ATTENDANCE POLICY

Governors' Committee Responsible: Pupil Progress & Standards

Last Review: February 2026

Policy Originator/Editor: Matt Houghton

Review Period: Annual

Headteacher: James Malley

Status: Statutory

Chair of Committee: Aurora Sinclair

Review Date: August 2026

Next Review Date: Autumn 2027

Introduction

The Department for Education guidance for attendance (Working together to improve school attendance 2024) says:
Good attendance is essential for pupils to get the most out of their school experience, including their attainment, wellbeing and wider life chances.
The government expects:
Schools and local authorities to:

- *Build strong relationships and work jointly with families, listening to and understanding barriers to attendance and working in partnership with families to remove them.*
- *Develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance.*
- *Have a clear school attendance policy which all staff, pupils and parents understand.*
- *Accurately complete admission and, with the exception of schools where all pupils are boarders, attendance registers and have effective day to day processes in place follow up absence.*
- *Regularly monitor and analyse attendance and absence data to identify pupils or cohorts that require support with their attendance and put effective strategies then need to be put in place;*
- *Share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities, and other partners when absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe.*
- *Be particularly mindful of pupils absent from school due to mental or physical ill health or their special educational needs and/or disabilities, and provide them with additional support.*

Parents to:

- *Perform their legal duty by ensuring their children of compulsory school age who are registered at school attend regularly All pupils to:*
- *be punctual to their lessons*

The staff at Therfield are committed, in partnership with the parents/carers, students, governors and the Local Authority, to building a school which serves the community and of which the community is proud. We also remain committed to our overarching aim – 'The Best for All'. To this end, all pupils are expected to attend school regularly unless the absence is authorised by the Headteacher.

The 'Senior Attendance Champion' responsible for the strategic overview of attendance at Therfield is Matt Houghton mhoughton@therfield.surrey.sch.uk, the Attendance Officer at Therfield is Kizzy Tullett ktullet@therfield.surrey.sch.uk.

Registers

Under the provision of the Education Act 1996 (s434) and the Student Registration Regulations 1995 the school must keep an attendance register. Any child who is absent from school at the morning or afternoon registration period must have their absence recorded as being authorised, unauthorised or as an approved educational activity. Only the Headteacher or a member of staff acting on their behalf can authorise absence. If there is no known reason for the absence at registration, then the absence must be recorded in the first instance as unauthorised.

Reporting Absences

We understand that there are times when being absent from school is unavoidable. We believe that these instances should be rare and only occur when there is absolutely no alternative. If this is the case, we use Arbor for all parents and carers to report absences through. It is an app based system where parents can send in a message with the reason for absence at any time which is convenient to them which is automatically stored on our system.
We believe this is a much more efficient system for parents and the school and we encourage all parents to sign up to the system. We will still accept calls where it is absolutely vital, however, our preferred method of communication is through Arbor. ***All parents*** and carers of students at Therfield must report absences, no matter what year group they are in. This includes Sixth Form students and parents.

Registration and Lateness

It is expected that children will arrive at school on time. The school day begins at 8.30am and ends at 3:15pm, if pupils arrive at school after 8.30am they will be asked to sign in at reception, registers close at 9:10, if pupils arrive after this time they will be awarded a U code for the morning session which means the session is unauthorised and counts as an absence. If pupils arrive late (after 8:30am) this will be recorded in Arbor and students will be given a 15 minute

centralised after-school detention. We also place a strong importance on punctuality to lessons as this impacts on learning and consequently progress. Students must take responsibility for being at registration and lessons on time. Any student who is late to lessons will be issued a 15 minute centralised after-school detention.

Rewarding High Attendance

At Therfield we recognise that there are times when being absent from school is unavoidable, but should be rare, as a result, we have a clear Target 97% message, communicated to staff, students and parents through reports, communication home and assemblies. Every Half Term there will be an individual competition for attendance designed to reward students who are achieving this target or those who are striving towards it by improving their attendance. There will be two awards per year group, split into two categories: Thrive, for students whose attendance is above 97% and Strive for students whose attendance is not yet at 97% but is showing a pattern of improvement. These students will receive a certificate and a Love2Shop voucher.

These competitions will be overseen by the Attendance Officer, in conjunction with the Attendance Lead, in order to ensure tutors are informed of the outcomes and that they are high profile. In discussion with the Inclusion Officer and the Attendance Lead, Heads of Year may run additional rewards programmes and incentives throughout the year to boost the attendance of specific groups of pupils.

Persistent and Severe Absence

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason and a pupil is severely absent when they miss 50% or more schooling across the year for whatever reason. Any absence has an impact on a child's educational achievement, and we need parents' fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

The DFE and the Local Authority monitor the levels of persistently absent and severely absent children and levels of absence in all schools. Attendance of all students is tracked and monitored carefully through our attendance systems and tutors/Heads of Year are regularly updated where there are concerns. Parents will be informed whenever there are concerns regarding attendance at the earliest opportunity.

