Where Learning Blossoms

Thorney Close Primary School

Attendance Policy

Person responsible for this policy:	Mrs C. Jones
Governor with responsibility for this policy:	Full Governing Body
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Ratified by:	
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Contents

- Introduction
- Promoting Regular Attendance
- Understanding types of absence
- Leave of Absence
- Persistent Absenteeism (PA)
- Absence Procedures
- Attendance and Inclusion Officer
- Lateness
- How we manage lateness:
- Looked After Children (LAC) and children subject to a Child Protection Plan
- Children with chronic medical conditions
- Leavers
- Children Missing Education
- Fixed Penalty Notices
- People responsible for this policy and its implementation

Introduction

Thorney Close Primary School recognises that positive behaviour and good attendance are central to raising standards and pupil attainment. This policy is written with the above statement in mind and this policy underpins our school ethos to:

- Promote children's welfare and safeguarding.
- Ensure every child has access to the full time education to which they are entitled.
- Ensure that children succeed whilst at school.
- Ensure that children have access to the widest possible range of opportunities when they leave school.

For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence or late arrival disrupts teaching routines and so may affect the learning of others in the same class. Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is a parental responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

Promoting Regular Attendance

Helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility – parents, children and all members of school staff.

To help us all to focus on this we will:

- Give parents/carers details on attendance in our newsletters and online.
- Report to parents/carers termly on their child's attendance.
- Contact parents/carers should their child's attendance fall below the school's target for attendance.
- Celebrate good attendance by displaying individual and class achievements in our weekly 'Shine' assembly.
- Recognise good or improving attendance through class competitions, certificates and rewards.

Understanding types of absence

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 any absence is always required.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason such as illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no leave has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily.
- Truancy during the school day.
- Absences which have never been properly explained.
- Children who arrive at school too late to get a mark.
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays.
- Day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed.

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child.

If a parent thinks their child is reluctant to attend school then we will work with that family to understand the root problem. We can use outside agencies to help with this such as the School Nurse or the school's Attendance and Inclusion Officer.

If a child who is subject to a Child Protection or Child in Need plan or who is a Looked After Child has an attendance pattern that is of concern to the school, we will contact Children's Services and make them aware of our concerns.

Leave of Absence

Parents do not have the right for their child to have leave of absence for a holiday. Headteachers no longer have the discretionary authority to approve holiday leave during term time.

Any parent who wishes to take their child out of school during term time, irrespective of the circumstances, must complete a Request for Exceptional Leave of Absence during Term Time form (available from the school office). The form must be completed in advance of the leave. Exceptional means, it is rare, significant, unavoidable, and short. Unavoidable means the event could not be reasonably be scheduled for another time in the school holidays.

Genuine medical appointments are exempt from this process but parents need to provide copy of any appointment letter etc. as clarification that the appointment is genuine. The child should attend school before and after the appointment time, if able to do so.

Persistent Absenteeism (PA)

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's education and we need parents' full support and co-operation to tackle this. We monitor all absence and the reasons given thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark or is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and we will inform the parents/carers immediately.

PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully; we also combine this with academic tracking where absence affects attainment. All our PA pupils and their parents are subject to specific support within school to address the underlining reason for absence. This may include the School Nurse, Family Support Worker or Attendance and Inclusion Officer. We may also use individual incentive programmes, individual targets and participation in group activities around raising attendance.

Absence Procedures

If your child is absent the parent/carer must follow these procedures:

- Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence before 8.45am; the school has an answer phone available to leave a message if nobody is available to take the call.
- Emailing school parents@thorneycloseprimaryschool.co.uk before 8.45am
- Speak to a member of the Senior Leadership Team who are on the at the school gates each morning.
- Call into school and report to reception.

- You have previously completed an Exceptional Leave of Absence form and leave has been authorised.

If your child is absent we will telephone you and/or text you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you. Where a child's attendance has become a concern we will:

- Visit the child's home address, where necessary.
- Invite you in to discuss the situation with the Headteacher, Early Help Worker Attendance Governor and /or Local Authority Attendance Officer
- Refer the matter to the Attendance and Inclusion Officer if the child's attendance does not improve following contact from the Headteacher.

