



## **Blackburn with Darwen L.A.**

### **St. Thomas's Centre**

#### **Attendance for Learning Policy**

#### **Rationale**

This Policy outlines the underlying philosophy, purpose, nature, organisation and management of student attendance at St Thomas's. It aims to ensure the enjoyment and achievement for all students at St Thomas's.

St Thomas's will provide an effective system of incentives and rewards which acknowledges the efforts of students to improve their attendance and will challenge the behaviour of those students and parents who have a low priority for punctuality and attendance.

To maximise attendance St Thomas's will establish an effective and efficient system of communication with students, parents and appropriate external agencies to provide mutual information advice and support.

#### **Principles**

The Management committee, Headteacher and staff wish to ensure every child has the opportunity to:

1. Fully participate in school life
2. Enjoy and achieve
3. Feel a valued member of the school and wider communities

#### **Aims**

1. To ensure individual plans are in place to raise attendance from baseline.
2. To reduce the number of student who persistently do not attend and ensure strategies have been reviewed and LA informed.
3. To consistently ensure safeguarding procedures are in place for those students whose attendance is a cause for concern.
4. To make attendance and punctuality a priority for all those associated with St Thomas's including students, parents, teachers and The Management Committee.
5. To ensure there is a whole school, graduated response to improving punctuality and attendance.

6. To define roles and responsibilities and promote consistency in carrying out designated tasks.
7. To use data effectively in order to identify groups of students and individuals whose absence causes concern and implement appropriate interventions.
8. To track students' attendance in order to monitor and evaluate progress.
9. To provide support, advice and guidance to parents and students.
10. To use appropriate assessments and develop strong multi-agency links in order to address higher levels of need.
11. To ensure a shared approach to resource provision and best practice across St Thomas's

### **Legal Responsibilities Relating to School Attendance**

Under Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act, a parent is responsible for ensuring that a child of compulsory school age receives an efficient full time education that is suitable to the child's age, aptitude and ability and any special educational needs a child might have.

### **Parental Responsibilities Relating to School Attendance**

Parents must:

- Ensure St Thomas's has up to date contact details. This also helps the school to ensure safeguarding. (Where parents/carers do not keep the school up to date with this information, we may need to refer to Children's Services).
- Contact St Thomas's on first day of absence to provide a reason for non-attendance prior to 9.30am.
- Provide medical evidence for absences due to medical appointment or illness where appropriate or at the request of St Thomas's
- Update the school daily for non attendance if the absence is expected to continue
- Not book holidays within term time. All holidays must take place within the allocated scheduled school holiday periods. (See appendix 1)
- To request any compassionate leave of absence in writing to the Headteacher. (See appendix 1)
- Work with the school and any other agencies to resolve any difficulties which may affect regular school attendance

### **St Thomas's Responsibilities Relating to School Attendance**

Each provision leader is the attendance lead for the allocated provision. As the attendance lead of the provision he / she will ensure:

- Registers are accurately marked and maintained in accordance with the Education (Student Registration) (England) Regulations 2006
- A whole provision approach to reinforce good attendance, teaching and learning to encourage all students to attend and achieve
- Individuals or group attendance targets are set and understood by staff, parents and students

### **Registration**

Parents should ensure students arrive promptly to school for breakfast club at 8:50am. Formal registration and lessons begin at 9:00am. Lateness will lead to further sanctions. Where lates are regular, parents/carers will be invited into the school to meet with the provision leader to discuss this as a concern and will offer support, where barriers to positive

punctuality have been identified. A support plan will be put into place by the Provision leader which will be monitored and reviewed weekly.

A student arriving after 10:00am, will be marked as late after the register closes. This is regarded as an unauthorised absence for the session and will be recorded on the register as a 'U' code. Students who regularly receive 'U' codes are stringently monitored. Where lateness is persistent, the school will issue a warning to parents/carers. If lateness continues following this warning, the school may issue a Fixed Penalty Notice, which can incur a fine of £120 per parent, per child. Where a student has additional unauthorised absences, the Local Authority may prosecute parents through the courts.

A student arriving in school after 9:10am should report to the main reception, giving a reason. The admin team will record as late on SIMs and include the reason.

