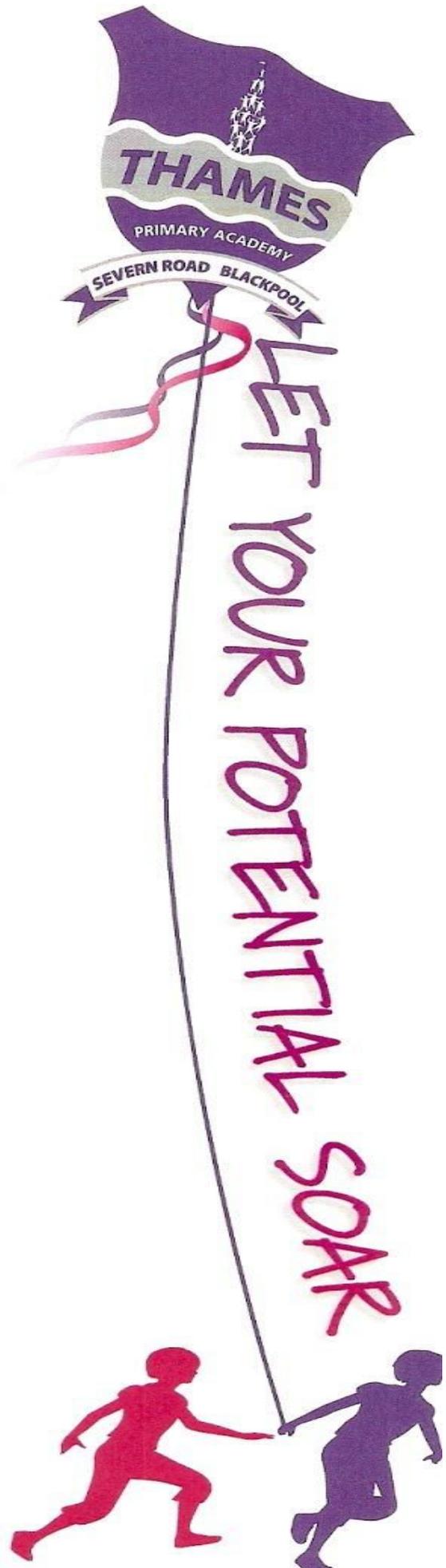


# Thames Primary Academy

## Attendance Policy

Inspirational  
Supportive  
Encouraging  
Effective  
Ambitious  
Imaginative



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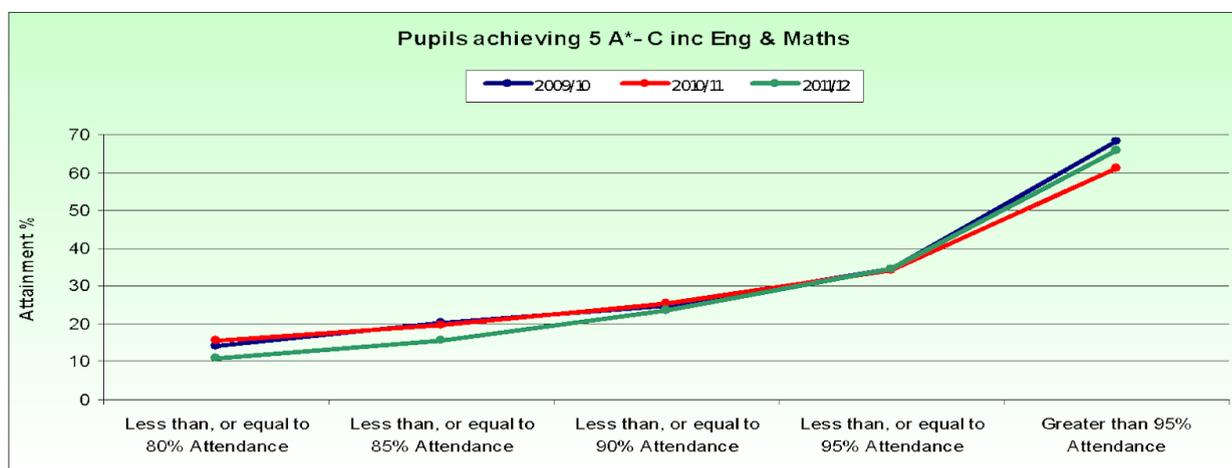
This advice will next be reviewed in July 2018.

