



NORTHAMPTON PRIMARY
ACADEMY TRUST PARTNERSHIP

Northampton Primary Academy Trust

Pupil Attendance Policy

**Created and approved:
Review date :**

**November 2013
November 2017**

Pupil Attendance Policy

All Northampton Primary Academy Trust Partnership schools aim to encourage and assist pupils to achieve the highest possible levels of attendance and punctuality. All staff and governors view regular school attendance as essential for all pupils if they are to maximise opportunities for each child to realise their true potential. The NPAT schools aim to work in partnership with parents to ensure the highest possible levels of attendance.

Across the partnership, NPAT schools aim to achieve excellent levels of attendance and punctuality to enable all students to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them.

We aim to emphasise the importance of, and secure, maximum attendance at school to enable pupils to take full advantage of their educational opportunities by:

- making explicit to all relevant parties the school's expectations for attendance levels
- promoting a consistent approach across the school to all matters relating to attendance
- clarifying the roles and responsibilities of all parties with respect to attendance
- communicating to all relevant parties (teachers, parents, pupils) the legal position with respect to attendance and the categories of absence which are authorized
- stressing the need for home and school to work in close partnership to achieve high attendance

Regular attendance at school is vital. Without it, the learning process becomes fragmented and unsatisfactory; absence results in missed learning. It is a legal requirement that pupils of compulsory school age receive full-time education and this, with the exception of those educated at home or elsewhere, means regular attendance at school. Irregular attendance results in pupils not fulfilling their true potential, being placed at risk and being drawn into patterns of anti-social or criminal behaviour. Therefore we take the issue of attendance very seriously and do all we can to obtain very high attendance from all our pupils.

Statutory Framework

Under Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act a pupil is required to attend regularly at the school where they are a registered pupil. The school is obliged by law to differentiate between authorised and unauthorised absence.

Absence from school will be authorised only at the discretion of the Head Teacher based on their assessment of the situation and if it is for the following reasons:-

- Genuine illness
- Unavoidable medical/dental appointments
- Days of religious observance (ceremony only, not extended leave). This is intended for one off situations rather than regular or recurring events.
- Exceptional family circumstances, such as bereavement, and for the funeral service (not extended leave)
- Holidays granted under exceptional circumstances and agreed by the Head Teacher

- time allocated visits to seriously ill relatives which cannot be scheduled outside of school time
- One day allocation to children of service personnel returning from long operational tours
- 'reasonable' time to recover from family trauma or crisis

Schools should make reasonable adjustments for students with special educational needs or disabilities.

Working Together – Home School Partnership

Improving attendance at NPAT Partnership schools is the responsibility of everyone in each school community – pupils, parents, governors and all staff.

What we ask of pupils – all pupils are expected to attend school regularly and punctually. Pupils who do experience attendance difficulties will be offered prompt and sympathetic support, initially from their class teacher, and if the need should arise, from the school pastoral team. At the end of each Autumn, Spring and Summer Term, pupils whose attendance is 100% or improved will be rewarded.

What we ask of parents/carers – Parents are responsible for ensuring that their child attends school regularly, punctually, properly dressed and equipped and ready to learn. Good sleep patterns, healthy eating and exercise all support good attendance and learning.

If a child is prevented for any reason from attending, parents are requested to notify the school on the first day of absence. If this does not happen, the school office will contact parents. Therefore it is important that all personal details must be updated by parents. A pupil's absence from school will be considered unauthorised until a satisfactory explanation is received from the parent. Parents will be informed promptly of any concerns which may arise over a child's attendance. Parents should avoid, if at all possible, making medical / dental appointments for their child during school hours. Holidays should not be taken in term time and will not be authorised.

In return the school will – encourage good attendance and punctuality. The school will employ a range of strategies to encourage good attendance and punctuality and will investigate promptly all absenteeism, liaising closely with parents. Attendance is the responsibility of all staff.

Schools will take a student's previous record of attendance into account when making decisions.