### **Categorisation of Authorised and Unauthorised Absence**

The parent must provide an explanation for any period of absence from school. It is the responsibility of the Headteacher (or designated senior leader) to decide whether or not the absence will be authorised.

The school will usually authorise absences where a student is:

- Absent due to religious observance. This is limited to two days per period and must be requested in writing prior to absence. An 'R' code will be recorded.
- Unable to attend school due to illness. If a student without known medical needs has had 2 previous periods of illness, the school will only authorise further absences due to illness where medical evidence has been provided. (Parents/carers will be reminded about this via a letter after the 2<sup>nd</sup> period of illness).
- In need of emergency dental/medical appointments, parents/carers should endeavour to secure appointments outside of the school day. An appointment card should be supplied to the school prior to the appointment. The school will not authorise any medical appointment without an appointment letter or card.
- Absence due to other exceptional circumstances must be discussed with the provision lead. A decision will be made whether to authorise any such absence on its individual merit.

The school will not authorise absence for the following reasons. Note: this is not a definitive list.

- Applications for term time holidays
- Shopping
- Birthdays
- Days out
- Looking after siblings
- Visiting sick relatives (home or abroad)

The School may request medical verification where a student's attendance falls below their individual target and/or your child is on an attendance plan.

### **School Trips**

Those trips associated with rewards will only be sanctioned for those students who have achieved reached individual attendance targets .

**Rewards**

All rewards will be linked to individual attendance targets and behaviour as well as achievement.

**Truancy**

Where a student's truancy is regular, Provision Leaders should follow up in the form of parental/carers meeting.

**Provision for supervised learning at home**

Where a student is not able to attend school when they would be usually timetabled for onsite provision, in special circumstances, guided, supervised work can be provided for the student (Refer to Appendix 2 and 2a).

**School Systems for Promoting Regular Attendance**

School will:

- Contact parents on first day of a student's absence, where no notification has been received from the parent/carers by 9:30am to ensure the safety of the student. This is done via personal telephone calls / emails or texts.
- Analyse individual attendance student data to identify patterns of absence causing concern
- Contact parents by letter when students' attendance falls below individual target to highlight concerns
- Invite parents in to school for a discussion when a student's attendance is of continued concern
- Conduct home visits if necessary, for safeguarding purposes. Where a student is absent for more than 5 consecutive days and not seen by school staff, a CME (Child Missing in Education) form will be forwarded to the Local Authority.
- Consider referral to The Local Authority when school action has failed to bring about an improvement in the student's attendance. This may result in legal proceedings being instigated
- Use Individual Attendance Support Plans for students with attendance difficulties
- Consider the use of Parenting Contracts, particularly where exclusion or behavioural issues are affecting a student's attendance in school
- In partnership with the Local Authority use a full range of strategies, including legal interventions, to support improvement to attendance
- Provide appropriate support to students to ensure successful reintegration following long term absence
- Discuss persistent absent students at school safeguarding meetings.
- Implement a range of rewards for students with high levels of attendance and those improving attendance
- Work proactively to engage with parents and carers to resolve any difficulties which may be affecting school attendance, through parents meetings, student reviews and home-school agreements
- Provide a full and diverse curriculum to engage and motivate students, including use of Emotional Literacy to promote emotional well-being
- Make parents aware of the impact of poor attendance on attainment
- Work with local business and industrial partners to help raise the profile of positive attendance within the local community
- Work with local schools to target those students with attendance difficulties at an early stage.

### **Review of Policy**

- This policy will be formally reviewed every year
- This policy will be less formally reviewed on a half termly basis via safeguarding meetings
- A copy of this policy is available on The School website
- A summarised version of this policy is given to all parents and students who are starting at St Thomas's.
- A paper copy of the policy is in the staff handbook and the handbook for The Management committee.
- Any complaints arising from the implementation of this policy should be addressed to St Thomas's Headteacher in the first instance

### **Aim No.1**

#### **To achieve whole school 95% attendance by 2017 – 18**

- Apply whole School attendance policy consistently.
- Establish and maintain a high profile for attendance and punctuality
- Relate attendance issues directly to student attainment and the School's values, ethos and curriculum.
- Monitor progress in attendance via measureable outcomes.
- Adopt a less accepting approach to authorising absence including holidays in term time.
- Effective partnership working with the Local Authority.
- Introduce the use of Fixed Penalty Notices for persistent lateness after registration closed and unauthorised term time holidays.

