



# Attendance Policy

## 2022-2024

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<b>Related Documents</b>	Keeping children Safe in Education 2023 Thurrock Penalty Notice Code of Conduct for Unauthorised Absence from School

<b>Version</b>	<b>Date Published</b>	<b>Details of key changes from previous version</b>
<b>2</b>	October 2023	References of KCSIE 2022 Changed to KCSIE 2023
<b>1</b>	September 2022	New Policy - supersedes all previous versions.

## Introduction

This document is a statement of aims, principles and strategies for Attendance. Government guidelines on attendance and punctuality have been taken into consideration in its foundation (including all current COVID-19 attendance guidance). The law entitles every child of school age to an efficient full time education and it is the legal responsibility of every parent to ensure their child receives that education (Section 7, Education Act 1996).

The Department for Education (DfE) document “Working Together to improve school attendance, May 2022’ states ‘Improving attendance is everyone’s business. The barriers to accessing education are wide and complex both within and beyond the school gates and often specific to individual pupils and families.”

West Thurrock Academy is a successful school that aims to provide the best available learning opportunities for children living in the local community. Without the help and support of parents, some children will find it difficult to adjust to the structured environment that schools have to be in order to achieve their objectives. For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their time at school, it is vital that they attend regularly and arrive at school, on time, every day that the school is open unless the reason for absence is unavoidable.

West Thurrock Academy will work with children, families, the local authority and other partners to identify barriers to good attendance and offer support as appropriate. In cases where this offer of support fails to improve a child’s attendance statutory action may become necessary. (Please see appendix 2 – Thurrock LA Penalty Notice Code of Conduct)

This policy sets out the information we think will help you to explain to your child what is important to their future success and how, with your support, attending school regularly will help them to achieve their full potential.

## Why Regular Attendance is so important:

<b>The effect of absence on progress</b>					
<i>A whole year has 365 days; a school year has 178 days. That leaves 187 days to spend on family time, visits, holidays, shopping and other appointments.</i>					
No absence	9 days absence	11 days absence	18 days absence	27 days absence	36 days absence
178 days of education	169 days of education	167 days of education	160 days of education	151 days of education	142 days of education
100%	95%	94%	90%	85%	80%
<b>Very Good</b> Best chance of success. Gets your child off to a flying start.		<b>Worrying</b> Less chance of success. Makes it harder for your child to make progress.		<b>Serious Concern</b> Your child will find it very difficult to make progress.	

Any absence that a child has from school affects them as their learning becomes disrupted and social interactions can also be affected. Regular absences will have a serious effect on their academic progress and can affect a child's confidence within school.

Ensuring your child attends school regularly is your legal responsibility and allowing absence from school without good reason is an offence and may result in a prosecution.

A few days a week/month can quickly build up –

<b>365 days in a year</b>	<b><u>Attendance</u> 178 school days in total/ 37 weeks</b>	<b><u>Absence</u></b>
100% attendance	178 days	0
95% attendance	169 days	2 weeks absence
90% attendance	167 days	4 weeks absence
85% attendance	160 days	6 weeks absence
80% attendance	151 days	Absence equal to the first school term Sept-Oct
75% attendance and below	142 days	9+ weeks absence

## **Attendance & Safeguarding**

Safeguarding the interests of each child is everyone's responsibility and within the context of this school, promoting the welfare and life opportunities for your child encompasses attendance, behaviour management, health and safety, access to the Curriculum and anti-bullying.

Your child may be at risk of harm if they are frequently absent and so failing to attend school regularly will be considered as a **safeguarding matter**.

### **The Law relating to attendance**

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that 'the parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him/her to receive efficient full time education suitable:-

- (a) to age, ability and aptitude and
- (b) to any special educational needs, he/she may have either by regularly attendance at school or otherwise'

### **The Law relating to safeguarding**

Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 places a duty on local authorities and governing bodies to have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State with regard to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and students under the age of 18.

## **Absence Procedures**

### **If your child is absent from school, you must:**

- Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence and inform us of the reason for the absence.
- Provide us with appointment card/appointment letter if taking your child out of school for a medical appointment; your child should only be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary for the appointment.
- Provide the school with medical evidence of any absence lasting more than 5 consecutive days (i.e. medical note, medical appointment card, medicine bottle).
- Provide the school with medical evidence for all future illness if your child has already had 5 different occasions in the school year when they have been absent due to illness or when attendance falls below 95%.

