

**Norton Primary Academy**

**ATTENDANCE POLICY AND  
PROCEDURES**

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# ATTENDANCE POLICY

## 1. Statement of Intent

Norton Primary Academy believes that regular attendance is important for pupils to take full advantage of the educational provision made available to them. Irregular attendance is likely to place the child at an educational disadvantage both socially and academically. As a school, therefore we aim to pursue the goal of regular attendance. In this matter the partnership between school and home is important. School aims to develop children to their full potential, parents have a responsibility to aid the education process by ensuring that children attend school regularly, on time, properly dressed and in a suitable condition to learn. We expect our parents to value school and their children's education and to support our school rules.

Promoting regular attendance and punctuality is the responsibility of each and every member of our school community. Increasing both overall attendance (in line with our locally agreed target) and reducing the levels of persistent absence is a priority for our school.

## 2. School Attendance – The Statutory Framework

Education Act 1944 - Establishes the duty of parents to ensure regular attendance of pupils.

Pupil's Registration Regulations 1986 - Establishes the criteria for the maintenance of Attendance Registers.

Education Act 1996 places a legal obligation on the Local Education Authority to provide education suitable to a child's age, aptitude and ability and to any special educational needs they may have and also Section 444 states that "The parent of a child of compulsory school age registered at school and failing to attend regularly is guilty of an offence punishable by law".

The Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 1997 (amended) provides the new registration categories of Approved Educational Activity. (Amending Regulation 3(2), (3), (5) of the Education Regulations 1995).

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2013 amend the 2006 regulation. From 1st September 2013 all reference to family holiday and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days is removed. The amendments make clear that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Headteachers should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.

## 3. Registration

- 3.1 There is a legal requirement upon schools to keep an attendance register on which, at the beginning of each morning and afternoon sessions, pupils are marked present or absent. The Education (Pupils Attendance Record) Regulations 1991 introduced a further requirement that attendance registers must show whether an absence of a pupil of compulsory school age is authorised or unauthorised.

- 3.2 Both staff and pupils should see the taking of registers as an integral part of the school day, as was indeed intended in law. Particular attention should be paid to accurate registration and to the preservation and security of registers.
- 3.3 In accordance with current legislation, each class in school will have an electronic attendance register. It is academy policy that registers are completed by 8.50 am and 1.05 pm. when they are closed.
- 3.4 It is our policy to record a late mark for children who arrive at school after registration closes at 9:20 a.m.
- 3.5 We believe that pupils arriving late seriously disrupt their work and that of others. Our policy is to encourage punctuality. Five minutes will be allocated for registration purposes at the beginning of each session. Children will only be admitted via the academy office if they arrive after class registration where their arrival will be recorded by the office staff.

#### **4. Absence**

- 4.1 It is the parent's responsibility to inform school of the reason for a child's absence. We would like to receive notification as soon as the child is absent from school. At the very latest we need to receive information when the child returns to school. Parents are encouraged to inform school on the first day of absence as to the nature of the absence. Should no reason be given the office will make first day contact phone calls for all absent pupils with home visits made in particular circumstances.
- 4.2 It is a fact that parentally-condoned unjustified absence is a serious problem in some schools. This is every bit as damaging as the more traditional forms of truancy.

Only the school, within the context of the law, can approve absence, not parents. The fact that a parent has offered a note or other notification (telephone call or personal contact) in relation to a particular absence does not, of itself, oblige the school to accept it if the school does not accept the explanation offered as a valid reason for absence. If, after further investigation doubt remains about the explanation offered – or where no explanation is forthcoming at all the absence must be treated as unauthorised. Where parentally condoned unjustified absence appears to be a problem in relation to a particular pupil, school will involve the Attendance Officer at the earliest opportunity.

- 4.3 An excessive amount of authorised absence can also seriously disrupt continuity of learning and encourage disaffection. We must be alert to emerging patterns of authorised absence. We may authorise absence retrospectively where we are satisfied as to the explanation offered. Absences of pupils of compulsory school age without valid reason or for which no explanation has been provided will be treated as unauthorised.
- 4.4 Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 provides that no offence is committed where a pupil of compulsory school age is prevented from attending school by reason of

illness. If school is satisfied that a pupil is absent as a result of illness the absence will be treated as authorised.

