

Newton Hill Community School



Attendance Policy 2026-2028

Updated January 2026

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Introduction:

Newton Hill Community School is committed to equality of opportunity and valuing diversity. We aim to create and promote an environment in which pupils, parents/carers and staff are treated fairly and with respect, and feel able to contribute to the best of their abilities.

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.

The policy intends:-

To raise attainment and achievement levels by having high expectations of attendance and punctuality, to work effectively with parents/carers and different agencies to maintain high attendance levels. Any absence leads to missed learning and may cause difficulties with social relationships. Encouraging good attendance and punctual arrival is the shared responsibility of the school and parents. Parents/carers have a responsibility to see that their children receive the appropriate education and it is the responsibility of the school to ensure that this happens.

Aims of the Policy

- To deliver a motivating, relevant, accessible curriculum to all children
- Reduce absence and lateness, and raise awareness of the importance of school attendance. Track Persistent absence data.
- Maintain high expectations in relation to attendance; all children should be aware that every day counts and that their attendance is important.
- 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.

Attendance Data and Targets

- The target for all children and young people is to strive for 100% attendance. Only by achieving full attendance can children expect to achieve their full potential.
- Attendance data will be collected and analysed and used to inform the school's attendance practices and interventions. This data will be shared monthly with our EWO.
- Individual data will be analysed and monitored to enable early intervention

Expectations for attendance are displayed on school newsletters and updates.

Outstanding Attendance	97%+
Good attendance	95-96%
Requires Improvement	91-94%
Deemed as Persistently Absent	90% and below
Severely Absent	50% and below

What you can expect from Newton Hill Community School:

- We will promote good attendance and punctuality and will investigate any unexplained and/or unjustified absence.
- We will work closely with parents/carers where a pupil's absence is cause for concern.
- We will support children and young people to achieve good attendance and punctuality.
- We will support children and young people returning to school after prolonged absence.

What NHCS expects from children and young people:

- To attend regularly and on time on those days that it is open, dressed in full uniform and equipped to learn.

What NHCS expects from Parents/Carers:

- To ensure their child attends the academy on those days it is open, dressed in full uniform and equipped to learn.
- To ensure their child attends every day the school is open unless they are too ill to do so.
- To avoid keeping their child away from the school for any reason other than illness or other authorised explanation, providing medical evidence where required.
- To avoid arranging holidays during term time
- To immediately inform the school if their child is unable to attend (by 8.00am where possible), including the reason for absence and expected date of return either via email or voice message on the school answer phone.
- Parents/carers should contact the school on each day of absence.

All elements of the DfE 'Working together to improve school attendance' guidance are used to inform best practice. We work in a collaborative and supportive way with the Local Authority and combine resources to support excellent attendance.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-improve-school-attendance>

Statutory Requirements, the Law and the Local Authority

- Registers are legal documents; regulatory requirements placed on schools regarding the keeping of registers are to be found in the Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2024.
- Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that parents/carers are responsible to ensure their child receives a suitable education.
- Under section 444 of the Education Act 1996, a parent who fails to ensure their child attends the school at which they are registered, is guilty of an offence.
- The school works together with the relevant Local Authority to ensure that parents/carers fulfil their responsibility. There are a range of legal sanctions that may be imposed for dealing with unauthorised absence: Penalty Notices, Parenting Contracts and Orders, Education Supervision Orders or referral to the Magistrates Court which can recommend fines (up to £2500) or up to 3 months in prison.

- All sanctions are used to improve attendance and punctuality and reduce absence.

Collection of data:

Electronic registration takes place between 8.50am-9.00am and 1.00pm-1.05pm.

Children arriving after registration (within 30 minutes) will be given a late mark. Children arriving after 30 minutes after the start of the school session will be recorded as unauthorised absence for that session.

The efficient collection of the data is essential to the development of effective strategies for action. Data is required to monitor individual absence and lateness at school. Patterns of lateness and absence and the identification of trends by

- Year Groups
- Seasonal patterns
- Patterns and nature of absence.

Parental engagement

Positive relationships with all stakeholders are essential to good attendance and open and honest communication between parents/carers and school is essential. Research shows that effective engagement often leads to increased attendance and it can also be linked to higher academic achievement and to a positive effect on children and young people' attitude to learning and on their behaviour.

