



Netherbrook Primary School

Attendance Policy

Document Control

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October 2022	Approved by TEFAT	Trustees
November 2022	Adopted and implemented by the school	Headteacher
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Elliot Foundation Academies Trust Values

1. Put children first

- a. We trust and value your professionalism
- b. We share the responsibility for the learning and welfare of all of our children
- c. Our purpose is to improve the lives of children

2. Be safe

- a. Don't assume that someone else will do it
- b. Look after yourself, your colleagues and all children
- c. We are all responsible for each other's safety and well being
- d. Discuss any concerns with an appropriate member of staff

3. Be kind & respect all

- a. People are allowed to be different as are you
- b. Kindness creates the positive environment we all need to flourish
- c. This kindness should extend to ourselves as well as to others

4. Be open

- a. If you can see a better way, suggest it
- b. If someone else suggests a better way to you, consider it
- c. We exist to nurture innovators and support those who take informed risks in the interests of children

5. Forgive

- a. We all make mistakes
- b. Admit them, learn from them and move on

6. Make a difference

- a. Making the world a better place starts with you
- b. Model the behaviour that you would like to see from others

Related Policies and Documents

[TEFAT Attendance Policy](#)

[TEFAT Safeguarding Policy](#) and Dudley LA safeguarding arrangements

[TEFAT Supporting Pupils with Medical Needs Policy](#)

[School attendance parental responsibility measures](#)

The Education Act 1996

The Education Act 2002

The Education and Inspections Act 2006

[DfE Working together to improve school attendance Sept 2022](#)

[DfE Summary table of responsibilities for school attendance Sept 2022](#)

1. Introduction

Promoting good school attendance and reducing absence is vital to: ensure children's day-to-day welfare and safeguarding; ensure that every pupil has access to full-time education; ensure that pupils make good progress academically and personally and to ensure that pupils leave us with the best possible opportunities for their future.

This policy aims to ensure that all pupils attend school regularly; consequently they will be able to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available.

The policy outlines the **responsibilities for the school and parents** in ensuring that pupils' attendance at Netherbrook Primary School is the best it can be. It also describes the strategies used by the schools, alongside The Elliot Foundation Academies Trust and Dudley LA to support and improve attendance.

2. The importance of culture and curriculum

High standards of pastoral care, excellent teaching and learning and an **exciting and broad curriculum** motivate children to want to attend school. They also build confidence and trust with parents who may feel nervous or anxious about leaving their children at school.

At Netherbrook Primary School we recognise that school must be a place where children feel valued, safe, welcome, accepted and supported in order for them to want to attend. This culture is established and maintained through regular staff training, inductions for new staff and pupils, high expectations regarding conduct, and school systems such as behaviour recognition and rewards. This culture is supported by effective and regular communication between staff teams, as well as between teachers and parents. Pupil voice is used to measure our success in maintaining such an ethos.

The curricula offered by the schools help children to maximise their academic success as well as developing their sense of self and their responsibilities to the wider community. We strive to broaden children's opportunities and experiences by introducing them to new and exciting topics through the taught curriculum, theatrical productions, off site visits, sporting competitions, public performances and opportunities to work alongside community leaders.

3. Attendance systems and procedures

3.1. Attendance Registers

Accurate and timely registers enable the school to safeguard children as well as to recognise and act upon any concerning attendance patterns. Staff follow the school Register Protocol which is reviewed and shared at least annually. Registers are taken at the start of every morning and afternoon session, specific registration times are 8:55am and immediately after lunchtime - [time varies by year group.]. Children arriving after registers close are recorded as late, and an "L" code will be applied to the register. If a child arrives late to school after 9:30 am without providing evidence of an appointment, a "U" code will be applied to the register and will be recorded as an unauthorised absence for that session. Contact is made with off-site providers when used, to ensure the register is accurate.

3.2. Recording and responding to absence

There is an expectation that parents will contact school **before 9:00 am** on the first day of a child's absence to explain the reason. Contact can be made via calling 01384 818415 and selecting Option #1 to leave a voicemail leaving **detailed information** relating to the absence. (*It is not sufficient to simply advise that your child will not be in attendance on that day due to being unwell*). Absence can also be reported via the School Life App. Your login details will be issued when your child joins Netherbrook School. If you need a reminder of your Username and password, you can contact the school office at any time to retrieve these. If no reason is given, or further information is required, a phone call will be made to parents. Once sufficient information has been gained, an absence code is determined by the appropriate member of staff in line with DfE guidance in [Working together to improve school attendance](#) (September 2022). This decision is based on the information provided by parents when a child's absence is reported, and will influence whether an absence is authorised or not.

