



ST THOMAS'S  
SCHOOL

# St Thomas's School

## Attendance Development

### *Protocols and Processes*

***Mā te hāpori te tamaiti i whakatipu.***  
***'It takes a village to raise a child'.***

*Everyone plays a part in the success of the children in our community.*

## **1. Attendance Protocols - Absence, Lateness and Leave**

### **1.1 Legal requirements:**

#### **Ministry of Education**

- Under The Education Act (2020) – all students enrolled at a school must attend when it is open for instruction, unless there is a justified reason, such as sickness or other equally serious situation that means a student cannot attend.

#### **St Thomas's School**

- The school has a legal responsibility to take all reasonable steps to ensure the attendance of students enrolled at its school. This means the school has to follow up absences and lateness with appropriate interventions.

#### **Parents/Caregivers**

- Parents/caregivers are responsible for their child's attendance at school.
- A parent/caregiver commits an offense if this responsibility is not met.
- In situations where a parent/caregiver condones (by lack of action or explicit approval) the absence of a child, then there may be a prosecution.

### **1.2. High attendance at school correlates strongly with academic achievement.**

- If a student's attendance is below 90% then the Ministry of Education regards the student as 'not regularly attending' school. 90% attendance means a student misses an average **1 in 10 days of school**. The school is very concerned if attendance falls Below 90%.

### **1.3. Students are required to stay in the school grounds during the school day (including interval and lunchtime) except:**

- If a parent is removing their child for an important appointment such as a medical visit.
- A parent or caregiver must sign their child out at the office, prior to the student leaving school.

#### **1.4. Notifications of absences (with an explanation)**

- Parents/caregivers are encouraged to advise the school of an impending absence or lateness ahead of time. When this is not possible, then parents/caregivers are asked to inform the school as soon as possible, when the absence takes place (e.g. by email, Hero, phonecall).
- The following methods of explaining student absences that will be accepted from parents/caregivers: an email, a phone call, a Hero notification or a face-to-face explanation.
- Absence notifications: Primary Caregiver One (whoever is listed as the first contact of students who are absent without explanation will receive a SMS (text) notification advising of this and asking for an explanation by replying. Please ensure that you reply.

**To advise of absence:** Login to Hero to advise us of your child's absence. If no reason is provided, or the reason is an unacceptable reason for absence, it is recorded as an explained, but unjustified absence.

#### **1.5. Requests for leave:**

- For planned absences, a Request for Leave is required.
- Application for leave for planned absences must be received one week prior to the start date, unless under urgent circumstances (e.g. bereavement).
- The purpose of this communication is to notify teachers of planned absence.
- The Ministry of Education guidelines state a student's leave/absence can be either justified or unjustified.

#### **1.6. Classification of absences – justified and unjustified**

- The school has to abide by the Ministry of Education classifications of absence.
- Absences can be either 'justified' or 'unjustified' regardless of if they have been explained.
- Justified absence includes illness/injury or a significant event preventing attendance i.e. bereavement or other exceptional family circumstances.
- Unjustified absence includes holidays in term time or other absences that are explained but not allowed under the Ministry of Education guidelines, such as busy traffic or not waking up on time.
- If the leave request extends a school term holiday, then it is generally unjustified.
- Note that all absences from class count as absences regardless of whether they are justified or unjustified, so all absences affect the attendance rate in the same way.
- Truancy is based on unexplained and/or unjustified absences only and includes skipping a class, a half day or full day of classes. In some cases, if the reason provided for the absence (by a parent/caregiver) is unacceptable then it will be considered as unjustified, for example being 'too tired to come to school', or 'it was too wet to walk' etc.

Code Group	Sub-Group	Code (Historic)	Code (Current)	Change	
Present	On-site	P - Present	P – Present	No change	
		L – Late to class	L – Late to class	No change	
		V – Unsupervised exam study	V – Unsupervised exam study	No change	
		I – Internal school appointment	N – Present but out of class	Merged to N	
		R – Removed from class			
		N – On-site school-based activity			
		S – Sickbay			
	Off-site	C – Justice Court proceedings	D – Approved external appointment	Merged to D	
		D – Medical appointment			
		F – Off-site class / course / distance learning	Q – Board approved offsite learning	Merged to Q	
		Q- Off-site school organised activity (trip / camp)			
		W – Work experience			
		A – Alternative Education	A – Alternative provision	Merged to A	
		K – Teen Parent Unit			
		Z – Secondary-Tertiary Program			
		H – Health camp / health school / residential school			
		Y – Activity Centre			
	Absent	Justified Absences	M – Illness / Medical Absence (e.g. Covid)	M – Illness / Medical absence	No change
			J – Justified (other)	J – Explained and approved	Merged to J
O – Justified overseas posting					
U – Stood down or suspended			U – Stood down or suspended	No change	
Exam Leave		X – Exam Leave	X – Exam Leave	No change	
Unjustified Absences		T – Truant	T – Truant	No change	
		E – Explained (but unjustified)	E – Explained but not approved	No change	
		G – Holiday during term time	G – Holiday during term time	No change	
	? – Unknown (Temporary)	? – Unknown reason (temporary)	No change		

