

Thomas Telford School



Attendance Policy

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1. Roles and responsibilities

1.1 The Governing Board

The Governing Board at Thomas Telford School is responsible for:

- Setting high expectations of all school leaders, staff, students and parents
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties, including:
 - Making sure the School records attendance accurately on the MIS, and shares the required information with the DfE and local authority
 - Making sure the School works effectively with local partners to help remove barriers to attendance, and keeps them informed regarding specific students, where appropriate
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data and helping school leaders focus improvement efforts on individual students or cohorts who need it most
- Working with school leaders to set goals or areas of focus for attendance and providing support and challenge
- Where the School is struggling with attendance, working with school leaders to develop a comprehensive action plan to improve attendance
- Holding the Headmaster to account for the implementation of this policy

Our safeguarding Governor will act as the link Governor for attendance, meeting the DSL to discuss attendance monitoring, trends and concerns.

1.2 The Headmaster

The Headmaster is responsible for:

- Recognising and promoting the importance of school attendance across the School's policies and ethos
- Making sure the School's attendance management processes are delivered effectively, and that consistent support is provided for students who need it most by prioritising staff and resources
- Making sure the School has high aspirations for all students, but adapts processes and support to students' individual needs
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school and repeatedly evaluating the effectiveness of the School's processes and improvement efforts to make sure they are meeting students needs
- Making sure all staff receive adequate training on attendance as part of the regular continued professional development offer, so that staff understand:
 - The importance of good attendance
 - That absence is almost always a symptom of wider issues
 - The School's legal requirements for keeping registers
 - The School's strategies and procedures for tracking, following up on and improving attendance, including working with partners and keeping them informed regarding specific students, where appropriate
- Making sure dedicated training is provided to staff with a specific attendance function in their role, including in interpreting and analysing attendance data
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary, and/or authorising the attendance officer to be able to do so

- Working with the parents of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) to develop specific support approaches for attendance for students with SEND, including where school transport is regularly being missed, and where students with SEND face in-school barriers
- Communicating with the local authority when a student with an education, health and care (EHC) plan has falling attendance, or where there are barriers to attendance that relate to the student's needs
- Communicating the School's high expectations for attendance and punctuality regularly to students and parents through all available channels

1.3 The Senior Leader responsible for Attendance

The designated senior leader is responsible for:

- Leading, championing and improving attendance across the School
- Setting a clear vision for improving and maintaining good attendance
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having a strong grasp of absence data and oversight of absence data analysis
- Regularly monitoring and evaluating progress in attendance
- Establishing and maintaining effective systems for tackling absence, and making sure they are followed by all staff
- Liaising with students, parents/carers and external agencies, where needed
- Building close and productive relationships with parents to discuss and tackle attendance issues
- Creating intervention or reintegration plans in partnership with students and their parents/carers
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to students and families

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance is Mrs Amy Jones and can be contacted via aejones@ttsonline.net or 01952 200 000

1.4 The Attendance Officer

The School Attendance Officer is responsible for:

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance, and the Headmaster
- Working with local authority link advisors on attendance
- Advising the Headmaster when to issue fixed-penalty notices

The Attendance Officer is Mrs Catherine Stevens and can be contacted via cstevens@ttsonline.net / attendance@ttsonline.net or 01952 200 000

1.5 Class Teachers

Class Teachers are responsible for recording attendance for both morning and afternoon sessions on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information on the School MIS system within the first 10 minutes of the lesson. Morning lessons start at 8.30am and afternoon lessons start at 11.50am. Class Teachers are also required to update the information as required throughout the lesson.

1.6 School Administration staff

Administration staff will:

- Take calls from parents/carers about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the School MIS system/email Attendance Officer with the relevant information. School lines open at 7.30am daily.
- Transfer queries from parents/carers to the relevant staff, including Personal Tutors, Heads of Year and Attendance Officer where appropriate, in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance.

1.7 Parents

- Where this policy refers to a parent, it refers to the adult the School and/or Local Authority decides is most appropriate to work with, including:
 - All natural parents, whether they are married or not
 - All those who have parental responsibility for a child or young person
 - Those who have day-to-day responsibility for the child (i.e. lives with and looks after them) □Parents are expected to:
 - Make sure their child attends every day on time
 - Call the School to report their child's absence before 8.30am on the day of the absence and on each subsequent day of absence, and advise when they are expected to return
 - Provide the School with at least two emergency contact numbers for their child
 - Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the School day
 - Keep to any attendance contracts that they make with the School and/or local authority
 - Seek support, where necessary, for maintaining good attendance, by contacting the students Personal Tutor in the first instance, who can be contacted via their email or by calling 01952 200 000

1.8 Students

Students are expected to:

- Attend every timetabled session, on time
- Be aware of the importance of attendance and punctuality
- Engage in any support on offer from the School and parents

2. Recording attendance

2.1 Attendance Register

At Thomas Telford School we will keep an electronic attendance register and place all students onto this register.

