



## **Attendance & Punctuality Policy**

### **ATTENDANCE POLICY**

#### **Policy Aims**

Sir Thomas Fremantle School aims to encourage every student to achieve the highest possible levels of attendance and punctuality in order to take full advantage of the learning experience available to them.

We wish to:

- develop habits of good time keeping
- develop habits of regular attendance
- encourage children/young people and their families to subscribe to the “every lesson counts” message
- ensure that all members of the school community understand their role in encouraging good attendance and punctuality.

#### **Statutory Framework**

Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act, places a legal duty on parents to ensure that their children of compulsory school age are “properly educated”, either at school or otherwise”. (s.7). Parents/carers who know that their child is failing to attend school regularly a student is required to attend regularly and have taken no reasonable action to secure their attendance can face: a fine (maximum £2500 and/or imprisonment or a fixed penalty notice of £60). The attendance register provides the primary evidence on which the parent can be convicted.

The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 increased the current amounts of penalty notices payable by parents from 1 September 2012. These will apply to any parent who fails to ensure the regular attendance of their child of compulsory school age (5-16) who is registered at a state school or fails to ensure that their excluded child is not found in a public place during schools hours without a justifiable reason.

The amounts stated on the penalty notices will increase from £50 to £60 for those who pay within 28 days; and from £100 to £120 for those who pay within 42 days.

### **Who is authorised to issue penalty notices?**

A police constable, local authority officer, Headteachers and those authorised by them (Deputy and Assistant Head only).

The school is currently obliged by law to differentiate between authorised and unauthorised absence. A letter or telephone message from a parent does not in itself authorise an absence. Only if the school is satisfied as to the validity of the explanation offered by the letter / message will the absence be authorised [see below].

### **Rights and Responsibilities**

Improving attendance at Sir Thomas Fremantle School is the responsibility of everyone in the school community – Students, parents, governors and all staff.

#### **Students**

Students are responsible for:

- arriving at school on time, ready for the morning bell
- signing in at reception if they arrive at school after registration
- signing out at reception **if authorised** to leave the school premises at any time during the school day
- attending school whenever they are well enough to do so
- ensuring they attend all classes timetabled during the school day and arrive at each one promptly.

Students who do experience attendance difficulties will be offered prompt and sympathetic support initially from their Form Tutor, and if the need should arise, from a member of the senior team. At the end of each half term, students whose attendance is either very good (100%, 98% at Key Stage 3 and 100% and 95% at Key Stage 4) or improved will be presented with certificates.

#### **Parents / Carers**

Parents are responsible for:

- ensuring that their children arrive in school before the start of the school day
- ensuring that the school has a current telephone number and address where they can be contacted throughout the school day in case of an emergency
- notifying the school on the first day of absence no later than 10.00am.

Parents are responsible for ensuring that their child attends school regularly, punctually, properly dressed and equipped and in a fit condition to learn. If a child is prevented for any reason from attending, parents are requested to notify the school on the first day of absence. A student's absence from school must be considered as unauthorised until a satisfactory explanation is received from the parent. Parents will be informed promptly of any concerns which may arise over a child's attendance. Parents whose child's attendance is a cause for congratulation or concern will be written to by the school. Parents should avoid, if at all possible, making medical / dental appointments for their child during school hours.

Parents whose first language is not English or who have literacy problems will be offered appropriate support from school in matters of communication.

### **School**

All members of school staff have a responsibility for identifying trends in attendance and poor punctuality.

Teachers are responsible for:

- keeping accurate and up-to-date registers
- keeping an overview of class and individual attendance, in particular poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/or unusual explanations for non-attendance offered by children and parents/carers
- informing senior staff about concerns and acting on them
- providing background information to support referrals
- monitoring follow-up once actions have been taken to address attendance concerns
- emphasising with their class/tutor groups the importance of good attendance and promptness
- following up absences with immediate requests for explanation
- discussing attendance issues at consultation evenings
- setting an example by arriving promptly to lessons
- taking registers at lessons.

Staff will endeavour to encourage good attendance and punctuality through personal example. Attendance is the responsibility of all school staff [not just teaching and pastoral staff]. The school will employ a range of strategies [see below] to encourage good attendance and punctuality and will investigate promptly all absenteeism, liaising closely with parents. Staff will respond to all absenteeism firmly and consistently.

Pastoral staff will identify patterns of attendance for distinct student groups and will report this to the senior leadership team periodically.

### **Registration**

Registers will be called promptly at 8.55am and at the beginning of period 5 and will be marked in accordance with the list of symbols as set out in the register.

