

THWAITES SCHOOL

Attendance Policy

2024/2025

<i>At the time of publishing the following roles were held:</i>	
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Review Sheet

Each entry in the table below summarises the changes to this Policy and procedures made since the last review (if any).

Version Number	Version Description	Date of Revision
1.	Original	Sept 2022
2.	Minor changes to reflect introduction of new Unitary Authorities.	May 2023
3.	Annual Review	May 2024
4.	Updated following publication of revised DfE statutory guidance 'Working together to improve school attendance' coming into force 19 August 2024	August 2024
5.	Changes made following issue of Cumberland Council's model policy	December 2024

Contents

1.	Aims	Pg. 4
2.	Legislation and guidance	Pg. 4
3.	Roles and responsibilities	Pg. 4
3.1	Leader responsible for attendance	Pg. 4
3.2	Class teachers	Pg. 5
3.3	School administration staff	Pg. 5
3.4	Parents	Pg. 5
3.5	Pupils	Pg. 6
3.6	Attendance staff team	Pg. 6
4.	Recording attendance	Pg. 6
4.1	Attendance register	Pg. 6
4.2	Unplanned absence	Pg. 7
4.3	Planned absence	Pg. 7
4.4	Lateness and punctuality	Pg. 8
4.5	Following up unexplained absence	Pg. 8
4.6	Reporting to parents	Pg. 8
5.	Authorised and unauthorised absence	Pg. 9
5.1	Approval for term-time absence	Pg. 9
5.2	Enforcement	Pg. 10
6.	Strategies for promoting attendance	Pg. 10
7.1	Pupils absent due to complex barriers to attendance	Pg. 10
7.2	Pupils absent due to mental or physical health or SEND	Pg. 10
7.3	Pupils returning to school after a lengthy or unavoidable period of absence	Pg. 11
8.	Attendance monitoring	Pg. 11
8.1	Reducing persistent and severe absence	Pg. 12
9.	Monitoring arrangements	Pg. 12
10.	Links with other policies	Pg. 12
11.	Additional links	Pg. 12

1. Aims

This policy aims to show our commitment to meeting our obligations with regards to school attendance, including those laid out in the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on Working Together to Improve School Attendance 2024, and Cumberland Council's School Attendance Strategy through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- Setting high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all pupils
- Promoting good attendance and the benefits of good attendance
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled.
- Acting early to address patterns of absence.
- Building strong relationships with families to make sure pupils have the support in place to attend school.
- Promoting and supporting punctuality in attending lessons.

2. Legislation and Guidance

This policy is based on the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on Working Together to Improve School Attendance 2024 and school attendance Parental Responsibility Measures 2023. The guidance is based on the following pieces of legislation, which set out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of the Education Act 1996
- Part 3 of the Education Act 2002
- Part 7 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (and 2010, 2011, 2013, and 2016 amendments)
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

It also refers to:

- School census guidance
- Keeping Children Safe in Education
- Mental health issues affecting a pupil's attendance: guidance for schools.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

Further information can be found on Cumberland Council Attendance Handbook page 4, and the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on Working Together to Improve School Attendance 2024.

3.1 Leader Responsible for Attendance

The designated leader (also known as the 'Attendance Lead') is responsible for:

- Leading, championing and improving attendance across the school.

- Setting a clear vision for improving and maintaining good attendance
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having a strong grasp of absence data and oversight of absence data analysis
- Regularly monitoring and evaluating progress in attendance
- Establishing and maintaining effective systems for tackling absence and making sure they are followed by all staff.
- Consulting with pupils, parents/carers, and external agencies, where needed.
- Building close and productive relationships with parents to discuss and tackle attendance issues.
- Creating intervention or reintegration plans in partnership with pupils and their parents/carers
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance is Mr. M. Redhead can be contacted via head@thwaites.cumbria.sch.uk

3.2 Class Teachers

Class Teachers are responsible for recording attendance for both morning and afternoon sessions daily, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office.

3.3 School Administration Staff

School admin staff will:

- Take calls from parents/carers about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system.
- Transfer calls from parents/carers to the Attendance Lead where appropriate, to provide them with more detailed support on attendance.
- Ensure all parents addresses/contact details are up to date.
- Consider referral to support services and or an Early help assessment.

3.4 Parents

Where this policy refers to a parent, it refers to the adult the school and/or local authority decides is most appropriate to work with, including:

1. All natural parents, whether they are married or not.
2. All those who have parental responsibility for a child or young person.
3. Those who have day-to-day responsibility for the child (i.e. lives with and looks after them)

Parents are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day on time.

