THAMESFIELD COLLEGE

CHANGING LIVES | CREATING FUTURES

Attendance Policy

Policy 0024 | 2026–2027

Review: July 2027

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Attendance Policy

Changing Lives | Creating Futures

Policy statement
Thamesfield College works with pupils, families, home schools and Surrey to secure regular attendance, remove barriers and act promptly when a pupil is absent. Every pupil is entitled to a suitable full-time education, with individual support and reasonable adjustments where needed.

Document control information

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School	Thamesfield College
School type	Pupil Referral Unit
Policy owner	Headteacher
Approved by	Management Committee
Senior attendance champion	Inclusion Manager
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1 Purpose and principles

Thamesfield College expects pupils to attend every session for which they are required to attend and to arrive on time, ready to learn. Regular attendance protects pupils' education, relationships and wellbeing. We work with families to understand difficulties and improve attendance from each pupil's starting point, while maintaining the ambition of suitable full-time education for every pupil.

This policy applies at Hersham and Staines and to attendance arrangements for pupils educated through linked schools or off-site provision. It reflects our values of Integrity, Respect and Perseverance. Attendance concerns are addressed alongside safeguarding, SEND, health, pastoral support and behaviour; attendance is the responsibility of all staff.

We listen to pupils and parents, identify barriers early, agree practical support, review its impact and work with Surrey and other agencies where further help is needed. Legal intervention is considered individually when appropriate support has not worked or has not been engaged with, or when support is not appropriate to the absence.

Parents must ensure their child receives a suitable full-time education. Where a child is registered at school, parents must secure regular attendance unless a lawful reason for absence applies. In this policy, "parent" includes a person with parental responsibility or day-to-day care of the child. Disability, health needs and individual circumstances are considered fairly throughout.

2 Roles and responsibilities

Management Committee and Headteacher

The Management Committee approves this policy, checks that it is implemented and that staff are trained, and scrutinises attendance, persistent absence and severe absence at least termly. It challenges differences between sites and pupil groups and considers whether resources and support are effective.

The Headteacher is accountable for implementation, accurate registration, staff training and reporting to the Management Committee. The Headteacher decides requests for exceptional leave, oversees safeguarding and support, and authorises referrals for legal consideration. In Surrey, attendance penalty notices are issued by Surrey County Council on behalf of schools; the school does not issue them independently.

Inclusion Manager and attendance administration

The Inclusion Manager is the senior attendance champion and leads attendance improvement across both sites. The role includes weekly pupil-level analysis, early intervention, family meetings, liaison with home schools and Surrey Attendance Service, oversight of attendance plans and advice to the Headteacher. Parents can contact the Inclusion Manager through either school office using the numbers in section 3.

Administration assistants maintain the daily register on Arbor, record messages and reasons, follow up unexplained absence, check the correct codes and alert the Inclusion Manager and senior leaders to concerns. Staff record facts accurately; uncertainty about a code or authorisation is referred to the Inclusion Manager or Headteacher.

All staff, pupils and families

Teachers and tutors take registers promptly, check lesson attendance and punctuality, welcome returning pupils and alert the Inclusion Team to changes or concerns. The pastoral team helps identify barriers and supports re-engagement. The DSL coordinates any safeguarding response; the SENCO and relevant health professionals inform adjustments and support.

Parents report absence promptly, provide a clear reason and expected return, keep contact details current, attend support meetings and work with the school on agreed actions. Pupils are supported to attend punctually, take part in their plans and tell a trusted adult when something makes attendance difficult. Wherever reasonably possible, the school holds more than one emergency contact number for each pupil.

3 School routines and reporting absence

Arrival and registration

Pupils should arrive by 08:45 at both sites. Registers are taken at the fixed times below for all registered pupils, including pupils with an agreed part-time timetable; their individual circumstances determine the code entered, not a different registration time.

Routine	Time
Expected arrival	By 08:45
Morning registration	09:00; register closes at 09:30
Afternoon registration	12:00; register closes at 12:30

A pupil arriving after registration starts but before it closes is recorded late using code L. Arrival after closure is normally recorded using code U unless another absence code properly describes the reason, for example a medical appointment. Staff record the arrival time and reason. Late arrival never removes the need to establish the pupil's whereabouts and offer support.

