



THE  
**THOMAS  
AVELING**  
SCHOOL

**ATTENDANCE POLICY**

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## Members of staff responsible:

Senior Leadership Attendance Champion - Rachael Hatter (Assistant Headteacher)

Childrens' Team Manager & Deputy DSL – Tanya Latchford

## Statement of intent

The Thomas Aveling School is fully committed to the continuous raising of achievement of all our students. We expect pupils to attend school every day when the school is open; as such attendance is critical if our students are to be successful and benefit from the opportunities presented to them. Research shows that all students who attend school every day and arrive punctually achieve much better results than those who experience attendance problems. The Government recommends that students' attendance does not drop below 96% (or 7 days absence in 1 academic year), except in serious medical cases. Thomas Aveling shares this expectation and requires all students to aim for *at least* 96% attendance.

The effect that poor attendance at school can have on a child's education can be permanent and damaging. Students need to be in school to access key learning and information and to close gaps in knowledge, understanding and application. The table below outlines the correlation between yearly absence rates and the number of lessons missed (based on our five lessons a day timetable).

<b>% Attendance</b>	<b>Days of absence</b>	<b>Lessons missed</b>
96%	7	35
93.68%	12	60
92.63%	14	70
91.05%	17	85
90%	19	95
88.42%	22	110
85.79%	27	135
82.11%	34	170
80%	38	190
73.68%	50	250

Thomas Aveling is committed to raising attendance and to supporting parents and students with high attendance expectations. We actively promote good attendance for all our students using a variety of rewards and incentives. We have a whole school approach which involves the teamwork of students, parents/carers, staff, the Headteacher and the School Governors and, where required, the Local Authority.

This policy will be reviewed, amended as necessary and published annually in accordance with current statutory guidance: [Working together to improve school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\)](#)



## **Parental responsibility**

Parents have a legal duty to ensure that their child attends school every day. Daily attendance is essential to the all-round development of the child who should be allowed to take full advantage of educational opportunities available to them. Poor attendance undermines a child's education and sometimes puts the child at risk, encouraging anti-social behaviour. It is the parent's responsibility to contact the school on the first day their child is absent. This is a necessary safeguarding protocol to ensure that all parties know that the child is safe.

If your child is unwell, it can be tricky to decide whether to keep them off school or not. The NHS has a useful guidance page for a list of common conditions and symptoms: [Is my child too ill for school? - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk)

**If your child is too unwell to attend school, parents are asked to notify the school through the EduLink app or by leaving a message as early as possible via telephone.**

Planned absence for medical appointments can also be reported through the EduLink app in advance. Supporting evidence (e.g., appointment letters) can be electronically attached to the form and this will be held on file. Pupils should only be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary for the appointment.

Members of the Attendance Action Alliance have worked with the Department for Education to develop this short guide to assist parents to understand how they can work with their school and local authority to support their children to attend school and get the right support. [The parents' guide Working together to improve school attendance](#)

Parents/carers are informed at each school reporting stage of their child's attendance figure. Attendance information (including rates for individual subjects, week, month and academic year) is also available to parents/carers within the EduLink app.

It is the parent/carers' responsibility to ensure that all changes to a student's circumstances are given immediately to the school. It is often necessary to contact parents/carers during the day and therefore vital that the school is informed of current telephone numbers, email and home addresses as well as emergency contact details.

## **Registration**

Students are expected to arrive no later than 8.35 a.m., to register in their form room at 8.40 a.m. Arrival to school after **8.40am** will be recorded as late (L) in the AM register. If a student arrives late but before 9am, they must proceed to their form room to register. If they arrive after 9am they must go straight to their Assistant Director of Learning (aDOL) to register, whereupon the reason for lateness is recorded. When a child is recorded as late to school, they will automatically incur a break time detention and parents will receive an email notification to make them aware.



AM registers formally close at **9.10am**. If a student is not present in school after this time and the parent/carer has not provided information to justify their child's absence, the absence will be recorded as Unauthorised (O) and contact home will be made via the school Attendance Officer. Any student present in lessons with no evidence of having been registered during form time will be sent to the aDOL to sign in.

PM registers open at **1.55pm**. Students that arrive to lesson after 1.57pm will be recorded as late (L). Where students are marked absent (N) to period 5 but were present earlier in the day, teachers must inform the Attendance Officer and the appropriate House team to ascertain the whereabouts of the student. PM registers close at **2.25pm**.

### ***Suspected Truancy from Lessons***

For students who are missing from a lesson but have been marked present previously in the school day, the Attendance Officer /aDOL should be informed. The student's whereabouts will then be ascertained and parents/carers and DOL informed.

On return to school the truant will:

1. Be seen by the DOL/Subject Leader and contact made home as appropriate.
2. Spend time in the Inclusion Zone.
3. Be closely monitored for attendance concerns by the aDOL, who may refer to the Childrens' Team Leader for further intervention if deemed appropriate.