No student will be marked as present unless they are in the front of their tutor.

Registers will close at 9.10am and at 2.15pm. If a student fails to arrive before the registers close, they will be marked as 'absent'. Students who arrive after the registers have closed should report to the general office and complete a Late Slip. The Form Tutor will amend the register entry to read 'late'. If a student is late on more than two occasions in a week, sanctions may be imposed which can include after-school detention. For persistent lateness to school and/or lessons, same-day detentions may be imposed. If a student is persistently late, the form tutor or a member of the senior team will contact the parents.

Parents are reminded that if a child arrives in school more than 30 minutes after the registers have closed and an acceptable explanation is not forthcoming, the student has to be recorded as 'unauthorised absent' for that session.

In exceptional circumstances (e.g. inclement weather) the school may keep registers open longer in the morning.

Students will not be penalised where lateness to school is a direct result of a delay arising from school or local authority provided transport.

All class teachers will take electronic registers in each of their classes and will notify the relevant staff as soon as possible of any internal truancy.

Registers will be checked at least each month in order to ensure that correct procedures are being followed and totals are being calculated and entered.

### **Authorised / Unauthorised Absence**

There is currently a requirement to distinguish between authorised and unauthorised absence. It is therefore vital that pastoral managers and other staff dealing with attendance adhere to the same criteria when deciding whether or not to authorise an absence.

Sir Thomas Fremantle School will decide on how an absence is to be recorded in accordance with the latest guidance from the Department for Education and Employment. This states that:

Absence can be **authorised** if:

- the student was absent with leave [defined as 'leave granted by any person authorised to do so by the governing body or proprietor of the school']
- The student was ill 'or prevented from attending by an unavoidable cause'
- 'the absence occurred on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the student's parents belong'
- the student is the child of Traveller parents and the conditions as stated in the Education Act 1996, Section 444[6] are met
- there is a family bereavement
- the student is attending an interview with either a prospective employer or in connection with an application for a place at an institute of further or higher education or for a place at another school (during Year 11, this absence can be recorded as an approved educational activity)
- the student is excluded
- a Year 11 student is granted study leave
- the student is involved in an **exceptional** special occasion
- leave of absence for a family holiday will generally not be authorised.

Absences should be **unauthorised** if:-

- no explanation is forthcoming
- the school is dissatisfied with the explanation
- the student stays at home to mind the house or to look after siblings [absence in such cases should only be authorised in exceptional circumstances at the Headmaster's discretion].
- The student is shopping during school hours
- The student is absent for **unexceptional** special occasions [e.g. a birthday]
- The student is away from school on a family holiday

- The student is on a family holiday without permission or if the parents have failed to apply for permission in advance of the holiday and instead seek retrospective approval on their return
- The Local Education Authority are in the process of undertaking statutory action for non-attendance at school

Where a student has a history of poor attendance, absence may not be authorised without a doctor's note.

## **Holidays**

The school will not authorise holidays taken during school term time except in very exceptional circumstances. Parents do not have the right to take their child out of school for such a holiday. Previous guidance gave Headteachers an amount of discretion with regard to authorising up to 10 days term time holiday. This is no longer the case. Where parents/carers feel that they must take their child on holiday during school time, this must be discussed with the Headmaster/Deputy Headmaster in advance.

## **Procedures for following up absence**

- If a student is absent without an explanation being received, the school will contact the parents wherever possible. If the absentee is a student about whom there are already concerns, they will make every effort to contact the parents on the first day of absence.

## **Persistence Absence**

Persistent absence is defined as Students missing 15% of school.