Reporting illness and other unexpected absence

Parents must telephone the site their child normally attends by 08:45 on each day of absence, or as soon as practicable. They should explain the reason and expected return and tell the office about any change. A specific reporting arrangement may be agreed for an established period of illness, but the school must remain able to confirm safety and changing needs.

Site	Telephone
Hersham	01932 229369
Staines	01784 464416

For medical or dental appointments, parents should notify the same office in advance. Appointments should be outside school hours where reasonably possible; where this is not possible, only the necessary time away should be taken and the pupil should attend the remainder of the day where able. Requests for other planned absence follow section 7.

4 Unexplained absence and safeguarding

Unexplained absence is checked promptly for every session. Administration staff check messages, arrival information, agreed timetables and any notification from a home school or provider, then contact the parent. Staff do not wait for a fixed number of days before acting on a safeguarding concern.

When absence remains unexplained	School response
First day or first unexpected session	Telephone the parent, leave a message if needed, use other emergency contacts and alert senior leaders. Record enquiries and actions on Arbor; refer safeguarding concerns to the DSL immediately.

When absence remains unexplained	School response
Second day	Repeat contact and safety checks, review the risk with the Inclusion Manager and senior leaders, and inform Surrey Attendance Service where the absence remains unexplained.
Third day	Continue enquiries and agency liaison. If contact has not been established, send a written request for an explanation and next steps; senior leaders and Surrey Attendance Service remain informed.
Continuing absence	Keep a daily record, agree further action with relevant agencies and complete the required returns. The ten-day attendance return is not a waiting period for safeguarding or a CME referral.

The response is proportionate to the pupil's vulnerability, known circumstances and available information. A home visit or other welfare check may be arranged under the school's safeguarding and staff-safety procedures. If there is immediate danger, contact emergency services. Social workers, relevant youth justice workers, carers and the home school are informed where appropriate; an unexplained absence involving a pupil with a social worker is raised promptly.

Code N is temporary while the reason is established. It is replaced with the correct code as soon as possible and no later than five school days after the session. If no reason can be established by then, the entry is changed to code O. Neither N nor a lack of parental response removes the school's duty to continue enquiries.

Where the school believes a pupil may no longer be attending and no destination or suitable education is confirmed, it makes a prompt referral to the relevant local authority children missing education team and continues joint enquiries. A pupil who remains on roll but is absent is not automatically a child missing education under the statutory definition; both situations require an appropriate response. Names are removed from the admission register only when a statutory ground applies, with required enquiries and notifications completed.

5 Improving attendance and reducing absence

The Inclusion Manager reviews attendance and punctuality weekly and acts on emerging patterns, including repeated short absences, particular days, missing lessons or a sudden change. Support begins before a pupil reaches a statistical threshold. A pupil is persistently absent when 10% or more of possible sessions are missed and severely absent when 50% or more are missed; both authorised and unauthorised absence count towards these measures.

Staff discuss concerns with the pupil and family, listen to the reasons and agree a named lead, practical actions and a review date. Support may include a trusted adult, a calmer arrival, transport liaison, adjustments to routines or provision, help with learning gaps and referrals to appropriate services. Attendance plans are coordinated with existing pastoral, SEND, health and family plans. Appendix 2 provides a record that may be replaced by an equivalent secure school record.

Where absence persists, staff review whether support has been delivered and whether it meets the pupil's needs. The school works with Surrey Attendance Service through Targeting Support Meetings and other agreed routes, and seeks coordinated help for severely absent pupils. Where necessary, support is formalised through an attendance contract or another appropriate intervention, with the family told clearly what is expected and what may happen next.

Attendance is discussed at admission, review meetings and in reports. Communications explain sessions or days missed, patterns and the effect on learning as well as percentages. Families are contacted early, receive clear information about decisions and have opportunities to contribute to and review the plan.

Recognition and returning to school

The school continues to recognise attendance through certificates, vouchers, positive contact with home and appropriate optional activities. Recognition values improvement and effort as well as high attendance. Decisions take account of disability, medical needs and individual barriers. Curriculum entitlement and essential support are not withheld as a punishment for absence, and reasonable adjustments are made to avoid unfair disadvantage.

