

# ATTENDANCE

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Within this Attendance Policy a parent is defined as in Section 576, Education Act 1996. This means all natural parents, whether married or not and includes any person who, although not a biological parent, has responsibility or has care of the child or young person.

## **Introduction:**

This is a successful Community College and your child plays their part in making it so. We aim for an environment which enables and encourages all members of the community to reach out for excellence. For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly and your child should be at College, on time, every day the College is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. This school attendance policy is written to reflect the law and also the guidance produced by the Department of Education.

It is very important therefore that you make sure that your child has excellent attendance and this Policy sets out how together we will achieve this.

## **Why regular attendance is so important:**

Any absence (including lateness) affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class. Ensuring your child's excellent attendance at school is your legal responsibility, and permitting absence from school without a good reason is an offence in law and may result in a Penalty Notice (for each parent) and/or prosecution.

## **Promoting regular attendance:**

Helping to create a pattern of excellent attendance is everybody's responsibility – parents, pupils and all members of school staff.

## **To help us all to focus on this we will:**

- Give you information on attendance
- Provide you with reports on how your child is performing in school, what their attendance is, and how this relates to their attainment
- Celebrate good attendance each term through certificates.
- Reward good or improving attendance through certificates and prize draws.

## **Understanding absence:**

By law, every half-day absence from school has to be coded by the school (not by the parent), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the reason for any absence is always required. *Codes are given in Appendix 1.*

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a genuine reason such as illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other exceptional circumstances. Approved education activities are coded as a present mark. Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings.

These include:

- parents keeping children off school unnecessarily (i.e. condoned absence)
- truancy during the school day
- absences which have never been properly explained
- failure to request 'exceptional circumstances' leave of absence
- children who arrive at school too late to get a mark

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- shopping, looking after other children, birthdays
- day trips and holidays in term-time

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance should be addressed by the school, the parents and the child. If your child is reluctant to attend school, you should not cover up their absence or give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and this usually makes things worse.

## **Persistent Absenteeism (PA):**

Thomas Estley College aims for all its students to have 96% attendance or above to allow consistency in learning. There is a great deal of information available about achievement which clearly shows low levels of absence have a negative impact on learning.

We monitor all pupil absence and pupils with below 90% attendance are tracked and monitored carefully by our Attendance Officer. A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when their attendance falls below 90% for whatever reason. Absence at this level causes considerable damage to any child's education and we need parents' fullest co-operation to tackle this.

## **Absence Procedures:**

### **If your child is absent you must:**

- Telephone the school on the first day of absence by 9.30am.  
Thomas Estley College has an answerphone for absences where parents can leave a message.
- Contact the College on a regular basis and keep the school informed regarding any prolonged absences do we need to be more specific than 'regular basis'?
- Provide medical evidence (Doctor's appointment card, prescription or prescribed medication) for absences due to illness of 5 days or more

### **If your child is absent we will:**

- Telephone you on the first day of absence (or *on subsequent days*) if we have not heard from you
- Write to you when your child's attendance falls below 90%.
- Write to you if we are concerned about your child's attendance to alert you to any emerging patterns or level of absence
- Invite you in to discuss the situation if absences persist

To address issues with pupil attendance we may:

- Request medical evidence for regular and/or prolonged absence
- Carry out home visits where the school is concerned about the validity of a child's absence
- Arrange for a visit to your home to be undertaken to establish that your child is safe. This could be by a Police Officer.
- Liaise with the other agencies and Traveller Education Service
- Take all reasonable steps to address the identified attendance issues.

Copies of all correspondence regarding your child's attendance are stored in your child's file.

## **Telephone numbers:**

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There are times when we need to contact parents about a variety of matters, including absence, so we need to have all of your contact numbers for all times of the day. Please help us to help you and your child by making sure that these are kept up to date.

## **Pupil Services Court Team - Leicestershire County Council:**

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be resolved in this way, the Attendance Improvement Officer may refer the matter to the Court Officer for the Pupil Services Court Team in the Local Authority for further action. Court Officers can use sanctions such as Penalty Notices or prosecutions in the Magistrates' Court. Full details of the options open to enforce attendance at school are available from the school or the Local Authority. (Please note that Penalty Notices can be issued by the Local Authority immediately following a period of leave that has not been authorised by the school.)

See Leicestershire County Council Website for more details [www.leics.gov.uk](http://www.leics.gov.uk)

## **Lateness:**

Persistent lateness is a serious concern and may affect your child's educational progress. Late arrival to class also disrupts lessons, can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage absence.

## **How we manage lateness:**

The school opens at 8.15am and pupil registration will take place in tutor time, 8.30-8.50am.

