



# Attendance Policy

I can do all things through God, who gives me strength.

Philippians 4:13

## Introduction

This policy has been written to adhere to the relevant Children Acts, Education Acts, Regulations and Guidance from the Department for Education in addition to guidance from the Local Authority. Parents/carers have the legal responsibility for ensuring their child's regular attendance and failure to do so is a criminal offence under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

## Rationale

This attendance policy ensures that all staff, governors and parents in our school are fully aware of and clear about the actions necessary to promote good attendance.

We expect all children on roll to attend every day, when the school is in session, as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so. We do all we can to encourage the children to attend and to put in place appropriate procedures. We believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is development of positive attitudes towards school. Consistent attendance helps children keep up with their lessons and absorb essential foundational skills in core subjects. Gaps in attendance can lead in difficulties understanding new material. As well as academic success, regular attendance supports children to build relationships with their peers and teachers. It helps them develop social skills and a sense of community, which is vital for overall emotional and social growth. To this end, we provide a safe and nurturing environment to enable the flourishing of all. We also make the best provision

we can for those children who, due to ill health, are prevented from coming to school.

It is the expectation of everyone within the wider school community to support pupils to:

- Attend school regularly
- Attend school punctually
- Attend school prepared

We will achieve this by:

- ✓ Promoting good attendance
- ✓ Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- ✓ Ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- ✓ Acting early to address patterns of absence
- ✓ Building strong relationships with families to ensure pupils have the support in place to attend school

## Definitions

### Authorised absence

- An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate unavoidable reason and the school has received notification from a parent or carer. For example, if a child has been unwell and the parent telephones the school to explain the absence.

*Only the Headteacher can decide on whether an absence is authorised or not. Sometimes, even if absence is supported by parent, an absence will be unauthorised.*

### Unauthorised absence

- An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the school even if the absence is supported by the parent.

## Procedures

Our school will undertake to follow the following procedures to support good attendance:

- School will provide a safe and nurturing environment to enable the flourishing of all
- Attendance will be recorded twice daily
- Parents will be contacted by the school office if their child is absent and school are unaware of the reasons why
- The class teachers and Headteacher will support the parents with the attendance of their child
- The school will refer to the Code of Conduct for Derbyshire County Council for guidance.

## **Responsibilities**

All members of school staff have a responsibility for identifying trends in attendance and punctuality. The following includes a more specific list of the kinds of responsibilities which individuals might have.

**Please contact the Headteacher, Mrs Gamble, for support.**

### **Class teachers are responsible for:**

Teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a twice daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office via MIS (Integris). In addition, teachers should report any attendance concerns or non-attendance patterns to the Headteacher. Teachers should also promote good attendance through positive praise and parental communication.

### **The Headteacher is responsible for:**

- Implementation of this policy
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Leading attendance across the school
- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having an oversight of data analysis
- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data
- Sending attendance letters and arranging calls and meetings with parents / carers to discuss attendance issues
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families

- Working with the family support worker, the attendance officer and outside agencies to tackle persistent absence
- Building good school:family relationships to allow the family to feel supported and encourage attendance.

### **School Business Officer is responsible for:**

- Answering calls, and listening to answer machine messages, from parents / carers about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system
- Making initial phone calls to parents / carers if a pupil is absent and the school have not been informed as to why
- Transferring calls from parents / carers to the Headteacher, in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance
- Arranging and sending attendance letters for authorised and unauthorised absence
- Arranging and sending forms to the Local Authority re issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary

### **GOVERNING BODY IS RESPONSIBLE FOR:**

- Promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school
- Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance
- Holding the Headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy

### **PARENTS / CARERS ARE EXPECTED TO:**

- Make sure their child attends school every day and on time (school starts at 8.40am and finishes at 3.10pm)
- Call the school to report their child's absence before 8.30am on the day of the absence, and each subsequent day of absence, and advise on why they are absent and when they are expected to return
- Provide the school with at least 2 emergency contacts, with phone numbers, for their child
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day

## **PARENTS / CARERS ARE EXPECTED TO SUPPORT PUPILS TO:**

- Attend school every day
- Arrive at school on time
- Have the correct clothing and equipment required for the school day

## **Registration**

The school doors open at 8.30am and children are expected to be in school by 8.40am this gives plenty of time for all pupils to come into their classroom and be ready to learn when lessons start.

Each class teacher has the responsibility for marking the attendance register at the beginning of the morning and afternoon sessions.

All attendance records are documented using Integris. Attendance registers are legal documents and these must be kept secure and preserved in line with the relevant retention schedule

## **Lateness**

Children who are persistently late after close of register soon fall behind with their learning. Arriving on time enables children to have a calm start to the day, as lateness can disrupt their normal daily routine.