Tutors and the pastoral team welcome pupils back after absence and check their wellbeing. After several days, staff agree how the pupil will catch up. Longer or repeated absence prompts a planned reintegration with the pupil and family, relevant staff and agencies, with learning, relationships and attendance reviewed together.

6 Illness, SEND and health needs

Physical and mental illness can justify code I where a pupil is unable to attend. In most cases, the parent's explanation is sufficient. There is no automatic requirement for a medical certificate after five days, or after any other fixed period. Evidence is requested only where proportionate, for example where there is genuine and reasonable doubt about the reason, or to understand prolonged or recurring health needs and arrange suitable support.

Staff first discuss the circumstances with the parent and pupil where appropriate. They accept relevant available evidence flexibly, such as information about treatment, medication or appointments, and do not insist on a GP letter where other evidence is sufficient. Difficulty obtaining a particular document is not, by itself, a reason to treat a genuine illness as unauthorised. Decisions and their reasons are explained to the parent.

Pupils with SEND, anxiety or other health needs have the same right to education and the same ambition for attendance. The school works with the pupil, family, SENCO, home school, Surrey and healthcare services to identify barriers and provide reasonable adjustments. Staff do not diagnose conditions or make access to support dependent on a new diagnosis. Where an EHCP is in place, attendance difficulties are raised with the responsible local authority so provision and any necessary review can be considered.

When there are reasonable grounds to believe that illness will cause a pupil to miss 15 school days, consecutively or cumulatively in the school year, the school makes the required sickness return to the local authority. It works with Surrey and the home school on suitable education under section 19 of the Education Act 1996 and the relevant health-needs guidance. Staff do not wait for 15 days to pass before seeking help. Medical arrangements are coordinated with Policy 0008.

Remote education is a last resort where in-person attendance is not possible and forms part of an agreed plan towards return. It does not automatically replace the school's duty to arrange support or secure suitable education. A pupil working remotely at home is not recorded as present, or given an approved-activity code simply because work has been provided; the code must reflect the actual reason and lawful arrangements.

7 Leave of absence

The Headteacher considers requests for exceptional leave individually, using the facts, background and pupil's circumstances, and decides the length of any leave. A parent with whom the pupil normally lives should apply in writing through the school office as far in advance as possible. There are no categories, occasions or family events for which exceptional leave is granted automatically, and leave is not granted retrospectively.

A desire for a holiday or other leisure or recreational absence is not normally an exceptional circumstance. Bereavement or a serious family situation may warrant leave, but the decision and duration remain individual. The school explains the decision and uses the correct code. Only the Headteacher or authorised delegate may grant leave; a parent's notification does not itself authorise it.

Other lawful reasons for absence or specific permissions, such as illness, medical appointments, religious observance, regulated performances or an interview, use their specific statutory codes and conditions rather than being grouped as exceptional leave. Religious observance uses code R for days exclusively set apart by the religious body to which the parent belongs; there is no blanket one-day limit. The school checks the circumstances where needed.

Study leave is agreed only where appropriate for Year 11 public examinations and is not a default arrangement or granted for mock examinations. Provision remains available for pupils who wish to revise in school. Code T is used for an eligible mobile child travelling with a parent for work only where its statutory conditions are met; ethnicity or a family description alone does not establish eligibility.

8 Dual registration and off-site education

Before a dual placement or off-site programme starts, the Inclusion Manager agrees with the home school, provider and relevant local authority who holds the pupil on roll, where the pupil is expected for each session, who confirms attendance and who follows up absence. Changes are shared promptly. Attendance is checked with providers for each session; no activity is recorded as attended simply because a placement was booked.

For a dual-registered pupil, the school the pupil is scheduled to attend records actual attendance or the appropriate absence code. The other registered school uses code D for that session. If the pupil is ill, the scheduled school uses I and the other school continues to use D. Code D is not used unless the pupil is on the other school's admission register; it is not counted as a possible attendance and does not record that the pupil was physically present there.