**At 8.50am the registers are closed. In accordance with the Regulations, if your child arrives after that time, unless they have been to an unavoidable medical appointment, they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site (U code see Appendix 1), but this will not count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. This may mean that you could face the possibility of further action from the Local Authority if the problem persists.**

If your child is late they will receive a B5 late detention. If your child has a persistent late record a letter of concern will be sent to you and you may be asked to resolve the problem. You can approach the school at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time.

## **Exceptional circumstances leave of absence in term-time:**

From September 2013 the DFE have issued new guidelines in relation to leave in term time.

From the 1<sup>st</sup> September 2013, **the new law gives no entitlement to parents to take their child on holiday during term time.** Any application for leave must only be in **exceptional and unavoidable** circumstances and the Principal must be satisfied that the circumstances are **exceptional, unavoidable** and warrant the granting of leave. **Principals would not be expected to class any term time holiday as exceptional.** Parents can receive a Penalty Notice from the Local Authority for taking their child on holiday during term time without consent from the school.

The Local Governing Body of Thomas Estley Community College deems exceptional leave to be:

- Bereavement of a direct/close **family** member
- Medical treatment/advice by a registered medical practitioner.

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Holidays, weddings or other visits to relatives are not deemed to be exceptional events which cannot be foreseen and will therefore not be authorised.

**All applications/requests for exceptional leave must be received in writing to the Principal in advance of the absence and in making a decision the school will consider the circumstances of each application individually and you will be notified of the decision in writing.**

Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school, or in excess of that agreed, will be coded as unauthorised and may result in a Penalty Notice being issued to parents. The school can request a Penalty Notice be issued from the Pupil Services Court Team at Leicestershire County Council. A Penalty Notice is £60 per parent, per child, to be paid within 21 days. Failure to pay the fine(s) within this timescale would mean the fine rising to £120 to be paid within 28 days of the original fine being issued. If the fine(s) remain unpaid after the full period of 28 days has expired, parents may face legal action under section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

Any complaints regarding the Principal's decision on whether to authorise exceptional circumstances leave should be put in writing to the Chair of the Board of Governors.

## **The registration system:**

The school will use a computerised system for keeping school attendance records. The national codes (*Appendix 1*) are used to record attendance information.

**Those people responsible for attendance matters in this school are given in Principal**

## **Equality Monitoring**

Thomas Estley Community College's commitment to equality and diversity means that this policy, via an Equality Impact Assessment, has been screened in relation to the use of gender-neutral language, recognition of the needs of disabled people, promotion of the positive duty in relation to race, age, disability and avoidance of stereotypes.

Based on the Equality Impact Assessment findings, this policy is judged to be of low impact against the equality strands of Race, Gender, Religion, Disability Sexual Orientation and Age. A copy of the Equality Impact Assessment of this policy is available from the Principal's PA.

This Policy is available in alternative formats on request. If you think we can improve the fairness of this Policy, please contact the individual who has responsibility for its update.

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## Appendix 1

CODE	DESCRIPTION	MEANING
\	Present (AM)	Present
/	Present (PM)	Present
<b>B</b>	Educated off site (NOT Dual registration)	Approved Education Activity
<b>C</b>	Other Authorised Circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code/description)	Authorised absence
<b>D</b>	Dual registration (i.e. pupil attending other establishment)	Approved Education Activity
<b>E</b>	Excluded (no alternative provision made)	Authorised absence
<b>G</b>	Family holiday (NOT agreed <u>or</u> days in excess of agreement)	Unauthorised absence
<b>H</b>	Family holiday (agreed)	Authorised absence
<b>I</b>	Illness (NOT medical or dental etc. appointments)	Authorised absence
<b>J</b>	Interview	Approved Education Activity
<b>L</b>	Late (before registers closed)	Present
<b>M</b>	Medical/Dental appointments	Authorised absence
<b>N</b>	No reason yet provided for absence	Unauthorised absence
<b>O</b>	Unauthorised absence (not covered by any other code/description)	Unauthorised absence
<b>P</b>	Approved sporting activity	Approved Education Activity
<b>R</b>	Religious observance	Authorised absence
<b>S</b>	Study leave	Authorised absence
<b>T</b>	Traveller absence	Authorised absence
<b>U</b>	Late (after registers closed)	Unauthorised absence
<b>V</b>	Educational visit or trip	Approved Education Activity
<b>W</b>	Work experience	Approved Education Activity
<b>X</b>	Untimetabled sessions for non-compulsory school age	Not counted in possible attendances
<b>Y</b>	Enforced closure	Not counted in possible attendances
<b>Z</b>	Pupil not yet on roll	Not counted in possible attendances
<b>#</b>	school closed to pupils	Not counted in possible attendances