Attendance and Inclusion Officer

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the child to the Attendance and Inclusion Officer (AIO) from the Local Authority. They will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the child's attendance have failed and unauthorised absences persist, these Officers can use sanctions such as Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court. Full details of the options open to enforce attendance at school are available from the school or the Local Authority. Alternatively, parents or children may wish to contact the AIO themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is available from the school office or by contacting the Local Authority.

Lateness

Good time keeping is a vital life skill which will help our children as they progress through their school life and out into the wider world. Poor punctuality has a detrimental effect on children's education. If a child misses the start of the day they can miss learning and important information and news for the day. As well as disrupting lessons, it can be embarrassing for the late arriving child and can also encourage absence.

How we manage lateness:

- The school day starts at **8.45am** and we expect our children to be in class by this time. If your child arrives via the main office after **8.55am they will be marked as late (L).**
- At **9.15am** the registers will be closed. In accordance with the Regulations, if children arrive after this time they receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this does **not** count as a present mark and it will mean they have a late mark after registration closes **(U).**
- If children have a persistent late record parents are asked to meet with the Headteacher to resolve the problem, but parents can approach school at any time if they are having problems getting their child to school on time.
- We will encourage good punctuality by being good role models to our children and celebrate good class punctuality.

Looked After Children (LAC) and children subject to a Child Protection Plan

The attendance of vulnerable pupils such as LAC, those subject to a Child Protection Plan or a Child in Need Plan will be monitored closely in order to alert external agencies of potential difficulties as soon as possible and offer support to the pupil and their family.

Children with chronic medical conditions

School supports children who fit into this category by following the statutory guidance provided by the Department of Education (DfE). The guidance documents are:

- Ensuring a good education for children who cannot attend school because of health needs: 2013
- Supporting pupils in school with medical conditions: 2015
- Alternative provision: 2013

Leavers

If a child is leaving other than at the end of Year 6, parents are asked to:

- Give the school full information about their plans including date of move, new address or at least the town you will be moving to, new school and start date when known, and reasons for moving. (A form is available from the school office).
- Confirm the school has your current mobile phone number.
- Let us know when they move.

Children Missing Education

When pupils leave and the school does not have the above information a child is considered to be a Child Missing Education. This means that the LA has a legal duty to carry out investigations, which will include liaising with Children's Services, the Police and other agencies, to try to track and locate the child.

The school will follow the Local Authority Guidelines for dealing with children missing from education which include:

- Informing the Attendance Officer: If the child has moved authority and we have an address for them, we will contact the Attendance Officer immediately, as once the receiving authority have taken responsibility for the child, they may be removed from our register.
- Keeping the child on roll for four weeks following their last attendance.
- Following published guidelines in relation to the Prevent strategy.

If a child who is subject to a Child Protection or Child in Need plan or who is a Looked After Child is missing from education, we will contact Children's Services and make them aware of our concerns.