LA-arranged education, school-approved activities, visits, sport and work experience use K, B, V, P or W only where the conditions for that code are met and attendance is confirmed. The school checks safeguarding, suitability and appropriate physical supervision, and records absence with the proper absence code when a pupil does not attend. Remote work alone does not satisfy those supervision requirements.

Outreach support for a pupil who remains on another school's roll does not in itself make the pupil dual registered. The home school retains its register responsibilities; Thamesfield staff share agreed attendance information and raise unexpected absence promptly. A pupil receiving a full-time programme across two settings is not on a reduced timetable merely because attendance at Thamesfield is part-time.

9 Reduced timetables and reintegration

A reduced timetable means less than full-time education. It is used only exceptionally, in the pupil's best interests, for the shortest necessary period; it is not a way to manage behaviour, staffing difficulties or an informal exclusion. The Headteacher approves the arrangement with the parent with whom the pupil normally lives, informed by the pupil's needs and professional advice where appropriate.

The written plan states why the arrangement is needed, the sessions and times to be attended, education and support available, safeguarding arrangements during time away, who is responsible, regular review dates and a proposed end date or clear route towards full-time education. The pupil and parent contribute to reviews. Any extension is justified and recorded; a continuing health need may require a longer period, with regular review and suitable education considered.

The school follows Surrey's current notification and monitoring arrangements for pupils missing out on education. A social worker is kept involved where applicable; where an EHCP is in place, the responsible local authority is consulted so the support package can be reviewed. The register is still taken at the standard times. Code C2 is normally used for agreed sessions not attended by a compulsory-school-age pupil under the reduced timetable, and these sessions count as authorised absence.

Flexi-schooling is different: it is an arrangement in which a child primarily receives elective home education and attends school for part of a full-time education by agreement. Thamesfield does not describe a phased return

or reduced timetable as flexi-schooling. Any genuine flexi-schooling request requires separate consideration and agreement; where agreed, authorised home-education sessions use code C, not C2. Full-time education across registered schools or other provision uses the appropriate codes for those arrangements.

10 Registers, retention and information sharing

Admission and attendance registers are kept electronically on Arbor. Every pupil is entered on the admission register on their agreed starting day before or at the start of their first session. Registers are completed accurately at the times in section 3. Staff record the reason applying to the session and keep an audit trail; Appendix 1 is a working summary, with the statutory definitions controlling difficult cases.

Entries in both registers are preserved for six years from the day the entry was made. A back-up is made at least monthly, and each back-up is kept for six years after the end of the school year to which it relates. Corrections retain the original entry, amended entry, reason, date and name of the person making the amendment. The school also records that person's role. Entries are not changed to improve reported attendance or to disguise part-time education.

The school makes required returns to Surrey, including additions to and deletions from the admission register outside normal transition points, attendance returns for pupils failing to attend regularly or with ten continuous school days of unauthorised absence, and the illness returns described in section 6. Attendance returns follow the agreed local frequency, at least monthly. Safeguarding referrals and immediate enquiries are made sooner where needed.

Daily attendance information is shared securely with DfE through the required collection arrangements, alongside school census and local authority returns. Staff maintain data quality and correct errors promptly. Information is shared with agencies where necessary and lawful, with access restricted to those who need it. Statutory sharing does not depend on parental consent; privacy notices explain the relevant uses. Other attendance records follow the school's retention and data-protection arrangements.

11 Legal intervention and penalty notices

Decisions and the national threshold

Attendance enforcement is intended to secure education, not to punish illness or disability. The school records the barriers identified, support offered and delivered, family engagement, reasonable adjustments and the impact of intervention. It works with Surrey to decide whether further support, a formal attendance contract, an education supervision order, a penalty notice or prosecution is appropriate. Each decision is considered individually.

The national threshold for considering a school-absence penalty notice is ten sessions of unauthorised absence within a rolling period of ten school weeks. A session is half a school day. The period can span terms or school years and include different unauthorised codes. Meeting the threshold requires consideration; it does not trigger an automatic fine. Surrey may consider a notice before the threshold where its Code of Conduct permits and the individual case justifies it.

