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Thongsley Fields Primary & Nursery School

Attendance Policy

Maximising Achievement

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Attendance Policy

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1. Introduction and Statutory framework

Thongsley Fields Primary School aims to maximise attendance rates and secure high levels of punctuality in order to ensure that all pupils are able to take the fullest advantage of the learning experiences available to them. Our partnerships with parents and carers play a vital role in ensuring that this is achieved. If allowed to remain unchecked, **persistent absence and lateness can significantly affect a pupil's progress and achievement.**

In line with the 1996 Education Act, we expect all children on roll to attend school every day, when the school is in session, as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so. We will endeavour to encourage the children to attend and to put in place appropriate procedures to support this.

We believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is development of positive attitudes towards school. To this end, we strive to create a happy and rewarding environment for all where children want to come each day. We will make the best provision we can for those children who, for whatever reason, are prevented from coming to school.

We recognise that children alone cannot ensure their regular and punctual attendance at school. At all times, parents are encouraged to take an active role in the life of the school and to share and support their children's learning. **By choosing to enrol their children at Thongsley Fields, parents agree to ensure their child's regular and punctual attendance.** As part of our annual written reports to parents, children's attendance records are shared.

2. Monitoring and Reviewing Attendance

By law, schools must take a register and record the attendance or absence of every pupil. It does this by:

- ensuring that class teachers are responsible for recording Attendance Registers twice each day: at the start of the morning session and again in the afternoon
- ensuring that, once closed, Attendance Registers are checked by the School Office
- ensuring that all absences and persistent lateness are followed up and investigated.

When the registers are closed, the School Office checks voicemail and email messages for absence notifications. If a pupil is absent and the school has not been contacted, a member of staff from the School Office will telephone parents/carers to check why a pupil is not in school.

Attendance data is held electronically within the school's Management Information System (MIS), accessible by the Head Teacher, Office and Teaching staff who are able to conduct spot checks on individual children and provide comprehensive attendance records.

The Head Teacher and/or Leadership Team monitors the attendance of pupils each week. Where the school deems appropriate, parents/carers will be notified by letter when their child's attendance drops below the school's target of 95%. If attendance falls below 90% in any one period, parents/carers will be invited to an Attendance Review Meeting to discuss ways of improving their child's attendance at school.

A continued decline in attendance will lead to the school referring the child to the Educational Welfare Officer (EWO) for further action.

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Statutory Returns of school data are made annually to the DfE and benchmark data exists to compare our school within local and national contexts.

The school sets challenging yet realistic attendance targets each year agreed between the Leadership Team, the Governing Body and The CAM Academy Trust.

3. Punctuality and lateness

It is important that classes are able to make a prompt and effective start to the school day. The Head Teacher monitors lateness of pupils as punctuality to school is crucial. Lateness into school causes disruption to that individual's learning and to that of the other pupils in the class. It is of extreme importance therefore that all pupils arrive at school on time.

- Children may arrive at school from 8.40am, when gates open, and proceed straight into their classroom.
 - There is no supervision on site for children before this time, except for those enrolled in Breakfast Club, and the school is not legally responsible for them.
- Gates are closed at 8.55 am - all pupils arriving after this time must be 'signed in' by parents/carers via the School Office. Staff will record the number of minutes late using an 'L' code.
- Registers are closed 15mins after gates are closed with pupils arriving after this time recorded with a 'U' code (Late after registers have closed) unless the school has agreed alternative provisions.

- Registers are also taken after the lunchbreak at 1.15pm and close 15mins later.

Where there are concerns about punctuality, the school will initially make verbal contact with parents/carers usually through the child's class teacher. If concerns persist, the Head Teacher will write to the parents/carers explaining the issue and any potential further action. If there is no improvement, the school will arrange a meeting with the parent/carer and/or make a formal referral to the Educational Welfare Officer (EWO).

4. Authorised and unauthorised attendance

Only the school, within the context of the law, can approve absence – not parents – and it is a statutory requirement for the Head Teacher to decide, with every absence, whether it is deemed authorised or unauthorised.

Wherever reasonably possible, we expect parents to make routine appointments (e.g. medical, dental) outside of school time. Where this is not possible, parents are expected to provide as much written notice as possible along with evidence of a planned appointment. Specific codes are used to record such absences in the Attendance Register.