Whilst it is the parent's responsibility to contact the school to report an absence and provide a reason, communication has to be a two-way process. Research has shown that using a range of tools has made communication between parents and schools more timely, efficient, and productive. Even when the school has established an effective engagement strategy there are likely to be some parents who remain hard to reach and it is this group of parents who are often those that a school needs to have more contact with. Their reluctance to engage may be due to their own experience of school or because they have difficulty with communicating, for example their own low literacy skills, their understanding of the English language or cultural differences. Intervention by interaction is a key priority of our school to support parents at all levels ensuring:

- increasing levels of communication dependent on need
- establishing trust
- support to remove barriers to attendance
- signposting to supportive agencies
- home visits
- support from the Learning Mentor

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

On occasion, a child with complex needs may have difficulties within the school which impact on their attendance. There is still a legal responsibility for the school to provide an education and for the parent/carer to ensure regular school attendance.

If a statutory assessment is in progress for an Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP), it is expected that the student must still have full attendance throughout the process. Throughout the statutory assessment process, school should actively engage with the parent/carer to support them to ensure their child attends school. Appropriate and tailored

support must be put in place to ensure the school's legal duty is met and the student is receiving a suitable full-time education that meets their needs.

Once an EHCP is granted, the Local Authority will undertake a formal consultation with the school(s) the parent/carer chooses for their child. Consultation takes 15 school days and the child will remain on roll throughout that period. The child may then remain on roll or move to another establishment if parents wish to name another school.

Absence from school:

Any absence from school is detrimental to a child's education and progress. It disrupts learning, routines and progress.

Authorised absence is where the school has given approval for absence in advance or where the explanation given afterwards has been accepted as satisfactory justification for the absence. Parents/carers may not authorise absence; only the school can do this. An authorised absence requires parents/carers to complete a request form or telephone communication. A child's own word cannot be taken as reason for absence. Phone calls home are made on the first and every successive day of absence for all children unless a notification has been received from parents about reasons for an extended absence.

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.

All requests must be made in writing on the standard absence request form (available in the school office and school website) which will be reviewed by the Headteacher and the Learning Mentor.

Unauthorised Absence:

These are absences which are not permissible in Law, and absences where no explanation has been received. The school will discuss unauthorised absence with the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) and further action may be agreed.

Absence will not be authorised for such reasons as:

- looking after brothers/sisters/unwell parents/carers
- birthdays
- days out, e.g. The Yorkshire Show
- shopping trips
- family holidays where permission has not been granted (please note, family holidays during term time will not be approved).
- special occasions, where the school does not agree that the absence should be granted.

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. A penalty notice may be issued if a child is taken on a term time holiday for 5 days or more. This doesn't necessarily have to be 4 consecutive days. Parents are asked to complete a request form for any absences from school. (See LA poster Appendix 2)

Home visits will be carried out where school feel it is required. Calling cards will be posted which states the family must contact school as soon as possible. Failure to do this may result in referrals to additional agencies including the Police and Social Care Direct.

Medical/dental and other appointments should be arranged out of school hours wherever possible. Where an appointment requires a child to take time out of school, parents/carers should ensure their child comes to school before the appointment, signs out and returns after the appointment.

Confirmation of all appointments by way of appointment card, letter or electronic/ text confirmation must be provided for any absence to be authorised. If medical appointments are attended at the start of the day, causing the pupil to arrive late to the school, confirmation of the appointment (as above) must be provided

- Following an explanation from parents/carers regarding their child's absence, the school will decide whether or not it accepts the explanation and authorise/unauthorise accordingly.
- An absence which hasn't been explained will remain as unauthorised.
- Parents/carers should not take their children out of school for holidays, days out, to attend sporting events, etc.

Persistent Absence:

A pupil becomes a Persistent Absentee when they miss 10% of their schooling across the academic year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any pupil's educational prospects and we need parents'/carers' fullest support and cooperation to tackle this. Any pupil whose attendance has reached the PA threshold or is at risk of moving towards that threshold is monitored in school. Parents are notified regarding any concerns and offered support. Each child's personal circumstances and needs will be considered case by case. Attendance is monitored daily, weekly and monthly by the Learning Mentor/Headteacher and letters can be distributed at any stage as a result of this. Education Welfare will support the school in this process. Leave of Absence during Term Time Any absence interrupts the continuity of a pupil's learning. Government Legislation now states that only exceptional circumstances warrant an authorised leave of absence, please refer to the Department for Education for the latest guidance.