## Introduction

This document has been produced to help schools and parents maintain high levels of school attendance as regular school attendance is essential if children are to achieve their full potential. Blackpool Council and Thames Primary Academy believe that regular school attendance is the key to enabling children to maximise the educational opportunities available to them and become emotionally resilient, confident and competent adults and make a positive contribution to their community. Thames Primary Academy values all pupils and we will work with Blackpool Pupil Welfare Service and our Pupil Welfare Officer to support families to identify the reasons for poor attendance and try to resolve any difficulties.

It is recognised that attendance is a matter for the whole school community. Thames Primary Academy Attendance Policy should not be viewed in isolation as it is a strand that runs through all aspects of school improvement, supported by our policies on safeguarding, bullying, behaviour, inclusive learning and the Council's Children and Young People's Plan. This policy should be read in conjunction with the Local Authority's Attendance Strategy.

Regular attendance at school is crucial in raising standards of education and in ensuring every child can meet their full potential. Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind. Children with poor attendance tend to achieve less in both primary and secondary school as the graph below demonstrates.



## Children Missing Education

Blackpool Council and schools have a clear role to play in helping to trace children who go missing from education. Blackpool Schools follow clear procedures in relation to those pupils who are removed from school by their parents without a named-school destination being provided and confirmed. Once a child's whereabouts has been confirmed the previous school will remove them from their school register from the last day of attendance. Parents must provide a forwarding address, particularly if it is abroad. Therefore, as soon as a child mentions to staff in school that they are moving, the school will begin making enquiries with parents and recording the information on the child's file. It is vitally important that up-to-date mobile

numbers and email addresses are shared with schools prior to leaving the area for ease of contact. Parents should be advised that if the local authority fails to locate a child they have a duty to report the child as missing to the Police and Social Care.

Thames Primary Academy must inform Blackpool Council of any pupil who fails to attend school regularly or has been absent without the school's permission for up to 10 days. Local authorities have a duty to put in place arrangements for identifying (as far as it is possible) those children of compulsory school age in their area who are not school registered or receiving education otherwise than at a school. Local authorities should trace those children and ensure that they receive full-time education.

### **Parents/Carers**

The term 'parent' refers to either one, or both, parents, or the child's carer.

Section 576 of the Education Act 1996 defines 'parent' to also include:

- all natural parents, whether they are married or not;
- any person who although not a natural parent, has parental 'responsibility' for a child or young person;
- any person who, although not a natural parent, 'has care' of a child or young person.

Section 3 of the Children Act 1989 defines 'parental responsibility' (PR) as all the rights, duties, powers, responsibilities and authority which by law a parent has in relation to a child and his/her property.

In the case of children who are 'looked after' by the Local Authority, (Children in Care - CiC), parental responsibility is with the allocated Social Worker, as the LA is the corporate parent.

### **Legal Framework**

Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act states that parents must ensure that children of compulsory school age receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude to any special educational needs they may have. This would normally be through regular attendance at school. A child is of compulsory school age at the beginning of the term following their 5<sup>th</sup> birthday, however, in Blackpool our young people are encouraged to start school from the September in which they reach the age of four. A child ceases to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday in June of the school year in which they reach the age of 16.

### **Raising the Participation Age**

The Education and Skills Act 2008 increased the minimum age at which young people in England can leave learning, requiring them to continue in education or training until the end of the academic year in which they turn 17 from 2013 and until their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday from 2015.

