

## THOMAS MILLS HIGH SCHOOL



### POLICY DOCUMENT 83

# ATTENDANCE POLICY

**This whole policy will be reviewed again with the September 2022  
statutory guidance in mind**

Next review due:	Currently under review
Date approved by Board of Trustees	22 <sup>nd</sup> March 2022
Policy Owner:	Assistant Headteacher, Pastoral

#### **Vision Statement**

***We, the staff and governors, aspire  
to ensure that all our students,  
irrespective of ability  
and regardless of anyone's doubts,  
achieve their potential in full;  
and we aspire in this way to make Thomas Mills High School  
the best in the country.***

# Thomas Mills High School

## Attendance Policy

Thomas Mills High School is committed to providing the highest quality of education for all its students, recognising that this can only be achieved by promoting and supporting excellent school attendance. Only by attending school regularly and punctually will children and young people be able to take full advantage of the educational and social opportunities available to them. High attainment depends on good attendance, particularly following the challenges of the pandemic. Not only is poor attendance likely to harm students' progress and attainment, it is also a potential safeguarding risk.

Jon Yates (CEO Youth Endowment Fund) has recently commented: *"Being away from school not only limits a child's ability to succeed academically, but also puts them at risk of criminal exploitation or trapped in dangerous home environments. Absences from school means that children can't receive the support they might need from their teachers or pastoral staff, which could help to keep them from harm. Simply put, to keep children safe, we need to know how best to keep them in school"*.

The report, *Securing good attendance and tackling persistent absence* (Ofsted 2022), distills its advice down to: *"Listen, understand, empathise and support – but do not tolerate"*. The report also emphasises persistence and high expectations.

Therefore, the whole school community – students, parents and carers, teaching and support staff, and school trustees and governors – have a responsibility for promoting and ensuring good school attendance. Part of the purpose of this policy is to clarify everyone's part in this.

The policy is based upon current government and statutory regulations. The school will be responsible for ensuring that all members of the community are made aware of the policy and have access to it.

### Monitoring and Evaluation

This policy will be reviewed annually but can be revised as needed. Governance will ensure this policy is implemented and commission external scrutiny to ensure its evaluation. Internally, the school will review the implementation of the policy through the regular monitoring of relevant data and work, where required, with external agencies including Educational Welfare.

Thomas Mills High School encourages all parents and carers to work positively and constructively in partnership with us in order to improve attendance and punctuality where needed, recognizing that; *"parents have the primary responsibility to ensure that pupils of compulsory school age attend school regularly"*.

Suffolk County Council's Attendance expectations are on their website; Thomas Mills High School adheres to their principals which include the following;

### *Why a child should attend school*

*Attendance at school is vital for a child's ability to learn, develop and achieve.*

*As a parent or carer of a child of school age, you should:*

- *send your child to school on time every day with the correct uniform and equipment*
- *contact the child's school on their first day of absence if they are unwell, and return them to school as soon as they are well enough*
- *take holidays only during school holidays*

#### **Absence**

*Your child's absence is only acceptable if:*

- *your child cannot attend school due to illness, injury or other unavoidable causes (e.g. family bereavement) or*
- *your family is observing a time of religious importance*

**and**

- *leave has been authorised by the school*
- *the local council has not provided transport for children living 2 miles away from school if they are aged 7 or younger, or for children living 3 miles away who are aged 8 and over*

*If your child needs time off please inform their [school](#) as soon as possible.*

*If you are worried about your child's attendance please contact:*

- *their school and discuss it with them*
- *If this does not resolve the issue then ask to speak to their school's education welfare officer. The school will have their name and contact details.*

*Research shows the positive impact good school attendance has on a pupil's academic achievement.*

#### **Aims & Objectives**

One purpose of this attendance policy is to ensure that all staff and trustees are fully aware of and clear about the actions necessary to promote excellent/good attendance.

The policy aims to;

- Maintain and improve students' achievement via high levels of attendance and punctuality;
- Maintain and improve students' social, emotional and mental wellbeing via high levels of attendance and punctuality;
- Achieve a minimum of 96% attendance for all pupils, with the exception of those with chronic health issues;
- Create an ethos in which excellent attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm and are seen to be valued by the school and its community;
- Raise awareness in parents, carers and students of the importance of uninterrupted, excellent attendance and punctuality at every stage of a child's education;
- Work in partnership with students, parents, staff and the Education Attendance Service in order that all students realise their potential;
- Promote a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which students feel safe, secure and valued, encouraging additionally in students a sense of their own responsibility;

- Establish a clear and workable system of monitoring attendance, ensuring consistency in recognising achievement and in dealing with challenges;
- Recognise the key role of all staff in promoting excellent/good attendance as part of their pastoral responsibility.