- Call the school to report their child's absence before 9am on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence and advise when they are expected to return.
- Provide the school with more than one emergency contact number for their child and ensure they are up to date.
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day.
- Keep to any attendance action plans that they make with the school and/or local authority.
- Seek support, where necessary, for maintaining good attendance

3.5 Pupils

Pupils are expected to:

Attend school every day, on time.

3.6 Attendance Team

Attendance Lead	Mr. M. Redhead
Designated Safeguarding Lead	Mr. M. Redhead
Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead	Miss. M. Jordan
SENCO	Mrs. S. Morton
Senior Mental Health Lead	Mr. M. Redhead

4. Recording Attendance

4.1. Attendance Register

We will keep an electronic attendance register and place all pupils onto this register. We will take our attendance register twice during the school day. Once at the beginning of the morning session (08:45) and once at the beginning of the afternoon session (13:00). It will mark, using the appropriate national attendance and absence codes from the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024, whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made.
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment.

See DfE Working Together to Improve School Attendance 2024 for the full list of attendance codes or refer to pages 27-31 on Cumberland Council Attendance Handbook.

We will also record:

- Whether the absence is authorised or not
- The nature of the activity, where a pupil is attending an approved educational activity.
- The nature of circumstances, where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 6 years after the date on which the entry was made.

The school day starts at 8:30am for Nursery / 8:40am for main school and ends at 3:00pm for Nursery / 3:10pm for main school.

4.2 Unplanned Absence

The pupil's parent must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 9.00am or as soon as possible, by calling the school office staff, who can be contacted via 01229 772554.

We will mark absence due to physical or mental illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

Where the absence is longer than 5 days, or there are doubts about the authenticity of the illness, the school will ask for medical evidence, such as a medical prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

GP fit for work notes for children are not acceptable.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised, and parents will be notified of this in advance.

4.3 Planned Absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised if the pupil's parent notifies the school in advance of the appointment. However, we encourage parents to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

For any planned absences, parents must complete an absence request form. These can be obtained from the school office or downloaded from the school website. This should be completed and submitted at least 2 weeks before the absence is due to take place.

4.4 Lateness and Punctuality

A pupil who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code.
- After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code.

Persistent lateness will trigger further intervention, including letters home and meetings with teachers/attendance lead.

Those who are late after registration closes and therefore absent will follow the same path as any other unauthorised absence and contributes to the 10-sessions of absence over 10 weeks national threshold.

4.5 Following Up Unexplained Absence

Where any pupil we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the school will:

- Call the pupil's parent on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the school cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts, the school may complete a home visit and contact any outside agencies who may be involved with the family.
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not.
- Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session(s) for which the pupil was absent.
- Call the parent on each day that the absence continues without explanation, to make sure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the school will consider involving an education welfare officer.
- Where relevant, report the unexplained absence to the pupil's social worker.
- Where appropriate, offer support to the pupil and/or their parents to improve attendance.
- Identify whether the pupil needs support from wider partners, as quickly as possible, and make the necessary referrals.
- Where support is not appropriate, not successful, or not engaged with the school will refer to the Local Authority.

4.6 Reporting to Parents

The school will regularly inform parents/carers about their child's attendance and absence levels at least once a half term via the school text/email system.

5 Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

5.1 Approval of Term-Time Absence

The headteacher will allow pupils to be absent from the school site for certain educational activities, or to attend other schools or settings.

The headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if the request meets the specific circumstances set out in the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on Working Together to Improve School Attendance 2024

These circumstances are:

- Taking part in a regulated performance
- Taking part in a significant sporting event
- A temporary, time-limited transition timetable (part time timetable).
- Exceptional circumstances

A leave of absence is granted at the headteacher's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for. We define 'exceptional circumstances' as unexpected or unavoidable events.

Leave of absence will not be granted for a pupil to take part in protest activity during school hours.

As a leave of absence will only be granted in exceptional circumstances, it is highly unlikely a leave of absence will be granted for the purposes of a family holiday.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, considering the specific facts, circumstances, and relevant background context behind the request. Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least 4 weeks before the absence, and in accordance with any leave of absence request form, accessible via the school website or central office. The headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

Other valid reasons for authorised absence include (but are not limited to):

- Illness (including mental-health illness) and medical/dental appointments (see sections 4.2 and 4.3 for more detail)
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parent(s) belong(s). If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parent's religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart.
- Parent(s) travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh Romani people, Irish and Scottish travellers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and new travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision.
- If the pupil is currently suspended or excluded from school (and no alternative provision has been made)

Other reasons the school may allow a pupil to be absent from the school site, which are not classified as absences, include (but are not limited to):

- Attending an offsite approved educational activity, sporting activity or visit or trip arranged by the school.
- Attending another school at which the pupil is also registered (dual registration)
- Attending provision arranged by the local authority.
- Attending work experience
- If there is any other unavoidable cause for the pupil not to attend school, such as disruption to travel caused by an emergency, a lack of access arrangements, or because the school premises are closed.