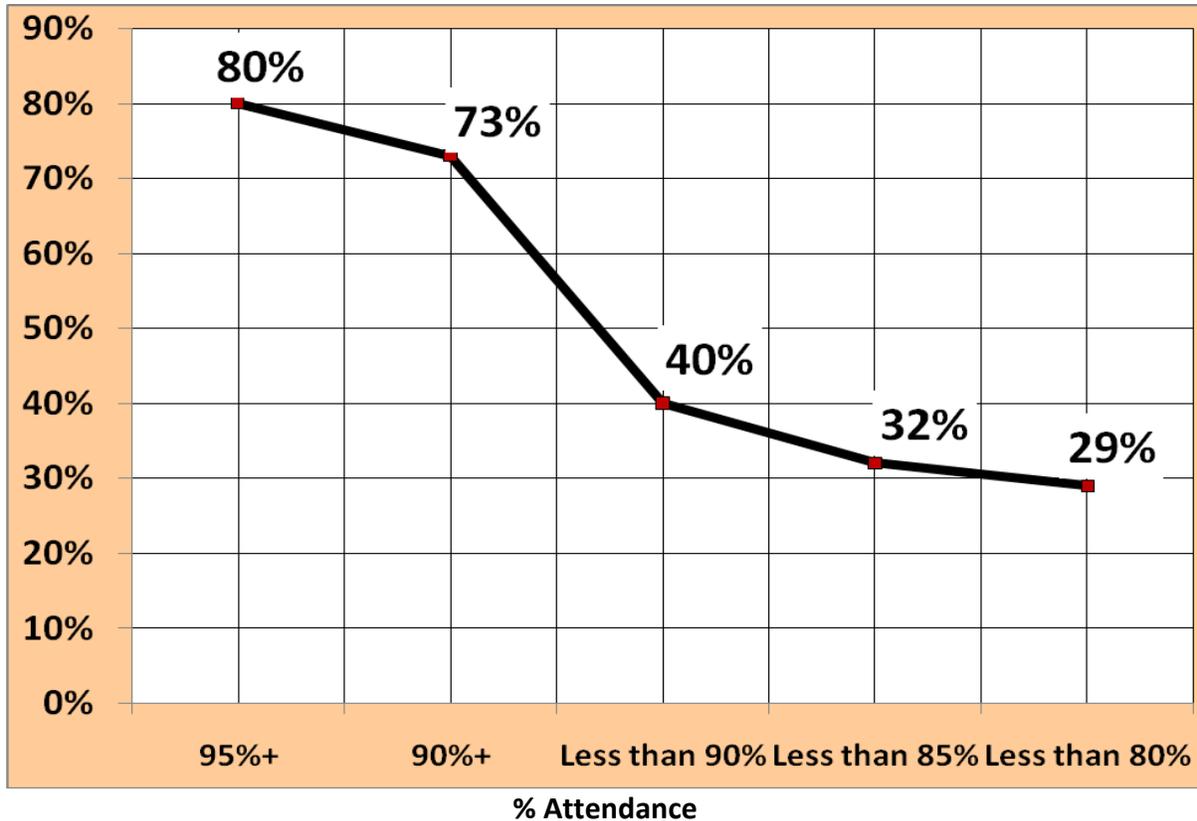
Latest national figures show that more than 430,000 Students miss 15 per cent of lessons a year – the equivalent of having a month off school a year.

Persistent absence is a serious problem for Students. Much of the work children miss when they are off school is never made up, leaving these Students at a considerable disadvantage for the remainder of their school career. There is also clear evidence nationally of a link between poor attendance at school and low levels of achievement:

- Of Students who miss more than 50 per cent of school, only three per cent manage to achieve five A\* to Cs including English and maths.
- Of Students who miss between 10 per cent and 20 per cent of school, only 35 per cent manage to achieve five A\* to C GCSEs including English and maths.
- Of Students who miss less than five per cent of school, 73 per cent achieve five A\* to Cs including English and maths.

The following graph shows the impact of poorer attendance on exam outcomes based on a recent year cohort at a local school.

**% of students gaining 5 x A\* to C (including English and Maths) 2010-11**



### **Additional Monitoring**

#### **Late gate & truancy sweeps**

At times throughout the year, the school will have a particular focus on punctuality to school which will involve staff taking names of all students who arrive at school after 8.55am. Sanctions, including after school detention may be enforced where students arrive late to school without good reason.

From time to time, the school may use a 'truancy sweep' around the local area to identify any absence or patterns of absence. We may request support from local police whilst carrying this out.

## **ACE Attendance – Our tiered approach to Absence**

### **Aims:-**

- To reduce overall absence
- To reduce level of persistent absence
- To improve consistency across year groups
- To make procedures more explicit and easily understood
- To make the link between attendance to achievement more explicit
- To increase school based support
- To improve quality of in-school monitoring
- To increase evidence base for possible court action

### **Actions**

- If a student is persistently [or intermittently] absent, the school will write to the parents and invite them to attend a meeting at school.
- If a student returns to school after a period of absence and fails to bring a note or if the explanation offered by a note is unsatisfactory, the school will contact the parents.
- If a student is persistently absent [or late] and the school's efforts to effect an improvement have been unsuccessful, the situation will be discussed by the senior team.
- Notes from parents will be initialled by the Form Tutor and kept on the student's file. All telephone messages regarding absence / lateness are to be recorded and kept in student's file.