Where support is appropriate but has not worked or has not been engaged with, the school normally issues a Notice to Improve under Surrey's process. It sets out the attendance concern, support, required improvement, monitoring period and possible consequences. The DfE framework provides for three to six weeks; Surrey's published code specifies a maximum of 25 school days. Staff use the current Surrey notice and instructions, explain the individual requirements and continue the agreed support.

A Notice to Improve is not always appropriate, for example for unauthorised holiday absence where support would not address the cause, or where a further notice would have no likely effect. The Headteacher records the reasons and follows Surrey's requirements, including prior information to parents about liability for

unauthorised leave and the evidence needed for a referral. Surrey County Council issues attendance penalty notices on behalf of the school.

School-absence penalty amounts

Notice for the same parent and child	Amount
First notice in the rolling three-year period	£80 if paid within 21 days; otherwise £160 within 28 days
Second notice in that period	£160 within 28 days; no early-payment reduction
Further offence in that period	No third penalty notice. Surrey considers another legal intervention, which may include prosecution.

Liability is considered for each parent who has allowed the absence and for each child. Previous notices, including notices issued by another local authority, are checked through Surrey. Unpaid notices can lead to consideration of prosecution for the original attendance offence. Withdrawn notices do not count towards escalation. The school does not describe prosecution as automatic or inevitable.

Public-place offences during exclusion

A separate penalty notice may apply where a parent allows an excluded pupil to be in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification in the first five school days of a suspension or permanent exclusion, after the required parental notification. DfE specifies £120, reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days, for this separate offence. It is outside the school-absence National Framework and its repeat-notice limit. Attendance at alternative education arranged during exclusion is recorded using the appropriate code; code E is not used for a session attended at that provision.

12 Monitoring, review and related policies

The Inclusion Manager analyses attendance and punctuality weekly, with fuller half-termly and termly review. Analysis includes both sites, year groups, authorised and unauthorised absence, persistent and severe absence, use of codes and the impact of support. It considers relevant cohorts, including SEND, health needs, disadvantaged pupils, pupils with social workers, looked-after pupils and young carers. Confidentiality is protected when reporting small groups.

The school reports complete whole-cohort figures and relevant comparisons with pupils' attendance before placement, local and national data and similar alternative provision. Context and progress help explain the figures; severely absent pupils are not removed from the headline measure. The Management Committee receives attendance information at least termly and checks whether actions are improving education and engagement.

The Headteacher reviews this policy at least annually, with the next review in July 2027, and sooner after changes in DfE or Surrey guidance, provision or operational arrangements. The Management Committee approves the policy. Staff receive induction and updates on registration, coding, safeguarding and attendance support. The policy is published on the school website and explained to pupils and families.

Read alongside Policies 0001 Safeguarding and Child Protection, 0008 Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions, 0015 SEND, 0023 Behaviour, Relationships and Culture, 0051 Reduced or Modified Timetables and 0019 Complaints, together with the SEND information report and data-protection, retention and privacy arrangements. Concerns about attendance decisions should be raised with the Inclusion Manager or Headteacher; unresolved complaints follow Policy 0019.

13 Guidance and source documents

This policy replaces the NESSSS Attendance Policy 2025–2026 and retains its responsible roles, site telephone numbers, arrival time and registration times. It has been checked against the sources below as at 20 November 2026. The legislation and current statutory code definitions take precedence if a summary in this policy does not cover an individual situation.

DfE Working together to improve school attendance, July 2026, including chapters 2, 5, 6, 7 and 8.

View source

School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024, as amended.

View source

DfE Children missing education statutory guidance, September 2025.

View source

DfE Share your daily school attendance data, updated December 2025.

View source

Surrey Code of Conduct for issuing penalty notices for school absence after 19 August 2024.

View source

Surrey guidance on part-time timetables, updated January 2025; current PMOOE procedures are on the Surrey Education Services Hub.

View source

DfE Arranging education for children who cannot attend school because of health needs.

View source

DfE Communicating with parents about school attendance, including the 2026 resources.

View source

Relevant legislation also includes the Education Act 1996, Education Act 2002, Education and Inspections Act 2006, Children and Families Act 2014, Equality Act 2010, the Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007 as amended, and the Education (Information About Individual Pupils) (England) Regulations 2013 as amended. Read with current Keeping Children Safe in Education and other linked statutory guidance.