Raising the participation age does not mean young people must stay in school. They will be able to choose one of the following options post 16:

- Full-time education, such as school, college or with a training provider
- Work based learning including an apprenticeship

- Part-time accredited education or training if they are employed, self-employed or volunteering full-time (Which is defined as 20 hours or more a week)

Young people in Blackpool are encouraged to participate due to the benefits it will bring, such as better job prospects and increased earnings. By changing the law it will make sure that all young people have the opportunity to access the learning option that's right for them. The government has explored the option of fining young people but is hopeful that encouragement will be enough due to the benefits of learning. However, this enforcement is still set out in legislation and will be reviewed on an annual basis from 2014.

### **Statutory Responsibilities**

Under the Education Act 1996, the Local Authority has a statutory responsibility to ensure that parents secure education for children of compulsory school age and, where necessary will use legal enforcement.

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, require schools to take an attendance register twice a day, once at the start of the morning session and then again during the afternoon session.

### **Legal Sanctions**

When there is absence from school the school will do all that they can to ensure the child/young person and family are supported to improve attendance.

Where these interventions fail to bring about an improvement in attendance, the Local Authority will be notified and legal action in the Magistrates' Court may be taken. The Academy will provide the Local Authority with evidence required for a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 and will appear as a prosecution witness if required by the court. This is to ensure that parents realise their own responsibilities in ensuring attendance at school and most importantly about returning children to education.

Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 states that, if a parent fails to ensure the regular school attendance of their child if he/she is a registered pupil at a school and is of compulsory school age, then they are guilty of an offence. A parent found guilty of this offence can be fined up to £2500 and / or be imprisoned for a period of, up to three months.

Alternatives to Section 444 prosecution are Parenting Contracts, Penalty Notices or an Education Supervision Order.

### **Parenting Contracts (Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003)**

A Parenting contract is a voluntary agreement between the Academy and the parent. It can also be extended to include the child and any other agencies offering support to resolve any difficulties leading to improved attendance. The contract will outline attendance targets and will detail agreed actions that will help to achieve the target. The contract will be reviewed regularly. The contract can be used as evidence in a prosecution should parents fail to carry out agreed actions.

### **Penalty Notices (Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003)**

A penalty notice for non-attendance can only be issued in cases of unauthorised absence. When submitting requests, Thames Primary Academy will adhere to the guidance on the

marking of registers. This guidance can be found in the DfE document entitled “Advice on school attendance” and in local authority guidance documents.

A Penalty Notice gives the parent the opportunity to improve their child’s attendance. If attendance improves with no unauthorised absences during the specified period, no further action will be taken at that point. However, if attendance fails to improve, a penalty notice will be issued.

Penalty Notices will be **considered** when:

- A pupil is absent from school due to unauthorised leave during term time.
- A pupil has accumulated at least 10 sessions of unauthorised absence (not related to holidays) and further unauthorised absence has occurred following a written warning to improve.
- The parent has condoned the absence.
- A pupil has unwarranted delayed return from authorised leave.
- A pupil has persistent late arrival after the register has closed

Penalty notices **will be issued** when:

- A pupil has an unauthorised holiday over 10 sessions (5 days).

For all penalty notices the Governing Body reserve the right to consider each case individually.

Parents must, from 1 September 2013, pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. This brings attendance penalty notices into line with other types of penalty notices and allows local authorities to act faster on prosecution. Failure to pay the Penalty Notice may result in a prosecution under Section 444 (1) of the Education Act 1996. Penalty Notices will be used in accordance with Blackpool Council’s Penalty Notice Protocol.

### **Education Supervision Order (ESO)**

Before initiating a prosecution under section 444(1) or (1)(A) of the 1996 Education Act, a Pupil Welfare Officer will consider whether it is appropriate to apply for an ESO under section 36 of the 1989 Children Act to the Family Court. The purpose of an ESO is to place a child/young person who is not being properly educated under the supervision of the Local Authority as opposed to the parent having full responsibility for the choices regarding their child’s education. The ESO is usually granted for a period of up to 12 months at a time.