Registration Procedures

It is a legal requirement that registers are taken at the beginning of a school session. It is also very important in the case of a fire or the evacuation of the school that there is an accurate record of which pupils are in the building. Registers are taken promptly by the class teacher twice a day, at the start of the morning and afternoon sessions.

Lateness Procedures

If a child misses the register, lateness should be recorded at the school office as soon as the child arrives. Registers will close 30 minutes after the start of the session (in most schools this is at 9.30 a.m.) Children arriving within those 30 minutes will be marked 'late before the register closes' and will officially be recorded as late for the session. Children arriving after the register has closed have to be marked as 'late after the register has closed' and will be officially marked as an unauthorised absence for that session, unless a valid reason is received (in which case it would be authorised). If a child has a pattern of recorded late marks in any half term a letter will be sent home to parents.

Absence monitoring may also identify trends and patterns of lateness which may cause concern (e.g. pattern of lateness on Mondays). Where this is identified the school will contact the parents.

First day response procedure

The school will make every effort to contact parents/carers who do not call the school to check the child's welfare and clarify the reasons for absence. Schools should take reasonable steps to check the accuracy of the register before contacting parents. Discretion should be used to ensure that vulnerable children or those with low attendance are prioritised when making contact. Where appropriate, home visits may take place and other agencies may be informed in order to safeguard the child.

Notifying Absence

Parents are expected to inform the school on the first day of absence by 9.00 a.m. when registers are completed. A telephone call will be made for every consecutive day of absence until a reason has been ascertained. A telephone message, email or a verbal message from **an adult** is sufficient. In cases of written or verbal information the reason should be recorded. If no reason is given for an absence, a Reason for Unexplained Absence letter may be sent asking for an explanation for the absence.

Unauthorised absence

Any absence that is not seen to be reasonable by the school will be deemed 'unauthorised' and recorded as such. This will apply to all absence without acceptable reason.

Early Departures

Children who leave early – partway through the school day – must be 'signed out' at the school office.

Religious Observance Absence will be authorised when it is due to religious observance for up to one day per religious event. The day must be exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parents belong. Where necessary, schools should seek advice from the parents' religious body about whether it has set the day apart for religious observance. R code will be used.

Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence

Children who are absent from school whilst travelling will be encouraged and supported to register in another school during their time away in order to ensure continuity of education. Ideally the child should attend school elsewhere when their family is travelling and be dual registered at that school and the main school.

Absence will be authorised when it is due to traveller cultural observance (as opposed to travelling) for up to one day per event.

Children from the traveller community whose families do not travel are expected to register at a school and attend as normal. They are subject to the same rules as other children in terms of the requirement to attend school regularly once registered at school.

School Closure

In the event of an emergency school closure such as strike days, bad weather etc children will be marked with the 'enforced school closure' code so that this does not affect their personal attendance.

Holidays during term time

Statutory guidance released by the DfE in August 2013 states that 'Head teachers should not grant leave of absence unless in exceptional circumstances'. Term times are for education. This is the priority. Children and families have 175 days off school to spend together, including weekends and school holidays. Head Teachers will rightly prioritise attendance.

The decision to authorise for absence for exceptional circumstance is at the Head Teacher's discretion, following consultation with the NPAT Strategic Director or an NPAT colleague Head Teacher. The following reasons constitute exceptional circumstances in NPAT Partnership schools:

- up to 5 days funded by charitable organisations previously agreed or requested by the school
- armed forces workers who are unable to gain leave during school holiday times (if providing written evidence)
- extended leave for cultural reasons where a family lives abroad (up to 10 days)
- In academic year 2013-14, holidays already authorised by the Head Teacher prior to changes in regulation
-

Exceptional Holiday requests will not be considered for children whose attendance is below a historic average of 96% or for children who are in Year 6 until after their SATs in May.

Parents who take unauthorised holiday absence

Parents who take unauthorised holiday absence will be sent a holiday warning letter outlining the implications for the future.