Appendix 1 Attendance codes

Working summary of the national codes. Use the full statutory definitions and DfE guidance for an individual decision. The statistical categories below do not remove the need to check safety and follow up unexpected absence.

Attending school or an approved educational activity

Code	Use
/ and \	Present in school at morning or afternoon registration respectively.
L	Arrived late after registration began but before it closed.
B	Attending another approved educational activity off site, with the required approval, supervision and attendance checks. Not remote work at home.
K	Attending education arranged by the local authority under the relevant statutory powers; use D if the pupil is registered at the other school.
P	Attending an approved and appropriately supervised sporting activity.
V	Attending a school-arranged educational visit or trip.
W	Attending approved work experience with the required supervision and checks.

Authorised absence

Code	Use
C	Leave for exceptional circumstances following an individual decision. Also used for agreed flexi-schooling home-education sessions.
C1	Leave for a regulated performance or regulated employment abroad, where the statutory conditions are met.
C2	Agreed temporary part-time education for a compulsory-school-age pupil; recorded as authorised absence.
E	Suspended or permanently excluded, where no alternative provision is made for the session.
I	Unable to attend because of physical or mental illness.
J1	Leave for an interview for employment or entry to another educational institution.
M	Leave for a medical or dental appointment.
R	A day exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parent belongs. No blanket one-day limit.
S	Agreed study leave for Year 11 public examinations.
T	Eligible mobile child travelling with a parent for occupational purposes; statutory conditions must be met.

Appendix 1 Attendance codes continued

Not counted as a possible attendance

Code	Use
D	Scheduled to attend another school at which the pupil is registered. The scheduled school records actual attendance or absence.
Q	Unable to attend because statutory home-to-school access or travel arrangements are missing, within the specific legal conditions. Not a general SEND or transport code.
X	Not of compulsory school age and not required to attend the session. Do not use for a compulsory-school-age pupil's reduced timetable.
Y1	Normally provided school or local authority transport is unavailable and there is no reasonable alternative.
Y2	Widespread disruption to travel prevents attendance.
Y3	Part of the school premises is unavoidably closed and the pupil cannot practicably be accommodated elsewhere on site.
Y4	The whole school is unexpectedly closed for the session. Use # for a planned whole-school closure.
Y5	Unable to attend because the pupil is in criminal justice detention.
Y6	Attendance would conflict with applicable public-health guidance or law about infection or disease. Ordinary illness uses I.
Y7	Another unavoidable emergency prevents this pupil attending. Record the cause; the condition must affect the pupil, not only the parent.

Unauthorised absence

Code	Use
G	Holiday for which leave has not been granted.
N	Reason not yet established. Resolve promptly and within five school days of the session; change to O if no reason can be established.
O	Other or unknown absence for which an authorised-absence code does not apply.
U	Arrived after registration closed, where no other more appropriate absence code applies.

Administrative codes

Code	Use
Z	Prospective pupil not yet on the admission register.
#	Planned whole-school closure, including holidays and INSET days.

Appendix 2 Attendance support and review record

Use this form or an equivalent secure record. Coordinate with the pupil's SEND, healthcare, pastoral or family plan. The form records support; it does not itself authorise leave or a reduced timetable.

Pupil and plan details	Record
Pupil name, year group and site	
Parent or carer and contact details	
Home school or other provision and registration arrangements	
Named school lead and agencies involved	
Plan date and review date	
Starting attendance, punctuality and pattern of absence	
Pupil and parent views and barriers identified	
Health, SEND, safeguarding or young-carer needs and adjustments	

Agreed actions and review

Action or support	Who and by when	Review and evidence of impact

Agreement and outcome	Record
What improved attendance or engagement will look like	
Education and reintegration arrangements	
Review outcome, next actions and next review date	
Pupil and parent contribution or agreement	
School lead signature and date	

For a reduced timetable, retain the separate approved plan, parent agreement, exact sessions, risk assessment, Surrey notifications, review dates and proposed end date. Store all completed records securely.