### **Categorising absence**

Where pupils of compulsory school age are recorded as absent, the register must show whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised. Absence can only be authorised by the Academy and cannot be authorised by parents. All absences will be treated as unauthorised unless a satisfactory explanation for the pupil’s absence has been received. This would not include holidays, please see leave of absence below.

Parents should advise the Academy by telephone on the first day of absence and provide the Academy with an expected date of return. This should be followed up in the form of a written

note from the parent, though verbal explanations may be acceptable where this is considered appropriate. Alternative arrangements will be agreed with non-English speaking parents.

## Absence and Attendance Codes

The Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations (England) came into effect on 01 September 2006 and enables schools to record and monitor attendance and absence in a consistent way which complies with the regulations. The data helps schools, local authorities and the Government to gain a greater understanding of the level and the reasons for absence. The codes are:

### Present at School

Pupils must not be marked present if they were not in school during registration. If a pupil were to leave the school premises after registration they would still be counted as present for statistical purposes.

**Registration Code / \ = Present in school      (/ = am    \ = pm)**

**Code L = Late arrival before the register has closed (after 8.55 am but before 9.30 am)**

Parents are expected to ensure that their child is punctual for school. If a child arrives late, they miss valuable teaching and often feel embarrassed. Poor punctuality can lead to underachievement, poor self esteem, absence and safeguarding issues.

Any child arriving after 8.55 am but before 9.30 am will be recorded as **late** in the register and must report to the main office in order to meet health and safety regulations. Frequent lateness of pupils can provide grounds for prosecution of parents (see Penalty Notice section).

Thames Primary Academy closes the registers at 9.30 am. Children arriving after this time will be recorded as **absent** for the morning they have missed. Frequent unauthorised absences of this nature can provide grounds for prosecution of parents (see Penalty Notice section).

***'10 minutes every day over 2 weeks equates to 1 hour 40 minutes of missed opportunities of learning.'***

### Present at an Approved Off-Site Educational Activity

An approved educational activity is where a pupil is taking part in supervised educational activity such as field trips, educational visits, work experience or alternative provision. The activity must be of an educational nature approved by the school and supervised by someone authorised by the school. The activity must take place during the session for which the mark is recorded.

Attendance codes are as follows:

### Code B: Off-site educational activity

Pupils that are present at a supervised educational activity that is off-site and approved by the Academy. The provider of the alternative activity will notify the Academy of any absences by individual pupils. The Academy will record the pupil's absence using the relevant absence code.

#### **Code D: Dual Registered - at another educational establishment**

The law allows for dual registration of pupils at more than one school. This code is used to indicate that the pupil was not expected to attend the session in question because they were scheduled to attend the other school at which they are registered.

The main examples of dual registration are pupils who are attending a pupil referral unit, a hospital school or a special school on a temporary basis. Each school should only record the pupil's attendance and absence for those sessions that the pupil is scheduled to attend their school.

#### **Code J: At an interview with prospective employers, or another educational establishment**

This code will be used to record time spent in interviews with prospective employers or another educational establishment. School should be satisfied that the interview is linked to employment prospects, further education or transfer to another educational establishment.

#### **Code P: Participating in a supervised sporting activity**

This code will be used to record the sessions when a pupil is taking part in a sporting activity that has been approved by the Academy and supervised by someone authorised by the Academy.

#### **Code V: Educational visit or trip**

This code will be used for attendance at an organised trip or visit, including residential trips organised by the Academy, or attendance at a supervised trip of a strictly educational nature arranged by an organisation approved by the Academy.

#### **Code W: Work experience**

Work experience is for pupils in the final two years of compulsory education. School will ensure that they have in place arrangements whereby the work experience placement provider notifies the school of any absences by individual pupils. Any absence will be recorded using the relevant code.

#### **Authorised Absence from School**

'Authorised absence' means that the Academy has either given approval in advance for a pupil of compulsory school age to be away, or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as justification for absence.