### **Aim No. 2**

#### **To ensure that persistent absence is consistently reduced year on year working towards the DFE target of no more than 5% by 2016**

- Early identification of at risk students through effective analysis of data.
- Effective communication with parents of at risk students to ensure they understand the impact and level of absence.
- Thorough assessment of need, and where appropriate, the use of multi-agency approaches to support families and students to improve attendance.
- Action planning and robust reviewing procedure for all students at risk.

### **Aim No. 3**

#### **To make attendance and punctuality a priority for all those associated with The School including students, parents, teachers and Management Committee members.**

- Develop summarised accessible versions of this policy differentiated for students, parents, teachers and Management Committee members.
- Regular reporting of attendance levels to parents / teachers / Management Committee members.
- Display materials at focal points – teaching rooms, meeting room, staff room etc.
- Overt promotion of attendance in tutor groups and staff meetings.
- Introduce tailored rewards schemes within year groups/provisions.

**Aim No. 4**

**To ensure there is a whole school, graduated response to improving punctuality and attendance.**

- Provision lead to meet regularly with provision team to ensure effective escalation of process (refer to flowchart of escalation of process at the end of this document).
- Develop whole school attendance strategies and embed.
- Hold regular attendance planning meetings via provision leaders.

**Aim No. 5**

**To define roles and responsibilities and promote consistency in carrying out designated tasks.**

- Maintain unambiguous procedures for statutory registration.
- Make clear each member of staff's responsibilities in relation to attendance (Refer to Appendix 2: Roles and responsibilities).
- Publicise the framework of roles and responsibilities through INSET and use of the staff handbook.
- Provision Lead to meet regularly with Headteacher to ensure consistent approach to addressing attendance concerns through all year groups.

**Aim No. 6**

**To use data effectively in order to identify groups of students and individuals whose absence causes concern and implement appropriate interventions.**

- Maintain an effective system of electronic registration
- Ensure electronic registration is accurate and timely
- With support from the Local Authority, continue to develop methods of data analysis.
- Identify patterns and trends for various cohorts on a half termly basis.
- Make full use of attendance software.

**Aim No. 7**

**To track students' attendance and monitor and evaluate progress.**

- Initiate first day absence contact
- Follow up unexplained absence in writing.
- Promote expectation of absence letters / phone calls
- Maintain computerised records of attendance.
- Attendance target setting and review process implemented for all students falling below 90% attendance.

**Aim No. 8**

**To provide support, advice and guidance to parents and students.**

- Promote attendance in tutor time and PSHE.
- Ensure timely communication to parents if attendance is a concern.
- Continue to develop strong positive relationships with parents, as members of the extended school community.
- Meet with parents and students to discuss barriers to attendance and assess need.
- Make referrals to the school's Education Welfare Officer, School Health and/or inclusion pathways following reviews of individual student plans.
- Provision Leaders to work closely with Teaching Assistants to ensure students needing support have access to it.

- Where necessary undertake home visits or arrange meeting venues to suit the parents' preference.

**Aim No. 9**

**To use appropriate assessment and develop strong multi-agency links in order to address higher levels of need.**

- Advocate use of Common Assessment Framework for those students higher levels/complex needs.
- Liaise closely with the School's SENCO for students with identified SEN.
- Continue to develop strong working partnerships with relevant agencies.
- Use Schools procedures to raise concerns about students in need (Inclusion, Safeguarding, Health)
- Safeguarding procedures will be activated following any absence of 6 days or more, where there has been no contact made by home

**Aim No 10**

**To ensure a shared approach to resource provision and best practice across provisions.**

- Regular meetings between provision leaders across school will ensure the sharing of best practice and common approach to implementing systems and procedures.
- A common Attendance for Learning Policy will be adopted across all provisions.
- To ensure all staff are aware of their responsibilities for safeguarding in terms of registers and reporting truancy and absence.

