sincerely,

K. Holehouse

Miss K Holehouse.

Deputy Headteacher

Appendix D



Theale C of E Primary School

Englefield Road, Theale, Berkshire RG7 5AS

Telephone: 0118 9302239

e-mail: office@theale.w-berks.sch.uk

website: www.thealeprimary.co.uk

Headteacher
Mrs C.V. Morley

DATE

Dear parent/carers,

Attendance Statement:

Below 90% Attendance: FULL NAME (CLASS)

Each term we are writing to parents letting them know the attendance percentage that their child has attained using the traffic light system, where we have concerns about levels of attendance.

	Percentage	Comment
Green	96% and above	Congratulations, your child has attained strong attendance so far this academic year. Please keep this up.
Amber	90% to 96%	Your child is below our 96% attendance threshold. We understand this may be due to a couple of days of sickness absence. We hope their attendance picks up.
Red	Below 90%	Your child's attendance is well below the 96% threshold. An improvement must be made. You may be invited to meet with me and your case may be referred to the Education Welfare Officer.

Your child's percentage attendance up to and including DATE is as follows:

Your attendance percentage is

???

Despite any extenuating circumstances or agreed absences, your child's attendance level will now be monitored more closely. You should expect to hear from us in the event of further absence during the course of the coming weeks. In the event that there is little or no improvement in the coming weeks, we may have to invite you in to discuss your child's poor attendance.

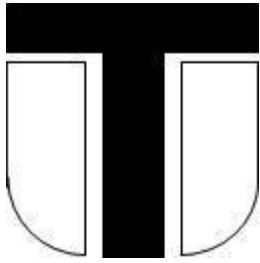
Following that meeting, and in the absence of satisfactory improvement, I will be expected to refer this case to the Education Welfare Officer at West Berkshire Council. They investigate referred cases and have the power to issue Penalty Notices to parents/carers of pupils with poor school attendance or see the parent/carers summonsed to appear before the Magistrates Court.

Yours sincerely,

K. Holehouse

Miss K Holehouse. Deputy Headteacher

Appendix E



Theale C of E Primary School

Englefield Road, Theale, Berkshire RG7 5AS

Telephone: 0118 9302239

e-mail: office@theale.w-berks.sch.uk

website: www.thealeprimary.co.uk

Headteacher

Mrs C.V. Morley

DATE

Dear Parents/Carers,

We are writing to you to emphasise the importance of being in school on time as **NAME** has arrived late to school, after the register has closed, several times since we returned to school in **January**.

School starts at 8.45 am every day. Children need to be in class at 8.45 am so that they can start their lessons promptly. Children who arrive late are greatly disadvantaged because they miss starting the day with their peers and the beginning of lessons. This means that they are often unsettled and confused about what they need to do.

It is also very important that children establish good routines and habits to support their future learning. Please ensure that your child arrives at school on time to support your child's own learning and that of others.

We are required to monitor children's punctuality and attendance. On-going lateness (after the class register has been taken) is classified as an unauthorised absence and we have to record it as such.

We understand that there may be rare occasions when you are unavoidably late due to unforeseen circumstances and we will always try to be understanding. On these occasions please make sure that you contact the school office to inform us when you will arrive.

Educational Welfare Service and other agencies regularly scrutinise our registers and levels of attendance and it is their role to engage further with you if they judge your child is being disadvantaged by their levels of attendance/punctuality.

If you are experiencing difficulties with punctuality and would like to discuss with us how we can support you, please make an appointment via the school office.

Yours sincerely,

K. Holehouse

Miss K Holehouse.

Deputy Headteacher