Responding To Non-Attendance

It is the responsibility of the parent/carer to inform the school by 9.10am (when registers close) if a child will be absent for any reason. When a student does not attend school we will respond in the following ways to support parents. The school will maintain a roll throughout the year of attendance data which will be shared with the Local Authority Educational Inclusion Officer (IO) on a frequent basis.

Attendance Threshold	**Interventions**	**Home visits (both announced and unannounced) may be used at any level of attendance intervention, if this is deemed suitable.**
Above 90% - Falling Attendance	90%-93% Letter, Attendance Officer, Tutor or Head of Year Phone-Call	
Under 90% - If attendance continues to fall despite Level 1 intervention, Level 2 intervention will be applied. Levels will continue to be applied if attendance continues to fall.	Level 1 – Letter of Concern	
	Level 2 – Face to Face Meeting with Attendance Assessment	
	Level 3 – Medical Evidence Letter	
	Level 4 – Face to Face Meeting with Attendance Contract (with Leadership Team Link)	
	Level 5 – Penalty Notice Warning Letter or Notification of Referral to Inclusion Service Letter (if second time at Level 5)	

	Level 6 – Penalty Notice or Referral to the Surrey Attendance Service (if second time at Level 6)	

Absence due to mental health

Summary of responsibilities where a mental health issue is affecting attendance states that schools should not routinely ask for medical evidence for mental health reasons, but it also explains that it may be appropriate to ask for it where the illness is preventing the child from attending for extended periods and where it could support school with putting in a plan to help students. As a school we would be unable to indefinitely authorise absences due to mental health, and we would need to liaise with the Local Authority on a case-by-case basis.

Dental and medical treatments

Whilst the school will grant requests for absence for dental and medical treatments, parents/carers are encouraged, whenever possible, to book medical and dental appointments outside of the school day. When appointments during school hours are unavoidable, the Attendance Officer must be contacted in advance of the appointment with details of the date and time of the appointment and when the child will be collected and/or returned to school. Evidence of the appointment will be requested for all appointments in school time where attendance is beneath a threshold set by the school. If the attendance officer is not made aware of appointments in advance, we cannot authorise them.

School trips

At Therfield, we believe that attendance to school is of paramount importance, as such, if your child's attendance is a concern they may not be able to participate in school trips. We review students' attendance on a regular basis and will speak with families if we believe there is a concern about your child's participation in a trip, we will approach each instance on a case-by-case basis.

Request for leave of absence in exceptional circumstances

As parents, you have a legal responsibility to ensure your child's attendance at school. During the academic year, pupils are at school for 190 days and at home for 175 days.

The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 state that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.

There is no automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday and the Department for Education does not consider a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation to be an exceptional circumstance. The school holiday dates are published well in advance and any holidays should be taken during these times. Requests for leave of absence will not be authorised unless under exceptional circumstances in accordance with The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024. All requests for leave will be considered on a case by case basis by the Headteacher. Any appeal will be heard by the Governing Body, whose decision will be final.

If a family needs to request absence in term-time then an Application for Leave of Absence in Exceptional Circumstances Form must, wherever possible, be completed prior to the leave date and preferably at least two weeks before. This form can be obtained from the website or the School Reception.

Where a child is taken out of school for an unauthorised leave of absence during term time for 5 days or more without the authority of the head teacher, each parent may be liable to receive a penalty notice for each child. In these circumstances, a warning will not be given where it can be shown that parents had previously been warned that such absences would not be authorised.

Penalty Notices

The Surrey Attendance Service, acting on behalf of Surrey County Council may issue a Penalty Notice as an alternative to the prosecution of a parent/carer for their child's unauthorised absence from school and require the recipient to pay a fixed amount.

Circumstances when a Penalty Notices may be issued

1. Pupils identified by police and Surrey Attendance Advice Officers engaged on Truancy Patrols and who have incurred unauthorised absences.

2. The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 state that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.

   Where a child is taken out of school for 10 sessions or more and the 'leave of absence' is without the authority of the head teacher, each parent is liable to receive a penalty notice for each child who is absent. In these circumstances, a warning will not be given where it can be shown that parents had previously been warned that such absences would not be authorised and that they will be liable to receive a Penalty Notice if the leave of absence is taken.

3. The issue of a Penalty Notice will also be considered where a pupil has incurred 10 or more unauthorised sessions during the preceding 10 school weeks. The parents' failure to engage with supportive measures proposed by the school will be a factor when considering the issue of a Penalty Notice. Unauthorised absence will include late arrival after the close of registration without good reason.

4. Section 103 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 places a duty on parents to ensure that their child is not in a public place without justifiable cause during school hours when they are excluded from school. This duty applies to the first five days of each exclusion. Failure to do so will render the parent liable to a Penalty Notice. If the Penalty Notice is not paid, the recipient will be prosecuted for the offence under Section 103. Alternative education provision will be made from the sixth day of any exclusion and failure to attend such provision without good reason will be treated as unauthorised absence.