For further information on specific codes refer to pages 26-31 of Cumberland Councils Attendance Handbook.

5.2 Enforcement

Our school will make use of the full range of potential enforcements. Refer to page 18-25 of Cumberland Council Attendance Handbook. **Decisions will be made on an individual, case-by-case basis.

6. Strategies for Promoting Attendance

Good attendance is part of the ethos of Thwaites Nursery and Primary School. In order to promote and achieve good attendance we work hard to ensure the education we offer is exciting, engaging and fun, so that children want to attend to avoid 'missing-out'. Through this approach, good attendance is its own reward.

The school works very closely with families to support with attendance and half-termly attendance updates are sent out to inform parents of their children's current attendance and to offer congratulations or support in an empathetic way.

The school will work collaboratively with the Access and Inclusion Team at Cumberland Council to help to support pupils and parents in achieving good attendance.

7. Supporting Pupils who are Absent or Returning to School

7.1 Pupils Absent Due to Complex Barriers

We work particularly closely with pupils and parents where there are more complex barriers to attendance. If a child is struggling or refusing to attend school, parents should inform us immediately.

To support more complex barriers to attendance we:

- Will invite the parent and pupil into school for a meeting.

- If the pupil cannot/will not attend a meeting at school, we will visit the family home.
- Depending on the barriers identified, the child's teacher will be informed and be part of any reintegration plans.
- Consider temporary transition timetables. Depending on need, the aim of these is always for students to be back in school full time as quickly as possible, however we recognise that this can support a phased return into school.
- Arrange for temporary pick-ups in the morning by one of our pastoral leads.

7.2 Pupils Absent Due to Mental or Physical Ill Health or SEND

Where a pupil has an education health and care (EHC) plan and their attendance falls, or the school becomes aware of barriers to attendance that related to the pupil's needs, the school will inform the local authority. Reasonable adjustments can be made to support students in school.

Where there is a prolonged physical or mental illness, the Access and Inclusion Team at the Local Authority will be requested to support with education.

7.3 Pupils Returning to School After a Lengthy or Unavoidable Period of Absence

To support a lengthy or unavoidable period of absence attendance we:

Will invite the parent and pupil into school for a meeting or attend the family home.

Consider temporary transition timetables. Depending on need, the aim of these is always for students to be back in school full time as quickly as possible, however we recognise that a pupil may need a phased return into school. This will be in communication with the class teacher who will also support with the return to school.

Arrange for temporary pick-ups in the morning by one of our Senior Leadership Team.

8. Attendance Monitoring

The school analyses attendance data at least once a week. This includes punctuality.

The school will monitor attendance and absence data (including punctuality) half-termly and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil level. This data is collated and shared with governors at each governor meeting. Attendance data is then appropriately challenged by governors.

Refer to page 8 in Cumberland Council Attendance handbook.

8.1 Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school. Reducing persistent and severe absence is central to the school's strategy for improving attendance.

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence.
- Consider potential safeguarding issues and, where suspected or present, address them in line with DfE Keeping Children Safe in Education
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable or at risk of persistent or severe absence, or who are persistently or severely absent, to:
 - Discuss attendance and engagement at school.
 - Listen, and understand barriers to attendance.
 - Explain the help that is available.
 - Explain the potential consequences of, and sanctions for, persistent and severe absence.
 - Review any existing actions or interventions.
- Communicate with parents via Tapestry, email, phone call or letters to inform them of attendance updates.
- Visit the family home to communicate and meet with parents.
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance, in conjunction with the local authority, where relevant
- Consider alternative support that could be put in place to remove any barriers to attendance and re-engage pupils. In doing so, the school will sensitively consider some of the reasons for absence.
- Implement enforcements, where necessary

9. Monitoring Arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority and/or DfE is updated, and as a minimum yearly by Mr. M. Redhead, Headteacher. At every review, the policy will be approved by the full governing board.

10. Links with Other Policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Behaviour policy

11. Additional Links

[Supporting attendance | EEF](#)

<https://thehub.naht.org.uk/management/guidance-on-authorised-term-time-pupil-absence/>