



January 2019
Ref: GBR/EPN

Dear families

Attendance Update

As we begin a new calendar year it is important to focus on the crucial role that good attendance plays in the lives of all of the children at Thorns.

You will be aware that the law states that children must attend school every day and that it is your legal responsibility, as parents or carers, to ensure that your child does so. The national average rate of attendance for all children in secondary education is over 95%.

At Thorns Collegiate Academy our attendance rate has been slowly improving over the last few years, but it needs to improve more quickly and it must not be a factor which holds us back in our pursuit of excellence.

I am disappointed to report that we have suffered from an unprecedented amount of unauthorised holiday in the early part of the current academic year and that this has set us back significantly. For those children who missed learning time there will undoubtedly be a negative impact. From the Academy's perspective, the impact on our statistics is considerable and this, in turn, risks having an impact on our reputation. This must be avoided if we are to continue to improve at the rate we require.

Our position on holidays in term time is absolutely clear. We will not authorise these absences and we will be obliged to contact the Local Authority who will then initiate legal proceedings and fine all families who take an unauthorised holiday in term time.

We trust that you, as parents or carers, will understand our position and will avoid taking your child out of the Academy for the purposes of a family holiday. We also expect you to ensure that your child comes to the Academy every day unless they are genuinely too ill to be here.

I would like to take this opportunity to remind you of research which has been undertaken regarding the negative influence of poor attendance on academic progress. The information presented in the tables below summarises the key points:

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Attendance rate	How this might affect your child
100%	Your child will have access to every opportunity available and is most likely to achieve their full potential.
Above 95%	Your child is likely to achieve their potential.
92% - 95%	This needs to improve. Your child will be missing key learning and other opportunities to enrich their life whilst at the Academy. Your child's chances of fulfilling their potential will begin to diminish . At this point we shall begin to intervene to ensure that improvements are made.
Below 92%	This is in need of urgent improvement and places your child at risk in terms of their progress. It will become increasingly less likely that they will reach their potential.
Below 90%	This is classified as Persistent Absence . This means that formal proceedings are likely to be taken against you as parents. Your child will be missing too much learning and will be most unlikely to reach their potential.

A child whose attendance is 90% throughout five years at Thorns Collegiate Academy will miss the equivalent of **half an academic year**.

The equivalent loss for other percentage attendances over the course of one academic year is as follows:

Percentage attendance during one school year	Number of days absent	Number of weeks missed	Number of lessons missed
96%	9	2	54
90%	19	4	114
85%	29	6	174
80%	38	8	228
75%	48	10	288
70%	57	11.5	342

An analysis of last summer's year 11 GCSE examination data revealed evidence of the connection between good attendance and success in terms of progress and attainment in examinations. There were two messages for us. Firstly, that those students whose attendance was above 95%, broadly

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achieved what was expected of them according to their ability across their subjects. Secondly, that those students whose attendance was below 95%, generally underachieved.

This is represented in the table below:

Rate of attendance	Average attainment compared to targets across all subjects
95% or above	Expected progress
Between 95 - 85%	Half a grade worse than expected
Less than 85%	Almost 2 grades worse than expected

We need to work together with you to ensure that all children at Thorns benefit from good attendance and we are determined to make this happen but this can only be achieved with your full support.

We are therefore asking for your support in two ways. Firstly, the single biggest support will be making sure that your child attends every day. Secondly, if an absence is unavoidable, then you **must** contact the Academy **before 9:30 on each day of absence**. It is your responsibility to contact us.

We have recently secured support from a company which specialises in improving attendance in schools. A number of local schools are now working with them. Their team comprises experts with experience of working within the educational welfare field. The company, Instill-Excellence (which we shall refer to as the Attendance Support Team), now has the mandate to conduct a number of activities on our behalf. We intend to work with them on two key strategies in the first instance:

- Parental engagement to improve attendance – this will involve meeting families to work together to improve attendance for their child where we have concerns.
- Safeguarding – this will involve daily home visits to families if we are not made aware of the reason for any absences.

The strategies are being implemented immediately so I need to make it clear to all parents/carers that should you fail to contact us to explain your child's absence then we will inform the Attendance Support Team who will then conduct a visit to the family home to establish the reasons for the absence.

Should your child's attendance rate fall below 90% then we will require you to provide us with appropriate medical evidence to explain each absence from then on. Attendance which falls below 90% must be urgently addressed otherwise it will be classified as **Persistent Absence** and will

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require us, in most cases, to initiate formal interventions from EIS (Educational Investigation Services) which may result in legal action against you as parents.

Clearly, there are some hard messages here in this letter and it is absolutely appropriate for me to share them with all parents and careers but, by the same token I would like to express my appreciation to those families whose children do attend regularly and thus play a full part in the continuing successes of Thorns Collegiate Academy. It is crucial that I acknowledge this.

From our perspective, we are doing all we can to encourage the very best attendance. We have recently initiated an exciting rewards system to support us in acknowledging our students for good attendance. At the end of the Autumn term, hundreds of our students received certificates and two students in each year were lucky enough to win an Amazon Fire in the prize draw. During the Spring term, all students will have the chance to win gift vouchers and an ipad will be awarded just before the Easter holiday.

The rewards are calculated over each half-term – so even if your child’s attendance wasn’t perfect last term, this new half-term is a fresh start for every child. We are fully-committed to encouraging the very best attendance for all of the children at Thorns.

Your child’s Head of Year will be intervening robustly and supporting positively where required to ensure that all children in their year group attend regularly and that they are successful in achieving the highest outcomes. I trust that they will receive your full support.

Yours sincerely

Mr G Baker
Vice Principal

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