



# Thirsk School

& Sixth Form College

## Attendance Policy

### visions

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# Thirsk School & Sixth Form College

## Attendance Policy

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## **Aims**

Thirsk School & Sixth Form College aims to meet its obligations with regards to school attendance by:-

- Promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensuring every student has access to full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address absence
- Communicating with parents to build good relationships
- Visiting homes to support families

We will also support parents to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend regularly and will promote and support punctuality.

At Thirsk School & Sixth Form College, we believe that good attendance is a crucial part of ensuring that students can achieve their potential and develop strong 'work-ready' habits, in preparation for life after school. Our definition of "Excellent attendance" is 98% and above.

Outstanding attendance links to high educational outcomes. On average 73.4% of students whose attendance is 95% and above will achieve 5 or more good GCSE grades. For students attending between 85% - 90% this drops to 41% and attending school for 50% only 3% of students gained 5 or more good GCSE grades. Other research suggests that for each 17 days missed from school, GCSE results will go down by one grade!

## **Legislation and guidance**

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:-

- The Education Act 1996
- The Education Act 2002
- The Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The Education (Student Registration) (England) Regulations 2006
- The Education (Student Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2010
- The Education (Student Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2011
- The Education (Student Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013
- The Education (Student Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2016

- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013. This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold

Thirsk School & Sixth Form College also follow the guidelines set out by NYCC and work in close liaison with the NYCC Attendance Officer.

## **School procedures**

### Attendance register

By law, all schools are required to keep an attendance register and all students must be placed on this register. The attendance register will be taken during form time 08:45-09:05 and at the start of lesson P4, 13:15. Registers are also taken for internal purposes at the start of all subject lessons throughout the school day.

It will mark whether every student is:-

- Present
- Absent
- If absent the reason for absence
- If no reason has been given it will note that the absence is unauthorised

See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

Students must be in school in their tutor room by 8.45am on each school day. The legal register for the morning session will be taken and will be kept open until 9.05am. A text will be sent to the parents of any child arriving late to school after 8.45am. A text will also be sent to the parents of any child whose attendance is unauthorised. The AM register officially closes at 9.30am. Students arriving after this time are marked U. The legal register for the afternoon session will be taken at 13:15 during P4, the first afternoon lesson. Students not in the lesson will be marked absent.

### Unplanned absence

Parents/Carers notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence – for example, if their child is unable to attend due to ill health – by 08:30 or as soon as practically possible. This should be through a telephone call to attendance voice mail facility via the school phone number, (Option 1 to report a student absence) or via email to rachael.webb@thirskschool.org. Failure to inform the school will result in any absence being recorded as unauthorised and as such parents should take full responsibility for informing the school every day of an absence. Absence due to illness will be authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness. But medical evidence such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence will be requested if the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, or where there are repeated absences due to reported illness. If the school is not satisfied about the

authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. Any child who is in the NYCC Fastrack System must provide medical evidence for all absences.

### Medical or dental appointments

We request parents to make non-urgent 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. When a child's appointment falls within the school day this will count against the child's attendance. However, it is appreciated that parents have little control over appointments with a consultant. We request that an appointment card or letter is brought into school to confirm all appointments. Students are required to be collected from reception by an adult and will not be allowed to sign themselves out without evidence. It may be required for us to contact you if in doubt.

### Lateness and punctuality

A student who arrives after 8.45am will be marked as late, using the appropriate code and the number of minutes late will be recorded. A text will be sent to parents. Students who are needlessly late will be issued with an appropriate sanction. Students who are repeatedly late can be placed on report for punctuality and attendance and a letter will be sent home. Further issues will result in parents being invited into school for a meeting. Where there is no improvement then the school will liaise with the NYCC Attendance Officer.

When students arrive late due to school bus, parents will be sent a text to make them aware and suggest they direct their complaints to NYCC transport.

### Following up absence

A weekly Unauthorised list is printed at the end of each week and where parents have not contacted school. The school will follow up any absences to ascertain the reason, ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary, identify whether the absence is approved or not and identify the correct attendance code to use.

### Reporting to parents

The school will notify parents about a child attendance at the end of each term, giving parents / carers and school the opportunity for early engagement. Parents can also request a copy of their child's attendance certificate at any time via the Attendance Office. Parents can also access attendance data via the MCAS app.

## **Leave of absence in exceptional circumstance during term time**

The department of education makes it very clear that there is NO entitlement for parents to take their child on holiday in term time. It is therefore, the school's policy that holidays taken during term time will be deemed as an unauthorised absence. Unauthorised holidays of 5 days or more may result in legal action which may well involve the issuing of a Fixed Penalty Notice. Leave of absence will only be granted to students on formal request and where there are clear exceptional circumstances within the categories defined by the department of

education. We also aim to work in conjunction and partnership with different schools that siblings attend.