## 1.7. Punctuality

- Punctuality is recorded on our attendance system. Being on time is getting the most from lessons and will typically mean a student is ready to learn. Students should aim to arrive 10-15 minutes before the scheduled start of the day and being ready to learn with all the right materials.
- A student who is late to school may not be ready to learn, will miss instructions and will disrupt the class on entry. Every minute counts. **If a student is late 5 minutes once a week that is equivalent to missing 4 days of learning twice a year. This causes disruptions to the class programme, other students and the teacher.**
- Students arriving late to school must sign in at the office. Students will receive a **Late Pass** to show classroom teachers. **The office will record the lateness.** Lateness is automatically recorded in Hero when a student signs in late.
- The school is aware that occasionally other circumstances may cause a lateness outside of the control of the student or parent/caregiver. For an individual this would be expected to be a rare event, but in such circumstances, provide a suitable explanation to the office (i.e. email or parent explanation to the office staff).

## 1.8. Lateness and unjustified/unexplained absence

- If a student is continually late or absent then an accountability conference will be convened to discuss how the student, parent/caregiver and school can work together to encourage adherence to the attendance/punctuality requirements.

## 1.9. Signing out during the school day

- If a student needs to be signed out during the school day they need to be signed out by their parent or caregiver. Parents are advised to avoid signing out at interval or lunchtime.

## 2. Attendance Procedures

### 2.1. Maintain the attendance register.

Rolls must be completed by the teacher at the start of the morning and the start of the afternoon. The register is a legal document and will be audited externally. Attendance rolls must be able to stand up in a court of law – so they must be accurate.

### 2.2 Teacher rolls when absent

The relief teacher will get a class roll either on paper or electronically.

**St Thomas's School Absence letter**

Date:

Dear [parent names]

**Response to proposed absence from school**

Thank you for your email regarding your child's proposed absence from school. One of the areas the Government is focused on is student attendance.

As a parent or caregiver, you, alongside our school, play a key role in building strong habits of regular school attendance.

All students are legally required to attend school every day and it is a shared responsibility to make sure students attend and engage in learning.

Your request for your child to be absent from school for this period is acknowledged and as per Ministry of Education regulations will be recorded as an "unjustified absence".

On behalf of the Thomas's School Board of Trustees,

Ngā mihi nui,

**Michael Maher**  
**Principal**

## St Thomas's School Attendance concerns letter

Date:

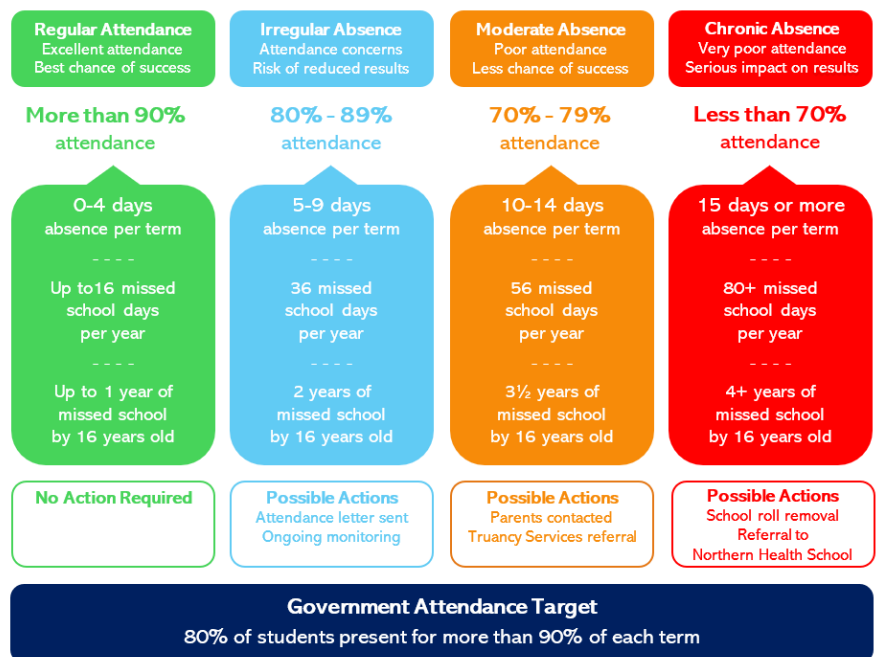
Dear [parent names]

We are committed to ensuring our students get the most out of their education. Part of this commitment includes supporting students to maintain regular attendance. Research shows those who attend school regularly; learn more, achieve better results and experience a greater sense of wellbeing through stronger peer connections.

The Ministry of Education has recently developed four **Student Attendance Categories**, designed to support schools to track and manage students with patterns or periods of non-attendance.

- **Regular Attendance**  
Over 90% attendance
- **Irregular Absence**  
80% - 89% attendance
- **Moderate Absence**  
70% - 79% attendance
- **Chronic Absence**  
Less than 70% attendance

Our Term [X] monitoring shows that your child [name], was absent from school [#] times.