3.3. Home visits

If further information is needed or we need to see how a child is, and contact cannot be established by phone, home visits will be routinely carried out by the Attendance Officer & Pastoral Leader and a member of the Admin Team. Home visits are **not** pre-arranged and can be made at any time at the discretion of the school. Staff will always carry their school ID and will expect to see the child in question, if only briefly, in order to ascertain how they are.

3.4. Monitoring and improving irregular attendance

The Attendance Officer & Pastoral Leader monitors attendance on a daily basis. Where attendance is below 95% or where a pattern is identified for children whose absence has increased, actions are taken which aim to prevent children becoming or remaining a 'Persistent Absentee' (<90%).

These actions may include but are not limited to:

Informal Chat. The Attendance Officer & Pastoral Leader will speak directly with parents to share that their child(ren)'s attendance is becoming a cause for concern, and to explain the implications of low attendance and the impact it may have on their child(ren)'s education. This will allow parents an opportunity to reach out if additional support is required for matters such as safeguarding, that the school may not be aware of. This initial contact may be face to face in school, or via the telephone.

Step 1. An initial letter will be sent to advise parents/carers that their child(ren)'s absence is below the expected national average attendance of 95% and will be monitored moving forward.

Step 2: If attendance drops below 90%, Letter 2 will be sent to parents/carers to express concern that attendance has not improved, and to invite parents to an Attendance Support Plan (ASP) meeting to discuss and identify barriers, and to implement an action plan for school and parents/carers to work together to improve attendance and punctuality. This may include referrals to Early Help, School Nursing or direct work with the child(ren) if specific needs are identified.

Step 3. Following the Attendance Support Plan meeting, an ASP Review meeting will be scheduled 4 - 6 weeks later to recognise improvement or identify additional barriers that need addressing or further monitoring.

Step 4. If attendance has improved beyond 90%+ at the ASP Review, no further review meetings will be scheduled. Attendance will continue to be monitored and the process will begin again if issues recur.

If there is no improvement evident following the ASP review, or attendance is still below 90% threshold, and parents/carers are not willing to engage with the process by attending further review meetings. A final letter will be sent to parents/carers to give notice of intention to refer to ESS for further investigation.

Pupils who have been suspended or who are absent for long periods because of ill-health receive appropriate support to return to school, build confidence and bridge gaps in their learning. These plans are drawn up in collaboration with parents and the pupil (providing they are able to understand the process).

3.5. Attendance and safeguarding

Concerns about any extended or persistent absence are referred to the appropriate team or staff member. It is recognised that poor attendance may be a sign or symptom of a wider safeguarding issue that requires support (this includes but is not limited to domestic abuse, mental health difficulties, FGM, CCE, CSE or financial strain). Where there are concerns about a child's welfare, action will be taken in line with the Trust's Safeguarding Policy.

3.6. Children Missing from Education (CMfE) Referrals

Academies have safeguarding duties under section 175 of the Education Act 2002 in respect of their pupils, and as part of this should investigate any unexplained absences. If a child is absent and contact cannot be made with parents directly (by phone or home visit), and their whereabouts cannot be confirmed by any of the additional named contacts held by school, then the Local Authority's CMfE team is notified immediately and police are asked to carry out a safe and well check at the home address. The CMfE team is also notified if a child is known to have moved out of the area so is no longer attending, or if a parent enquiring about a school place states that their child is not currently attending a school.

3.7. Recognising and rewarding good attendance

To help children and their parents understand the importance of regular attendance and monitor their own and their class's attendance, it is discussed and celebrated in the following ways:

- Each week, attendance and punctuality is celebrated in a Whole School Assembly. The class who achieves the best attendance is presented with a certificate, and will have an additional break time awarded the following week. A further certificate is also displayed on the attendance board in reception.
- Best class attendance is published in the school newsletters
- Each term we celebrate attendance as a whole school. Children who have achieved 100% attendance for the current term will receive a certificate.
- We also award children who have attended 100% of the school year with a certificate and a gift token to the value of £10.00 (September to July).
- Attendance figures are reported to parents annually via the child's report.
- We have clear and established communication with pupils and parents about the importance of punctuality and good attendance.
- We work in partnership with the Dudley Education Support Service (ESS) to communicate to parents their legal obligations and the consequences of unauthorised absence.