## Appendix 1

### Leave of Absence in Term Time

St Thomas's is committed to maximising the potential of every child and good attendance and punctuality are essential to this aim. We feel this will be achieved, with the support of parents/carers by ensuring that holidays are not taken in school time. Absence during term time for any reasons interrupts the continuity of teaching and learning and disrupts the educational progress of students.

### The Law

From 1<sup>st</sup> September 2013, the Department for Education has changed the way schools look at applications for holidays in term time. ALL schools and academies both at secondary and primary level have been directed to not authorise any holidays in term time. Any reference to holidays has now been removed from documents. (The Education, Student Registration, England, Amendment, Regulations 2013).

- (i) St Thomas's will **not** grant permission for holidays or extended leave to be taken in term time.
- (ii) St Thomas's will only consider leave of absence for compassionate leave, in exceptional circumstances, for one period of absence lasting up to **five days** and where the student has achieved individual attendance targets or above. This can be applied for in writing to The Headteacher. A meeting will be arranged to consider the application further. Any travel arrangements should **not** be made prior to leave being authorised. The School will not be held responsible for any costs incurred where travel arrangements have been if the School does not authorise the absence.

### Special and Exceptional Circumstances

The Headteacher or person designated by the Headteacher may consider that the following circumstances are "special" or "exceptional". (This is not an extensive list)

- Unavoidable circumstances e.g. the parent/carer has inflexible leave allocation and this has been confirmed by the employer.
- A family member is seriously ill.
- There has been a death or significant trauma in the family.

**PLEASE NOTE IF AUTHORISED, A MAXIMUM OF FIVE SCHOOL DAYS MAY BE GRANTED**

### However

- Availability of "cheap" holidays
- Availability of desired accommodation
- The prospect of better weather
- Weddings
- Birthdays

would not be considered as exceptional circumstances and therefore compassionate leave of absence will NOT be granted.



**ST THOMAS'S ADVISES YOU NOT TO BOOK FLIGHTS OR TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS UNTIL  
THE APPLICATION FOR EXCEPTIONAL LEAVE HAS BEEN GRANTED**

Where compassionate leave is granted The School will authorise a 'C' code. This means the absence is authorised on the attendance register.

Where a student is taken out of school for the purpose of a holiday in term time or where an extended absence has been taken without permission, the parent/carer of the student will be issued with a £120.00 Penalty Notice. This is an imposed fine by the Local Authority, per parent per child. (We will consult other schools where siblings attend and issue the notice for all children). If the notice remains unpaid after 28 days the Local Authority will commence proceedings under section 444(1) of the 1996 Education Act in the Magistrates Court. This may result in the parent(s)/carer(s) having a criminal record for ten years and any conviction will appear on a CRB check. This may adversely affect employability.

**NB**

*Where a student has additional unauthorised absences prior to an unauthorised leave of absence, The School will consult with the Local Authority and request that the case is prepared directly for prosecution through the courts and not the Penalty Notice process.*

**Appendix 2: Interim part timetables**

Process:

- 1) Issue identified, discussed by Provision Leaders. A final decision must be made in consultation with the Headteacher and parents / carers, in line with School's policies, DCSF legislation and the efficient use of resources. Medical evidence or consent to contact health professionals should be obtained at this point if appropriate.
- 2) Referral made to Education Social Worker to instigate 'Supervised learning at home' procedure. ***Signed authorisation must be obtained from the Provision leader.***
- 3) Meeting with parent / carer to discuss details of plan and to obtain signature on 'Education outside school' form (contains plan, review dates and main contact; see 1a).
- 4) Provision Leaders to announce in provision briefing and request work with deadline.
- 5) If the student is unable to return to school within 2 weeks the Individual Personalised Support Plan procedure should be adopted, to ensure the plan is reviewed and evaluated regularly and that the process is supporting effective learning.
- 6) Provision Leader to keep detailed records of the dates (and nature of) work provided, handed in, returned after marking; regular contact to be made and recorded from nominated staff to ensure instruction is given, guidance can be requested and support given. Records of online learning access also kept.

**Appendix 2a: Supervised learning at home pro-forma**

Permission from Headteacher obtained on ..... (date).....

Parental agreement obtained on .....(date).....

Review due .....(date)

Nominated keyworker.....

