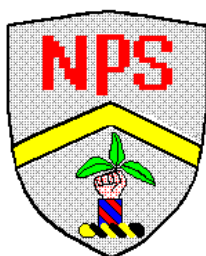


Attendance Policy

Nettlesworth Primary School



Academic Year

2023/24

Attendance Policy

2022-2023

Nettlesworth Primary School

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Author of document:	Mrs Donna Lee	Job role:	Head Teacher/SENCO
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4 th Review			

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Revision	Date of revision	Reason for revision	Resulting version number	Signatories

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Attendance key contact List

Name	Role	Contact details
Donna Lee	Head Teacher	0191 3710444
	Designated senior leader with responsibility for attendance	d.lee103@nettleworth.durham.sch.uk

Who in school can help if you are experiencing difficulty / require help and support:

Name	Role / type of help	Contact details
Mrs K Peverley	School Admin Officer	k.peverley385@nettleworth.durham.sch.uk
Mr C Graham	Deputy Head Teacher/Designated Safeguarding Lead	c.graham201@nettleworth.durham.sch.uk
Mrs R Aspinall	E Safety Officer	r.rose200@nettleworth.durham.sch.uk

Roles and responsibilities

The governing board

The governing board is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school on at least a termly basis. It also holds the Headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy.

The Safeguarding Committee are responsible for reviewing the monitoring of pupil attendance and termly data is shared with Full Governing Body through the Head Teacher's report to Governors.

The Headteacher

The Headteacher is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary

The attendance officer

The school attendance officer: Mrs Donna Lee Head Teacher

- Monitors attendance data across the school and at an individual pupil level
- Reports concerns about attendance to the Headteacher
- Works with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence
- Arranges calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Advises the Headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices

Class Teachers

Class Teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office.

School Office Staff

School Office staff are expected to take calls from parents about absence and record it on the school system. They will also contact parents/carers if no reason for absence is given. School office staff will liaise with the Head Teacher regarding attendance and alert the school leadership team to any concerns

Introduction to our school attendance vision and ethos

Nettlesworth Primary School seeks to ensure that all of its pupils receive an education which maximises opportunities for each pupil to realise his/her true potential. The school will strive to provide a calm, orderly, safe, and supportive environment where all pupils want to be and are keen and ready to learn within a culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance.

Regular school attendance plays a vital role in children's wellbeing and their education, ensuring that their current learning needs are being met but also building their future ability to learn.

As attendance is the essential foundation to positive outcomes for all pupils', improving attendance is everyone's business, a concerted effort across all teaching and nonteaching staff in school, the trust or governing body, the local authority, and other local partners.

Some pupils find it harder than others to attend school and therefore at all stages of improving attendance, the school and partners will work with pupils and parents to remove any barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships and working together to put the right support in place.

Why is regular attendance so important?

Being in school every day that it is open, is important to your child's achievement, wellbeing, and their wider development. There is a renewed national focus on maximising pupils' time in the classroom, as evidence shows that the students with the highest attendance throughout their time in school gain the best GCSE and A Level results.

Here's what the data shows:

Pupils with higher attainment at KS2 and KS4 had lower levels of absence over the key stage compared to those with lower attainment.

Pupils who did not achieve the expected standard in reading, writing and maths in 2019 had an overall absence rate of 4.7% over the key stage, compared with 3.5% among pupils who achieved the expected standard and 2.7% among those who achieved the higher standard.

Pupils who did not achieve grade 9 to 4 in English and maths GCSEs in 2019 had an overall absence rate of 8.8% over the key stage, compared with 5.2% among pupils who achieved a grade 4 and 3.7% among pupils who achieved grade 9 to 5 in both English and maths.

Generally, the higher the percentage of sessions missed across the key stage at KS2 and KS4, the lower the level of attainment at the end of the key stage.

Among pupils with no missed sessions over KS2, 83.9% achieved the expected standard compared to 40.2% of pupils who were persistently absent.

Among pupils with no missed sessions over KS4, 83.7% achieved grades 9 to 4 in English and maths compared to 35.6% of pupils who were persistently absent.

The importance of good attendance alongside good behaviour is a central part of the school's vision, values, ethos, and day to day life.