4. Term-time leave of absence requests

A leave of absence request form **MUST** be completed in all circumstances, as far in advance as possible, and a **minimum** of 15 school days before the requested absence starts. Forms must be requested from and returned to the school office. One form must be completed **per child** and incomplete forms will not be considered.

The Headteacher will **only** authorise leave during term time in **exceptional circumstances, when absence during term time is absolutely unavoidable**. This decision is entirely at the Headteacher's discretion, based on the information provided by parents in writing, at the time the request is made. For the avoidance of any doubt; **The Headteacher will not authorise any Leave of Absence Request during term time for the purpose of a family holiday.**

Please Note: If a child is taken out of school for a leave(s) of absence totalling more than 10 school sessions (5 School days) for a family holiday, the matter will automatically be referred to EIS as a Tier 2 investigation and as a result they may issue a fixed penalty notice.

Where a period of absence is authorised in exceptional circumstances, the number of days will be determined by the Headteacher. For this reason, it is strongly recommended that permission for leave is obtained *before* travel or accommodation are booked.

This is in line with DfE guidance which states that:

215. Parents should plan their holidays around school breaks and avoid seeking permission from schools to take their children out of school during term time unless it is absolutely unavoidable.

216. An application for leave of absence should (and from certain schools must) not be granted unless it is made in advance by a parent the pupil normally lives with and the school is satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances based on the individual facts and circumstance of the case which justify the leave. Where a leave of absence is granted, the school will determine the number of days a pupil can be absent from school. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the headteacher's discretion. [Working together to improve school attendance](#) (DfE, September 2022)

After submitting a request for term time leave to be authorised, parents will be informed of the Head Teacher's decision in writing within five school days.

How absences are monitored -

Unauthorised absences will be referred by the school to the **Education Support Service** who act upon the following criteria -

Tier 1 – Intervention – A Tier 1 intervention is part of ESS's prevent strand in an attempt to avoid a Penalty Fine or prosecution of a parent and Level 1, 2 and 3 are early interventions. It is geared to support the work undertaken by schools and not in place of it.

Level 1 - 10 unauthorised sessions (but no more than 19) - The outcome will be a visit to the property to give advice and guidance to the parent.

Level 2 - 20 unauthorised sessions (but no more than 29) - The outcome will be a home visit and an Advisory Warning Notice will be issued.

Level 3 - 30 unauthorised sessions (but no more than 39) - The outcome will be up to 3 home visits and a Formal Advisory Warning Notice will be issued.

Statutory Intervention - 40 unauthorised sessions -

Tier 2 (Penalty fine) - A penalty fine may be issued.

Tier 3 (Unpaid fine) - When a penalty fine is unpaid legal action may be taken.

Tier 3 (Prosecution) - ESS will inform at point of contact.

Tier 4 (Prosecution) - Where the parent has a previous conviction, dependant on what the disposal details were and when the case was heard, EIS will consider whether to take proceedings for the aggravated offence.

5. Formal and legal interventions

Netherbrook Primary School will always seek to resolve any attendance concerns by working to support the family with improving a child's attendance. Where this is not successful, or when those with parental responsibility for the child do not engage with this support, then the school will work with the Local Authority's School Attendance Support Service to address poor attendance.

The first step would be to set up a formal parenting contract between parents and the school.

Definition of a parent

A parent means :

- All natural parents, whether they are married or not;
- Any person who has parental responsibility for a child or young person; and,
- Any person who has care of a child or young person i.e. lives with and looks after the child.

The local authority and school will need to decide who comes within the definition of parent in respect of a particular pupil when using the legal measures, but generally parents include all those with day to day responsibility for a child.

5.1. Parenting contracts

- Are a formal written agreement between a parent and either the school or Local Authority to address irregular attendance at school or early years provision.
- Are not legally binding but allow a more formal route to secure engagement with support where a voluntary early help plan has not worked or is not deemed appropriate.
- Are not a punitive tool, they are intended to provide support and offer an alternative to prosecution.
- Parents cannot be compelled to enter a contract, and they cannot be agreed in a parent's absence.
- Aim for the parent(s), and the pupil where they are old enough, the school and the Local Authority to work in partnership.
- Parenting contracts contain:
 - Details of the requirements the parent(s) is expected to comply with.
 - A statement from the school and/or Local Authority agreeing to provide support to the parent(s) to meet the requirements and setting out details of the support.
 - A statement by the parent that they agree to comply with the requirements for the period of time specified by the contract.
 - The period it will be in place for (most are for between 3 and 12 months but can be longer if needed).