Procedure for requesting holidays for exceptional circumstances:

I: The Parents / Carers write a letter to the Head Teacher and submit it **at least two weeks** prior to the holiday date. Parents / Carers should also **make an appointment with the**

Head Teacher or Deputy Head Teacher, at this time, to discuss their reasons for considering a holiday during term time.

2: The Head Teacher or Deputy Head Teacher will request 12 month attendance figures for the child/ren involved.

3: Having met with the Parents / Carers, the Head Teacher or Deputy Head Teacher will make a decision based on the above criteria and inform Parents / Carers, within two working days of the meeting, in writing with details outlining the reason for the decision.

'Missing from Education'

If a child is absent from school for 10 consecutive days without any contact being made between home and school, the child will be reported as 'Missing from Education' and we will make an immediate referral to the Education Entitlement Service. During the 10 days of absence, the school will make every attempt to contact the parents through all contact details which the school has on record and will ensure that a home visit has been made. After 20 school days the school will request that EES remove the child from the school role.

In order to prevent children becoming 'missing from education' parents are requested to inform the school directly of their proposed move, and complete a mid-year transfer form for signature by the Head Teacher.

Reward systems

All Northampton Primary Academy Trust Partnership schools offer an environment in which pupils feel valued and welcomed. Each school's ethos will aim to demonstrate that pupils feel that their presence in school is important, that they will be missed when they are absent/late and that follow up action will be taken.

Good attendance will be rewarded in each school on a regular basis.

Absence Monitoring and Evaluation

Attendance data will be monitored and analysed regularly in order to identify patterns, set targets, correlate attendance with achievements and support and inform policy / practise. A below 95% attendance sheet will be analysed regularly to identify patterns of concern. Where attendance is causing concern, the following procedures will be followed (from mid-October onwards):

- Attendance falls below 95% - Initial Concern letter will be sent.
- Attendance continues to cause concern or deteriorates over 10 day period - Letter A will be sent (with offer of a Parenting Contract)
- Attendance continues to cause concern or deteriorates over 4 week (20 day) period - Letter B will be sent (with offer of a Parenting Contract) and referral made to Jogo
- Where consultation with Jogo has not improved the attendance, a referral will be made to Education Entitlement Service for consideration for a Fixed Penalty Notice and/or prosecution

Absence monitoring may also identify trends and patterns of absence which may cause concern (e.g. pattern of Friday absences). Where this is identified the school will contact parents.

Attendance figures for the previous year are published in the school's prospectus. Parents will be given a report of their child's attendance for the school year with their child's report.

Parenting Contract

A parenting contract is a formal written signed agreement between parents and either the local authority (EES) or the governing body of a school and should contain:

- A statement by the parents that they agree to comply for a specified period with whatever requirements are set out in the contract; and
- A statement by the local authority (EES) or governing body agreeing to provide support to the parents for the purpose of complying with the contract.

Parenting contracts can be used in cases of irregular attendance at school. Parenting contracts are voluntary but any non-compliance will be recorded by the school or local authority as it may be used as evidence in court.

Persistent Absence and Fixed Penalty Notices

Since September 2015, the Persistent Absence (PA) criteria changed from 15% to 10%. This means that any pupil who falls below 90% attendance will become a persistent absence pupil and therefore reported to National and Local government through the school census.

Where there is an ongoing concern regarding a child's absence and the school have been unable to secure improvements in attendance, a referral will be made to the Education Entitlement Service. Referrals to EES may lead to the issue of a Fixed Penalty Notice or even prosecution.

Penalty notices are fines of £60/£120 imposed on parents. They are an alternative to the prosecution of parents for failing to ensure that their child of compulsory school age regularly attends the school where they are registered or at a place where alternative provision is provided. Penalty notices can be issued to each parent liable for the attendance offence or offences.

Parents must pay penalty notice fees of £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days per child per parent. This brings attendance penalty notices into line with other types of penalty notices and allows local authorities to act faster on prosecutions.