- 4.5** Where we have reason to doubt the validity of an explanation offered in respect of a particular absence, further information will be requested by the academy from the child's parents. If the school continues to be dissatisfied then the absence will be treated as unauthorised.
- 4.6** Where there is regular absence attributed to illness school may request medical evidence in order to authorise absence, for example appointment slips, medication prescriptions. Parents may be asked to complete a consent form for school to liaise with school health in order to support the pupil to attend school as regularly as possible.
- 4.7** Leave for medical or dental appointments will be given (i.e. the absence will be authorised) where confirmation has been received from the parent (either in person, in writing or by a telephone call) or on production of an appointment card.
- 4.8** The school monitors all pupils with absence below 90% over the previous half term and monitors this closely on a weekly basis. When attendance has dropped below 90% parents receive a letter from the Parent Support Advisor which also offers the opportunity to discuss any concerns directly. Where this low level of attendance persists the PSA requests a meeting with the parents of the child / children in question in order to identify ongoing issues, set targets and discuss the role of the Attendance Officer should this level of absence continue. Support may include a CAF referral. School nurse referral or school support from either the PSA or other appropriate agencies.
- 4.9** Where attendance continues to deteriorate the further action will be taken which may include the involvement of the LA Attendance Officer which ultimately may lead to a fine or a prosecution.

## **5. Reporting of Absence Procedure**

- 5.1** Parents/carers are expected to telephone on the first day of absence, or at the latest see the class teacher or send a note once their children return to school. This will allow the office to interpret the category of absence. If they do not school endeavours to contact the parent to discover the cause of the absence.
- 5.2** The class teacher and office staff will record all notes / verbal explanations by entering them on the electronic SIMS system.
- 5.3** Norton Primary Academy operates a system of first day contact – Parents are requested to inform us of their child's absence on the first day. If we have received no notification we will contact home by phone. In some cases a home visit may be arranged if we are unable to contact parents.

Reported absences can be referred to the Attendance Officer or Social Services if:

- a) the absence is regular/repeated and therefore, affecting the child's education.
- b) there is cause for concern that the child is a risk.

**5.4** Revised Government regulations have removed the right of schools to authorise leave of absence for annual holidays except in exceptional circumstances. Parents should complete a Leave of Absence form, which they may obtain from the academy office, if they intend to remove their child from school for any reason including holidays. It should be completed and returned, before the absence. The Principal will assess each request individually and inform parents whether the leave be authorised or unauthorised. In the case of family holidays it is very unlikely that leave will be authorised save for exceptional circumstances. The maximum number of days authorised in exceptional circumstances within an academic year will be 5 days. Under the following circumstances NO holiday absence will be authorised under any circumstance:

- When the pupil's attendance has been below 90% in the 12 months preceding the application;
- In the first two weeks of September each year;
- Between March and May (end of SATS week) each year for pupils in Year Six

Evidence of exceptional circumstances may be requested to support the Principal in making a decision.

Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, says:

"If a child of compulsory school age, who is a registered pupil at a school fails to attend regularly at the school, her parent is guilty of an offence".

If the reasons given for your child's irregular school attendance are not satisfactory, or if your child doesn't attend school when holidays have been unauthorised then the Local Authority may take legal proceedings against you for failure to comply with the Law. This may result in:

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

**5.5** Where a pupil is present for registration but then has to attend an appointment, the academy records the fact that (for the purpose of emergency evacuation) the pupil is not physically present. Similarly the school must note the presence of a pupil (again for purposes of emergency evacuation) who was not there when the register was being taken but returns later from an appointment. The academy office make a note on the signing in / out sheet as to the times the child came or left so that there is information on the child's whereabouts in the event of emergency evacuation.

## 6. **Categorising Absence**

Our policy deals in general with the categories of absence and cannot cover every eventuality. It will be necessary on occasion to exercise reasonable discretion when investigating some absences.