We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark, using the appropriate national attendance and absence codes from the School Attendance (Student Registration) (England) Regulations 2024, whether every student is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

- Any amendment to the attendance register will include:
- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

We will also record:

- Whether the absence is authorised or not
- The nature of the activity, where a student is attending an approved educational activity
- The nature of circumstances, where a student is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances We will keep every entry on the attendance register for six years after the date on which the entry was made.

The School day starts at 8.30am and ends at 3.15pm for Years 7-11 and 3.20pm for Sixth Form students.

Students must arrive in school by 8.25am on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at 8.30am and will be kept open until 9.00am The register for the second session will be taken at 11.50am and will be kept open until 12.20pm.

2.2 Unplanned absence

The student's parent must notify the School of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 8.30am, or as soon as practically possible, by calling the School office, who can be contacted via 01952 200 000 or attendance@ttsonline.net . School lines open at 7.30am.

We will mark absence due to physical or mental illness as authorised, unless the School has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

Where absence due to illness is prolonged, complex or repeated, or where there is genuine and reasonable doubt about the authenticity of the illness, the School may ask for reasonable evidence to help understand the pupil's needs, identify appropriate support or reasonable adjustments and accurately record the absence. The School will not apply blanket rules requiring medical evidence and will not ask for evidence unnecessarily.

If the School is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents will be notified of this in advance.

2.3 Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the student's parent notifies the School in advance of the appointment.

If a student has a pre-arranged medical or dental appointment, before the appointment an email must be sent to attendance@ttsonline.net from the email address registered to the School by the parent/carers. Wherever possible, please try to schedule appointments outside the School day.

However, we encourage parents to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the student should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

The student's parent must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Go to section 3 to find out which term-time absences the School can authorise.

2.4 Lateness and punctuality

A student who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code
- After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code
- Session 1 register closes at 9.00 am. Session 2 register closes at 12.20pm.

Students who arrive late to school or late to lessons will be monitored through the both the Pastoral Team and the Attendance Officer. Students who are persistently late will be contacted by their Personal Tutor, Head of Year team or Attendance Officer explaining the importance of punctuality. If the concerns continue, meetings will be set to address the concerns.

2.5 Following up unexplained absence

Where any student we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the School will communicate with the parents via a text message. If there is no response to this, the following actions will be taken:

- Call the student's parent on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the School cannot reach any of the student's emergency contacts, the School may conduct a home visit and if there are concerns this will be reported to the police and appropriate front door services, for example Family Connect.
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than five working days after the session(s) for which the student was absent
- Call the parent on each day that the absence continues without explanation, to make sure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the School will consider involving the local authority attendance advisor
- Where relevant, report the unexplained absence to the student's youth offending team officer
- Where appropriate, offer support to the student and/or their parents to improve attendance
- Identify whether the student needs support from wider partners, as quickly as possible, and make the necessary referrals
- Where support is not appropriate, not successful, or not engaged with: issue a notice to improve, penalty notice or other legal intervention (see section 3.2 below), as appropriate.

2.6 Reporting to parents

The School will regularly inform parents (see definition of 'parent', as used in this policy, in section 3.7 above) about their child's attendance and absence levels in all module reports which occur a minimum of 5 times per year.

3. Authorised and unauthorised absence

3.1 Approval for term-time absence

The Headmaster will allow students to be absent from the School site for certain educational activities, or to attend other schools or settings.

The Headmaster will only grant a **leave of absence** to a student during term time if the request meets the specific circumstances set out in the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 and the July 2026 DfE statutory guidance. These circumstances are:

- Taking part in a regulated performance, or regulated employment abroad
- Attending an interview

- Study leave
- A temporary, time-limited part-time timetable
- Exceptional circumstances

A leave of absence is granted using the Headmaster's professional discretion, including the length of time the student is authorised to be absent for.

Leave of absence will not be granted for a student to take part in protest activity during school hours.

As a leave of absence will only be granted in exceptional circumstances, it is unlikely a leave of absence will be granted for the purposes of a family holiday.

The School considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant background context behind the request.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least four weeks before the absence, and in accordance with any leave of absence request form, accessible at reception and via the School website. The Headmaster may require relevant evidence to support the request, but each case will be considered individually and no absence will be authorised automatically.