Provision Leader.....

|  |   |
|--|---|
| Name:  | Form:   |
| Parents name(s):   |   |
| Rationale for providing supervised learning at home:   |   |
| Dates of expected absence:   | Is the absence expected to be longer than 2 weeks?<br><br>(If so the PSP/ESP procedure must be adopted) |
| Agreed by (SLT):   | Signature:  |
| Please detail priority subject areas / pieces or work (consider any coursework deadlines, upcoming exams / assessments, areas to be strengthened, or areas of interest): |   |
| Detail arrangements for the delivery and retrieval of work (inc. dates, method, by whom etc):  |   |
| Nominated keyworkers e-mail:   | Academy telephone number:   |

## Roles, Responsibilities and Interventions

| Level 1  |   | Level 2   | Level 3   | Level 4   |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| <b>Designated provision staff (or directed staff by provision leader) DAILY</b>  | <b>Class Teacher</b>  | <b>Provision Leader</b>   | <b>Education Social Worker (ESW)</b>  | <b>External Agencies</b>  | <b>The Core Attendance Team</b>   |
| <p>Electronically record statutory attendance during registration.</p> <p>Monitor attendance and punctuality of provision.</p> <p>To contact parents concerns about poor attendance and punctuality to school.</p> | <p>To report any student who leaves lesson without permission</p> | <p>Monitor provision group statutory registers.</p> <p>Support tutors to monitor attendance and punctuality of form.</p> <p>Set form targets half termly.</p> <p>Ensure attendance and punctuality is raised regularly at provision meetings and through assemblies</p> | <p>Collate and analyse whole school and specific cohort data to identify trends and inform strategic planning.</p> <p>Meet regularly with provision leads and agencies to address attendance issues.</p> <p>Keep abreast of any new guidance or legislation pertaining to</p> | <p>To support home visits for attendance and safeguarding purposes</p> <p>To host Educational Parenting Contract meetings at the local police station (Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003)</p> <p>To meet regularly</p> | <p>To support the School to develop robust procedure and strategy to reduce absence levels.</p> <p>To challenge and take direct statutory action with parents who fail to ensure that their children attend school regularly,</p> |

|  |  |  |  |   |  |
|--|--|--|--|---|--|
| <p>Award rewards and apply consequences as per <i>attendance/beaviour policy / pastoral guidance.</i></p> <p>Using specified weekly tutor time address / discuss attendance issues with individuals. (To include chasing up notes, discovering reasons of non-attendance, concerns of student, setting targets).</p> <p><b>WE DO NEED THIS</b></p> |  | <p>Implement reward strategy for attendance and punctuality</p> <p>Attend regular meetings with Attendance Officer.</p> <p>Communicate and discuss attendance concerns with parents, requesting medical evidence if appropriate.</p> <p>Set targets for individual students.</p> <p>Respond to data for QA meetings.</p> <p><b>Directly inform</b></p> | <p>attendance.</p> <p>Work closely with partner agencies to support the needs of students and families whose attendance is of concern.</p> <p>To arrange and hold attendance panels/surgeries .</p> <p>To conduct assessment of need and plan appropriate intervention.</p> <p>To produce termly reports for governors/Trust Board Members.</p> <p>To action whole</p> | <p>with Attendance Lead regarding strategy and attendance concerns</p> <p><b>Directly inform Child Protection Officer if a student is absent for 6 continuous days.</b></p> | <p>using the court process and/or fixed penalty notices as appropriate.</p> <p><b>Directly inform Child Protection Officer if a student is absent for 6 continuous days.</b></p> |
|--|--|--|--|---|--|

|   |  |   |  |  |  |
|---|--|---|--|--|--|
| <p><b>Directly inform ESW if a student is absent for 6 continuous days.</b></p> |  | <p><b>ESW if a student is absent for 6 continuous days.</b></p> | <p>school attendance reporting to parents.</p> <p><b>Directly follow Child Protection procedures if a student is absent for 6 continuous days.</b></p> |  |  |
|---|--|---|--|--|--|

Approving Body & Date:

Signed on behalf of Management Committee Chair and Head Teacher: *D. Thomson* (Vice Chair)

Date: December 2016

Reviewed: December 2017