### School's Responsibilities

As all staff are expected to place a high value on regular attendance and punctuality, they also have a responsibility to set a good example to students in matters relating to their own attendance and punctuality. All staff have an identified role to play in creating an environment where positive attitudes towards attendance are fostered

All school staff are responsible for ensuring that students have good attendance by:

- Form tutors and subject staff ensuring that registers are kept accurately;
- Differentiating appropriately between what constitutes *authorised* and *unauthorised* absence; a parental note/message does not in itself authorise an absence – Head of Year and Assistant Headteacher (Pastoral) in liaison with the Attendance Officer will liaise and decide whether any explanation given justifies authorising an absence;
- Responding to absence firmly, consistently and with care, and as outlined in the Attendance Guidance structure (\*Appendix A);
- As outlined in \*Appendix A, the Form Tutor, Head of Year and Attendance Officer will contact parents when they are concerned about a student's absence and keep records of that contact using MyConcern;
- The Assistant Headteacher (Pastoral) in liaison with Head of Year and Attendance Officer will consult with the Education Attendance Service (EAS) via half-termly meetings with the Educational Welfare Officer (EWO) and at other times if a student's attendance continues to give cause for concern (as outlined in \*Appendix A);
- Promoting regular school attendance (for example, via the Attendance Officer contacting parents on the first day of absence if no parental contact has been forthcoming, and on subsequent days of absence);
- Acknowledging excellent/good or improved attendance of individual students and classes via postcards, certificates, achievement assemblies etc.

### Parents'/Carers' Responsibilities

Parents and carers have a statutory duty to ensure regular attendance at school of students of compulsory school age. It is the intention of the school to work with parents to enable all students to achieve the benefits that a regular attendance pattern brings. Children who are persistently absent and/or late can rapidly fall behind with their learning. Children who are frequently absent from school can develop large gaps in their learning which will impact upon their progress, their ability to meet age-related learning expectations, and future academic outcomes.

Punctuality: it is the parent's/carer's responsibility:

- To ensure that their child/children arrive at school on time;
  - Morning registration begins at 8.55am and all students should be in their tutor bases by this time;
  - Any student arriving after [insert time - still need to check detail with EWO and use of codes *late before reg.* / *late after reg.*] will be marked as 'late'; however, school

- recognises that on rare occasions bus/coach travel may encounter circumstances delaying students' arrival to school;
- Students who arrive after morning registration has been taken will need to report to reception to sign-in, as will any student arriving later in the school day, or those leaving early in the school day (for example, for a medical appointment) who will need to sign-out;
  - Class registers will also be taken at the beginning of every lesson; students arriving late to lessons will be marked as such, and any student not in a lesson without a reason being tagged to their profile (for example, a music lesson) will be raised with the Attendance Officer via a pquery.

Absence: it is the parent's/carer's responsibility:

- To notify the school on the first day of their child's absence as soon as possible telephoning the attendance line and/or emailing;
- To provide medical evidence if requested to support their child's absence;
- To ensure that, as far as possible, appointments of a medical nature are arranged outside school hours. Where this is not possible, parents/carers will be expected to provide evidence of the appointment in advance, and their child should attend school before/after the appointment;
- To liaise with school via their child's Form Tutor and/or the Attendance Officer as soon as possible regarding any specific issues that might cause absence or lateness;
- Parents/carers of children who have not provided a reason for absence will be contacted by telephone and/or email on the first day of absence, and on subsequent days of absence should a reason not be forthcoming.

Illness/Medical Absence:

- In addition to the above, if a child is repeatedly absent due to illness, the school is likely to request medical evidence for further absences; evidence can take the form of a GP appointment card/email, a copy of a prescription, a consultant's letter etc.
- An automatic request for medical evidence may be instigated if the authenticity of an illness is in doubt; for example, in cases of any illness absence taken immediately before or after a school holiday.

Absence for Holidays and Requests for Leave of Absence:

- It is the expectation that parents/carers do not take their children out of school for holidays during term time in order to minimize the impact of missing education;
- Parents/carers requesting a holiday during term time must complete a Leave of Absence request form (\*Appendix B) at least four weeks in advance of the intended trip; such requests will be considered on a case-by-case basis by the Assistant Headteacher (Pastoral) in liaison with the relevant Head of Year;
- It is the parent's/carer's responsibility to obtain/access a Leave of Absence form either from the school office or school website, and to complete and submit the form in advance of the intended period of absence (four weeks or more in advance);
- If parents/carers decide to take a holiday without the school's authorization, the child's absence will be marked as unauthorized; this may then impact upon overall attendance with further action being necessary (see \*Appendix A);

- An immediate fixed penalty notice fine will be issued when six or more unauthorised absence sessions have been recorded (amounting to three whole days in total); school will notify parents about attendance should six unauthorised sessions have been recorded and no further unauthorised absence will be expected following this;
- The penalty is £60 if paid within 21 days; please note this amount applies to each child, and for each parent/carer (e.g. 2 children, two parents/carers = £240 fine), increasing to £120 between 21 and 28 days.

#### Absence for Other Reasons:

- It is the parent's/carer's responsibility:
  - To inform their child's Form Tutor, Head of Year and Attendance Officer in writing of the need for leave for circumstances which are known in advance;
  - To inform the school as soon as possible when sudden or unforeseen circumstances occur which prevent a child from attending school in order that the appropriate code can be recorded in the register, and suitable support offered if needed.

#### Unexplained Absence:

- When a student is repeatedly absent with no satisfactory reason provided, or a student's attendance drops below 95%, contact will be made as outlined in \*Appendix A;
- Where a student's absence drops below 90%, or a student is persistently absent (attendance remains below 90%), further action will be necessary including requesting parents/carers to attend a meeting with members of the Pastoral Team directly involved with their child in order to discuss forms of support, potential referrals and potential EWO involvement – see \*Appendix A.

**\*The Appendices referred to in this policy are under review.**

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