Please see the NYCC School Attendance Guidance for examples of term time absences such as term time holidays, which are not a valid reason for authorised absence (unless they meet the specific criteria as laid out within the LA guidance).

### Legal sanctions

Schools can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age. If issued with a penalty notice, parents/carers must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the Local Authority. The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice ultimately rests with the Headteacher, following the Local Authority's Code of Conduct for issuing penalty notices.

This may take into account:-

- A number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- Where an excluded student is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute the parent or withdraw the notice.

### **Strategies for promoting attendance**

1. Regular form time focus on importance of attendance, supported by key messages and attendance assemblies.
2. Year 6 Transition – target poor attenders in advance. Year 6 attendance data is passed to the new Year 7 tutors.
3. Parents' Evenings online!
4. Celebrate good attendance: issue letters for improved attendance as well as 100% attendance every term, half termly assembly reward draw, termly reward event.
5. Notices for students and parents emphasising the importance of attendance.
6. Regular updates and reminders in the school newsletter.
7. Utilise form tutors as first point of contact and in combatting the "odd day" attitude, combatting the "time off for minor illness" attitude and emphasising the negative impact of making avoidable medical appointments in term time.

8. Provide Form Tutors, Heads of Year and Heads of School with attendance data for their groups. Tutors are provided with attendance and punctuality data once per fortnight.
9. The school's PSA (Parent Support Adviser) will interview students in school and visit students and parents at home.
10. The school's PSA will make home visits to vulnerable students whose absence is unauthorised.
11. The school's PSA will interview and visit students who truant school.
12. Work with external support agencies such as Early Help.
13. Adopt the Local Authority guidance procedures and fast track process where appropriate. (See Appendix 2)

### **Attendance monitoring**

The Attendance Administrator and PSA monitor student absence on a daily basis.

Parents/carers are expected to call the school in the morning if their child is going to be absent due to ill health. Parents/carers should then call on each day of the absence before 8.30am.

If after contacting parents/carers a student's absence continue to rise, we will start the Local Authority fast track attendance procedure.

The persistent absence threshold is 90%. If a student's individual overall absence rate is less than 90%, the student will be classified as a persistent absentee and appropriate actions will be taken to support improvements in the student's attendance.

Where attendance falls to 50% and below, this is now known as, "severe absence."

Thirsk School & Sixth Form College follows the NYCC Attendance Pathway and use a series of letters to parents and are sent at the discretion of the PSA in consultation with the Attendance Administrator. Letters 1 & 2 are warning letters. Letter 3 is the first of the legal documents used in the Attendance Pathway and fast track process. The letter outlines a 10-day target of 95%+. Letter four instigates a parental meeting and a contract drawn up over 20 days targeting 95% +. Beyond this NYCC will in liaison with school and parents arrange a PACE caution meeting. Letters 3 & 4 can trigger an external agency referral such as Early Help.

Student-level absence data is 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. We compare our attendance data to the national average.

In school, we update our Attendance spread sheets on a weekly basis and review our actions in a weekly attendance meeting. Where possible, we adopt an approach of early



intervention. If a student's attendance continues to worsen, we initiate monitoring periods, contracts over 10 days and Panel meetings. As suggested above other actions from the Local Authority guidance documentation will be instigated beyond Letter 4.

## **Roles and responsibilities**

### The Governing Board

The Governing Board is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school on at least a termly basis. It also holds the Headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

### The Headteacher

The Headteacher is responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented consistently across the school, and for monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to Governors. The Headteacher also supports other staff in monitoring the attendance of individual students and issues fixed penalty notices, where necessary.

### The Parent Support Adviser and Attendance Administrator

The Parent Support Adviser, Attendance Administrator and support staff:-

- Monitors attendance data at the school and individual student level
- Reports concerns about attendance to the Pastoral Team
- Works with external partners to tackle persistent absence
- Arranges calls, meetings and send letters to parents to discuss attendance issues
- Decides when to issue fixed-penalty notices

### Teachers

Teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes on BROMCOM. Any additional information should be submitted to the attendance office in a prompt manner.

### Admin Staff

Admin staff are expected to support the Attendance Administrator by taking calls from parents/carers about absence and record it on the school system when the Attendance Administrator is not available.

## **Monitoring arrangements**

This policy will be reviewed every year. At every review, the policy will be shared with the Governing Board.