   With the exception of unauthorised leave of absence taken in term time (Paragraph 2 above) parents will be sent a 'Notice To Improve' their child's attendance, warning them of their liability to receive such a notice before it is issued.

Amount Payable Under a Penalty Notice: The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2024

1. If a parent/carer has not incurred a penalty notice relating to the relevant child/children since 19 August 2024, then the penalty notice will be charged at the rate of £160.00, per parent/carer per child, if paid within 28 days. This will be reduced to £80.00 if paid within 21 days of receipt of the notice. Failure to pay the Penalty Notice will result in Surrey County Council considering legal proceedings against you in the Magistrates Court.

2. If you have incurred a penalty notice relating to this child/children since 19 August 2024, the rolling 3 year period will be activated from the date of the first penalty notice and the second penalty notice will be charged at the flat rate of £160.00, per parent/carer per child, if paid within 28 days. There will be no reduction for payment within 21 days. Failure to pay the Penalty Notice will result in Surrey County Council considering legal proceedings against you in the Magistrates Court.

3. If you have incurred 2 penalty notices relating to this child/children in the rolling 3 year period since the first penalty notice was issued, then you will NOT receive a third penalty notice – Surrey County Council will have no option but to consider a prosecution, per parent/carer per child, in the Magistrates Court under s 444 Education Act 1996.

Circumstances when a Penalty Notices may be issued:

Unauthorised leave of absence

Penalty Notices may be used in cases where pupils identified by police and Attendance Advice and Intervention officers have incurred unauthorised absences. The issue of a Penalty Notice warning letter will also be considered where attendance has fallen below 90% and there are no less than 10 unauthorised sessions during the preceding 10 school weeks, subject to policy changes at county/national level. The attendance will be monitored for a further 15 school days. Where future unauthorised absences occur, the Penalty Notice can then be issued. The parents' failure to engage with supportive measures proposed by the school will be a factor when considering the issue of a Penalty Notice.

Please note, unauthorised absence will include late arrival after the close of registration without good reason. With the exception of unauthorised leave of absence taken in term time, parents will be sent a formal warning of their liability to receive such a notice before it is issued.

Attendance, Advice and Intervention Officer

The Attendance, Advice and Intervention Officer will work on a consultancy basis with school staff. If attendance problems cannot be resolved by the school and unauthorised absence persist, then the Surrey Attendance Service may intervene through penalty notices and prosecution. Failure to ensure regular school attendance, under section 444 of the Education Act 1996, could result upon conviction in a magistrate's court, to a fine not exceeding £2500 or a term of imprisonment not exceeding three months, or both.

Roles and responsibilities

Students

Take responsibility for ensuring they are on time to school and all lessons. Recognising the importance that attendance can have on progress and to ensure that all opportunities to attend school are taken. Providing encouragement and support for their peers in order to ensure attendance is a high priority among the students.

All staff

Promote exemplary attendance and punctuality. Maintain high status of attendance and the role it has in academic achievement. To support this there is a high profile inclusive ethos at Therfield School and teaching is monitored regularly to ensure that lessons are accessible and enable progress for all students. Pastoral care is also at the heart of our provision and staff always take time to work with students to ensure they are happy at school. In short, students will feel supported at all times by the staff which will foster high engagement and attendance.

Governing Body and Headteacher

Promotes the attendance policy and ensure that it is implemented effectively. Ensures that school has a high profile system to reward good attendance and punctuality and promote the ethos of an inclusive school whose aim is 'The Best for All'. To challenge the Attendance Champion to effectively on attendance data and trends.

Attendance Champion

Maintains a high profile for attendance and leads the school in ensuring there are clear systems for ensuring high attendance. Has an overview of attendance across the school, liaises with Heads of Year and Tutors, liaises with the Attendance, Advice and Intervention Officer for consultation and advice, tracks trends and ensures the attendance policy is upheld.

Attendance Officer

Has responsibility for the day to day administration of all attendance issues including (but not limited to) processing parental calls, compiling up to date data, ensuring parents are contacted to establish a student's whereabouts and being responsible for the upkeep of the reward system to promote high attendance.

Heads of Year

Work in partnership with the Attendance Champion, monitoring the attendance of students in their Year, liaising with parents and ensuring issues that may develop in school which are contributing to poor attendance are resolved effectively and promptly. Following the policy steps and actions to promote good attendance with students and parents.

Form Tutor

Day to day overview of student progress and pastoral care, regular contact with parents/carers and liaising with Head of Year and teaching staff in order to prevent escalation of attendance related concerns. Following the policy steps and actions to promote good attendance with students and parents. Leading the reward system with students.

Class Teacher

Has responsibility for ensuring that students are included in lessons, are able to access the lessons content and make progress. Promote positive relationships and ensure good behaviour. Ensuring students are supported to ensure they are in school as soon as possible.