The interplay between attendance and wider school improvement efforts is crucial to maximise pupil progress, behaviour, bullying, special educational needs support, supporting pupils with medical conditions or disabilities, safeguarding, wellbeing, and support for disadvantaged students (including use of pupil premium).

This policy is supported by our policies on:

- KCSIE 2023 Safeguarding Policy
- Inclusion Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- SEND Policy
- Behaviour Policy

The school and all partners will work together to:

EXPECT

Aspire to high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents and build a culture where all can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across the school.



MONITOR

Rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.



LISTEN AND UNDERSTAND

When a pattern is spotted, discuss with pupils and parents to listen to understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.



FACILITATE SUPPORT

Remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. This might include an early help or whole family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues.



FORMALISE SUPPORT

Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners should work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances this may include formalising support through a parenting contract or education supervision order.



ENFORCE

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, enforce attendance through statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.

1. Expectations

We recognise that the relationship between attendance and achievement of our students is inextricably linked.

Regular school attendance is crucial to maximise pupil progress and enjoyment of learning, and for this reason the school is dedicated to ensuring its attendance policy is adhered to.

We will ensure that:

- All students have an equal right, and access to, an education in accordance with the national curriculum, or agreed alternative.
- Attendance is a priority across the school.
- Aspire to high standards on attendance.
- Students will not be deprived of their education opportunities by, either their own absence or lateness, or that of students.
- Action is taken where necessary to secure an improvement in attendance.
- Build strong relationships with families, listen and to understand barriers to attendance and work with families to remove them.

2. Attendance data

Pupil-level absence data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. The school will compare attendance data to the national average, and share this with the governing board.

The school collects and stores attendance data to:

- track the attendance of individual pupils
- identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern
- monitor and evaluate those children identified as being in need of intervention and support.

3. Listening to and understanding barriers to attendance

Through daily monitoring of attendance, when a pattern is spotted, the school will discuss this with pupils and parents to listen to and understand barriers to attendance and make a plan / otherwise agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.

4. Facilitate support

We will keep an attendance register, and place all pupils onto this register.

We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Pupils must arrive in school by on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at 8.45am and will be kept open until 9.15am. The register for the second session will be taken when children return from lunchtime.

The attendance officer at our school monitors pupil absence on a daily, weekly, monthly and termly basis.

A pupil's parent/carer is expected to call the school in the morning if their child is going to be absent due to ill health

If a pupil's absence goes above 2 days, the school will contact the parent/carer of the pupil to discuss the reasons for this.

If a pupil's absence continue to rise after contacting their parent/carer, we will consider involving an education welfare officer.

The persistent absence threshold is 10%. If a pupil's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 10%, the pupil will be classified as a persistent absentee.

Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence by **9.00am**

Parents must contact the school office on 0191 3710444 or email school at nettlesworth@durhamlearning.net

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

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. Parents should inform the school office and bring a copy of the appointment letter/card to the school office.

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.

Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code
- After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code

Should a pupil's punctuality becomes a regular issue, parents/carers will be notified in writing in the first instance. In the case of older children who walk to school alone, a text message or phone call made to parents/carers when the pupil is late.

If these measures do not lead to improved punctuality, then parents/carers will be asked to attend a meeting to discuss ways to support.

Following up absence

Where any child we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, the school will:

- Follow up on their absence with their parent/carer to ascertain the reason, by telephone. If no response, a text message or email will be sent requesting that the parent/carer contact school. If there is still no response, a phone call to a pupil's other contacts may be made to request they ask the parent/carer to contact school.

- Ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- Identify the correct attendance code to use

Reporting to parents

Pupil's attendance will be reported to parents termly, either through parent's meetings or on the termly written report.

5. Formalise support

Approval for term-time absence

The Headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to pupils during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the Headteacher's discretion.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a Traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision

Reducing persistent absence

Persistent absence significantly impacts pupils' academic achievement as well as having a negative impact on their social and emotional well being.

The school will work with parents/carers where there are issues with persistent absence. A letter will be sent initially, alerting parents/carers that persistent absence is a concern. Attendance will then be monitored.

If there is no improvement, a meeting will be arranged with parents/carers and either the Head Teacher or the Deputy Head Teacher to discuss concerns and provide school support where possible. Parents/Carers will be asked to agree an attendance contract at the meeting. Attendance will then be closely monitored.