### **Summary of strategies for promoting attendance**

- Sir Thomas Fremantle School will offer an environment in which Students feel valued and welcomed. The school's ethos must demonstrate that Students feel that their presence in school is important, that they will be missed when they are absent / late and that follow up action will be taken.

- A varied and flexible curriculum will be offered to all students. Every effort will be made to ensure that learning tasks are matched to students' needs.
- Attendance data will be monitored regularly and analysed in order to help identify patterns, set targets, correlate attendance with achievements and support and inform policy / practice.
- High attendance awards will be presented at the end of each school half term, year and key stage.
- Students whose attendance is a cause of concern will be set targets for improvement. The Form Tutor will monitor and review these targets in consultation with the senior team.
- Parents will be reminded regularly [via newsletters, the school brochure, parents' evenings, etc] of the importance of regular attendance.
- Students will be reminded regularly through notice boards and assemblies.
- Students who are absent through sickness for any extended period of time will [when appropriate] have work sent home to them and will be re-integrated back into school upon their return.
- Students who have been absent for whatever reason for an extended period of time will [when appropriate] have individually-tailored re-integration programmes prepared for them.
- The Headmaster will make an annual report to the school's governing body on attendance matters including targets for the coming year.
- The school will, when appropriate, liaise with other services and agencies when this may serve to support and assist Students who are experiencing attendance difficulties.
- Regular visits will be made to feeder Primary schools in order to ensure the smoothest possible secondary transfer. Discussions with Primary School Teachers will seek to identify those Students who may require extra support or Pastoral Support Programmes involving a multi-agency plan.

A range of staff and outside agencies may be requested to work with the school, parents and students where concerns are raised about student attendance and/or punctuality. These may include:

The Form Tutor

SENCO

Teaching Assistants / HLTA

The senior team

Connexions PA

The Police Liaison Officer

The Education Welfare Service (EWS)

School Governors

Linked Policies

- Climate for Learning
- Detention
- Anti-bullying
- Home-school agreement.
- Child protection

# ACE Attendance – The Stages

## NON-INTERVENTION STAGE

<b>Stage 1</b>	<p>Your child's attendance is above 97%</p> <p><b>They are absent less than six days in the school year</b></p> <p>They <i>are highly likely</i> to achieve the best grades for their ability, enabling them to continue their studies and raise their earning potential in the world of work</p>
<b>Stage 2</b>	<p>Your child's attendance is 95% plus</p> <p><b>They are absent less than 10 days in the school year</b></p> <p>They <i>will probably</i> achieve grades that will allow them to continue their studies and raise their earning potential in the world of work</p>

## INTERVENTION STAGES

### A C E Attendance

<b>Stage3</b> Alert	<p>Your child's attendance is 90-95%</p> <p><b>They are missing up to 20 days in each school year – a full month!</b></p> <p>This amount of absence will make progress more difficult and reduce their level of success</p>
<b>Stage 4</b> Concern	<p>Your child's attendance is between 85-90%</p> <p><b>This means they are absent up to 40 days in each school year – EIGHT WEEKS!!</b></p> <p>Missing this much time will make it extremely difficult for them to keep up in lessons and make progress</p>
<b>Stage 5 (&amp; 6)</b> Further action likely	<p>Your child's attendance is below 85%</p> <p><b>YOU NEED TO TAKE ACTION NOW!</b></p> <p><b>This amount of absence will seriously affect their earning potential and life chances. As a parent you may face court Action.</b></p>

## ACE Attendance - Actions at each stage

### STAGE ONE (97% plus)

- 100% Individual Prizes
- Best Class Attendance Prize
- 100% Attendance Cards
- Lucky Draw

### STAGE TWO (95% plus)

- Informing school of absence
- First day phone calls
- Termly monitoring

### STAGE THREE (90-95%)

- Less than 95% attendance group receives an attendance monitoring letter
- Monitored by Student Manager

### STAGE FOUR (85-90%)

- Close monitoring every 2/3 weeks
- Attendance target letter
- Attendance Plan in place
- Red alert calls made
- Regular close monitoring
- Attendance Panel Warning

### STAGE FIVE (85% and below)

- Attendance Panel
- Home Visits

### STAGE SIX (85% and below)

- Parental contract and pre-court action
- Legal action
- Prosecution

*Each of the intervention stages has an accompanying letter, examples of which are shown over the coming pages.*

Agreed by the Full Governing body

Signed by: ..... Chair of Governors

Date .....

Signed by: ..... Mr D J Lyon; Headmaster

Date .....