## **Links with other policies**

This policy is linked to our Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

## **Sixth Form Attendance Procedures**

- AM registration starts at 8.45am
- All students must 'tap in' using the new Invenry system recently installed
- Any student signing in after 8.55am must do so via reception on the Invenry screen
- Invenry will automatically update Bromcom
- A text will be sent to the parents of any sixth form student who is late
- Students signing in after 9.30am will be marked with a U
- Students who are consistently late will be dealt with by Sixth Form Pastoral Staff
- Any student leaving the site for the remainder of the day must tap out using Invenry in reception
- Students leaving the site for break and lunch can use the Invenry module in the sixth form common room

## **Card Access**

- Cards are useable up to 8.55am
- Break time 11.00 - 11.25am
- Lunch time 12.15 - 1.20pm
- 3pm onwards
- Students missing the access times will have to enter the school via reception and tap in using Invenry

## **Home Study**

- Home study does not count against a student's attendance
- Home study is authorised and as such will be marked on the register with B
- Students must tap in and out on the Invenry screen at reception where there is a list for reception staff to confirm the arrangement

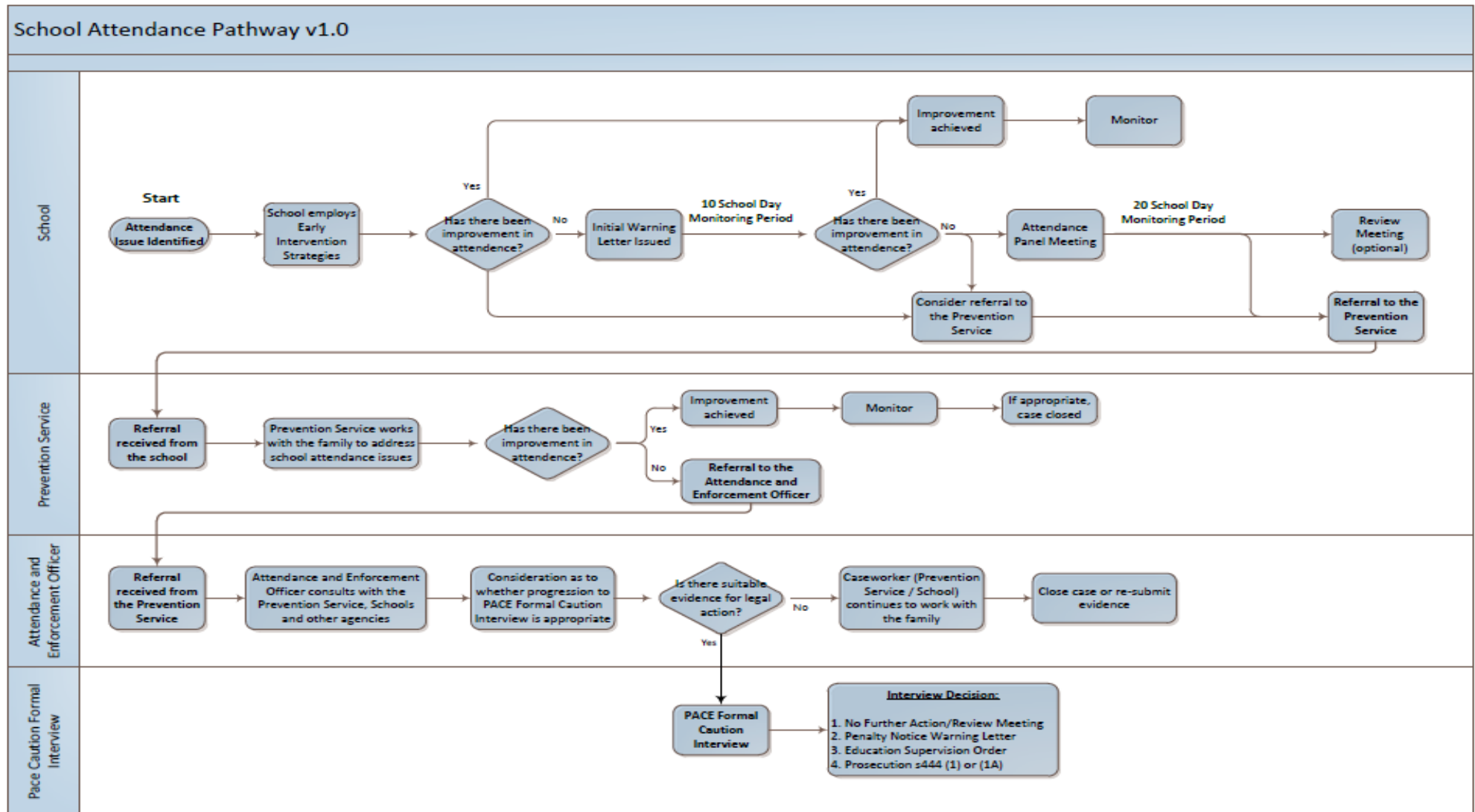
## Appendix 1 Attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Student is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Student is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Student arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Student is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Student is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Student has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Student is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
Q	Examination	Student is present but, in an examination,
V	Educational trip or visit	Student is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Student is on a work experience placement
C	Authorised leave of absence	Student has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
<b>Authorised Absence</b>		
E	Excluded	Student has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Student has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	School has been notified that a student will be absent due to illness
M	Medical/dental appointment	Student is at a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance	Student is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Year 11 student is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence	Student from a Traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
<b>Unauthorised Absence</b>		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Student is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
N	Unauthorised absence	Reason not provided Student is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for student's absence