**If we do not receive information from a parent/ carer regarding absence – it will be considered as a safeguarding matter.**

### **If your child is absent from school, we will:**

- Telephone the first day of absence if we have not heard from you. If the school is unable to make contact with the family, we may have to complete a home visit.
- Send a letter of expectation if the absence reporting procedure is not being adhered to (Safeguarding concern).
- Apply the attendance escalation stages once your child meets the stage criteria

Attendance is monitored on a daily basis, however, the school's Attendance Team meet regularly to monitor every child's attendance and as a result, letters/ stage escalation will occur when needed and threshold met (Please note – earlier intervention may be applied – case by case knowledge).

### **West Thurrock Academy Stages of Response for Attendance Concerns**

**Stage 1** - Letter to parents

**Stage 2** - Letter to parents and attendance meeting

**Stage 3** - Letter to parents and attendance meeting to discuss possible statutory action

**Stage 4** - Referral to Thurrock Local Authority to process statutory action

### **School Attendance Support Team (Thurrock Local Authority) (Stage 4)**

Thurrock School Attendance Support Team (SAST) are a team of experienced and highly professional officers providing the highest quality service to families, schools and other agencies in respect of school attendance matters. SAST support schools and academies in the promotion of positive attendance and provide a service where school attendance levels are a concern in line with the Education Act 1996.

Regular and punctual attendance at school is a legal requirement (Section 7 of the Education Act 1996) for pupils and is essential if pupils are to maximise the opportunities available to them. It is a parent's responsibility to ensure that their child attends regularly.

A child is of compulsory school age from the start of the term after their 5th birthday up until the last Friday of June in year 11.

An offence occurs:

- If a parent fails to ensure a child's attendance at a school at which they are a registered pupil and that absence is not authorised by the school; or
- An excluded child is found in a public place, without reasonable justification, during the first 5 school days of a formal exclusion from school.

Section 576 of the Education Act 1996 defines "parent" as "all natural parents, whether they are married or not; any person who, although not a natural parent, has parental responsibility (as defined in the Children Act 1989) for a child or young person; and any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of a child or young person. Having care of a child means that person with whom the child lives and who looks after a child, irrespective of what their relationship is with that child, is considered to be a parent in education law."

A Penalty Notice is an alternative to prosecution and offers parents the opportunity to discharge their responsibility for the period of non-attendance by payment of a penalty rather than by prosecution through the Criminal Court. The use of a Penalty Notice should be considered at the earliest opportunity; if it is believed it will address the non-attendance before it becomes entrenched.

## **Penalty Notices**

West Thurrock Academy has adopted the Thurrock Council Code of Conduct (the code) as part of its Attendance Policy (see Appendix 2).

Penalty Notices may be applied for:

- in line with 'the code' for Irregular Attendance
- for unauthorised leave of absence/time leave
- if an excluded child is found in a public place, without their parent, during the first 5 days of a formal exclusion from school.

## **Circumstances in which a Penalty Notice may be issued;**

### ***Irregular Attendance:***

Penalty Notices can only be issued in respect of unauthorised absence, when the following criteria are met:

- At least 12 sessions of unauthorised absence are recorded against the pupil's name within 120 available sessions. (One session is a half day)
- Parents must first be sent a letter warning that a Penalty Notice could be issued and allowing them 30 school days to evidence a commitment to improving their child's attendance (See Appendix A of Thurrock Penalty Notice Code of Conduct for Unauthorised Absence from School document).

### ***Unauthorised Leave of Absence (term time holiday)***

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 were amended in 2013 so that references to family holiday (including reference to headteachers/Chair of Governors allowing up to 10 school days for a term time holiday) and extended leave were removed. The amendments make clear that headteachers (Chair of Governors) may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Headteachers/Chair of Governors should determine the number of school days the child may be away from school if the leave is granted.

Penalty Notices can only be issued in respect of unauthorised absence and must meet the following criteria.

- If a headteacher (Chair of Governors) does not authorise a request from a parent for term time leave of absence and the parent takes the leave.
- There must be at least 10 consecutive sessions of unauthorised term time leave.