The graphic above illustrates the impact of absence from school on your child's overall education and the actions that may be taken to improve attendance.

As parents, you have an important role in ensuring your child attends school whenever it is open unless there are good reasons for absence. Acceptable reasons include sickness or serious family circumstances such as a bereavement. When there is a good reason for absence, you must contact the school office to let us know.

We will continue to monitor your child's attendance throughout the following term and anticipate an improvement in attendance.

If your child continues to miss school without a justified explanation, we will contact you and request a meeting to see how we can work with you to encourage better attendance. If unexplained absences persist, a referral may also be made to Truancy Services.

We thank you for your support in ensuring your child attends school regularly.

Kind regards,  
Claire Fromow  
Deputy Principal

[cfromow@stthomas.school.nz](mailto:cfromow@stthomas.school.nz)

## St Thomas's School Lateness Concerns Letter

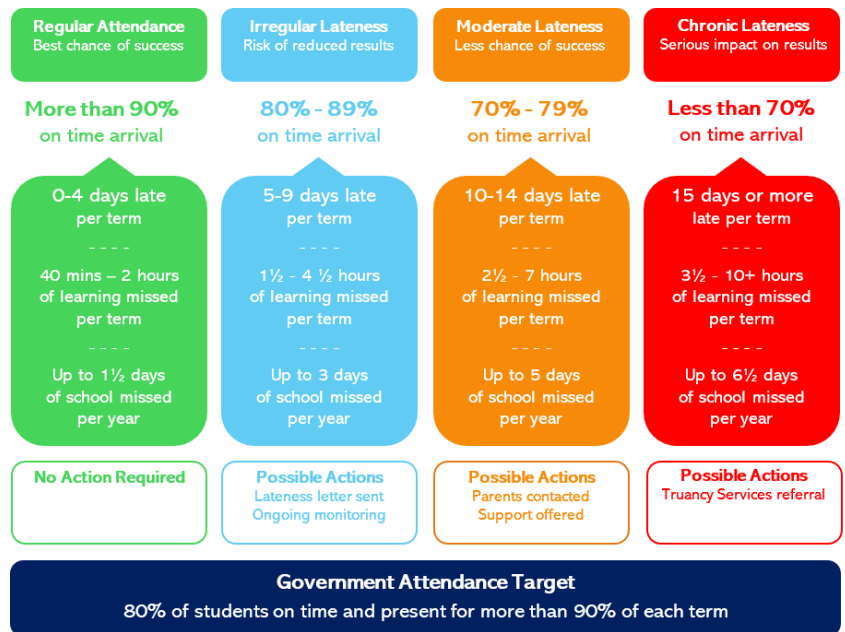
Date:

Dear [parent names],

We are committed to ensuring our students get the most out of their education. Part of this commitment includes supporting students to arrive at school on time and maintain regular attendance. Research shows those who attend school regularly; learn more, achieve better results and experience a greater sense of wellbeing through stronger peer connections.

The Ministry of Education has recently developed four **Student Attendance Categories**, designed to support schools to track and manage students with patterns or periods of lateness and/or non-attendance.

- **Regular Attendance**  
90% on time attendance
- **Irregular Lateness**  
80% - 89% on time attendance
- **Moderate Lateness**  
70% - 79% on time attendance
- **Chronic Lateness**  
Less than 70% on time attendance



**Our Term 2 monitoring shows that your child [name], was late to school [#] times in Term 2 and # times in total so far this year.**

The graphic above illustrates the impact of continual lateness to school on your child's overall education and the actions that may be taken to improve attendance.

As parents, you have an important role in ensuring your child arrive at school on time and attends school whenever it is open unless there are good reasons for lateness or absence. Acceptable reasons include sickness or serious family circumstances such as a bereavement. When there is a good reason for lateness or absence, you must contact the school office to let us know.

We will continue to monitor your child's attendance throughout the following term and anticipate an improvement in arriving at school on time.

If your child continues to arrive late to school, we will contact you and request a meeting to see how we can work with you to encourage better attendance. If the lateness persists, a referral may also be made to Truancy Services.

We thank you for your support in ensuring your child attends school on time.

Kind regards,  
Claire Fromow  
Deputy Principal

[cfromow@stthomas.school.nz](mailto:cfromow@stthomas.school.nz)

## Every Minute Counts!

**Arriving at 8.30 am for a 8.55 am start is a habit for success**

8.30 am

Arriving before class means having time to socialise with friends and getting settled and ready for class

8.50 am

Less likely to be ready for class

8.55 am

Arriving late means the start of the lesson could be missed and it is likely to unsettle the other students in the class as well

9.00 am

5 minutes late per day means missing about 4 days of learning time per year

9.05 am

10 minutes late per day means 7 days of learning lost per year

**MINISTRY OF EDUCATION**

Students who are constantly late or absent may be contacted by Truancy Services

Students that are late are missing out on learning and are a disruption to other students learning  
If a student is regularly late it will affect their learning and it also means less time to socialise with friends

**NOTE:** 70% of students who are constantly late or absent from school drop out of High School before they are 16 years old