



# North Huddersfield Learning Community

# Attendance Policy

2019-2020

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## **1. INTRODUCTION AND STATEMENT OF INTENT**

Regular school attendance is essential to ensure the best possible learning outcomes for all children and is necessary to promote better life chances. Our ethos encourages children to feel that their presence in school is important and that they are missed when they are absent or late.

There is a clear link between good attendance and high standards. For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly. Every child should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

There is now more Government pressure on schools than ever before to ensure the regular attendance of children in their school. There is a legal requirement for schools to set targets for improving school attendance.

This policy sets out the principles and guidelines by which we seek to raise attendance, improve punctuality, raise levels of achievement and to maximise opportunities both in school and in later life.

### **WHY REGULAR ATTENDANCE IS SO IMPORTANT:**

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Any pupil's absence disrupts teaching routines and may affect the learning of others in the same class. Ensuring every child's regular attendance at school is the responsibility of their parents/carers and permitting absence from school without good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

## **2. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

**PROMOTING REGULAR ATTENDANCE** and helping to create a pattern of regular attendance is everybody's responsibility – parents/carers, pupils and all members of school staff.

### **To help us all to focus on this we will:**

- Give parents/carers details on attendance in our regular newsletters and on our websites.
- Report to parents/carers at least termly on their child's attendance and punctuality.
- Monitor whole school attendance continuously.
- Routinely celebrate good attendance.
- Reward good or improving attendance.
- Run promotional events when parents/carers, pupils and staff can work together on raising attendance levels across the school.

### 3. UNDERSTANDING TYPES OF ABSENCE

Every half day absence from school is coded by the **school** (not by parents/carers) as either **authorised** or **unauthorised**.

It is the parent/carer's responsibility to inform school before registration if their child will be absent and the reason for the absence.

**Unauthorised absences** are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily.
- Truancy before or during the school day.
- Absences which have not been clearly explained.
- Shopping trips, looking after other children or celebrating birthdays.
- Day trips and absence in term time which have not been agreed.

This type of absence can lead to the Local Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings.

Absences will only be authorised where a good reason is provided such as genuine illness or family emergencies.

Absence for religious observance, as advised by the DfE, can be authorised for up to 3 days over the school year.

Routine appointments should ideally be made outside of school hours. If an appointment during the school day is unavoidable children should only be out of school for the duration of that appointment.

#### **Sickness Absence**

Schools make the decision whether to authorise any reported absence due to illness. If there is doubt that an illness is genuine the absence will not be authorised. Where sporadic illness has become excessive school may request medical evidence for each and every subsequent period of absence. If absence extends beyond 5 days schools will require medical evidence explaining why the child is unfit to attend school.

#### **Persistent Absenteeism (PA)**

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more of their schooling across a school year **for any reason**. Absence at this level causes considerable damage to children's educational attainment and we need full the support and co-operation of parents/carers to tackle this.

All schools monitor absence thoroughly. Where a child's attendance is nearing 90% the school will work closely with parents/carers to determine reasons for this and agree strategies for improvement.

**PA** pupils are tracked and monitored in school and are discussed routinely with the Local Authority Attendance and Pupil Support Officer.

#### **4. ABSENCE PROCEDURES**

Each school follows rigorous First Day Calling procedures to monitor absences from school.

##### **If a child is absent, parents/carers must:**

- Inform school before registration that their child will be absent and the reason for their absence.
- Keep any absence to a minimum.

##### **If a child is absent, school will:**

- Telephone, text or email parents/carers on the first day of absence if we have not heard from them.
- Liaise closely with the Attendance and Pupil Support Service and take appropriate action to address poor attendance; this may include letters being sent home, home visits by the Attendance and Pupil Support Officer or meetings in school.
- Refer the matter to the Attendance and Pupil Support Service if attendance falls below 90%.

#### **Telephone Numbers**

It is vital that school can contact parents/carers at all times. Please ensure that you inform school of any changes to your contact details and provide additional emergency contacts in case you are unavailable.

#### **5. LATENESS**

Lateness is unacceptable. Each time a child is late the lesson is disrupted both for that child and other pupils in the class. Frequent lateness causes children to miss valuable learning and they may not receive vital information about their school day.

**Children will receive a late mark if they are not in class by the end of registration.**

If a child is frequently late parents/carers may be asked to meet with school or Local Authority staff to resolve the problem.

Parents/carers can approach school if they are having problems getting children to school on time.

## 6. LEAVE OF ABSENCE IN TERM TIME

Taking a 'Leave of Absence' in term time will affect a child's schooling as much as any other absence; we expect parents to help us by **not** taking children away in term time. There is **no** automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time for any reason.

Parents/carers must understand that by taking children out of school they are making a choice to miss out on part of their child's education.

Parents/carers choosing to take their child out of school during term time must complete a '**Leave of Absence Request Form**' and return it to the Head Teacher **before** making any travel arrangements; failure to do so could result in the child(ren) being removed from the school register and being referred to the Children Missing Education Team (CME). The form is available from the school office and proof of travel must be provided with a defined return date. Head Teachers may only authorise Leave of Absence in exceptional circumstances.

Following any Leave of Absence, if a child does not return on the date given to school, school will use first day calling procedures. The Schools within the Pyramid cannot take children off role while they are on requested Leave of Absence, unless the Leave of Absence exceeds 21 days. After the 21st day of unauthorised term time absence, a child will be taken off role, even if school have been informed of a future return date as this is an avoidable absence.

The North Huddersfield Learning Community Head Teachers uphold the Local Authority expectations regarding Leave of Absence as these are in line with the DfE guidance. All requests from parents and carers are considered by individual schools in line with these guidelines and the North Huddersfield Learning Community schools will uphold any decisions made the Local Authority.

**It is the policy of North Huddersfield Learning Community to request a Fixed Penalty Notice for every pupil taking a Leave of Absence in term time of 5 consecutive days or more.**

If parents/carers take their child(ren) out of school during term time, and this has not been authorised by the Head Teacher, they may be fined **£60.00** if paid within **21 days**, rising to **£120.00** if paid within **28 days**. Failure to pay the Fixed Penalty Notice could result in the matter being referred to the Magistrates Court where the maximum penalty for an offence is **£1000**. **All penalties are issued to both parents for each child taking an unauthorised 'Leave of Absence'.**

Parents/carers who also choose to repeatedly take their children on unauthorised Leave of Absence (3 or more occasions in their time as a student at school) may be directly prosecuted under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996. If found guilty, they may be fined up to £1000 and receive a criminal record.

## **7. ATTENDANCE AND PUPIL SUPPORT SERVICE**

Many schools have an Attendance and Pupil Support Officer (APSO) who visits schools regularly to look at attendance data and discuss concerns with staff.

If attendance and/or punctuality drop to an unacceptable level a referral may be made to the APSO. The APSO will then make contact with the family to discuss any issues that may be preventing full school attendance and to work together to ensure improvement.

Failure to sustain improved attendance could result in Fixed Penalty Notices being issued or referral to the Magistrates Court.

## **8. SUMMARY**

Schools are committed to working in partnership with parents/carers, children and families to ensure a high a level of attendance. However parents have a responsibility to minimise absence; this includes illness, medical appointments and Leave of Absence. Persistent absence could result in further action being taken. Parents/carers should report absence as soon as possible providing a valid reason. Arriving at school on time every day will help you and your child establish good routines: lateness results in learning opportunities being missed. Good attendance and punctuality is crucial to ensure positive educational outcomes.

**Reviewed 24 September 2019 at NHLC Headteachers meeting.**