U	Arrival after registration	Student arrived at school after the register closed
X	Not required to be in school	Student of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or student is in custody
Z	Student not on admission register	Register set up but student has not yet joined the school
#	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half term/bank holiday/INSET day

## Appendix 2 – NYCC Attendance Pathway



# Attendance Expectations

You can expect the following from Thirsk School and Sixth Form College.

## **We will:**

- Take an attendance register to comply with law twice a day.
- Parent / Carer will be informed in writing, via email or a phone call, should the student's attendance be of concern.
- Keep all class registers up to date so that parent / carers can view their child attendance on MCAS.
- Celebrate good attendance.
- Reward good and improved attendance.
- Use tutor time to focus on the importance of good attendance and combat the "it was only a day" attitude.
- Regular updates and reminders in the school newsletter.
- Work with Parent/ carers / external agencies to provide support and guidance to improve a child's attendance.
- Update the school website as required.

What we expect in return.

## **Parent / carers should pledge:**

- Notify school either by telephoning the attendance line or emailing, should the student be absent from school.
- Book holidays outside of term time.
- Book medical appointment as far as practically possible outside of the school day. Where this is impossible the shortest time possible should be taken and not the whole day.
- Emphasise the importance of good attendance.
- Work with school to find ways to support and improve a student's attendance should it fall below the expected standard.

We expect the following from our students.

## **Students should pledge:**

- Arrive at school on time and be punctual to every lesson.
- Aim for 100% attendance and only be absent due to illness.
- Sign in at reception should they arrive late and promptly make their way to their lesson.
- Ensure any missed work due to absence is identified and completed.

Percentage		Comment	School Intervention	Parental Intervention
Above 98 - 100%: Less than 4 days absence a year		Excellent attendance! These young people will almost certainly get the best grades they can leading to better prospects for college, university or work.	Nothing, please keep up the good work	No action required. You are doing an amazing job, lots of praise.
97 - 95%: 10 days absence a year	97 - 95% Letter 1  94 - 92% Letter 2	The young people are likely to achieve good grades and have opportunities for college, university or work, but could still improve their attendance!	Through discussion with HOY / HOS <b>Letter 1</b> will be issued.  Escalation to <b>letter 2</b> if no improvement seen after monitoring and reviewing by the attendance team, HOY / HOS	Avoid non-essential medical appointment during term time. Contact the attendance team if you have concerns. Early intervention is always more successful. Don't keep you child off school unnecessarily, be prepared to challenge your child. We will contact you should they need to come home.
94 - 90%: 19 days absence a year	92 - 90% Letter 3 10 -day contract	Young people in this group are missing a month of school per year; it will be difficult for them to achieve their best and attain their full potential.  Their attendance has already fallen below the national average.	HOS will issue <b>Letter 3</b> . Young person will be placed on a 10-day contract. If no improvement is seen parents will be invited to meet pastoral staff to discuss strategies to improve your child's attendance. If no significant improvement is made <b>Letter 4</b> will be issued after a period of monitoring.	All medical appointments must be made outside of school time and appointment cards submitted.  Request for leave of absence will be refused.  Don't keep you child off school unnecessarily, challenge your child. We will contact you should they need to come home.  You will need to work with us to improve your child's attendance by ensuring they attend every day.

<p><b>Below 90 % Over 20 days off a year Persistent Absentee Letter 4 - Parent/School meeting , 20-day contract</b></p>	<p>Young people in this group are missing six weeks of school per year; it will be very difficult for them to keep up with work and they are unlikely to do their best.</p> <p>Young people in this group are missing a year of school over the five years of secondary education; it will be almost impossible for them to make the necessary progress and hit target grades. Parents of young people in this group are highly likely to be placed on the NYCC attendance pathway.</p>	<p>The PSA will issue <b>Letter 4</b>. Young person will be placed on a 20-day contract after a parent/school meeting. If no improvement is seen, the NYCC attendance pathway protocol will be instigated which could result in a meeting with the NYCC attendance officer. This is a formal PACE meeting following the NYCC Attendance Pathway. This may result in legal action or a fine being issued.</p>	<p>All medical appointments must be made outside of school time and appointment cards submitted.</p> <p>Request for leave of absence will be refused.</p> <p>If your child is off school, you will need to supply medical evidence as to why they are absent. If they are ill in school, we will contact you should they need to come home.</p> <p>You will be required to attend a formal meeting with the PSA.</p>
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