

Netherbrook Primary School

Attendance Policy



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1. Policy Rationale

At Netherbrook Primary School we strongly believe that attendance and punctuality are vital for a child to maximise their potential and create a feeling of belonging in their class/school community.

In promoting the belief that attendance and punctuality are important values we will be helping to equip our children for life and potentially impacting upon their futures as employees and employers.

We believe that;

- Prolonged and consistent absence affects access to the curriculum ultimately impacting on progress.
- Repeated and consistent lateness is an unsettling start to the school day for both the child and school.

Every school in The Learning Link Trust (TLLT) has adopted a minimum target of 96% attendance. Each school will use all the resources in their power to reduce absence from school

The DfE documentation '*Reducing Absence – ensuring schools intervene earlier*' states that;

“The poor attendance of a number of pupils can disrupt their own learning and that of other pupils. The children quickly begin to fall behind their peers and often never fully catch up with gaps in their skills or knowledge.”

There is a clear link between poor attendance at school and low levels of achievement. The Government has stated that once a child's attendance figure reaches 85% they are classed as persistently absent. This equals just 30 school days.

Good attendance at school *makes a considerable difference* to a child's education. If children get into bad habits at Primary School then they will continue them at Secondary School. Statistics show that:

- Pupils with an attendance rate of less than 50% - 3% manage to achieve 5 A* to C's including English and Maths.
- Pupils with an attendance rate of between 90% and 70% - 35% manage to achieve 5 A* to C's including English and Maths.
- Pupils with an attendance rate of over 95% - 73% manage to achieve 5 A* to C's including English and Maths.

If a child has an 80% attendance record this constitutes an average of one day missed every week. Over the course of a child's primary school life this would amount to over one year and one term of absence.

Poor attendance can have a massive impact on a child's life chances and as a result the school will take all possible steps to ensure no child at Netherbrook has an attendance level of below 90%.

2. Promoting good attendance

At Netherbrook Primary School we have a culture of celebrating all kinds of achievement and progress, academic and non-academic. Attendance is included in this.

We promote good attendance and punctuality in the following ways;

- Each week attendance and punctuality is celebrated in Whole School Assembly. The class who achieve the best attendance is presented with a certificate and is given 5 minutes extra playtime the following week.
- 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 cinema gift token to the value of £10.00 (September to July).
- The class with the best attendance for the school year will also receive a free trip to the local cinema/theatre or sporting event. **New for 2015-16**
- Attendance figures are reported to parents annually via the child's report.
- We have clear communication with pupils and parents about the importance of punctuality and good attendance.
- We work in partnership with the Education Investigation Service (EIS) to communicate to parents their legal obligations and the consequences of condoned absence.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

Pupils

- To attend school regularly and punctually and to arrive at school by 8.55am.
- To attend registration promptly for both morning and afternoon registration.

Parents/Carer

- To ensure that their children attend school regularly, punctually, properly equipped and in a fit state to learn every day that the school is open.
- To notify the school every day of absence by 9.25am.
- To take family holidays in the school holiday period and **NOT** in term time.
- To provide the school with up to date contact details and telephone numbers for every adult with parental responsibility. If contact details change then we must be informed of new details within 24 hours.
- If a 'Leave of Absence' is required for exceptional circumstances, it must be made in writing (using an application form available from the school office) to the Headteacher **at least 21 days in advance** of the proposed start date of the absence.
- If a 'Leave of Absence' is to be requested it must be for '**exceptional**' circumstances. The circumstances you consider 'exceptional' must be detailed and made in writing to the Headteacher at least 21 school days before the start of that 'leave'.

Teachers

- To keep an accurate, timely and up to date attendance register.
- To add their initials to any notes on Integris registers.
- To praise and reward pupils for punctuality and good attendance.
- To take appropriate action when pupils are late.
- To monitor pupil absence.
- To inform the Senior Leadership Team and Attendance Officer when absence is impacting on achievement.

SLT

- To have a named member of SLT responsible for attendance.
- To set clear and challenging attendance targets as part of school self-review.