Referrals may be made, with parental consent, to other agencies such as Early Help if parents/carers need further support.

A referral may be made to the Local Authority Attendance Team if the support offered does not reduce persistent absence.

6. Enforce

Legal sanctions

The school or local authority can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

If issued with a fine, or penalty notice, each parent must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

Penalty notices can be issued by a headteacher, local authority officer or the police.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice may take into account:

- The number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

General / frequently asked questions

When can children be absent from school?

When you register your child at school, you have a legal duty to ensure your child attends that school regularly.

This means that your child must attend every day that the school is open, unless:

- Your child is too ill to attend that day.
- You have asked in advance and been given permission by the school for your child to be absent on that day due to exceptional circumstances.
- Your child cannot attend school on that day because it is a day you are taking part in religious observance

- Your local authority is responsible for arranging your child's transport to school and it is not available on that day or has not been provided yet; or
- You are a gypsy/traveller family with no fixed abode, and you are required to travel for work that day meaning your child cannot attend their usual school. In most circumstances, however, your child is required to attend another school temporarily during such absences.

These are the only circumstances where schools can permit your child to be absent.

What do I need to do if my child needs to be absent from school for one of those reasons?

You should contact their school as early as possible to explain why. If not, your child's school will contact you on the first morning of their absence to find out why.

All parents can request a 'leave of absence' for their child which gives them permission to be absent from school. Leaves of absence must be applied for before your child will be absent and will only be granted in exceptional circumstances.

Your child's headteacher has the final say over whether to approve the request and how long your child can be absent.

Their decision will be made after considering the specific facts and circumstances behind your request.

Can I take my child on holiday during term time?

Parents should plan their holidays around school breaks and avoid requesting leaves of absence for holidays unless it is unavoidable.

As leave of absence is only granted in exceptional circumstances, it is unlikely that your child's headteacher will agree a leave of absence for a family holiday.

If permission is refused and you keep your child off school on the days requested, you are likely to be committing an offence and be issued a fixed penalty notice or be prosecuted by your local authority.

Attendance Procedures and Absence Processes

Attendance and absence management

Promoting good attendance and punctuality

The school:

- Builds respectful relationships with staff, pupils and families to promote engagement with school and attendance

- Delivers clear messages about expectations for attendance to pupils
- Regularly communicates expectations for attendance and punctuality through regular channels of communication with parents/carers, such as newsletters
- Celebrates good attendance in the weekly school celebration assembly. The class with the highest attendance are on display and given rewards
- Prizes are awarded for classes/children with 96+%/100% attendance
- Presents termly attendance certificates in assemblies
- Reports termly pupil attendance to parents/carers
- Monitors whole school data regularly to identify reasons for absence, patterns and impact of interventions. This includes raising concerns with other agencies like children's social care and early help services that are working with families.
- Develops support for pupils with medical conditions (including the use of individual healthcare plans), mental health issues or SEND
- Liaises with other agencies working with pupils and their families to support attendance

We ask that parents/carers:

- Treat staff with respect
- Actively support the work of the school
- Call on staff for help when they need it
- Communicate as early as possible circumstances which may affect absence or require support

Communication

The school requests that all parents please remember to report and explain the reasons for absence and to make sure your contact and emergency contact details are up to date.

It is vital, that school can contact parents if their child becomes unwell during the school day or in order to discuss the reasons for absence.

The school will analyse absence across the school. As a result of this, some families will receive letters to inform them if their child's absence is lower than it should be if no prior discussion has taken place (unless this is due to, for example medical needs). If we have concerns regarding your child's attendance then we may contact you by phone, letter, invite you to a meeting or make a visit to your home.

As a parent you may identify concerns about school attendance early on if you have seen a change in your child's attitude to school or in their willingness to attend. If this is the case, please share your concerns with us and we can work together to ensure that school attendance doesn't ever need to decline. The quicker that concerns are shared, the quicker they can be resolved.

The school will work with you to discuss ways that we can offer support in finding a way to improve attendance.

On the first day of absence

If a child is absent for any reason, parents or carers are asked to phone the School Office giving a reason for the child's absence. If a child is absent from school and there is no phone call from home then school will phone home to inform parents that the child is not in school and enquire about a reason why.

