

Date of last review: Summer 2021
Date of next review: Summer 2022

Introduction

At Netherfield Primary, we fully recognise the contribution that good attendance and punctuality can make towards ensuring pupils' safety and improving their achievement. The aim of the policy is to:

- make improving attendance and punctuality a high priority;
- establish systems and processes to monitor and improve attendance;
- define specific roles and responsibilities;
- promote effective partnership working with outside services and parents.

Absence

Absences at school are of two types: authorised or unauthorised. All absences are unauthorised until a satisfactory reason for the absence is given, however **it is the school's responsibility and final decision to authorise any absence**. The only satisfactory reasons for absence are:

- Agreed leave of absence.
- Observance of a religious festival.
- Illness. Children should only be kept at home if they have a serious illness or injury. If this is the case, parents should contact the school first thing. **If a child has a minor illness e.g. mild headache, stomachaches etc. parents should inform the school and bring them in. If they do not get any better, school will contact parents straight away, to collect them.** Regular illness may need to be substantiated by a medical evidence.
 - If the child is prescribed a course of antibiotics, they should return to school after one or two days, timing medication around the school day or giving permission for a school first aider.
 - Children with identified medical conditions, who are regularly absent as a result, are asked to keep the school informed.
 - Attendance at a medical appointment must be authorised at the school office, whereby proof of the appointment must be shown e.g. doctor's medical card or letter, hospital appointment card or letter. Children should attend school before and after any appointment, reducing the time away from school. Wherever possible, these appointments should be made out of school time.

All other absences are unauthorised.

Netherfield Primary School's aim is **97% attendance and above** for all pupils in the school. All children's attendance is monitored but when the **percentage attendance is below 90%, the child is considered a persistent absentee** and further investigation takes place. This can trigger further sanctions and is in line with Department for Education and Local Authority guidance.

Agreed Leave of absence

It is school policy not to authorise holiday absence during term time. Leave of absence may be given in exceptional circumstances such as:

- death of parent/carer or sibling of the pupil
- life threatening or critical illness of parent or sibling of the pupil
- parent/carer recuperation and convalescence from critical illness or surgery (leave request to be made within 6 months of recovery and medical evidence required)

Family emergencies need careful consideration. It is not always in the best interest of the child for them to miss school for family emergencies that are being dealt with by adult family members. Being at school, friendships and support from staff can provide children with stability and care during difficult times. The routine of school can provide a safe and familiar background during times of uncertainty.

Any family experiencing such exceptional circumstances should make any request for leave by completing a leave of absence form, available from school. **Absence due to leave in term time is at the discretion of the Head Teacher.** Parents/carers are at risk of penalty notices if they do not return to school on the agreed date.

If leave is not agreed by the Headteacher, the absence is recorded as an unauthorised absence and a Penalty Notice may be issued. This will also apply if a child is absent due to leave that has not been requested or agreed.

Attendance in the Foundation Stage

Regular attendance is encouraged from the outset and will create good habits for the future. This early message, communicated to parents from the initial meeting, will set the expectations of the statutory requirements once the child is registered on roll at school, the term following their fifth birthday. The information regarding non-statutory attendance is analysed in the same way as the rest of the school and every attempt will be made to address any concerns, initially in discussion with the parent/carer or by a home visit. Such intervention will be noted at school and confirmed in writing to the parent/carer.

If the child's attendance fails to improve and no satisfactory reasons have been given for the absences, an appointment will be made inviting parents to meet with an attendance team. **Our Foundation Stage 1 is often oversubscribed. Where a child's attendance is poor, we reserve the right to allocate their place to another child.**

Celebrating good attendance

The school recognises that one powerful way of increasing attendance and punctuality is to ensure that it has a high profile in the school. We aim to achieve high levels of attendance by providing incentives for children.

Activities include:

- Issuing Pupil Reward Points
- Whole-school incentives and rewards
- Termly 100% certificates
- End of year 100% award and prize to individual children
- Each week the class that has 100% attendance wins the trophy, points and a playtime reward.

General responsibilities

All members of the school community are expected to share responsibility for promoting good attendance and punctuality.

Parents are legally required to send their child/children to school daily (and on time) so that they can benefit from the education, which is offered to them. As they mature, pupils are expected to take greater responsibility for their own attendance and punctuality, but the legal duty remains with parents.