Office/Attendance Officer

- To intervene early when individual pupil absence gives cause for concern.
- Develop a multi-agency response to the attendance agenda.
- Utilise the support of available specialists in relation to the attendance agenda.
- To monitor late entrants into school and adjust the school management information system (Integris) accordingly.
- To pass on phone messages to class teachers regarding absences.
- To monitor register codes and alert staff of inconsistencies.
- To produce individual or class summary sheets upon request of the Education Investigation Service (EIS)
- To produce attendance figures for end of year reports.
- To undertake reporting on a weekly basis and update the Headteacher regularly.

4. Registration procedures

Late to school in the morning

At Netherbrook Primary School we expect children to arrive at school between 8.45am and 8.55am.

Registers open at 8.55am. They close 30 minutes afterwards at 9.25am.

If your child arrives after 8.55am in the morning, they will need to be signed in at the main school office by a parent/carer, or other appropriate adult and a reason for the lateness must be given.

If a child arrives in school after 8.55am then they will receive the 'late' code (L). If a child arrives in school after 9:25am then they will receive an unauthorised late code (U).

If a child is late due to a doctors/medical appointment and an appropriate appointment card/medical letters is shown/copied to school they will be marked as 'M' which does not class as a late mark.

The Pupil Registrations Act (2008) states that it is the duty of the parents to ensure their child/children arrive on time for school every day.

The DfE have also stated that;

"Arriving late for school, after the register has closed, is to be recorded as an unauthorised absence."

The school will only authorise up to 5 lates (earlier than 9.25am) in any academic year.

If your child is late more than 5 times, not due to medical appointments, then you will receive a letter from the school notifying you of these lates and the reasons you provided. We will then withdraw the privilege of having the lates authorised – all further lates will be unauthorised. We will use the 'U' code to record this.

Once your child has accumulated 12 unauthorised sessions of absence (1 session – ½ day) within 30 school days we will automatically refer your family to the Education Investigation Service. As a result you will receive a warning notice. A further referral for any continuing absence will lead to the possibility that a fixed penalty fine could be issued per child to each adult who has parental responsibility.

Unacceptable reasons for being late

Last year we collated reasons people sent in as to why their child was late for school. Some of them are listed here;

- Missed the bus
- Could not walk quickly enough
- Delayed slightly due to rain
- My watch is slow/alarm didn't go off
- My child will not be rushed
- I'm feeling poorly and can't get them to school
- I woke up late

5. Attendance and Illness

If your child is ill your first action is to call the school as early as possible (and before 9.25am) and let the School Office know your child will not be in school – 01384 818415.

This needs to be done every day of absence, not just the first day of absence (unless your child is admitted to hospital, or has a longer term illness-related absence for a period of time - in this instance you do not need to ring every day, e.g. Chicken Pox, broken leg).

If your child is not in school and we have not had a phone call by 9.30am one of our Office Staff will call you to find out why your child is not in school.

Leaves of Absence

The latest DfE guidance, Advice on School Attendance - August 2013, answers the FAQ;

Can a school fine a parent for taking their child on holiday during term time?

Yes. Parents have a legal duty to make sure that their child aged 5-16, if registered at a school, attends that school regularly. Any periods of leave that are refused by the school will be recorded with the 'G' code which is an unauthorised absence. Taking an unauthorised term time holiday is grounds for issuing a penalty notice according to the local authority's code, and if the leave of absence for holiday was not authorised by the school, the **Local Authority** may issue a warning or a fixed penalty notice.

It is the statutory duty of local authorities to carry out investigations including witness statements leading up to prosecutions. Local Authorities should conduct all investigations in accordance with PACE and Attorney General's Guidelines for Crown Prosecutors Local Authorities cannot delegate this function to schools (including academies) or charge them for this service.

Penalty notices

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.

It is the EIS who upon referral from schools issue Warning Notices and Penalty Notices (for both Leave of Absence and Unauthorised absence) as stated in Dudley's Code of Conduct. Which is available on their website.