### ***Students Off Site***

No Key Stage 3 or 4 students are allowed off site at break or lunch. If they are caught doing so parents/carers are contacted by the aDOL by email to explain the sanctions as appropriate, which can include a Break and Lunchtime Report, Community Service, time in the Inclusion Zone or with their form tutor and in persistent cases Parental Supervision at lunchtimes off site or a fixed term exclusion.

### **The role of school staff**

Form tutors complete the first register of the day and then class teachers complete a register in each subsequent lesson. Teachers mark students present, absent or late. Any causes for concern (for example, if a student is marked present earlier in the day but has not come to a later lesson) should be reported immediately to the Attendance Officer and the appropriate aDOL/House team.

The Assistant Headteacher for Attendance and the Childrens' Team Manager have overall strategic responsibility for attendance.



It is the responsibility of the Attendance Officer to:

- Ensure registers are accurately completed and the correct codes for attendance and absence are used (School Attendance Regulations 2024, Regulation 10).
- Ensure parents/carers are contacted on the first day of absence if a reason for absence has not been received.
- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance.
- Provide updates to parents and coordinate parental support meetings when attendance levels begin to decline.
- Provide regular attendance reports to appropriate school staff & the Senior Leadership Team to facilitate discussions with pupils and families.

It is the responsibility of the overall Attendance team to:

- Raise awareness of the importance of full attendance and punctuality, using social media, form time notices, staff training and other regular communications to parents and staff.
- Use attendance and absence data regularly to provide targeted support to pupils and their families that need additional support with their attendance.
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns.
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place to inform future strategies aimed at reducing persistent and severe absence.
- Communicate effectively with other agencies (Early Help, Social Services, AASSA etc).
- Ensure that all staff comply with the school policy and deal consistently with lateness and absence.
- Have procedures in place to help children settle back to school after a long absence. It is important that on return from an unavoidable absence all pupils are made to feel welcome. This should include ensuring that the pupil is helped to catch up on missed work and brought up to date with any information that has been passed to the other pupils.

## **Absence**

### ***First/Second day of absence***

If a pupil is unable to attend due to illness (both physical and mental health related), parents should report their child's absence through the EduLink app. The appropriate absence code will be entered onto the MIS by the Attendance Officer. If notification of absence is not received and the circumstances around an absence cannot be established, the absence will be recorded as Unauthorised (O). Home visits may be carried out by the members of the Children's Team when reasons for absence remain unknown for students considered to be vulnerable or at risk.



## ***Protracted Absence***

Good attendance at school is vital; however, it is recognised that some young people suffer from longer term medical issues and such absence would normally be authorised as there will be clear medical evidence to support the absence. The school will work with the Inclusion and Attendance Service and others, as appropriate, to assist such young people in continuing their education.

Where medical issues arise during the school year, parents are encouraged to notify the main school office of such conditions, providing any relevant medical certificates/letters (that may be reasonably available). The school maintains a confidential medical register which is shared with staff working within the school.

Regular register monitoring and data analysis is used to identify pupils with a pattern of absence that could result in a classification of 'persistent' or 'severe.' Parents/Carers of children whose attendance drops to below 96%, will receive a percentage information letter to notify them of declining attendance levels. When the school has a reasonable doubt about the authenticity of an illness, medical evidence may be requested to authorise any further periods of absence.

Further unauthorised absence will result in a parental meeting where a plan of support to improve attendance can be agreed upon. Students may be enrolled onto a daily intervention programme whereby morning telephone calls are made to parents and/or students (if above the age of 15) to encourage good attendance that day. This allows parents to discuss any issues their child may face coming into school and an opportunity for these to be resolved before the day begins. The HSSW worker, House team and Childrens' Team Manager also coordinate home visits for families where telephone interventions may not be suitable. An 'Attendance Contract' may be formulated (in collaboration with parents) that includes strategies and targeted support to improve student wellbeing and attendance. Families of students considered to be 'vulnerable' will receive additional support from the Early Help team and can also be referred to external support agencies and/or Social Services.

Parents who have concerns about their child's mental wellbeing can contact our school's Mental Health Lead, Mrs S. Williams (or other key professionals, including the House teams) for further information on the support available. Many children will experience normal but difficult emotions that make them nervous about attending school, such as worries about friendships, schoolwork or exams. It is important to note that these pupils are still expected to attend school regularly.

It is the responsibility of the Thomas Aveling School to work together with the local authority and other relevant professionals to ensure any child who is going to be absent for longer than 15 days due to medical reasons either consecutively or cumulatively, will have access to relevant and appropriate education. The Local Authority can make arrangements on behalf of the school for the provision of suitable education at school,



or otherwise than at school, for those children of compulsory school age who, by illness, exclusion from school or otherwise, may not receive suitable education unless such arrangements are made for them.

### ***Leave of absence requests***

The Head Teacher cannot authorise term time holidays during the 190 days each year designated for school. The Head Teacher may authorise absence in “exceptional circumstances” but this must be requested in advance and agreement to each request is at the discretion of the Head Teacher, acting on behalf of the Governing Body. If the parent/carers decision remains unchanged and they decide to take their child out of school, it will be recorded as unauthorised and will be referred to Attendance Advisory Service (AASSA), Medway Council, in line with S444(1) Education Act 1996.