The school has a legal responsibility to record the attendances and punctuality of all its pupils. We fulfil our legal responsibility through operation of the attendance policy.

General procedure for class attendance

Completion of class registers at the beginning of the morning and afternoon sessions is a requirement and an integral part of our attendance and safeguarding procedures for pupils.

The attendance team are committed to making early contact with parents for pupils who are absent, via a telephone call and visits for more vulnerable students. The attendance team must be able to trust the accuracy of the registers as this is the bedrock for safeguarding.

Teachers are expected to:

- Take the class register and save it within the first 15 minutes of each session;
- Take a paper register if the class register cannot be taken electronically;
- Take a quick head count after taking an electronic or paper register.

General procedure for reporting a child's absence from school

Parents should notify school on the first and each consecutive day of their child's absence by phoning or emailing the school or using the school app.

This contact is requested from parents to ensure safeguarding procedures are followed. For example, a parent may suggest their child will be absent for 3 days, but if improved, may send them in on the second day. Without daily absence reporting, the school would still be expecting their absence to last 3 days and would not be in a position to alert parents if they failed to attend on the second day, which could compromise pupil safeguarding if an incident occurred on the way to school. It is for this reason daily absence calls are required.

Procedure for elective home education

Parents may elect to home educate at any stage up to the end of compulsory school age. Parents who choose to educate their children at home must be prepared to assume full financial responsibility, including bearing the cost of any public examinations. Parents must also ensure that their child/children receive(s) suitable full-time education for as long as they are being educated at home.

When a parent is thinking of deregistering their child from school to home educate, the school's deputy head should explore in detail with the parents the full implications of taking their child off roll.

Parents are required to inform the headteacher in writing if they do decide to deregister their child. The deputy head will inform the local authority within 14 days of the parent's written decision to deregister their child.

Procedure for investigating pupil absence

1. First day contact will be made, by the attendance team, with a parent when a pupil does not arrive at school and the school has not been informed of their absence. Dependent upon the individual circumstances this contact might be via telephone or personal home visit.

2. Where no response has been received following initial first day contact, a home visit or letter will be sent depending upon circumstance and knowledge of the family involved.

3. Where a pupil has returned to school after an absence, but the school has not been provided with a reason for that absence, the attendance team will make continued attempts to contact the parent of the child on the day they return to school to obtain an explanation for absence. If there is a continued failure to respond to calls or written requests for information, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. This can be amended later should further satisfactory information be given for the absence.

4. If it has not been possible to establish the reason for the absence via first day contact the attendance team wherever possible will make a home visit on the third day of absence in an attempt to ascertain why the pupil is not at school.

5. Home visits will be made earlier if the pupil is deemed vulnerable, such as being subject to a child protection plan. If such visits are unsuccessful, written notification of the visit will be left at the home address requesting contact be made with the attendance team as a matter of urgency.

6. For more prolonged absences the Missing Pupil Officer for Nottinghamshire should be notified. Continued home visits should be pursued during this time and the liaison with other outside agencies considered. All parental contact and visits must be logged onto Bromcom.

Nottinghamshire County Council Family Service

Family Service support involves specific interventions to improve the attendance of pupils identified as persistent absentees or following up pupils who have been continuously absent without authorisation from school for 10 days or more. School can refer to this service.

Procedure for supporting pupils during and after absence from school

It is teachers who are expected to plan the support for any pupil who has been absent due to short-term illness by providing them with help and resources so they can catch up on work missed. Where a pupil is absent for a longer period of time due to illness or exclusion, teachers are also expected to provide appropriate learning materials or to give direction on how to access relevant learning resources.

Further support for pupils during and after long-term absence may include:

- arranging home tuition when applicable;
- arranging off site provision;
- developing personalised learning programmes in discussion with parents, these may include renegotiated timetables, alternative curriculum opportunities or flexi-schooling.

The team of DHT, HT, attendance and SENCO are all involved in supporting such circumstances.

The attendance team will be responsible for written requests to the Health Related Education Team (HRET) if the absence of a pupil fits the criteria for their involvement (medical and anxiety).

If any staff member becomes aware of any pre-planned medical operations, which will result in at least 10 school days being lost, then contact should be made with the attendance team to enable a timely referral being made.

Procedure for analysing attendance data

Bromcom system is used to access pupil / group and overall attendance / absence data for analysis. This information is used:

- To track individual, group and overall attendance/absence levels.
- To highlight underachievers who are also poor attendees.
- For self-evaluation and improvement of strategic planning.
- To support the management of attendance issues.