### ***Exclusions***

- Where a pupil of compulsory school age who has been excluded from school, either for a fixed period or permanently is found to be present in a public place during school hours in the first five days of the exclusion, without reasonable justification.

## **Penalty Notices are issued per parent per child**

Once a person is issued with a Penalty Notice they must pay a penalty. This is set by regulation at £60 if paid within 21 calendar days (after the date of issue), rising to £120 if paid after 21 calendar days but within 28 calendar days. Please see Appendix 2 – ‘Thurrock Penalty Notice Code of Conduct for Unauthorised Absence from School’ for full details.

Parents must apply for leave of absence in advance of taking it, failure to do so will result in the absence being marked as an unauthorised absence code ‘O’ rather than an unauthorised holiday code ‘G’. All applications need to be made at least 4 weeks before the period of absence and before personal and travel arrangements are made. (Request for Leave form – please see appendix 1)

If the absence is not authorised and the holiday taken, the Absence Procedure will be followed as necessary. If a leave of absence is taken, staff will not set extra work for children to do during their absence or on their return

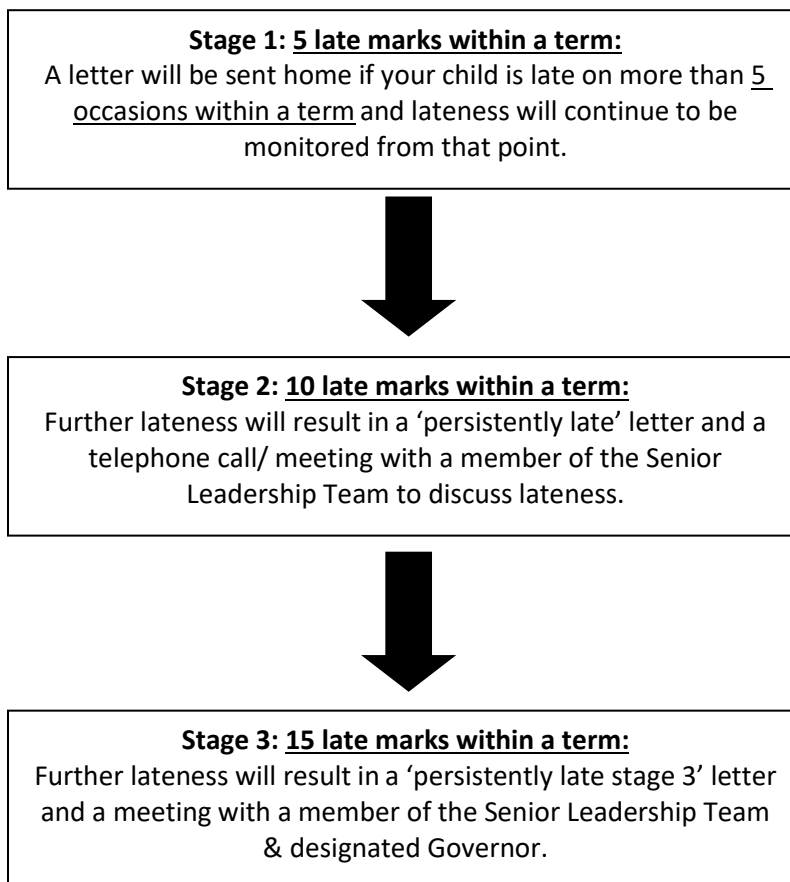
## **Lateness**

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If your child misses the start of the day it can have a detrimental effect on their progress as they find it hard to settle and they will inevitably miss vital introductions to lessons. It also disturbs the class routines, which has a negative effect on other children’s learning.

The school gates open at 8:40am and children must be in class for registration by 8:55am. If a child arrives at school after 8:55am they will need to come via the school office for their details to be recorded on the class electronic register. If a child is up to 30 mins late they are marked in the electronic register as ‘late’ (L), pupils arriving more than 30 minutes after the close of registration will be regarded as absent from the morning session and will be given an unauthorised absence mark (U).