Any pupil who comes into school after the register closes will be marked as late. Records are kept of those pupils who are late; this is documented on the electronic register for each pupil (Attendance code L).

Any child who arrives for school later than 9am will be marked as late after close of register (Attendance code U). This is an unauthorised absence for the whole session and will affect your child's overall attendance percentage and can be used to calculate absence thresholds for legal decision making.

Children who have attended a dentist or doctor's appointment and subsequently come to school later than after the register closes will have the absence recorded as a medical absence (Attendance code M).

## **Managing persistent lates**

Pupils who have repeated punctuality issues will be reported by the school office or teacher to the Headteacher. The child's parent / carer will be contacted to identify strategies to overcome any barriers to punctual attendance. The school will strive to provide support for the family through an

open door, open communication and a united home:school support system for the child. Newton Solney CofE (VA) Infant School is a very encouraging and nurturing school and recognises life and family circumstance are not always linear, so we do our best to provide support whilst managing lateness. If punctuality does not improve, the case may be escalated to more formal procedures as detailed The Code of Conduct for Absences for Derbyshire County Council.

## **Absences**

### **UNPLANNED ABSENCE**

The pupil's parent / carer must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 8.30am or as soon as practically possible by calling the school office on 01283 703461. We will mark absence due to illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness. If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask the pupil's parent / carer to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily. If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents / carers will be notified of this in advance.

### **PLANNED ABSENCE**

In September 2013, the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 came into force. These regulations make it clear that Headteachers should not grant approval for any leave of absence during term-time, including holidays, unless there are exceptional circumstances. These regulations also state that holidays cannot be authorised retrospectively. Any requests should be on an official school absence request form and handed into the school office for consideration prior to any holiday / leave arrangements being made. You may be issued with a Penalty Notice should leave be taken which is not authorised. If unpaid, this could lead to prosecution under section 444(1) of The Education Act 1996. Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent / carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment. However, we encourage parents/ carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary. The pupil's parent / carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. The

Headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the Headteacher's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for. The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request. Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least two weeks before the absence, and in accordance with any leave of absence request form, accessible via the school office. The Headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

## **First Day Contact**

Where a child is absent from school and we have not received any contact from the parent, then we initiate a first day contact process. Office staff check all of the registers each morning to identify those pupils who are absent without explanation and, as a safeguarding requirement, make contact with the parents of these children by telephone.

## **Applications for Leave of Absence in Term Time**

In September 2013 the government introduced new regulations making it clear that Headteachers **must not** give approval for any leave of absence during term time, including holidays, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Any requests for term time leave should be made on our leave of absence form available from the school office and on the website, and then handed in two school weeks before the first date of the requested absence whenever possible. **You must have received written authorisation before your child can be absent from school.**

Parent/carers may be issued with a penalty notice fine or prosecution should leave of 5 days or more be taken which is not authorised by the Headteacher, or where repeated incidents of leave in term time for less than 5 days occur or where the unauthorised absence contributes to wider poor attendance that meets the legal threshold. (Attendance code G).

## **Flexi- Schooling**

We offer Flexi-Schooling on a case by case basis. Parents are invited to hold a meeting with the Headteacher to discuss Flexi-schooling and their child's attendance.

## Addressing Attendance Concerns

Attendance Categories	
95 to 100%	As expected
91 to 94%	At risk of persistent absence
80 to 90%	Persistent absence
51 to 79%	At risk of severe absence
Less than or equal to 50%	Severe absence

It is important for children to establish good attendance habits early on in their school career. It is the responsibility of the Headteacher and the governors to support good attendance and to identify and address attendance concerns promptly. We rely upon parents to ensure their child attends school regularly and punctually and therefore where there are concerns regarding attendance parents are always informed of our concerns.

**Parents can contact the class teacher for support with ongoing attendance. The Headteacher and Local County Council can offer support and advice.**

If a child's attendance does not improve and absences are unauthorised this may lead to consideration of parental responsibility measures which include the issue of penalty notice fines or other statutory action.

## National framework for penalty notices

The new national threshold for consideration of legal action is 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks. A school week means any week in which there is at least one school session. This can be met with any combination of unauthorised absence, including lates after close of register (Attendance code U) and unauthorised leave in term time (Attendance code G).

If your child's absence falls into this category the school will decide if further offers of support is likely to improve the situation or if a request for legal action should be submitted to the Local Authority.



Reviewed by the Governing Body – October 2024

Review date – October 2025