



North Huddersfield Learning Community

(Adapted for Birkby Infant and Nursery School)

Attendance Policy

2024-2025



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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 and to follow Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on [working together to improve school attendance \(applies from 19 August 2024\)](#).

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:

- Build strong relationships and work closely with families to support them and understand barriers to attendance so they can be removed.
- Give parents/carers details on attendance in letters and on our websites. For more information about supporting good school attendance as a parent/carer, please follow this link and download the guide for parents on school attendance <https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/back-into-school/resources-for-families/> . A PDF copy of this guidance can also be downloaded from our school websites, within the attendance section.
- Report to parents/carers at least termly on their child's attendance and punctuality.
- Share attendance data with the DfE; local authority (where applicable) and other schools
- Monitor whole school attendance continuously as well as key groups of pupils.
- Routinely celebrate good attendance.
- Reward good or improving attendance.
- Offer support and targeted intervention to pupils and families, alongside the local authority attendance and pupil support officer/team.

- Monitor the impact of any intervention strategies
- Run events when parents/carers, pupils and staff can work together on raising attendance levels across the school.
- Share good attendance procedures and practice between the pyramid of schools.

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.
- Being late to school after school registers have closed.
- Absences which have not been clearly explained.
- Shopping trips, looking after other children or celebrating birthdays.
- Day trips; school holidays or travel to visit relatives e.g. overseas in term time which have not been agreed.

If school observe continued unauthorised absences and families fail to engage with support offered, the local authority and school may make a joint decision to use sanctions (e.g. Penalty Notices, Notices to Improve) and/or legal intervention to enforce better attendance. Please see section 4 for more information.

Absences will only be authorised where a good reason is provided such as genuine illness or family emergencies. Head Teachers may only authorise leave of absence in exceptional circumstances and a leave of absence will not be granted for the purposes of a family holiday or visiting relatives e.g. overseas.

Absence for religious observance, as advised by the DfE, can be authorised for up to 3 days over a 12-month period. This applies where a religion other than Christianity is practiced and when the day falls on a usual school day.

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 3 days schools may require medical evidence explaining why the child is unfit to attend school however will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

Lateness

Lateness is unacceptable and can become a form of unauthorised absence. 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 (U) if they are not in class when registers close. This will be classed as an unauthorised absence for that half day session.

If a child is frequently late, parents/carers may be asked to meet with school or local authority staff to resolve the problem and it is possible that sanctions and/or legal intervention may be used if no improvement is seen.

Parents/carers can approach school if they are having problems getting children to school on time so that staff can offer help with getting your child to school on time.

4. ABSENCE PROCEDURES

Each school follows rigorous First Day Calling procedures to monitor absences from school – please refer to your school's individual attendance policy for an overview of their first day calling procedures.

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 local authority 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 local authority if attendance becomes a concern

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. SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES

Where a pupil's attendance is causing concern, all schools within the North Huddersfield Learning Community will use early intervention to support families. School staff will strive to build strong relationships with families so that they can work jointly to remove barriers to attendance.

Each individual case will be different and schools will meet with parents and pupils to agree on actions of support which will be used. These may include involving the local authority and/or making referrals to outside services and organisations which can provide support. Failure to engage with support offered, will lead to support being formalised in the form of sanctions/and or legal intervention.

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; understand any barriers to good attendance 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 Officers.

Pupils absent due to mental or physical ill health or their special educational needs and/or disabilities

All schools within the NHLT Community are particularly mindful of pupils absent from school due to mental or physical ill health or their special educational needs and/or disabilities, and will endeavour to provide them with additional support. Pupils displaying EBSA (emotionally based school avoidance) are particularly vulnerable and we will work diligently with families and external services; following advice to ensure school is as welcoming as possible for these pupils.

Please refer to your school's individual attendance policy for more information on how they will identify pupils who need support and how support will be implemented.

6. SANCTIONS AND LEGAL INTERVENTIONS

Continued absences in term time will affect a child's schooling as much as any other absence; we expect parents to help us by **not** allowing their children to take leave of absences during term time and/or allowing pupils to be absent for other unauthorised reasons. 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.

When parents/carers fail to engage with support offered by schools; other agencies/organisations and or the local authority, and these attempts to improve attendance are unsuccessful, a range of legal interventions will be considered. School staff will agree, with the

local authority, on the most appropriate legal intervention and formalise attendance improvement efforts. Decisions will be made on an individual case by case basis.

Penalty notices

It is the policy of North Huddersfield Learning Community to liaise with the local authority and consider a Penalty Notice if the national threshold for a penalty notice has been met.