Dear parent/carer

### **Intervention Stage 3 - Alert Letter**

Attendance is a key factor in academic success and we have developed a six stage approach to monitoring and improving school attendance.

You will note from the attached that your child's attendance has dropped to between 90% and 95% which, if maintained at this level over a school year, could equate to the loss of up to 20 days or a full school month.

Should the level of attendance not improve over the next four weeks, we will ask you to come to school to discuss the reasons for the absence with us in more detail. This will also involve your child being placed on a formal attendance plan with specific targets for attendance over closely monitored two-week periods. If these targets are not met, the next stage involves your attendance at a formal Attendance Panel.

If you have any queries regarding this process or would like to discuss your child's attendance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Dear parent/carer

**Intervention Stage 4 - Concern Letter**

You will remember that I contacted you on the (INSERT DATE) regarding your child's attendance which was then ( %).

You will note from the attached that your child's attendance is currently between 85% and 90%. Over a school year, this could equate to the loss of up to 40 days or 8 weeks.

As advised in my previous letter, your child will now be placed on a formal attendance plan with specific targets for attendance over two-week periods.

I would therefore be grateful if you would attend a meeting with myself and your child on (INSERT DATE/TIME) to discuss the attendance plan and agree formal targets.

If these targets are not met, the next stage involves your attendance at a formal Attendance Panel.

Yours sincerely

Dear parent/carer

**Intervention Stage 5 – EWO Referral Letter**

You will remember that we contacted you on the (INSERT DATE) regarding your child's attendance which was then ( %).

You will note from the attached that your child's attendance is currently below 85%.

I have therefore arranged a formal Attendance Panel meeting on (INSERT DATE/TIME) to discuss how best to move forward.

Yours sincerely

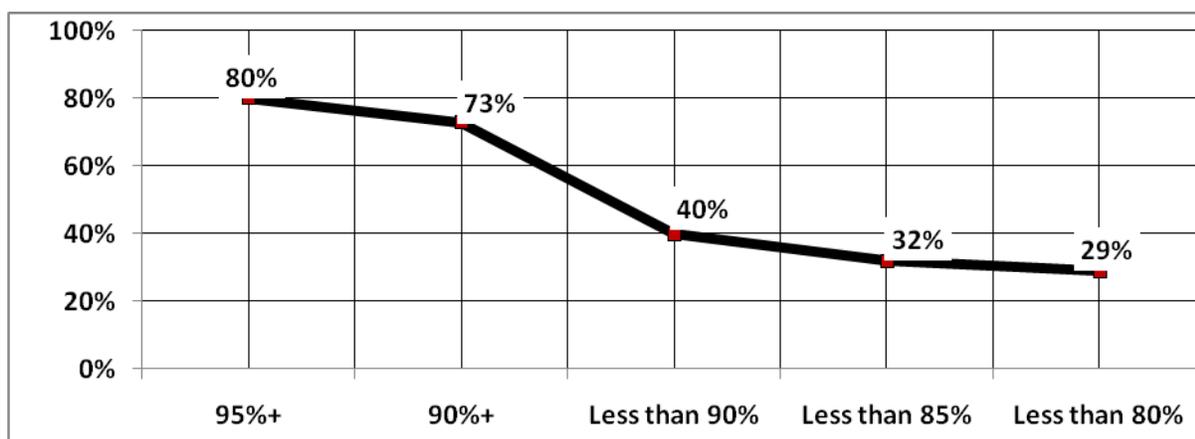
Darren J Lyon  
**Headmaster**

Dear

Thank you for your letter of (INSERT DATE). I regret that I am unable to authorise this holiday.

The reason for this stance is purely related to achievement of students and is indicative of the importance that we attach to regular and high levels of attendance.

The following graph, which reflects data from a local secondary school, highlights the impact that reduced attendance has on achievement at school. From this you can see that in a group of Year 11 students, those whose attendance fell below 90%, only 40% achieved 5 A\* to C grades as opposed to 73% with those above this level of attendance.



Having said this, I clearly cannot prevent you from taking the holiday and, bearing in mind the reason for your request, would understand that you must balance this in your own minds. You may judge that this holiday will not affect (INSERT NAME)'s progress significantly.

I hope that you will understand that I am in no way making a judgement about your request, merely reflecting a school policy which is aimed at encouraging a very high (in excess of 95%) level of attendance.

I would ask you to note that where students are absent for a period of holiday during term time, whether this absence is approved or not, will be expected to complete any work they have missed during their absence.

Yours sincerely

Darren J Lyon  
**Headmaster**