Penalty notices can be issued to each parent liable for the attendance offence or offences related to each child taken out of school.

(Example: Two children living with mother and father = (£60.00 fine x 2 children x 2 parents = a total fine of £240.00, this may double to £480.00 if not paid in 28 days.)

Penalties can be used where the pupil's absence has not been authorised by the school.

The penalty is £60 if paid within 21 days of receipt of notice, rising to £120 if paid between 22-28 days. The payment must be paid direct to the Local Authority, **the school does not receive the money**. The parents may be prosecuted in court if 28 days have expired and full payment has not been made.

There is **no right of appeal** by parents against a fixed penalty notice. If the penalty is not paid in full by the end of the 28 day period the local authority must decide either to prosecute for the original offence to which the notice applies or withdraw the notice.

The amendments make clear that head teachers **may not** grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are **exceptional circumstances**.

Please note: If you should choose to take any leave of absence during term time you should complete and return to the school office a "Leave of Absence" return form no later than 21 working days prior to the 1st day of absence. Forms are available from the school office.

If a leave of absence is to be requested it must be for "exceptional" circumstances. This does not include examples such as: "holiday of a lifetime", "special family birthday", "Cheaper holiday" or "visiting family (sick family) abroad" The leave of absence request will be reviewed by the Headteacher.

What happens when 10 days/20 sessions or more of school are missed?

If your child is absent from school for **10 consecutive school days** without contact from parents we must inform the Education Investigation Service.

If your child has more than **10 days** out of school, at any time over an academic year due to illness and/or holiday, then every time your child is absent after this you will be required to provide further information, detail or evidence so we can consider whether the absence can be authorised. An appointment card saying you had an appointment for the doctor is not considered as further evidence. A written document from a registered health professional stating something similar to 'I have seen Jack in surgery today and in my professional opinion he is not fit for school' will be the level of evidence we can accept for absence when more than 10 days have already been missed.

The school's medical policy allows us to administer **prescribed medicines** only with prior written consent from parents which may ensure a quicker return to school. A child that has been prescribed medication does not necessarily mean that they need to have any time off school.

If no further evidence is received by the school, we may involve the School Health Adviser. You may also be asked to attend a meeting with the Education Investigation Service to discuss how to improve your child's attendance. Following this meeting you may be issued with a warning notice from the Education Investigation Service.

What happens when 20 days/40 sessions or more of school are missed?

The Headteacher will look at the reasons for the 20 or more days absence. If it is a combination of reasons – including holiday - then you will be informed by letter that further absences will be unauthorised.

The Education Investigation Service will ask to meet with you to decide how to improve attendance – following this meeting you may be issued with a warning notice from the Education Investigation Service.

You may also receive a home visit from the Attendance Officer and the Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher. Your child's absence will then be scrutinised on a weekly basis.

Your child's absence will be scrutinised on a weekly basis if your child continues to be absent for:

- 12 sessions of unauthorised absence over a 6 week period
- 20 consecutive sessions with no reason for absence
- Attendance levels below 90%

(NB: 1 session = half a school day (am or pm))

You will automatically be referred again to the Education Investigation Service.

You will receive a Home Visit and Formal Written Warning from them advising that any continuing unauthorised absence could lead to Penalty Notice/s being issued against you.

They will then investigate the evidence around the unauthorised absences, which could result in them taking the attendance issue on as a case and investigating why your child has not been in school for these days. EIS will not undertake an investigation, we will use the 'prima facia' evidence of the Attendance Summary provided at Referral to issue Warning/Penalty Notices. Any explanations provided by parent/s after the event to the school, if accepted by the Head teacher, will warrant a 'withdrawal' of any Notice if this is Re-referred/requested by the school.

This external investigation will result in you receiving a final fixed penalty notice and then a fine if your child was well enough to be in school. Non-payment of a Penalty Notice will further action by EIS which may include Magistrates Court Action a fine of up to £2,500 and/or 3 months imprisonment.