Pupil attendance is a standing item on the pupil and personnel committee of the governing body. A report on pupil attendance is presented to the governors termly through the headteacher's report to the governing body.

Fixed Penalty Procedures

Section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act gives powers to the Local Education Authority (LEA) and other designated bodies to issue Penalty Notices where a parent/carer are considered capable of, but unwilling to secure an improvement in their child's school attendance.

Netherfield Primary School operates a Fixed Penalty Fine Notice in respect of unauthorised school absences, in close co-operation with the Local Authority.

Penalty Notices may be used in a range of circumstances where Unauthorised Absences occur, such as:

- Unauthorised holiday absence during term time.
- Where a holiday is suspected by the school and parents/carers have failed to provide medical evidence to the contrary.
- Unnecessary parental condoned absence.
- Continued Persistent absence without supporting medical evidence.
- Persistent late arrival at school (after the registers have closed)

In respect of unauthorised holidays in term time, a Fixed Penalty Notice will be requested if a student has missed a minimum of three school days (six sessions) during the previous six school weeks.

For other unauthorised absence, a Fixed Penalty Notice will be issued for absences of more than three school days (six sessions) over a six-week period. (Please note the unauthorised absences do not have to run consecutively and can be on any day or session in a six-week period).

The Enforcement Team

Fixed Penalty Notices are issued by post to home. Parents/carers will be notified if the school applies a Penalty Notice. The costs associated with a Penalty Notice are as follows:

- The penalty is £60 and it is issued to each parent/carer for each child who was absent without authorisation. The fine must be paid within 21 days of issue. If it isn't paid within 21 days the fine then rises to £120 per parent for each child that was absent without authorisation.
- The enforcement team could prosecute and there could be a fine of up to £2500, a community order or a jail sentence of up to 3 months or a parenting order.

Specific roles and responsibilities

The Class Teacher

- Follow the general procedure for attendance and liaise with the attendance team with any concerns.
- Encourage good attendance through stimulating lessons and the use of rewards.
- Prepare learning materials to support the return of pupils as required.
- Welcome and support students returning from absence.
- Liaise with parents over attendance issues.
- Support persistent absentees in improving their attendance.
- Set high expectations for pupils' attendance/punctuality.
- Discuss attendance/punctuality at phase meetings.
- Ensure suitable resources are available for absent/excluded pupils.
- Induct supply/temporary staff on use of the general procedures for class attendance.
- Use data to inform target setting and interventions.
- Promote a positive ethos across phase through use of attendance rewards.

Attendance Team

- Amend entries with up to date information to ensure accuracy of registers.
 - Contact teachers who may have entered incorrect or confusing marks.
 - Contact teachers, who have failed to take their register.
 - Liaise between home and school in relation to general attendance queries.
 - Contact home by telephone on the first day of a child's absence.
 - Be responsible for the initiation of letters to parents regarding any unexplained absences.
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- Refer pupils to Family Service as required.
 - Conduct home visits on the third day of any unexplained absences.
 - Conduct home visits on the first day of any unexplained absence for students deemed to be vulnerable.
 - Liaise with school staff and external agencies on improving pupil attendance.
 - Analyse data on attendance and intervene with pupils who are developing a pattern of absence.
 - Monitor whole school attendance data and advise key staff on trends, concerns and referrals.
 - Produce weekly and termly attendance reports for phase leaders and the Headteacher.
 - Attend weekly attendance meetings with the Headteacher.
 - Liaise with secondary schools over transition of vulnerable pupils.
 - Devise and implement strategies to achieve and maintain excellent levels of attendance whilst eliminating unknown absences.
 - Where possible, conduct late gate checks.
 - Maintain close links with local police, Family Service and Children's Social Care.
 - Take responsibility for the authorisation of leave of absence requests.
 - Liaise closely with the SENCo regarding vulnerable students.
 - Work with the Local Authority on the monitoring and application of Fixed Penalty Notices

Headteacher

- Promote positive school ethos in relation to attendance through the development and operation of agreed policies, practices and processes.
- Coordinate strategies and plans for improving attendance.
- Ensure that roles and responsibilities in relation to attendance are communicated and understood.
- Ensure staff consistently apply strategies aimed at improving pupil attendance.
- Attend weekly attendance meetings with the attendance team.