If a parenting contract is not effective at improving a child's attendance, or is deemed not appropriate, the Local Authority has the option to progress as far as needed through the following, hierarchical legal interventions;

- **Education Supervision Orders (ESO)** - non compliance can lead to prosecution and a fine of up to £1000
- **Attendance prosecutions** - if found guilty, depending on the circumstances parents can be sentenced to a community order, a parenting order, a fine of up to £2500 or imprisonment of up to 3 months.
- **Parenting orders** - breaches can lead to a fine of up to £1000

Where safeguarding concerns exist, the school's designated safeguarding lead and children's social care services may decide that either a s.17 (Children in Need) or s.47 (Child Protection) plan is a more appropriate form of support.

5.2. Fixed Penalty Notices

Penalty notices 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. Penalty notices are used when parenting contracts are not appropriate, such as when a parent(s) takes a child out of school for term time leave that has not been authorised.

- fines of £60 (if paid within 21 days)/£120 (if paid after 21 days but before 28 days) imposed on parents
- can only be issued by a head teacher or someone authorised by them (a deputy or assistant head), a Local Authority officer or the police
- can be issued to each parent liable for the attendance offence or offences
- can be used where the pupil's absence has not been authorised by the school
- there is no right of appeal by parents against a fixed penalty notice
- Dudley LAs Fixed Penalty Notice Code of Conduct can be found at <https://www.dudley.gov.uk/residents/learning-and-school/education-support-service/school-attendance-advice/>

For full details of the school attendance parental responsibility measures available to schools and Local Authorities see [School attendance parental responsibility measures](#) (DfE, January 2015) or Section 6 of [Working together to improve school attendance](#) (DfE September 2022)

6. Roles and responsibilities

6.1. Parents and carers are responsible for:

- Ensuring that their child attends school regularly and on time for each day the school is open except when a statutory reason applies..
- Informing the school on the first day of non-attendance by telephoning the school office by 9am, or by registering the absence via the School Life App.
- Ensuring that medical appointments are booked outside school time wherever possible.
- Speak to the Attendance Officer and Pastoral Leader to seek support for any issues that may be preventing their child from wanting to attend school, and to proactively engage with any support offered.
- Understanding and accepting that absences for family holidays or visits and special occasions will not normally be permitted. Approval will only be granted in truly exceptional circumstances, at the discretion of the Head Teacher.
- Working alongside the school to address and improve any patterns of poor attendance.
- Complying with the DfE statutory guidance on [School attendance parental responsibility measures](#) (January 2015).

6.1a. In addition to legal parental responsibilities.

It would be appreciated if the following could be observed and implemented.

- Keeping the Pastoral leader informed of any formal child arrangements orders in place so they can be kept on file. Allowing the school to recognise which parent

should be dropping off their child(ren)/collecting their child(ren) on a given date, to avoid potential breach of any formal court orders.

- Where medical appointments during school time cannot be avoided, to bring in a copy of the appointment to be held on file.
- Ensuring that emergency contact details are up to date, and wherever possible more than one contact number is provided to school in the event that a child needs to be collected from school early due to illness, and the primary carer cannot be contacted.
- There is an expectation that the attendance policy is adhered to by any parent that accepts a place for their child(ren) to attend our early years provision, despite them not being of compulsory school age.

6.2. Pupils, when developmentally ready to take some responsibility for their learning, are expected to:

- Attend school every day.
- Arrive on time, ready to learn.
- Tell a trusted adult if there is a problem that might lead to absence.
- Not fabricate reasons for absence to avoid attending school.

6.3. All staff are responsible for promoting good attendance. Those with specific responsibilities include:

- The Headteacher is appointed as overall **Attendance Lead** and is responsible for the strategic approach to attendance taken by the school.
- The Attendance Officer and Pastoral leader checks absence after each register period, carries out first day calling and home visits and supports parents with improving their child's attendance. The Attendance Officer and Pastoral Leader also monitors attendance data for individuals and groups and works with the attendance lead to decide on and implement actions in response to patterns shown in data.
- **Class teachers and TAs** discuss attendance daily, refer concerns to the ASP and award a dojo point.
- The **Headteacher** decides whether term time leave applications are approved or not (see 'Term time leave of absence requests', above).
- The **Pastoral Team and SENDCo** work with children who face attendance barriers and families who need support.

Our school is supported to improving pupil attendance by the following partners:

- Dudley LA - Education Support Team
- **The Elliot Foundation Academies Trust** Regional Director, DSL for the Trust and Legal, SEND and Governance Director