Other valid reasons for **authorised absence** include (but are not limited to):

- Illness (including mental-health illness) and medical/dental appointments
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the student's parent(s) belong(s). If necessary, the School will seek advice from the parent's religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Parent(s) travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travellers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and new travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the School, but it is not known whether the student is attending educational provision
- If the student is currently suspended or expelled from the School (and no alternative provision has been made)

Other reasons the School may allow a student to be absent from the School site, which are not classified as absences, include (but are not limited to):

- Attending an offsite approved educational activity, sporting activity or visit or trip arranged by the School
- Attending another school at which the student is also registered (dual registration)
- Attending provision arranged by the local authority
- Attending work experience
- If there is any other unavoidable cause for the student not to attend school, such as disruption to travel caused by an emergency, a lack of access arrangements, or because the School premises are closed

3.2 Sanctions

Our school will make use of the full range of potential sanctions – including, but not limited to, those listed below – to tackle poor attendance. Decisions will be made on an individual, case-by-case basis.

Penalty notices

The Headmaster (or someone authorised by them), local authority or the police can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age, by issuing a penalty notice.

If the School issues a penalty notice, it will check with the local authority before doing so and send it a copy of any penalty notice issued.

Before issuing a penalty notice, the School will consider the individual case, including:

- Whether the national threshold for considering a penalty notice has been met (10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks)
- Whether a penalty notice is the best available tool to improve attendance for that student
- Whether further support, a notice to improve or another legal intervention would be a more appropriate solution
- Whether any obligations that the School has under the Equality Act 2010 make issuing a penalty notice inappropriate

Each parent who is liable for the student's offence(s) can be issued with a penalty notice, but this will usually only be the parent/parents who allowed the absence.

The payment must be made directly to the local authority, regardless of who issues the notice. If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice. If issued with a **first** penalty notice, the parent must pay £80 within 21 days, or £160 within 28 days.

If a **second** penalty notice is issued to the same parent in respect of the same student, the parent must pay £160 if paid within 28 days.

A **third** penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within three years of the date of the issue of the first penalty notice. In a case where the national threshold is met for a third time within those three years, alternative action will be taken instead.

A penalty notice may also be issued 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 suspension or exclusion (where the School has notified the parents that the student must not be present in a public place on that day). These penalty notices are not included in the National Framework, not subject to the same considerations about support being provided, and do not count towards the limit as part of the escalation process.

If in an individual case the local authority believes a Penalty Notice would be appropriate, they retain the discretion to issue one before the threshold is met. This might apply for example, when parent(s) are deliberately or purposefully avoiding the national threshold by taking several term time holidays below threshold, or for repeated absence for events such as birthdays and taking their child out of school, or when there are only four pupil days in school and the fifth day is for example a PD day or bank holiday

In these cases, the parent must pay £60 within 21 days, or £120.

Notices to improve

If the national threshold has been met and support is appropriate, but parents do not engage with offers of support, the School may offer a notice to improve to give parents a final chance to engage with support.

Notices to improve will be issued in line with processes set out in the local code of conduct for the local authority area in which the student attends school.

They will include:

- Details of the student's attendance record and of the offences
- The benefits of regular attendance and the duty of parents under [section 7 of the Education Act 1996](#)
- Details of the support provided so far
- Opportunities for further support, or to access previously provided support that was not engaged with

- A clear warning that a penalty notice may be issued if attendance doesn't improve within the improvement period, along with details of what sufficient improvement looks like, which will be decided on a case-by-case basis
- A clear timeframe of between three and six weeks for the improvement period
- The grounds on which a penalty notice may be issued before the end of the improvement period This follows guidance from Telford & Wrekin Attendance Support Team.

4. Strategies for promoting attendance

Thomas Telford celebrates attendance by promoting the value of attendance through assemblies, parents information evenings, personal tutors and rewarding high attendance levels across the School. All parties are encouraged to celebrate attendance over 98% and we pay particular attention to those students who regularly meet 100% attendance.

5. Supporting students who are absent or returning to school

5.1 Students absent due to complex barriers to attendance

Students who are presenting with complex barriers to attendance will be supported through the pastoral system where in the first instance personal tutors will work with the families to understand the barriers. If progress is not made this will escalate to support meetings being set with heads of year, attendance lead and the attendance officer.

5.2 Students absent due to mental or physical ill health or SEND

Where a student has an education health and care (EHC) plan and their attendance falls, or the School becomes aware of barriers to attendance that related to the student's needs, the School will inform the local authority.