Doctors and dentist's appointments should be made outside of school time. If this is not possible, your child should miss the minimum amount of school time necessary. If they are well enough to come back to school following the appointment they need to.

Periods of extended absence

- If a child's absence continues beyond 2 days then parents are requested to notify the school to update them. If a phone call is not received, the school will:
- Follow up on their absence with their parent/carer to ascertain the reason, by telephone. If no response, a text message or email will be sent requesting that the parent/carer contact school. If there is still no response, a phone call to a pupil's other contacts may be made to request they ask the parent/carer to contact school.
- Ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- Identify the correct attendance code to use

to verify the absence and take any relevant action in relation to assuring itself of the child's welfare.

If the school receives no reason for any absence then an unauthorised absence will be recorded. Continued absenteeism and unauthorised absences could result in more formal action.

Absence authorisation

The High Court has confirmed that the school's Head Teacher authorises absences. In some circumstances, the school may request that parent's provide medical evidence to support absences.

We are committed to supporting your child effectively, to ensure that they get the very best education possible and therefore have the best life chances. All challenges made concerning persistent absences, will be handled sensitively and in confidence.

Punctuality:

Registration time is at **8.45am** at which point the pupil entry gates will be locked and all pupils must enter by the main entrance. It is so important for all children to be on time, as missing the first few minutes of any lesson can be disruptive and unsettling, both for children and for the rest of the class. If a child arrives in school up to 15 minutes after this time then a late mark will be recorded in the register (L). Registers will be closed at this point and any children arriving more than 15 minutes late will be recorded as (U) which is a late after registers close mark and this is classed as an unauthorised absence (a number of these marks can also contribute to more formal action being considered).

If your child is late for school:

A pupil who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed (9.15 am) will be marked as late, using the appropriate code

All children arriving late at school will be asked the reason for their lateness and this will be recorded on the school's attendance data base (SIMs).

If a child is late (after registers close) for school on a number of occasions

- After the register has closed (9.15am) will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code

If lateness becomes persistent with no identifiable reason

Should a pupil's punctuality becomes a regular issue, parents/carers will be notified in writing in the first instance. In the case of older children who walk to school alone, a text message or phone call made to parents/carers when the pupil is late.

If the school continues to have concerns about a child's punctuality

If these measures do not lead to improved punctuality, then parents/carers will be asked to attend a meeting to discuss ways to support.

Help & Support

If you need help with attendance, it is important that you contact school about the issues as soon as possible. The quicker we know what the problem is, the quicker that we can work together to solve it and put a plan together which will meet your child's needs and ensure your child can benefit from all that school has to offer. Where needed we can also involve other services to make sure that your child and

your family gets the right support, at the right time from the right people.

Leave of Absence in Term Time

Head teachers are only able to grant leave of absence during term time **unless there are exceptional circumstances**. The school will consider each request of absence individually; taking into account the circumstances, such as; the nature of the event for which leave is sought, the pupil's prior attendance and any important events taking place in school at that time.

An application for leave of absence must be made well in advance via a form which is available from the school website or in person from the school office. Where a leave of absence is granted, the head teacher will determine the number of days a pupil can be away from school.

A leave of absence is granted entirely at the head teacher's discretion. If an application for leave of absence is not made prior to the time of the required absence, then the absence will be recorded as unauthorised regardless of circumstances.

Please note that absence will not be authorised under any circumstances during any period of public examinations or internal assessments.

Pupils with specific needs

We account for the specific needs of pupils/pupil cohorts, be applied fairly and consistently and consider the individual needs of pupils/ families who have specific barriers to attendance.

In development and implementation of the policy, consider obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Children Missing from Education

If you move from the area and your whereabouts are unknown, the school can legally remove your child from the roll after 20 school days of unauthorised absence. It is **vital that if you keep school informed of any change of details** and regularly update them if details change. Your child may be at risk of losing their school place if your whereabouts are not known.

It is also important that emergency contact information is kept up to date and that if you are leaving the area, you provide details of where and how you can be contacted. If you do not do this and the school is unable to trace your child, this would be treated as a **safeguarding matter**.

Roles and Responsibilities

Please see key contact list and details at the start of this document.

