



Attendance Policy

Mission Statement

‘To educate young people to meet the challenges of life courageously, to use their talents to the full and to live the values of Christ’s Gospel’

Principles

As ‘working together to improve school attendance 2022’ says, *“Pupils with the highest attainment at the end of key stage 2 and key stage 4 have higher records of attendance over the key stage.”* Thornton College recognises the importance of good attendance and works with parents and other partners to support good attendance to enable all our pupils to fulfil their potential. We expect all pupils and parents to aspire to the highest standards of attendance and we monitor attendance data to ensure that we offer early support to resolve any patterns of poor attendance.

In the first instance, the emphasis of the school is to support both students and parents by building strong relationships with families, listening to them, understanding the barriers to attendance and working with families to remove them. We recognise attendance is never ‘solved’ and is a continuous process by regularly reviewing and updating messages, processes, and strategies. The policy should be applied fairly and consistently but in doing so the school should always consider the individual needs of pupils and their families who have specific barriers to attendance.

The Deputy Head (Whole School) (Ms T Wilks), and the Assistant Head, Head of Prep (Mr D Holmes), ensure that all staff, students, and parents are aware of the high importance we place upon good attendance and for overseeing the monitoring of attendance data to identify where support to improve attendance may be needed.

The School Roll and Register

The admission register (sometimes referred to as the school roll) must contain specific personal details of every pupil in the school along with the date of admission or re-admission to the school, information regarding parents and carers, and details of the school last attended. Where practicable, there should be two emergency contacts for a student.

Publication of Attendance Information

Parents have a duty to ensure that their daughters attend school.

Thornton College has a legal duty to promote attendance and to publish its absence figures, if required by the DfE. The School is usually asked to disclose information on attendance and punctuality when writing references for students.

The School is committed to working with parents to achieve as high a level of attendance as possible.

Students are expected to attend school every day. A student should only be absent if the reason is ‘unavoidable’. Every half day absence from school must be classified by the school, not the parents, as either authorised or unauthorised. Hence information about the cause of each absence is always required.

Authorised absences are morning or afternoon sessions away from school with good reason; for illness or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no ‘leave’ has been given. This includes keeping a student off for trivial reasons; truancy, absences or late arrivals which have never been properly explained.

Students should never be kept off school for reasons such as shopping, looking after the house, or looking after siblings or relatives. Where communication from parents / guardians does not specify the reason for absence, further investigation may be necessary after consultation with the Deputy Head or the Assistant Head, Head of Prep of Thornton College.

On very rare occasions where a student needs encouragement to attend school regularly, any problems are best resolved between the school, parents, and the student. If problems cannot be resolved this way, the school will contact the Education Welfare Officer from the relevant Local Education Authority. He or she will also try to resolve difficulties by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve a student's attendance have failed, these officers can use court proceedings to prosecute students or to seek an Education Supervision Order on the student. Parents may wish to contact the Education Welfare Officer themselves for advice. They are independent of the school. Their telephone number is available by contacting the appropriate Local Education Authority. The school reserves the right to withdraw a pupil's place in the case of pupils who fail to attend (as per regulation 8(1)(l) of The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006.

Procedures

Thornton College applies the following procedures in deciding how to deal with absences:

Illness or Other Legitimate absence

If students are ill and unable to attend school, parents / guardians are requested to contact the school before 8.40am on the first morning of absence, giving an indication of the possible duration of the absence. This should be done either using <mailto:office@thorntoncollege.com> or accessing 'My School Portal' where a 'Sickness Absence Form' can be found in the section 'Parent Forms' or alternatively there is a form called 'Longer Term Sickness Absence.' If this is not possible then parents should call the school on 01280 812610. (The school has an answering machine until 7:45am; thereafter Reception will take your call.) My School Portal Sickness Forms are forwarded directly to Form Tutors.

If no contact is made, the Form Tutor will insert an N in the register and the Administration team will contact home that morning to confirm the reason for absence. Heads of Year in Senior School and Form teachers in Prep School review attendance in the first instance and will also contact home should there be concern or a pattern of absence identified.

If a student is absent for reasons other than ill health, this must be communicated to the school on each separate occasion. Parents / guardians should complete the 'Absence Form' located in 'My School Portal' in the section 'Parent Forms;' completed forms are automatically sent through the portal to Form Tutors directly and / or the Head Teacher, dependent on the nature of the request for absence. Form Tutors may forward requests for entire day absences to the Head Teacher for authorisation but can authorise shorter absences such as dentist or medical appointments. In these circumstances it is not necessary to then telephone the school on the day of absence

If a student is required to leave school without notification and for reasons other than illness, an explanation must be provided by the parent or guardian and the absence must be authorised by the Head Teacher.

All students, who leave the school during the school day must sign out at front reception. Should a student return that day, she must sign in.

When attendance causes concern, the Head of Year/Class teacher will contact home and continue to monitor records. The school will continue to work with and support parents / guardians to ensure that their child

maintains a good attendance record. Long term absenteeism will be reported to the appropriate authorities via the school's DSL. (See Safeguarding policy)

Holidays

Please note that we ask parents **not** to make holiday arrangements that require their daughters to miss days during term-time. Holiday leave in term time will not be granted unless circumstances are exceptional. Our terms are short and intensive and a relatively lengthy period of holiday is available. If your daughter needs to be away from school in exceptional circumstances, a letter requesting permission should be sent to the Head Teacher of Thornton College.