There are times when your child may be late into school due to external factors (e.g. traffic if travelling from outside of the immediate catchment of the school) or if a child needs to attend an appointment; this type of lateness is marked accordingly, although the school does need to be notified prior to the lateness. If an appointment is later in the morning or afternoon it may be possible to send your child into school to obtain their ‘present’ mark and then collect them nearer to the appointment time. Ideally, where possible, appointments should be made for your child outside of the school day.





If you are having problems getting your child to school on time, you can approach us at any time to support you and help resolve the problem. This could prevent the lateness escalation policy being applied – this will be reviewed on a case by case basis.

### **First Day Contact**

It is vital that you tell us as early as possible if you know your child is not going to be attending school. We have a 24hr answer phone service to help parents inform us of absence. If you don't contact the school, we will have to try to contact you, so it is important that you regularly notify us of your latest contact telephone number or any change of address. If you don't contact us and we can't make contact with you we may have to make a home visit and may have to report your child as a 'missing person'.

Failure to give the school an acceptable reason for an absence will result in an unauthorised absence mark

## **Understanding types of absence:**

An electronic register is taken in the school every morning and afternoon (each classed as a 'session') and every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents) as either **Authorised** or **Unauthorised** when inputted onto the system. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required by the school.

**Authorised** absences are sessions away from the school for a good reason such as illness, medical/dental appointments (which unavoidably fall in school time), emergencies or other unavoidable situations. Obviously children do need to be kept off school if they are too ill to attend, however, if they are simply 'not feeling right' or are just tired then this will not be authorised. It is also important that a child returns to school as soon as possible after feeling unwell, for example, it is not acceptable not to send a child back to school on Friday simply because they have been unwell Monday-Thursday.

**Unauthorised** absences are sessions away from the school which the school deems unreasonable.

Unauthorised absences include:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily;
- Truancy before or during the school day;
- Absences which have not been properly explained;
- Children who arrive at school too late to get a mark;
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays;
- Day trips and holidays in term time.

## **Persistent Absenteeism (PA)**

A pupil is classed a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for any reason, both authorised and unauthorised absences. Absence at this level is causing considerable damage to any child's progress and educational prospects. Please refer to the escalation policy on page 7.

## **Unauthorised Leave of Absence (term time holiday)**

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 have been amended so that from 1st September 2013 references to family holiday (including reference to head teachers allowing up to 10 school days for a term time holiday) and extended leave have been removed. The

amendments make clear that a designated member of the Governing body (Normally the Chair of Governors) **may not** grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. The designated member of the Governing body should determine the number of school days the child may be away from school if the leave is granted.

**At West Thurrock Academy, the designated governor for attendance is Mrs Brierly**

Parents must apply for leave of absence in advance of taking it, failure to do so will result in the absence being marked as an unauthorised absence code 'O' rather than an unauthorised holiday code 'G'. All applications need to be made **at least 4 weeks** before the period of absence and before personal and travel arrangements are made. **Families, that would like to complete an application for leave, will need to complete the online absence request form using the link below:**

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If the absence is not authorised and the holiday taken, the Absence Procedure will be followed as necessary. If a leave of absence is taken, **staff will not set extra work for children to do during their absence or on their return**

**How do we promote, monitor, improve and maintain attendance?**

### **Rewards**

We reward good attendance by:

- **Ongoing:** Each class will be set the targets of achieving 20 days full class attendance. On each occasion that everyone within a class is present in school, the class will achieve one token. Once the class has collected 20 tokens, the whole class is provided with a mystery prize.
- **Weekly:** 'Class of the Week' in both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 will be presented to the highest attending class in our weekly Celebration Assembly. These classes are awarded a class certificate, attendance lion or cup and a reward of 10 minutes extra break time. Their achievement is also noted on the weekly newsletter.

- **Fortnightly:** Attendance Hero Award - Every two weeks all children within each class who have had 100% attendance for the two-week period will be entered into a class draw. Each class will pick an Attendance Hero who will win a small prize.
- **Half termly:** Children who do not have any late marks for the half term will receive a certificate to celebrate their punctuality.
- **Termly:** The school will recognise good or better attendance for any child that is able to maintain their attendance level at 96% or above in the following ways:

	1 Term	2 Terms	3 Terms
96%+	Bronze certificate	Silver certificate Attendance wristband	Gold certificate Gold badge
100%	Bronze certificate Bronze 100 badge	Silver certificate Silver 100 badge	Gold certificate Gold 100 badge Trip to Jump Giants

In addition to the rewards set out above, individual pupil incentive schemes are used for pupils with low attendance, this is done sensitively to encourage and reward pupils for achieving their personal attendance target.