Appendix I – Initial Contact Letter

Mr & Mrs X
Northampton

2nd October 2013

Dear Mr & Mrs X,

Regarding the attendance of X

I am writing to make you aware that since the start of term your child's attendance has fallen well below the 95% attendance target that all schools work to.

Please note that this letter is for your information only, so that you know that your child's attendance is being monitored. You do not need to respond to the school at this stage.

X's attendance is currently below this target at x% and I am writing to make you aware of this, and to ask for your support in raising this level back to the 95% that the school is expected to achieve.

We are aware that X has missed school due to illness but it is important that they attend school every day to avoid further impact on their attendance.

In the meantime I will continue to monitor X's attendance and expect to see a significant improvement. Please advise that any future absences may be unauthorised unless supported by medical evidence e.g. appointment card.

I thank you for your support in this matter. If you would like to come into school to discuss this with myself or our Family Support Worker further, please feel free to contact the office to make an appointment to see me.

It is your parental and legal responsibility to ensure that X is in school.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher

Copy to: Pupil file

Appendix 2 –Letter A

Mr & Mrs X
Northampton

2nd October 2013

Dear Mr & Mrs X,

Regarding the attendance of X

I am writing to you with concerns about X's attendance at school. Since the beginning of the academic year, X's attendance has fallen to 84.7% and this is significantly below the government recommendation of 95%.

X has missed 16 school days due to illness and for unauthorised absences but every effort must now be made to ensure X is in school to prevent further intervention from the Education Entitlement Service.

I will continue to monitor his attendance for the next four weeks, excluding the half term, and hope to see a significant improvement. May I also ask you to provide proof of doctor's appointments so that we can authorise any absences due to medical reasons, as without proof we are unable to authorise his absences.

Under Section 444 a person is guilty of an offence for failing to secure regular school attendance of their child, if their child is of compulsory school age and is a registered pupil at a school. Legal action against you may result in either:

- 1: A Penalty Notice with a potential fine of up to £120 fine per child.
- 2: Prosecution under Section 444 (1) of the Education Act 1996 where, if convicted, you may be fined up to £1,000.
- 3: Prosecution under Section 444 (1A) of the Education Act 1996 where, if convicted, you may be fined up to £2,500 and/or imprisonment.

Should X's attendance not significantly improve during this time then I will need to request the involvement of the Attendance Welfare Advisor.

Should you wish to discuss this further, please contact the school to arrange an appointment.

Yours sincerely,

Head Teacher

Copy to: Pupil file

Appendix 3 – Initial Contact Letter

Mr & Mrs X
Northampton

2nd October 2013

Dear Mr & Mrs X,

Regarding the attendance of X

Despite two requests for you to come into school to discuss X's attendance I note that you have not done so. Please contact the school as soon as possible to make an appointment that is convenient to you to come into school to discuss how we can work together to improve her attendance.

X's attendance now stands at 58% and as a result over the next four weeks, not including the half term, X must achieve 95% attendance. In the meantime I have instructed Mr. Carl Henry to complete paperwork in order to refer your case to court. I therefore urge you to contact the school as soon as possible.

As X's parent it is your legal responsibility to ensure that your child is in school.

Yours sincerely,

Head Teacher

Copy to: Pupil file

Appendix 4 – Absence Chase up letter

Mr & Mrs X
Northampton

2nd October 2013

Dear Mr & Mrs X,

Regarding the attendance of X

We have noticed from our records that forename was absent from school on the date/s shown below and as yet we have not received an explanation:

periods_of_absence

It is very important to ensure the school is informed of the reasons for any absences. This may allow us to authorise them and will help ensure we do not need to involve external agencies unnecessarily.

Please complete the slip below and return to the school by the end of this week. If we do not receive a satisfactory explanation for this absence within two weeks of this letter, the absence will be marked as unauthorised.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher

Unexplained Absence

Child's Name: _chosen_forenamechosen_surname_ Class: ___reg_____

Date/s of Absence: _____

Reason for Absence: _____

Signature _____ Date: _____