Absence codes are as follows:

#### **Code C: Leave of absence authorised by the school**

Only exceptional circumstances warrant leave of absence. Thames Primary Academy will consider each request individually taking into account the circumstances, such as: the nature of

the event for which leave is sought; the frequency of the request; whether the parent gave advance notice; and the pupil's attainment, attendance and ability to catch up on missed schooling.

#### **Code E: Excluded but no alternative provision made**

If no alternative provision is made for a pupil to continue their education whilst they are excluded but still on the admission register, they will be marked absent in the attendance register using Code E. Where alternative provision is made they will be marked using the appropriate attendance code.

#### **Code B: Excluded but alternative provision offered**

Should this arrangement extend over a 5 day period the Academy has a duty to provide alternative provision.

#### **Code I: Illness (not medical or dental appointments)**

Parents should advise the Academy by telephone on the first day of absence and provide the Academy with an expected date of return. This should be followed up in the form of a written note from the parent, though verbal explanations may be acceptable where this is considered appropriate. Alternative arrangements will be agreed with non-English speaking parents. Parents may be asked to provide medical evidence where there are repeated absences due to reported illness. Medical evidence can take the form of prescriptions, appointment cards, etc. rather than doctors' notes.

#### **Code M: Medical or dental appointments**

Parents are advised to make medical and dental appointments outside of the school day in order to cause minimal disruption to learning. Where this is not possible, the pupil should only be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary for the appointment. Parents must show evidence of appointments to the Academy.

#### **Code R: Religious observance**

Thames Primary Academy acknowledges the multi-faith nature of British society and recognises that on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside school holiday periods or weekends and this necessitates a consideration of authorised absence or special leave for religious observance. It is reasonable for a parent to allow their children not to attend school on any day of religious observance if recognised by the parent's religious body. Where necessary, the Academy may seek advice from the parents' religious body about whether it has set the day apart for religious observance. If the religious body has not set the day apart there is no requirement for the Academy to approve the absence or grant leave of absence. Parents are encouraged to give advance notice to the Academy if they intend their child to be absent.

However, in the interests of fulfilling the academic requirements of the Academy and limiting the authorised absence rate of the Academy, it is identified as reasonable that no more than one day be designated for any individual occasion of religious observance/festival and no more than three days in total in any academic year. Any further absence will be categorised as unauthorised.

#### **Code S: Study leave**

Blackpool Schools do not operate study leave as there is evidence nationally that high proportions of students do not have the skills, or are not inclined, to make the best use of large

amounts of unsupervised and unstructured revision time. Study leave is also recorded as an absence.

#### **Code T: Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence**

A number of different groups are covered by the generic term Traveller – Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers.

The expectation for the attendance of Traveller children, as with all other children, is to attend school as regularly and as frequently as possible. Children from these groups whose families do not travel are expected to register at a school and attend as normal. They are subject to the same rules as other children in terms of the requirement to attend school regularly once registered at school.

If the Pupil's family are known to be travelling but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision (at a school or other provider), the absence should be authorised and recorded using code T.

To help ensure continuity of education for Traveller children, dual registration is allowed. A school cannot remove a Traveller child from the school roll while they are travelling if it is the base school. If the pupil is known to be dual registered and present at another school during the session in question, the attendance should be recorded using code D. The Blackpool school in this instance will become the base school and will record their register as a code D for dual registration until the child returns.

If a child fails to return on their agreed date with no contact the school must notify the Local Authority as soon as possible. Should the School or the Local Authority fail to locate the family after 20 days the child can be removed from the School roll. The Local Authority should then record the child on the children missing from education database for further investigation.

#### **Unauthorised Absence from School**

Unauthorised absence is where a school is not satisfied with the reasons given for the absence.