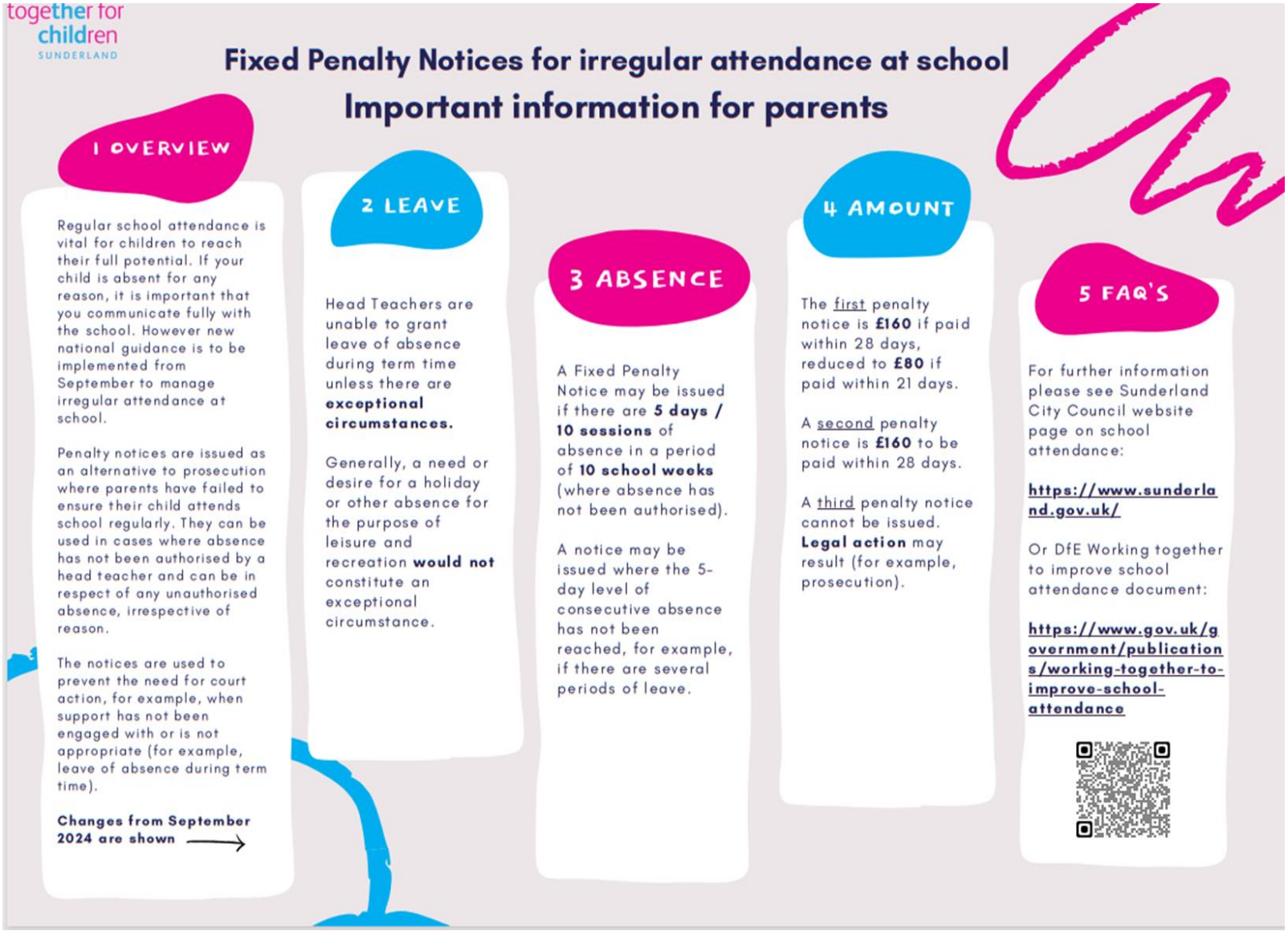
Fixed Penalty Notices

See Appendix 1 for Fixed Penalty Notices issued for irregular attendance at school and Penalty Notices Sunderland City Council Local Code of Conduct for issuing education related Penalty Notices on the school website (https://www.thorneycloseprimary.org.uk/Penalty_Notices_-_Code_of_Conduct.pdf) for information regarding how Fixed Penalty Notices will be issued.

People responsible for this policy and its implementation

The Headteacher and the Governing Body will monitor the effectiveness of this policy and review it on annually.

Appendix 1


together for children SUNDERLAND
Fixed Penalty Notices for irregular attendance at school
Important information for parents
1 OVERVIEW
Regular school attendance is vital for children to reach their full potential. If your child is absent for any reason, it is important that you communicate fully with the school. However new national guidance is to be implemented from September to manage irregular attendance at school.
Penalty notices are issued as an alternative to prosecution where parents have failed to ensure their child attends school regularly. They can be used in cases where absence has not been authorised by a head teacher and can be in respect of any unauthorised absence, irrespective of reason.
The notices are used to prevent the need for court action, for example, when support has not been engaged with or is not appropriate (for example, leave of absence during term time).
Changes from September 2024 are shown
2 LEAVE
Head Teachers are unable to grant leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.
Generally, a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation would not constitute an exceptional circumstance.
3 ABSENCE
A Fixed Penalty Notice may be issued if there are 5 days / 10 sessions of absence in a period of 10 school weeks (where absence has not been authorised).
A notice may be issued where the 5-day level of consecutive absence has not been reached, for example, if there are several periods of leave.
4 AMOUNT
The first penalty notice is £160 if paid within 28 days, reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days.
A second penalty notice is £160 to be paid within 28 days.
A third penalty notice cannot be issued. Legal action may result (for example, prosecution).
5 FAQ'S
For further information please see Sunderland City Council website page on school attendance:
https://www.sunderland.gov.uk/
Or DfE Working together to improve school attendance document:
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance