

St Thomas' (Halliwell) CE School



Attendance and Punctuality Policy

October 2025
To be reviewed October 2026

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Bolton
Council



St Thomas' CE Primary School Attendance and Punctuality Policy

Overview

If pupils are to get the greatest benefit from their education in school, it is important that they have good attendance and arrive punctually. As pupils grow and prepare for their next stages of education and employment they need to have good attendance and punctuality as important qualities that are valued by others and employers. We will do all that we can to encourage good attendance and punctuality. Where pupils are not conforming to our high expectations for attendance and punctuality we will put into place effective strategies to bring about improvement.

Legal Requirements

The school adheres to the legal requirements laid down by the DFE and:

- Is open to all pupils for 380 sessions each school year.
- Maintains computerised attendance registers in accordance with regulations accurately records and monitors all absenteeism and lateness.
- Clearly distinguishes between absence which is authorised and absence which is unauthorised according to criteria laid down by the DFE.
- Submits absence returns and publishes information relating to levels of attendance and absence and includes details of these in the school's prospectus and annual reports.
- Sets annual targets to reduce absence and submit these targets in accordance with the relevant regulations.

In order to improve the overall attendance of pupils in school we aim to:

- Make attendance and punctuality a **priority** for all those associated with the school including pupils, parents, teachers and governors.
- Develop a framework which defines agreed roles and responsibilities and promotes consistency in carrying out designated tasks.
- Develop a systematic approach to gathering and analysing attendance related data.
- Implement a system of rewards and sanctions.
- Provide support, advice and guidance to parents/carers and pupils.
- Further develop positive and consistent communication between home and school.
- Develop effective partnerships with supporting services and agencies through the Local Authority 'Early Intervention' Team.
- Recognise and address the needs of the individual pupils when planning reintegration following significant periods of absence.

Staff Responsibilities:

The Headteacher and attendance team will:

- Regularly communicate attendance information to parents through the school website, through newsletters, through parents' evenings or through other media.
- Collect and make effective use of attendance data to monitor progress/trends and set targets for improvement – for individuals, classes, year groups and the whole school.
- Provide clear guidance to staff on the practice of registration and on such connected issues as the appropriate categorisation of absence.
- Identify clear procedures to identify and follow up all absence and lateness (allocating individual staff roles and responsibilities).
- Make provision for first-day of absence contact in relation to pupils who are known to be poor attendees or who might otherwise be considered to be at risk.
- Identify a range of both proactive and reactive strategies to promote attendance and address absenteeism, especially persistent absenteeism.

- Provide for a clear and unambiguous hierarchy of sanctions (see below).
- Develop strategies which recognise and celebrate pupils' attendance achievements.
- Set up effective networks for liaising with other involved agencies and services such as Educational Social Workers (ESW).
- Stress to parents/carers the importance of continuity of learning, particularly in relation to family holidays during term-time.
- Help create an ethos and culture which encourages good attendance, addressing school-based causes of poor attendance such as bullying, racism, an inappropriate curriculum, etc.

Class Teachers will:

- Take the attendance register at the start of the morning and afternoon sessions in accordance with appropriate guidance. If a child is absent the code **N** will be put in the register.
- Inform the Attendance Officer of any absentees, particularly those who are a cause for concern.

The Office Staff will:

- Take telephone messages from parents/carers on the first day of absence and inform class teachers of reasons for absence so that registers can be changed accordingly.
- Text parents/carers to find out reasons for absence when no notification has been given, particularly with children who are a cause for concern.
- Monitor registers to ensure guidelines are followed and entries are accurate.
- Produce electronic reports where appropriate.
- Maintain a 'late gate' list in order to monitor punctuality.
- Collect the names of absentees each morning; patterns will be analysed.
- Report to the Attendance Officer on a daily basis.
- Change the **N** code accordingly to authorised or unauthorised and add reasons for absence.

Governors will:

- Discuss attendance data, including trends and patterns at the Curriculum Committee meetings, acting upon any issues which arise.
- Review the Attendance Policy on an annual basis.

Parents/Carers should:

- Ensure that their children attend the school regularly, on time, properly dressed and in a fit condition to learn, as required by law.
Ring the school office before 9:30am when your child is absent or it will be unauthorised.
- Ensure that their child only misses school for reasons which are unavoidable or justified, such as illness or days of religious observance.
- Always notify the school as soon as possible - preferably on the first morning - of any absence.
- Not book family holidays during term-time; where this is unavoidable, parents/carers should put their request in writing to the Headteacher, outlining the reasons for the absence.
- Talk to the school if they are concerned that their child may be reluctant to attend so that problems can be dealt with at an early stage.

The Law:

The law says parents/carers do not have the right to take their child out of school for holidays during term time. In exceptional circumstances, schools can allow parents/carers to take their child out of class for up to 5 days in a school year. If a child is taken out of school without prior permission from the Headteacher of the school, this will be recorded as unauthorised absence and noted on the child's record. This may result in parents/carers being issued with a fixed penalty notice of £160 if you pay within 28 days of receipt of a Penalty Notice reducing to £80 if you pay within 21 days. (Per parent, per child). With any second penalty notice issued to the same parent for the same child within a rolling 3-year period, the amount will be charged at £160 with no option to pay the lower rate of £80. There is a national limit of 2 penalty notices that can be issued to a parent for the same child within a 3-year rolling period, so at the 3rd (or subsequent) offence(s) another tool will be considered (such as prosecution)

Please see Bolton Council School Attendance code of contact and Penalty Notices:

[Information about school attendance and penalty notices \(bolton.gov.uk\)](https://www.bolton.gov.uk/information-about-school-attendance-and-penalty-notices)

[Penalty Notice Code of Conduct \(bolton.gov.uk\)](https://www.bolton.gov.uk/penalty-notice-code-of-conduct)

The Decision when deciding whether to allow term time leave consideration is given to:

- The child's age.
- The time and duration of the leave.
- The child's record of attendance.
- The child's ability.
- Previous term time leave.

What Parents/Carers should consider:

There are times during a school year when a child may experience particular problems because of term time leave such as:

- Close to exams or tests, for example Standard Attainment Tests (SAT's) in Year 6 or phonics screening in Year 1.
- During the first year at a new school.
- At the beginning of a new school term.

If you wish to take your child out of school during term time you will need to complete an application form which is available from the School Office.

If school refuses your request for term time leave and your child is still taken out of school, this will be recorded as unauthorised absence and noted in your child's record and a penalty notice will be issued.

If your child is absent for 20 days or more, and we have received no contact from parents/carers, your child is at risk of losing their place at St Thomas' (Halliwell) CE Primary School

Persistent Absence:

If your child has an attendance of 90% or less, the following procedure will be followed:

- If your child is absent from school, the Attendance Officer will be in touch to find out the reason why. If the reason is deemed unnecessary, we will ask that you bring your child in to school.
- If you have 5 unauthorised absences, you will be issued with a warning letter.
- If you continue to have 5 more unauthorised absences (10 in total) you will be issued with a penalty notice.
- After a penalty notice, if further absences continue, you will be invited into school for a meeting. This is a supportive meeting in which we can explore the reasons why your child is having absences from school.
- If the attendance continues not to improve, a 'parental contract' will be put in place and set expectations for your child's attendance to improve. This will be over a four week period. This meeting will be supportive and school will offer any support if needed which will be outlined in the plan.
- In some cases, we will open an Early Help to support families that need it.
- If the parental contract and attendance targets agreed have not been met school will report this to the local authority. The Local Authority will consider whether or not to report you for prosecution under section 4441 or 4441 (A) of the Education Act 1996.
- ***Please see attendance flow chart below.***

Currently the potential penalties for a failure to ensure regular school attendance of a child include a fine of up to £2500 and/or up to 3 months imprisonment.

Lateness:

School starts at 8:45am. We expect that all children are 'in the line at quarter to nine'. Those children that are not will receive a late mark in the register.

If your child arrives at school after 9:30 AM this will be classed as an unauthorised late in the register. They will receive a U code in the register which will impact their overall attendance rate.

If your child has 5 unauthorised late marks, you will be issued with a warning letter.