## Engaging Parents

The school will use standard letters for information. Standard letters will be sent out when:

- Attendance has fallen to 96% or below (stage 1) – Letter sent to parent/s
- Attendance has not improved since stage 1, letter sent & stage 2 meeting with class teacher and Key Stage lead (Barriers to attendance and target setting)
- Attendance has still not improved, Stage 3 letter sent & stage 3 meeting held with Key stage lead and Attendance Lead.
- Attendance has not improved, Stage 4 – letter – Penalty Notice Warning
- There is a high incidence of late marks (5 lates in a term – Stage 1 lateness)

- There is a persistent high incidence of late marks (10 lates in a term – Stage 2 lateness, 15 lates in a term – Stage 3 lateness)

All letters referring to a fall in attendance have a reply slip attached to acknowledge receipt of the letter and parents have the opportunity to respond accordingly.

We will do our best to help you with any problems that affect your child's attendance, but we cannot help you if you do not tell us. In fact, where parents consistently fail to cooperate with the school, the absences will be unauthorised. However, before we get to that point, we will invite you to a Support Action Plan meeting. The purpose of this meeting will be to give you the opportunity to discuss the reasons for your child's poor attendance/persistent lateness and for us therefore to support you in ensuring your child gets to school where possible. At the meeting an Action Plan will be drawn up with targets for your child to meet with respect to their attendance (This meeting will be chaired by a member of the Senior Leadership team (if available) and possibly the class teacher).

We review children's attendance half termly and we will on occasion request evidence for medical appointments and parents unable to provide evidence will find absence is unauthorised.

## **Exclusion**

A pupil of compulsory school age who has been excluded from school, either for a fixed period or permanently is not allowed to be present in a public place during school hours in the first five days of the exclusion, without reasonable justification. The parent must have been notified in writing by the school at the time of the exclusion of this and the days to which it applies.

## **Those responsible for attendance matters in this school**

In order for the school's Attendance Policy to be successful, every member of staff must make attendance a high priority and convey this to the pupils at all times. Parents/carers need to support these views in the home to ensure that children are receiving corresponding messages about the value of education.

In addition to this, the following staff has specific attendance related responsibilities:

- **Class Teacher** – To complete registers accurately and punctually at least twice daily; to be alert to early signs of issues which may result in non-attendance; to inform the Senior Leadership Team of any attendance concerns. The class teacher may also make phone calls/ arrange meetings in order for attendance to be challenged at a very early stage. The class teacher will also discuss attendance at Parent/Carer evening which take place twice throughout the academic year (November & April).
- **Office Staff** - To ensure children who are late or absent are added to the electronic register including recording reasons and first day absence calls are made when parents have not notified the school of an absence; to alert the Designated Safeguard Lead if unable to make contact as a home visit may be necessary or the child may need to be reported as missing; to notify the Designated Safeguard Lead of any issues concerning pupil absence.
- **The Attendance Team** – To oversee the registration process and liaise with class teachers over attendance concerns; to alert parents over pupil absence and for frequent lateness and to closely monitor all identified children; promote good attendance within the school with assemblies, achievement certificates and rewards. Members of the Attendance Team will also meet and write to parents in line with the school's stages of response to address attendance concerns.
- **Head Teacher and Governors** – To ensure all attendance procedures are carried out in accordance with the Attendance Policy and to work with the Attendance Team to raise the profile of attendance within the school and deal with the attendance issues that arise. To also authorise Stage 4 of the escalation process (Local Authority Penalty Notice).

## **Re-integration programmes**

Where children have been absent from school for some time, they may need to return on a gradual basis. Individual cases will need to be discussed with the relevant members of staff and agreement reached as to the pace and time scale of any return.

## **Policy Summary**

Whilst we do understand that children are ill from time to time, individual pupil's academic attainment/progress does suffer if they miss school on a regular basis. Also, coming in late to school can have a detrimental effect on a child's progress as they find it hard to settle and will inevitably miss vital introductions to lessons. It also disturbs the class routines, which has a negative effect on other children's learning.