Registration

Students in Reception to Year 2 are permitted to enter the Claudine Thevenet from 8am. They will be supervised in the Early Birds Club by a member of staff. Prep school students from Years 3 - 6 should enter the school either via reception (Years 3 & 4) or via the St Clare Building (Years 5 & 6) and register with the member of staff on duty in the Dining Hall between 7.45am and 8am and in the Quad between 8.00am and 8.30am. They will remain in the quad or attend reading club in the library, following registration. In wet weather, all early students will gather in the Quad or return to form rooms, dependent upon numbers. Senior students enter through the side door and go to the Dining Room before 8:30am and to their form room after 8.30am. Sixth Form students can make their way to their common room before 8.30am but must be in their form rooms by 8.30am. It is important that all students are in their form rooms by 8.30am each day for registration (at 8.40am). If a student arrives after 8.45am she should enter via Reception and sign in.

The attendance register is taken at the start of each morning session of each school day and once during each afternoon session. On each occasion the adult responsible for taking the register must record whether every pupil is present, attending an approved educational activity, absent, or unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

Registers are legal records and the school will preserve every entry in the attendance or admission register for 3 years from the date of entry. An additional back up copies of the electronic attendance and admission registers will be made once a month. These will be retained for three years after the end of the school year in question.

Lateness

Students must attend registration on time to be marked as present for that session otherwise they will receive a late mark (L). Parents are expected to ensure that their daughters arrive in good time so that they are present at registration.

Notification of removal or addition of student on the register

There is a difference between the admissions register, which is the student database of prospective students or school roll which includes children currently attending Thornton).

The school will notify the local authority whether they remove or add a student's name to the admissions register at non-standard transitions. The school will refer to the lawful grounds for removing a student, and the information to be reported to the local authority, in line with *School Attendance 2019* and *Children Missing Education 2016*. If requested, the school will provide information to the local authority for standard transitions.

Where possible and considering the potential safeguarding implications of children missing education, the school will also copy in the local authority where the child is normally resident if this is different to the local authority of the school.

The School will make reasonable enquiries to establish the whereabouts of the student jointly with the local authority, before deleting the student's name from the register if the deletion is under regulation 8(1), sub-paragraphs (f)(iii) and (h)(iii) (see Annex A of the Students missing education guidance September 2016) We do not delete the student's name from the register but we do delete the student's name from the school roll once they have left the school. The School register we understand as our ISAMS database – and school roll we understand as who is currently attending the school. Any child that leaves is not deleted from the school register (our database) as their record is moved to the former student section and kept for GDPR compliant archiving.

Thornton College will notify the local authority within five days of adding a student's name to the admission register at a non-standard transition point. The school will send all the registration details to the local authority.

Keeping Parents Informed

The school will regularly inform parents about their daughter's absence and attendance levels through MySchoolPortal.

A Staged Approach to Monitoring Attendance

The Heads of Year in Senior School, and the Assistant Head in charge of the Prep School will monitor attendance on a half termly basis. They will look for trends in attendance and of anyone who is causing a concern and needs support to attend school. The following stages will be followed for those whose attendance is deemed a concern. This will usually be when attendance falls below 90%.

Stage 1

The attendance records are examined by the Heads of Year and the Assistant Head in charge of the Prep School. Those below 90% are discussed with the form teacher to establish why they have been absent. Parents will be contacted by Form Teachers. The communication will be supportive and carried out in the first instance by the form teacher. The school will treat all pupils and parents with dignity and staff will model respectful relationships to build a positive relationship between home and school that can be the foundation of good attendance. In communicating with parents, the school will discuss the link between attendance and attainment and wider wellbeing, and challenge parents' views where they have misconceptions about what 'good' attendance looks like. This will be recorded on CPOMS. Such students should be monitored on a half termly basis.

Stage 2

If the level of attendance of a student does not improve, then the Head of Year or the Assistant Head in charge of the Prep school will contact parents. This will be a supportive communication exploring any barriers to school attendance and discussing what the school can do to support the student. A written communication will be sent home which will detail the advantages of attending school, breaking down the absence into the different types and offering support. Where barriers are outside of the school's control, all partners should work together to support pupils and parents to access any support they may need voluntarily. This will be recorded on CPOMS.

Stage 3

If the level of attendance is still causing a concern, then parents will be invited into school for a meeting with the Head of Year (or the Assistant Head in Charge of Prep) and the Deputy Head. At the meeting, the importance of attendance will be emphasised and further ways of support will be explored including a parent contract. The meeting will be recorded on CPOMS.

Stage 4

Where absence intensifies, or the level of attendance does not improve, so will the support provided, which will require the school to work in tandem with the local authority, including the Educational Welfare Officer (EWO) and other relevant partners. Where engagement in support is proving challenging, the school will hold more formal conversations with the parents. Some students face greater barriers to attendance than their peers. These can include students who suffer from long term medical conditions or who have special educational needs or who have disabilities. In working with their parents to improve attendance, the school will be mindful of the barriers these students face and put additional support in place where necessary. Students with long term illnesses or other health needs may need additional support to continue their education, such as alternative provision provided by the local authority. In all cases, the school will be sensitive and avoid stigmatising students and parents and will talk to students and parents and understand how they feel and what they think would help improve their attendance to develop individual approaches that meet an individual student's specific needs. This will be recorded on CPOMS.

Stage 5

Where a student is persistently absent and all attempts to improve attendance have been unsuccessful then the School will have no choice but to remove the students name from the admissions register. (Regulation 8(1)(I) of the Education (Pupil Registration)(England) Regulations 2006. In accordance with regulation 12(6) the School will notify the local authority in these circumstances.