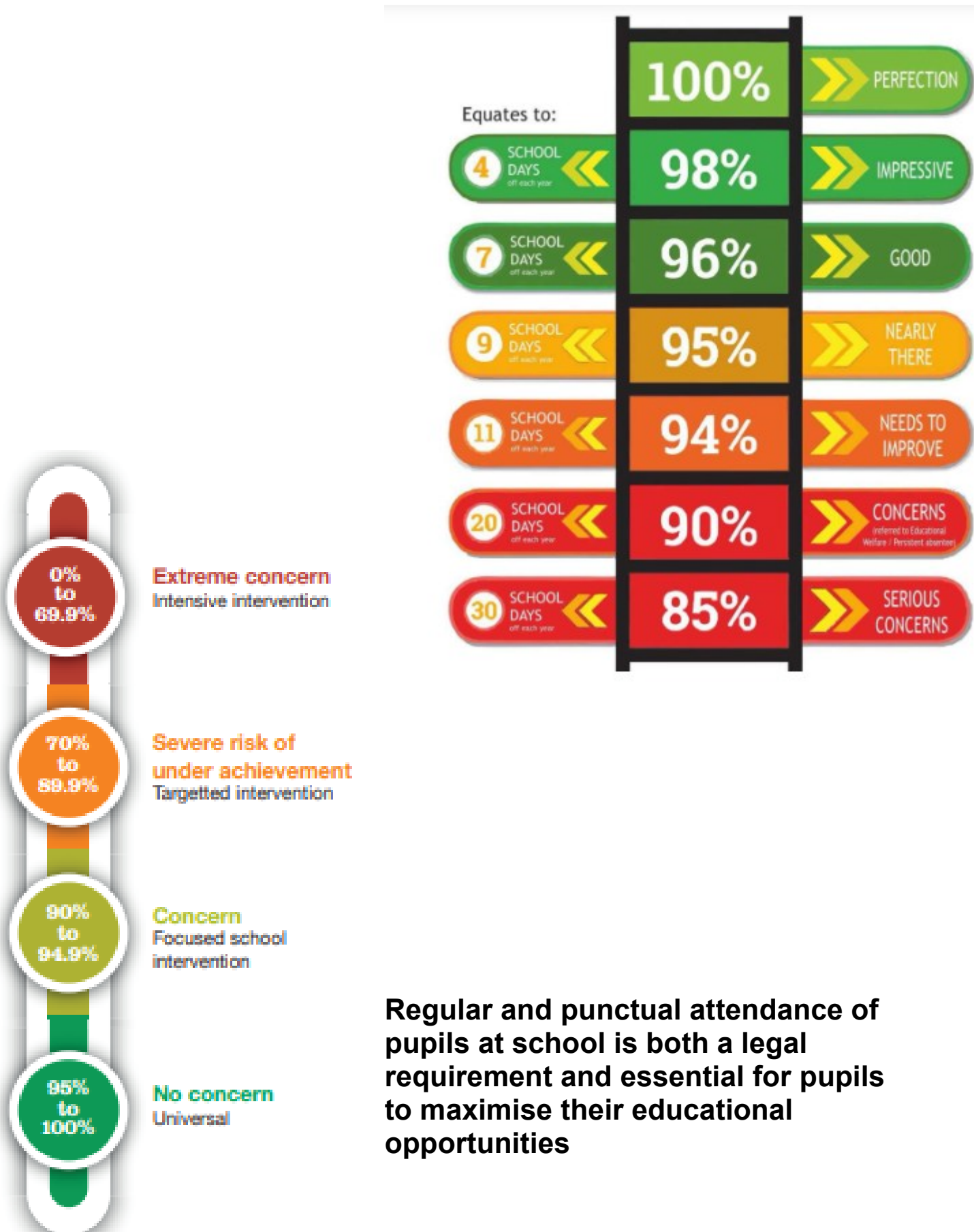
If your child has a further 5 unauthorised late marks, you will be issued with a fine.

The fixed penalty notice is £60 if paid within 28 days, which goes up to £120 if paid within 42 days.

Attendance Ladder:

Make sure your child is in school every day! If your child misses just one day, it can have a huge impact on their learning.

Take a look at the attendance ladder below:



Every half term you will receive a letter outlining your child's attendance. It will be colour coded as follows.

Your child's attendance is 96 – 100 %

Your child's attendance is 90 – 96 %

Your child's attendance is below 90 %

No concerns: Your child has good attendance.

Concerns: Your child's attendance needs to improve!

Serious concerns: Your child is a persistent absentee!

Your child has an attendance of less than 90 %

Your child will be added to the school's persistent absentee list. A message will be sent from the office to ask you to contact school. School will contact you to find out the reason for your absence. A home visit may be conducted in some cases.

No improvement

You will be invited in school for a meeting with to discuss the reasons for the absences and school can offer any support needed.

No improvement

A **parental contract** will be put in place outlining expectations of how we expect your child's attendance to improve. This will be monitored over a four week period.

No improvement

An **Early Help** will be put in place, further outlining the school's expectations of how we expect your child's attendance to improve and how we can support you. School will refer to Early Intervention Team if required to offer you further

Any further absences will be classed as unauthorised, unless school are provided with medical evidence.

Please note: 5 unauthorised absences will result in a warning letter. If you continue to have 5 more unauthorised absences (10 in total) you will be issued with a penalty notice.
This may result in parents being issued with a fixed penalty notice of £60 if paid within 28 days, which goes up to £120 if paid within 42 days.

If the parental contract and attendance targets agreed have not been met school will report this to the local authority. The Local Authority will consider whether or not to report you for prosecution under section 4441 or 4441 (A) of the Education Act 1996. Currently the potential penalties for a failure to ensure regular school attendance of a child include a fine of up to £2500 and/or up to 3 months imprisonment.