Prolonged absence over 20 days

Long term sickness absence

If a child needs to be hospitalised for 3 days or more we can contact the Hospital Teaching Service so that they work with your child whilst they are not in school. This would be recorded as the 'B' code which means they are being educated off site and would not affect their overall attendance percentage.

If a child leaves hospital and following this is at home for 2 weeks, or more, then we can contact Cherry Tree Pupil Referral Unit and they will support the child at home. This would use the 'D' code meaning the child is dual registered with ourselves and Cherry Tree.

Removal from school roll

If a child is not ill and is absent from our school for 20 days (40 sessions), or more and recorded as an unauthorised absence as a school we would work with the Education Investigation Service to find out where your child is. A result of this investigation may be to remove your child from the school roll (Section 8 (h) (iii) Admissions).

It would then be the parent's responsibility to contact admissions in order to re-register the child/children at Netherbrook or elsewhere. It should be noted that a place may no longer be available at Netherbrook if a child on the waiting list is offered it in the meantime.

Special circumstances

It is not acceptable to **assume** that your child can have days out of school for the following events:

- Moving House
- Funerals
- New babies
- A child in the family is sick and parent cannot get other child/children to school
- Parent on holiday and child is staying with a relative, relative cannot bring child to school - it is expected that other arrangements are made with family members/neighbours/friends to bring your child to school. (In this case if a child is staying with a relative who is unable to get the child to school, it is this relative as well as the parents who may receive a fine for continued non-attendance.)
- Parent sick on a long term basis and cannot get child to school – it is expected that other arrangements are made with family members/neighbours/friends to bring your child to school. Please contact us if this is a problem.
- Inclement weather i.e. snow – if you live within a 1 mile radius of the school, unless there is a babe in arms in the household, or you live in a remote setting, you are expected to get your child to school.

Unacceptable reasons for not sending your child to school

Last year we collated reasons people sent in as to why their child was off school/or why they should be allowed holiday in term time. Some of them are listed here;

- Buying new school uniform as we couldn't do this in the holidays
- Going to the caravan on a Friday to avoid traffic
- Waiting in for the builders/Gas man/delivery driver to arrive
- Holidays are cheaper – child's attendance is not our problem
- Only Year 6 matters
- I overslept
- I'm unwell

If you give these or similar reasons for absence, your child will automatically receive an unauthorised mark, this would be recorded as an 'O' code.

If you ever have concerns or worries regarding your child's attendance at school then please get in touch with us. It is very important that effective home/school relationships are maintained.

This policy is in line with that used by other local schools, the Local Authority guidance and current Government Legislation.

Appendix 1: Attendance Codes, Descriptions and Meanings

CODE	DESCRIPTION	MEANING
/	Present (AM)	Present
\	Present (PM)	Present
B	Educated off site (NOT Dual registration)	Approved Education Activity
C	Other Authorised Circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code/description)	Authorised absence
D	Dual registration (i.e. pupil attending other establishment)	Approved Education Activity
E	Excluded (no alternative provision made)	Authorised absence
G	Family holiday (NOT agreed or days in excess of agreement)	Unauthorised absence
H	Family holiday (agreed)	Authorised absence
I	Illness (NOT medical or dental etc. appointments)	Authorised absence
J	Interview	Approved Education Activity
L	Late (before registers closed)	Present
M	Medical/Dental appointments	Authorised absence
N	No reason yet provided for absence	Unauthorised absence
O	Unauthorised absence (not covered by any other code/description)	Unauthorised absence
P	Approved sporting activity	Approved Education Activity
R	Religious observance	Authorised absence
S	Study leave	Authorised absence
T	Traveller absence	Authorised absence
U	Late (after registers closed)	Unauthorised absence
V	Educational visit or trip	Approved Education Activity
W	Work experience	Approved Education Activity
X	Non-compulsory school age absence	Not counted in possible attendances
Y	Enforced closure	Not counted in possible attendances
Z	Pupil not yet on roll	Not counted in possible attendances
#	School closed to pupils	Not counted in possible attendances