



Newton Hill Community School

Attendance Policy

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE MATTERS

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Aim

There is a direct correlation between Attendance and Attainment. The aim of the Attendance Policy is to raise levels of attendance and punctuality for children and young people, therefore maximising their opportunities for improved attainment.

Objectives

- ✓ Reduce absence and lateness, and raise awareness of the importance of school attendance.
- ✓ Include all school staff, parents, pupils and Governors in School Attendance Matters strategies.
- ✓ Develop a robust electronic data handling system, enabling school staff, the LA and DfE to access statistical data in order to work effectively in partnership.
- ✓ Work effectively with parents/carers and partner agencies, using a range of strategies to improve the attendance of individual pupils and the whole school. The strategies may include assemblies and rewards.

The Law

Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act states:

that if a child of compulsory school age fails to attend regularly, the parent is guilty of an offence.

Parents, therefore have a legal responsibility to ensure their child's school attendance. Failure can lead to legal action being taken by the LA in the Magistrates Court, or the need to issue Fixed Penalty Fines. Since March 2001 there has been a further offence, Section 444 (1A) where a parent **knowingly** allows their child to be absent from school. This offence can carry a custodial sentence.

Absence from School

Any absence from school is detrimental to a child's education and progress. It disrupts learning, routines and progress. Government research shows that 17 days lost learning in one school year can lead to a drop of one grade at GCSE and SAT level.

School will follow up unexplained absences by contacting parents/carers on the first day of absence. Parents/carers are invited into school to discuss attendance issues if there is a cause for concern. School will agree with the EWS at what point a referral to the Service will be made.

Authorised Absence

Some absences are unavoidable, usually due to illness, bereavement or difficult family circumstances. These absences should be supported by medical evidence where possible or an explanation from the parent/carer. The decision to authorise an absence lies with the Headteacher. Notes are made in a duplicate book and electronically on Integris should a parent/carer phone to say a child is going to be absent from school. Written explanations are copied to Integris.

Unauthorised Absence

These are absences which are not permissible in Law, eg birthdays, shopping trips, days out and Term Time Holidays, and absences where no explanation has been received. The School will discuss unauthorised absence with the EWS and further action may be agreed.

The headteacher cannot authorise holiday taken in term time. The school works in close partnership with the EWS regarding the issue of Fixed Penalty Fines.

Persistent Absence

A pupil becomes a persistent absentee if he/she has missed 15% or more of school for any reason and has an attendance of below 85%. The school will invite parents/carers in to discuss the situation, and referrals may be made to the EWS. A range of school and LA strategies can be deployed to improve attendance, including the Fastrack to Attendance programme, Parenting Contracts and Fixed Penalty Fines.

Punctuality

The Law states that children should arrive at school on time, every day. The school doors open at 8.50am and the expectation is that pupils should be ready to learn at 9.00am. Poor punctuality is unacceptable and persistent lateness, ie after the close of registration at 9.15am may be marked as an unauthorised absence, leaving parents/carers at risk of legal action. Families who are persistently late are brought to the attention of the headteacher who will determine whether further action should be taken.

Roles and Responsibilities

We will:

- ✓ Set high expectations for pupil attendance, and monitor individual and whole school attendance on a weekly basis.
- ✓ Identify causes of concern with regard to pupil attendance.
- ✓ Make initial contact with parents where there is unexplained absence.
- ✓ Invite parents/carers into school to discuss concerns if there is no improvement.
- ✓ Work in partnership with the LA, and with EWS particularly.
- ✓ Maintain electronic registration data systems effectively and deploy them robustly to facilitate presentation of reports.
- ✓ Provide attendance data for parents.
- ✓ Promote attendance at all levels – within school, the community, the LA, regionally and nationally.
- ✓ Celebrate excellent and improved attendance.

Parents and Carers will:

- ✓ Ensure pupils arrive at school on time everyday and that routines are in place at home to support this.
- ✓ Contact the school as soon as possible if absence is unavoidable, and follow this up with a written explanation.
- ✓ Obtain evidence where appropriate to support medical absence.
- ✓ Avoid term time holidays, and attempt to minimise school time appointments.

Education Welfare Service will:

- ✓ The EWS will work in partnership with the school to promote and facilitate improved attendance, at an individual level, either through a referral system or using the Fastrack to Attendance Programme; and at whole school level using proactive strategies and Action Plans.
- ✓ The EWS will work with children and families to ensure their school attendance and safeguarding is maintained.
- ✓ EWS will provide advice and guidance with regards to Children Missing Education. Child Employment and Licensing.
- ✓ EWS will work in partnership with other agencies and will offer advice and signposting for referrals to appropriate organisations.
- ✓ EWS will undertake legal action on behalf of the School.
- ✓ The LA will support the school with networking and training events and with individual School Audits and Action Plans.