The Education (Penalty Notices) Regulations 2007 provide that FPNs (fixed penalty notices) can be issued to each parent of a child taken out of school without authorisation. For continuous or irregular absence, you will receive a written **Notice to Improve** which will explain the extent of your child’s non-attendance, the support offered to help improve your child’s attendance and the possibility of you receiving a penalty notice if attendance is not improved within 20 school days. During this period, your child must not have any further unauthorised absences from school.

**National threshold: Unauthorised absence totalling 5 consecutive days or 10 sessions in a ten-week period will result in a referral to the Local Authority for consideration of a Penalty Notice/Court action.**

First offence - The first time a Penalty Notice is issued the amount will be: £80 per parent, per child paid within 21 days. This increases to £160 per parent, per child if paid after day 21, until day 28. Any non-payment of the Penalty Notice may be referred to the Magistrates Court.

Second Offence (within 3 years) - the second time a Penalty Notice is issued the amount will be £160 per parent, per child paid within 28 days. Any non-payment of the Penalty Notice may be referred to the Magistrates Court.

In cases where there is a third period of unauthorised absence following 2 previous FPNs being issued, a Penalty Notice will not be issued. Instead, legal proceedings and potential prosecution in the Magistrates Court will be considered.

**Any holiday-related absence taken that includes 10 sessions in 10 weeks, will result in a Penalty Notice referral. In this instance, a ‘Notice to Improve’ notification will not be issued beforehand.**

Appendix 1 provides an overview of the threshold and conditions of penalty notices.



## **Attendance prosecution**

If a child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school fails to attend regularly at the school, the parent is guilty of an offence under s.444 (1) Education Act 1996.

Parents who fail to secure their child's regular attendance at a school, for which there are 2 separate offences: section 444(1) where a parent fails to secure the child's regular attendance; and section 444(1A) where a parent knows that the child is failing to attend school regularly and fails to ensure the child does so. The section 444(1) offence may result in a fine of up to level 3 (£1,000) and the section 444(1A) offence may result in a fine of up to level 4 (£2,500), and/or a community order or imprisonment of up to 3 months." *Education Act 1996.*

## **Children missing in education (CME)**

We have a legal duty to report the absence of any pupil who is absent without an explanation for 10 consecutive days. If the child is not seen and contact has not been established with the named parent/carer then the Local Authority is notified that the child is at risk of missing education (CME).

## **Attendance Rewards**

The Thomas Aveling School will use all possible opportunities to promote the importance of good attendance and punctuality. These include a number of different rewards and incentives for good or significantly improving attendance:

- Merits and 100% attendance certificates awarded for excellent attendance in end of term House assemblies.
- Attendance Lottery – Every Friday a form and register position is chosen at random. If the student selected has no unauthorised absence for the current term, they win an Amazon Voucher. If the student selected has an unauthorised absence, the prize rolls over to the next week for the next lottery draw.
- Students classed as 'persistently absent' can be enrolled on a 4-week attendance intervention with the Intervention Officer/Childrens' Team manager. Students can earn a 'queue jump' pass and food item from the canteen at the end of each week completed with full attendance.
- Students with 100% attendance at the end of the academic year are invited to a celebratory event where they will receive a certificate of recognition and a 100% attendance pin badge.

***Sixth form attendance expectations and procedures are outlined in the Sixth Form Handbook, which can be found on our school website.***





# Penalty Notice Fines for School Attendance are Changing!

With the introduction of the new National Framework for Penalty Notices, the following changes will come into force for Penalty Notice Fines issued after 19<sup>th</sup> August 2024.

### **Per Parent, Per Child**

Penalty Notice Fines will now be issued to each parent, for each child that was absent.

For example: 3 siblings absent for term time leave, would result in each parent receiving 3 separate fines.

### **5 consecutive days of term time leave**

Penalty Notice Fines will be issued for Term Time Leave of 5 or more consecutive days.

### **10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a 10-week period**

Penalty Notice Fines will be considered when there has been 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a 10 week period.

### **First Offence**

The first time a Penalty Notice is issued for Term Time Leave or Irregular Attendance the amount will be:

£160 per parent, per child paid within 28 days.

Reduced to £80 per parent, per child if paid within 21 days.

### **Second Offence (within 3 years)**

The second time a Penalty Notice is issued for Term Time Leave or Irregular Attendance the amount will be:

£160 per parent, per child paid within 28 days.

### **Third Offence and Any Further Offences (within 3 years)**

The third time an offence is committed for Term Time Leave or Irregular Attendance a Penalty Notice will not be issued, and the case will be presented straight to the Magistrates' Court. Magistrates' fines can be up to £2500 per parent, per child.

Cases found guilty in Magistrates' Court can show on the parent's future DBS certificate, due to 'failure to safeguard a child's education'.