The school has a responsibility to discourage parents from removing their children from education for any reason as absences may have a negative impact on a pupil's educational attainment and progress. A pupil who takes 10 days absence a year will actually be spending more time at home than at school in that year and will only attain 94.7% attendance. 10 days absence means a child misses 50 hours of education.

All staff within the school are committed to working with both parents and pupils to ensure that attendance within the school is as high as it can be so that the pupils receive the best education that they can which will improve their life opportunities.

***Appendices to West Thurrock  
Academy***

***Attendance Policy***



## Appendix 1 - West Thurrock Academy Stages of Response for Attendance Concerns

### Stage 1: Letter to parents

Attendance drops below 96% - Letter to parents/carers informing of 'below 96% attendance' – opportunity to discuss barriers to attendance with the class teacher.

**3-week monitoring and review**



### Stage 2: Letter to parents and attendance meeting

No improvement or further drop in attendance – Letter to parents/ carers and in school attendance meeting to be held by Mrs Pitcher or another member of the school's Attendance Team.


Barriers to attendance discussion and CAF (Common Assessment Framework) for additional support

Any further medical/illness absences – medical evidence needed (if not = unauthorised)

(If parents/carers do not attend meeting or fails to engage – meeting held and recorded on the minutes)

Parents/carers sent minutes of the meeting.

**3-week monitoring and review meeting**



### Stage 3:


No improvement or further drop in attendance – There will be a meeting with at least two members of the Attendance Team.

Letter to parents/carers and in school attendance meeting to be held by Mrs Pitcher and Head teacher. Formal warning and risk of statutory action.

Parental agreement written up and shared with parent/carers sign and issued a copy and minutes of the meeting sent to parent/carers.

**6 week monitoring and review meeting**

If no improvement or parenting contract breached = Statutory action considered = Application for a Penalty Notice to issued or referral made for prosecution) – letter sent.



### Stage 4:

Referral to Thurrock Local Authority and letter to parent/carers (all of the evidence from stages 1 -3 to be submitted to local authority for assessment) – Penalty Notice/ Prosecution likely



## **REQUEST FOR LEAVE OF ABSENCE IN EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES**

This online form must be completed by the parent or carer **at least 4 weeks prior** to the period of absence.

West Thurrock Academy would like to stress:

1. There is no 'right' to leave of absence during term time.
2. Schools & academies have a duty in law to keep pupil absence to a minimum.
3. Nationally, Government policy is to encourage schools and academies to minimise the amount of teaching and learning time lost as a result of term time holidays and schools and academies are expected to adopt a much more challenging response to such requests.
4. For all of the above reasons, requests from parents and carers for children to be allowed to take holidays during term time at West Thurrock Academy will normally be refused and, if taken will be deemed to be an unauthorised absence and may result in further action being taken.

At West Thurrock Academy we understand the challenges of booking family holidays out of school term however the Academy will not grant holidays in term time unless under exceptional circumstance/s.

### **Exceptional Circumstances**

West Thurrock Academy will consider requests for leave of absence where there are exceptional circumstances. These may include:

- A close relative is terminally ill and the absence is likely to be the last such absence.
- The absence is for a one-off, never to be repeated occasion which can only take place at the time requested (e.g. wedding of child's parents/ sibling etc).
- Religious observance – The Education Act 1996 S444(3), states 'on any day exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which his/her parents belong'.

There are other exceptional circumstances where absences may be granted, such as for an approved educational activity, for example:

- An audition for a prestigious performance or admission to a specialist organization
- Out of school programmes such as music, arts or sport operating at a high standard of achievement (direct communication with the organisation may be needed, therefore, contact details could be asked for).

Even in exceptional circumstances leave of absence will not normally be granted:

- If a child's attendance is below 96% for the current academic year
- If the period of absence coincides with the start of term, or is near to or coincides with tests, SATs, exams or other significant events in the school calendar.

**Appendix 3 - Thurrock Penalty Notice Code of Conduct for Unauthorised Absence from School**



PN Code of Conduct September 2022 PDF.pdf