Absence codes are as follows:

#### **Code G: Family holiday not authorised by the school or in excess of agreed period**

Parents should not take their children on holiday during term time. Parents do not have an automatic right to remove their child from school during term time for the purpose of a holiday. Schools are closed for 13 weeks a year. Parents have 175 days in which to take holidays outside of school hours. In Blackpool, Council Policy is that no Blackpool Head teacher will authorise any holiday due to the negative impact on learning.

Amendments to the 2006 regulations, which come into force on 01 September 2013, remove references to family holiday and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days. The amendments make clear that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time.

However, if a parent chooses to take their child on holiday during term time against the Academy Attendance Policy they must still inform the Academy of their intentions in writing. Failure to do this will result in a welfare check being carried out at the family address by the Academy's Pupil Welfare Officer.

#### **Code N: Reason for absence not yet provided**

The Academy will follow up all unexplained and unexpected absences in a timely manner. Every effort will be made to establish the reason for a pupil's absence. When the reason for the pupil's absence has been established the register will be amended from the above code.

If the Academy is not informed of the reason for absence within 2 weeks, then the absence will be recorded as unauthorised (code O – see below).

#### **Code O: Absent from school without authorisation**

If the Academy is not satisfied with the reason given for absence they should record it as unauthorised.

At Thames Primary Academy, when a child/young person's attendance is below 90%, absences will not be authorised unless in extenuating circumstances or medical evidence is provided e.g. a Doctor's note, a prescription, sight of a medicine bottle etc. Unauthorised absence could result in legal action being initiated by the Local Authority.

#### **Code U: Arrived in school after registration closed**

Thames Primary Academy actively discourages late arrival, and is alert to patterns of late arrival seeking an explanation from the parent. Frequent lateness of pupils can provide grounds for prosecution of parents through a Penalty Notice. Lateness will be monitored through the 'traffic light' system by the Academy's Pupil Welfare Officer.

#### **Code X: Not required to be in school**

This code is used to record sessions that non-compulsory school age children are not expected to attend.

#### **Code Y: Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances**

This code can be used where a pupil is unable to attend because:

- The Academy site, or part of it, is closed due to an unavoidable cause; or
- The transport provided by the Academy or a local authority is not available and where the pupil's home is not within walking distance; or
- A local or national emergency has resulted in widespread disruption to travel which has prevented the pupil from attending school.

#### **Deletions from the Register**

A pupil can lawfully be deleted from the admission register on the grounds prescribed in regulation 8 of the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006. Schools must inform their local authority in advance of any pupil who is going to be deleted from the admission register.

All schools will follow Blackpool Council's Children Missing Education Protocol when a pupil's whereabouts is unknown.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

Thames Primary Academy believes that improved school attendance can only be achieved if it is viewed as a shared responsibility of the Academy staff, governors, parents, pupils and the wider school community.

#### **The Governing Body will:**

- Ensure that the importance and value of good attendance is promoted to pupils and their parents
- Annually review the school's Attendance Policy and ensure the required resources are available to fully implement the policy
- Identify a member of the governing body to lead on attendance matters and attend panel meetings.
- Ensure that the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 and other attendance related legislation is complied with
- Monitor the school's attendance and related issues through termly reporting at Governing Body Meetings
- Ensure that attendance data is reported to the Local Authority or Department for Education as required and on time
- Ensure that there is a named senior manager to lead on attendance
- Ensure that the school has clear systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site
- Ensure that there are procedures for collecting and analysing attendance data frequently to identify causes and patterns of absence
- Ensure that data is understood and used to devise solutions and to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions

#### **The Leadership Team and the Pupil Welfare Officer will:**

- Actively promote the importance and value of good attendance to pupils and their parents
- Form positive relationships with pupils and parents
- Ensure that there is a whole school approach which reinforces good school attendance; with good teaching and learning experiences that encourage all pupils to attend and to achieve
- Monitor the implementation of the Attendance Policy and ensure that the policy is reviewed annually
- Ensure that all staff are aware of the Attendance Policy and adequately trained to address attendance issues
- Ensure that the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 and other attendance related legislation is complied with
- Ensure that there is a named senior manager to lead on attendance and allocate sufficient time and resource
- Return school attendance data to the Local Authority and the Department for Education as required and on time