Students who are absent due to physical or mental ill health will be supported and monitored by the pastoral team. The School will work with the family and, where appropriate, external agencies to understand barriers to attendance, consider reasonable adjustments, agree pastoral or reintegration support and review this regularly. Any phased return or part-time timetable must be time-limited, have clear review dates and a proposed end date.

Where a student's illness absence is expected to reach 15 school days consecutively or cumulatively in the School year, the School will make the required sickness return to the local authority so that appropriate provision can be considered for pupils who cannot attend because of health needs.

Where a student is identified as a young carer, and caring responsibilities may be affecting attendance, the School will work with the student, parents and local authority to understand barriers and access appropriate support.

5.3 Students returning to school after a lengthy or unavoidable period of absence

Students who are returning after a lengthy or unavoidable period of absence will be supported and monitored by the Pastoral Team ensuring all support networks, including the use of external agencies are utilised by the family to present the most appropriate support programme. This may include staggered starts to the School day and adapted timetable provision.

5.4 Students accessing work during periods of absence

Students who are absent may access learning through the School's online curriculum where appropriate. Remote education will only be used as a last resort, where reasonable adjustments have been considered first,

and as part of a wider plan to support the student's return to school. Students receiving remote education while absent from school must still be recorded as absent using the most appropriate attendance code.

6. Attendance monitoring

It is the responsibility of all staff at Thomas Telford School to monitor attendance, punctuality and highlight potential patterns. Heads of Year, the attendance lead and attendance officer analyse attendance information by individual student, year group and key cohort, including pupils with SEND, pupils with a social worker, young carers, pupils eligible for free school meals and pupils with long-term medical or mental health needs. Attendance is reviewed at least weekly for emerging concerns, with wider analysis half-termly, termly and annually. Attendance is a regular agenda item at pastoral meetings. The attendance lead and attendance officer benchmark data against national, regional and local data, including through DfE tools such as View Your Education Data where available. This information is shared with the Headmaster and Governors.

6.1 Monitoring attendance

The School will monitor attendance and absence data, including punctuality, weekly for emerging patterns and at half-termly, termly and yearly points across the School and at individual student, year group and cohort level.

Specific student information will be shared with the DfE on request.

Data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics.

The School will benchmark its attendance data at whole school, year group and cohort level against local, regional, and national levels to identify areas of focus for improvement, and share this with the governing board using the VYED platform advised by the DfE.

6.2 Analysing attendance

The School will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify students, groups or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and
- Identify students whose absences may be a cause for concern, especially those who demonstrate patterns of persistent or severe absence
- Conduct thorough analysis of half-termly, termly, and full-year data to identify patterns and trends
- Analyse attendance by key cohorts relevant to the School context, including pupils with SEND, pupils with a social worker, young carers, pupils eligible for free school meals and pupils with long-term health needs.
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns

6.3 Using data to improve attendance

The School will:

- Develop targeted actions to address patterns of absence (of all severities) of individual students, groups or cohorts that it has identified via data analysis
- Provide targeted support to the students identified as causing concern, including those who demonstrate patterns of persistent or severe absence, and their families.
- Provide regular attendance reports to Personal Tutors to facilitate discussions with students and families, and to the Governing Board and school leaders (including special educational needs co-ordinator, designated safeguarding lead and student premium lead)

- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies
- Share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities and other partners where a student's absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe, including keeping them informed regarding specific students, where appropriate

6.4 Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence is where a student misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a student misses 50% or more of school. Reducing persistent and severe absence is central to the School's attendance strategy and should be a focus of regular data monitoring, school improvement activity and work with the local authority.

The School will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Consider potential safeguarding issues and, where suspected or present, address them in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of students who the School (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable or at risk of persistent or severe absence, or who are persistently or severely absent, to:
 - Discuss attendance and engagement at school
 - Listen, and understand barriers to attendance
 - Explain the help that is available
 - Explain the potential consequences of, and sanctions for, persistent and severe absence
 - Review any existing actions or interventions
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance, in conjunction with the local authority, where relevant
- Consider alternative support that could be put in place to remove any barriers to attendance and reengage these students. In doing so, the School will sensitively consider some of the reasons for absence
- Consider formal support or legal intervention only where voluntary support is not appropriate, has not been successful or has not been engaged with, and after considering the individual circumstances of the case.
- Any concerns highlighted may result in parent meetings, local authority referrals and potentially prosecution.

7. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority and/or DfE is updated, and as a minimum annually by Mrs Amy Jones, Attendance Lead. The next scheduled review will take place in July 2027. At every review, the policy will be approved by the full governing board.

8. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Behaviour Policy