If a child is absent from school for whatever reason, parents/carers must inform the school in person, in writing or by telephone as soon as possible. The normal routine is to telephone the school on the first morning of absence. All such calls are logged: Attendance Registers updated accordingly and teaching staff informed.

Unauthorised absences are those absences for which the school received no reason/explanation or if the school has good reason to doubt the explanation given.

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5. Leave of Absence

The Government issued new regulations in September 2013 regarding Leave of Absence; The Education (Pupil Regulations) (England) Regulations 2006 as amended by Education (Pupil Regulations) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013:

- Head Teachers **shall not grant any** Leave of Absence during term time **unless they consider** there are **exceptional** circumstances relating to the application. Exceptional circumstances being defined as being of unique and significant emotional, educational or spiritual value to the child which outweighs the loss of teaching time.
- Parents do not have any entitlement to take their children on holiday during term time. Any application for leave must establish that there are **exceptional circumstances** and the Head Teacher must be satisfied that the circumstances warrant the granting of leave.
- Head Teachers will determine how many school days a child may be absent from school if the leave is granted.
- Applications for Leave of Absence must be made in advance and failure to do so will result in the absence being unauthorised.
- The school can only consider applications for Leave of Absence which are made by the resident parent holding Parental Responsibility.
- Applications for Leave of Absence, made in advance but refused, will result in the absence being unauthorised and may result in legal action against the parent, by Fixed Penalty Notice, if the child is absent from school during that period.
- If a Fixed Penalty Notice is issued and is not paid within the timeframe set out in that Notice, the matter will be referred to Cambridgeshire County Council's Legal Services to consider instigating criminal prosecution proceedings under S444 of Education Act 1996.

Each application for a Leave of Absence will be considered on a case by case basis and on its own merits.

Thongsley Fields Primary School understands that holidays are generally less expensive during term time but that this does NOT count as an exceptional circumstance. Leave which is taken for the following reasons will not be authorised:

- Availability of cheaper holidays
- Availability of desired accommodation
- Poor weather experienced in school holidays
- Overlap with beginning or end of term
- Booked the wrong dates by mistake
- Booked by another family member
- Attending a wedding that is not immediate family
- Family birthdays

6. Strategies for promoting attendance

Why attendance matters:

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- Less than 5 days absence = 98%+ attendance
- 14 days absence (approx.) = 93.5% attendance
- 20 days absence (approx.) = 90% attendance
- 30 days absence (approx.) = 88% attendance

If a child only has an 80% attendance figure, they will have missed approximately 40 days of education over the academic year, averaging 1 day per week.

At Thongsley Fields, the staff and governors endeavour to support parents with their responsibilities by:

- creating an environment in which pupils feel safe, welcomed and valued. The school's ethos will demonstrate that pupils feel that their presence in school is important, that they will be missed when they are absent/late and that follow up action will be taken
- making every effort to match learning tasks to pupils' needs
- collating attendance data regularly and analysing it in order to help identify patterns, set targets, correlate attendance with achievement, and support and inform policy/practice
- regularly reminding parents (via newsletters, the school website, parents' evenings, etc.) of the importance of good attendance
- reporting termly attendance data to governors and The CAM Academy Trust
- liaising with other agencies when this may serve to support and assist pupils who are experiencing difficulties
- promoting strong links with other primary and secondary schools to help ensure smooth transfers. Discussions will identify pupils who may require extra support during this process.

7. Role of the Governing Body

Governors will act alongside the Head Teacher to monitor the attendance of all children and vulnerable groups (Pupil Premium, SEND, etc) and ensure that this policy is being followed.

8. Role of the EWO

On those occasions when a pattern of poor attendance or lateness develops, the Head Teacher will work directly with the family to seek solutions. Should issues continue, for example when attendance falls below 85%, a referral to the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) will be made.

9. Data Analysis

The school collects and stores attendance data using its Management Information System.

The school provides attendance data to the DfE, via the school census, which includes the data as part of the annual publication of school statistics.

The school uses the attendance data to identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern and to track the attendance of individual pupils.

Where attendance is a concern, the school will use data to analyse attendance by year group, classes, groups of pupils for example ethnicity or gender.

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The school uses attendance data to identify the main causes of absences within the school and to take action to address and improve those areas.

The school will use data to monitor and evaluate those children identified as being in need of intervention and support.