Head Teachers may only authorise leave of absence in exceptional circumstances. The Head Teacher (or someone authorised by them); local authority or the police can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age, by issuing a penalty notice.

Before issuing a penalty notice, the school will consider the individual case, including:

- Whether the national threshold for considering a penalty notice has been met (10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks). These 10 unauthorised absences, within a period of 10 school weeks, do not need to be consecutive and may be unauthorised for a combination of different reasons e.g. 6 sessions of unauthorised absence for a term time leave of absence (requested or unrequested) and 4 sessions of unauthorised absence for your child arriving late after the register closes.
- Whether a penalty notice is the best available tool to improve attendance for that pupil
- Whether further support, a notice to improve or another legal intervention would be a more appropriate solution
- Whether any obligations that the school has under the Equality Act 2010 make issuing a penalty notice inappropriate

A penalty notice may also be issued where parents allow their child to be present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification, during the first 5 days of a suspension or exclusion (where the school has notified the parents that the pupil must not be present in a public place on that day).

Each parent who is liable for the pupil's offence(s) can be issued with a penalty notice, but this will usually only be the parent/parents who allowed the absence.

The payment must be made directly to the local authority, regardless of who issues the notice. If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice. Failure to pay the penalty notice could result in Kirklees' local authority commencing legal proceedings against you for the offence of not ensuring your child's regular school attendance. If found guilty, you may be fined up to £1,000 and you will receive a criminal record.

If issued with a first penalty notice, the parent must pay £80 within 21 days, or £160 within 28 days. If a **second** penalty notice is issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil, the parent must pay £160 if paid within 28 days.

A **third** penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within 3 years of the date of the issue of the first penalty notice. In a case where the national threshold is met for a third time within those 3 years, alternative action will be taken instead. This will often include considering prosecution as repeated offences of leave of absence may result in the matter being directly prosecuted in Kirklees Magistrates' court. Other tools such as one of the other attendance legal interventions may also be considered.

Please note, school will consider whether a penalty notice may be issued for any requested or unrequested term time leave of absence as these types of absences will all be treated as unauthorised.

Parents/carers choosing to take their child out of school during term time must complete a **'Leave of Absence Request Form'** (available from your own School) 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/or the school website and proof of travel must be provided with a defined return date. Completing a request form does not mean that school will choose to authorise the leave of absence.

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 roll while they are on requested Leave of Absence, however if there is a continued absence of 20 days or more, we will refer the case to the Children Missing in Education team (CME) and work with them to determine whether there are reasonable grounds to remove your child from the school roll.

Notices to Improve

If the national threshold has been met and the support offered by school is appropriate, but parents do not engage with these offers of support, the local authority may issue a Notice to Improve. This is to give parents a final chance to engage with support.

Notices to improve will be issued in line with processes set out in the local code of conduct for the local authority area in which the pupil attends school.

They will include:

- Details of the pupil's attendance record and of the offences
- The benefits of regular attendance and the duty of parents under [section 7 of the Education Act 1996](#)
- Details of the support provided so far
- Opportunities for further support, or to access previously provided support that was not engaged with
- A clear warning that a penalty notice may be issued if attendance doesn't improve within the improvement period, along with details of what sufficient improvement looks like, which will be decided on a case-by-case basis

- A clear timeframe of between 3 and 6 weeks for the improvement period
- The grounds on which a penalty notice may be issued before the end of the improvement period

Education Supervision Orders:

An Education Supervision Order (ESO) is heard in Family Court. If granted, the order is for 12 months with the option of renewing for an additional 24 months. The parent will be assigned a Supervising Officer who will oversee the order; and the pupil will be assigned a Befriender to advise, assist and guide the pupil.

Forms of legal interventions:

Kirklees' local authority will decide on which type of legal intervention is more appropriate when they have agreed to formalise attendance improvement efforts. Again, decisions will be made on an individual case by case basis. The appropriate course of action must be agreed by the Kirklees Legal Intervention Panel and these will be discussed with, and explained to parents should they be chosen as the most appropriate form of legal intervention.

Other legal interventions which may be considered include:

- Attendance contracts
- Attendance prosecution
- Parenting orders

Prosecution is heard in Magistrates' Court for the offence of knowingly failing to ensure your child's regular school attendance (s444(1)(a) Education Act 1996). If found guilty, this carries a penalty of up to £2,500 or up to 3 months imprisonment and you will receive a criminal record. Additionally, other community orders may be attached.

7. SUMMARY

Our 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 are crucial to ensure positive educational outcomes.

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