Parents/carers are strongly urged not to take their children out of school, for holidays during term time. All requests for leave of absence are dealt with on a case-by-case basis and are always at the discretion of the Headteacher. It is expected that an Absence Request Form is submitted to the school at least 4 weeks in advance of the proposed absence. All factors that need to be considered must be stated on the request form. The school has the right to serve a Penalty Notice on parents/carers who insist on taking their children out of school without authorisation.

Re-integration following Long-term Absence

Where a pupil has been absent for a prolonged period of time, perhaps due to illness, the school will:

- Welcome the child back to the school and value their return.
- Provide support for the child in consultation with parents/carers to enable a successful return to the school
- Ensure that all relevant staff are informed of the circumstances.
- Work with other agencies, where appropriate, to ensure a successful outcome.
- Consider a personalised programme of return if appropriate.
- Nominate a key member of staff to monitor and review the child's return.

Registration

The law requires the register to be taken twice a day. At the start of the morning session and once in the afternoon session. Registers will only remain open for 30 minutes (Until 9:20am) during the morning and afternoon sessions (1:20pm).

- AM Session - Opens at the start of the day and closes after 30 minutes
- PM Session - Opens at the start of the session after the lunch break and will close after 30 minutes.
- If a child arrives after the session closes the absence will be marked as unauthorised.

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, whereby a pupil arrives after the close of registration at 9.20am may be marked as an unauthorised absence, leaving parents/carers at risk of legal action.

Contact will also be made with families of children who are arriving at school after the start time for each morning and afternoon session. Often this first contact will be via phone call and supported with a letter. A child's own word cannot be taken as a reason for lateness and in all circumstances late arriving children must be brought to the main reception with the adult who has brought them to school. Only the adult will be allowed to give the reason for late arrival. This will then be recorded for our records.

Roles and Responsibilities:

Newton Hill Community School 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 EWO 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 every day 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.
During and after meetings parents must adhere to agreed Attendance Action Plans.

Education Welfare Service will:

- The EWS will work in partnership with the school to promote and facilitate improved attendance, at an individual level and whole school using proactive strategies.
- The EWS will meet with the Learning Mentor/Headteacher every half term to discuss concerns and agree the next steps.
- 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.
- 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.

The school complies with GDPR and data and documentation will be stored in line with the School's Retention guidance (copy available on request).

APPENDIX 1

Attendance codes can be found in Chapter 8 of DFE Guidance, Working Together to Improve School Attendance 2024.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65f1b048133c22b8eecd38f7/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance_applies_from_19_August_2024

PENALTY NOTICE FINES FOR SCHOOL ATTENDANCE ARE CHANGING!

With the introduction of the New National Framework for Penalty Notices, the following changes will come into force on 19th August 2024.

PENALTY NOTICES WILL BE ISSUED FOR

Term time leave: Penalty Notice Fines will be issued for Term Time Leave of 5 or more consecutive days

10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a 10 week period: A Penalty Notice may be considered/issued when a pupil has had 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a 10 week* period.

*School Week's

PER PARENT/PER CHILD

Penalty Notice Fines will continue to be issued per parent per child.

For example: 3 Siblings absent for term time leave, would result in each parent receiving 3 separate fines.

FIRST OFFENCE

The first time a Penalty Notice is issued for a Term Time Holiday or Irregular School Attendance the Penalty Notice will be charged at:

£160 per parent, per child if paid within 28 days of issue, reducing to £80 if paid within 21 days**.

SECOND OFFENCE (within 3 years of the First Offence)

Where it is deemed appropriate to issue a second Penalty Notice to the same parent for the same pupil within 3 years of the first notice, the second Penalty Notice will be charged at:

£160 if paid within 28 days (no reduced fee for paying early).

(**Unpaid Penalty Notice's after 28 days may result in a parental prosecution)

THIRD OFFENCE (within 3 years of the First Offence)

On the third time that an offence is committed for either a Term Time Holiday and / or Irregular Attendance a Penalty Notice will not be issued, the case may proceed straight to Parental Prosecution under the Single Justice Procedure. If found guilty of the offence of 'Failure to send a child to school' the Magistrates can impose a fine up to £1000.