- Report the school's attendance and related issues through termly reporting to the Governing Body and on a half termly basis to the lead governor for attendance
- Ensure that systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site are implemented
- Ensure that attendance data is collected and analysed frequently to identify causes and patterns of absence
- Interpret the data to devise solutions and to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions
- Develop a multi-agency response to improve attendance and support pupils and their families
- Document interventions used to a standard required by the local authority should legal proceedings be instigated

#### **Class teachers and Pupil Support Staff will:**

- Actively promote the importance and value of good attendance to pupils and their parents
- Form positive relationships with pupils and parents
- Contribute to a whole school approach which reinforces good school attendance; with good teaching and learning experiences that encourage all pupils to attend and to achieve
- Comply with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 and other attendance related legislation
- Implement systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site
- Analyse attendance data to identify causes and patterns of absence
- Contribute to the evaluation of school strategies and interventions
- Work with other agencies to improve attendance and support pupils and their families
- Document interventions used to a standard required by the local authority should legal proceedings be instigated

#### **Thames Primary Academy will request that Parents:**

- Talk to their child about school and what goes on there. Take a positive interest in their child's work and educational progress
- Instil the value of education and regular school attendance within the home environment
- Encourage their child to look to the future and have aspirations
- Contact the Academy if their child is absent to let them know the reason why and the expected date of return. Follow this up with a note where possible.
- Avoid unnecessary absences.
- Ask the Academy for help if their child is experiencing difficulties
- Inform the Academy of any change in circumstances that may impact on their child's attendance
- Support the Academy; take every opportunity to get involved in their child's education, form a positive relationship with the Academy and acknowledge the importance of children receiving the same messages from both the Academy and home
- Encourage routine at home, for example, bed times, home work, preparing school bag and uniform the evening before
- Not keep their child off school to go shopping, to help at home or to look after other members of the family
- Not taking leave of absence during term-time.

### Persistent Absence

Your child is a persistent absentee if they have 85% attendance or less. 85% attendance is an average of 1 day's absence per fortnight. Details of these children are submitted to the Local Authority and Central Government. Persistent absence is a serious problem for pupils. Much of the work children miss when they are off school is never made up, leaving these pupils at a considerable disadvantage for the remainder of their school career. There is also clear evidence of a link between poor attendance at school and low levels of achievement. If your child is identified as being on track to be persistently absent an action plan will be devised to support them.

### The Impact of poor school attendance on attainment

Ongoing poor attendance is a factor often linked to low levels of academic success. Poor attendance could also effect your child's future applications for jobs or college places and many pupils have difficulty maintaining friendships if they have long or numerous periods of absence. The following information highlights how attendance can effect your child's future progression.

<b>Above 97% = Less than 6 days absence a year</b> Excellent attendance! Young people who are achieving above 97% will almost certainly get the best grades they can, leading to better prospects for their future.
<b>95% = 10 days absence a year</b> These young people are likely to achieve good grades and have good future prospects, however, could still improve their attendance.
<b>90% = 19 days absence a year</b> Young people who are missing this much time off school will be absent for almost a month per school year, making it difficult for them to achieve their best.
<b>85% = 29 days absence a year</b> Young people who are missing this much time off school will be absent for almost six weeks per school year, making it very difficult for them to keep up with their work and are unlikely to do their best.
<b>80% = 38 days absence a year</b> Young people who are constantly missing this much time off school will be absent for one full year over the five years of secondary education, making it almost impossible to keep up with work and dramatically limiting future prospects.

As the above information demonstrates, every school day counts and missing any time from school will result in lost learning. If you are experiencing difficulties in ensuring your child's regular attendance please contact the Academy and we will be happy to assist you.

Thank you in advance for your co-operation.