Some Key points: -

- registered pupils of compulsory school age are required by law to attend school or their educational provision during school hours;
- whilst it is right that schools should recognise that individual pupils and families have problems the aim should always be to expect regular attendance;
- lateness is actively discouraged with intervention from the PSA when lateness is persistent;
- where a pupil is absent without prior authorisation an explanation is required. If one is not forthcoming (for whatever reason) it must be treated as unauthorised and the register recorded accordingly;
- schools are not obliged to accept parental explanations where there is reason to doubt the validity of the explanation offered;
- even where absence is authorised, school is alert to emerging patterns of absence, which may seriously disrupt continuity of learning.
- in promoting regular attendance, school works closely with the Attendance Service.

## 7. **Punctuality**

**7.1** It is Norton Primary Academy's policy to actively discourage late arrival. A pupil arriving late may seriously disrupt not only his or her continuity of learning but also that of others. In recognition of local circumstances (such as bad weather or occasional public transport difficulties), we may occasionally keep registers open for a reasonable period.

**7.2** For registration to mean anything at all, a firm line must be taken on late arrivals. To do otherwise undermines the whole purpose of registration and may serve to encourage other pupils to arrive late. Particular attention will be paid to emerging patterns of late arrival.

**7.3** Where a pupil does arrive late and misses registration, his or her presence on site will still need to be noted for purposes of emergency evacuation. Anyone arriving late must report to the office. The child's name and time of arrival is recorded electronically.

**7.4** In responding to lateness, we will of course need to take account of the individual circumstances of each case. In some instances enquiries may reveal that the late arrival stems from difficulties at home or other genuinely unavoidable circumstances. The PSA seeks to arrange meetings with parents of pupils who persistently fail to arrive on time with valid reason need to seek an early meeting with parents and take appropriate action / intervention to support the family to improve punctuality.

## **8. Procedures to address attendance issues**

**8.1** The role of our PSA with regard to attendance is to:

- liaise, where appropriate, between home and school;
- investigate irregular attendance or lateness which may give rise to concerns that a child may be at risk;
- liaise effectively with the Principal and the LA Attendance Officer;
- work with children who are experiencing problems with Attendance and/or punctuality and/or are preparing to transfer to secondary school

**8.2** Referral to the Attendance Officer

Referral to the Attendance Officer may be made in the following circumstances:

- the absence is regular and/or repeated and therefore affecting the child's education;
- when a pupil has been absent for two consecutive weeks and the absence is unauthorised;
- where unauthorised leave is taken for more than 10 sessions;
- the intervention by the school has failed to secure a pupil's regular attendance;
- Where patterns of absence suggest that the pupil is at risk of becoming a persistent absentee (in exceptional circumstances it is recognised that a child may be persistently absent with good cause – for example serious illness, medical treatment).

Referrals can only be made through the Principal or Parent Support Advisor. A referral form will be completed for each pupil and given to the Attendance Officer.

Progress reports on referrals will be given to the school at regular intervals by the Attendance Officer (as agreed between the school and the AO).

**8.3** Details of the procedure followed by the AO may be found in the Attendance Procedure Document. However, it seems appropriate to note here the information required to make a referral so that staff involved can have the details ready: -

- action taken to date by the school;
- parents/pupils attitudes towards school and the school's intervention;
- parental reasons for non-attendance;
- action taken by school to resolve any identified problems;
- information regarding any special educational needs the pupil may have, academic attainment and support being provided by the school.

## **9 Rewarding Good Attendance and Punctuality**

**9.1** As well as taking appropriate action against parents who fail to secure the regular attendance of their children, we will take steps to reward good attendance and punctuality at. We fundamentally believe that the importance of good attendance and punctuality should be raised at all possible opportunities.

**9.2** This takes many forms. Attendance is regularly publicised via the academy website and newsletter. The PSA participates in the annual new starters meeting to highlight the importance of regular attendance from the very onset of full-time education. Equally the PSA becomes involved where attendance concerns emerge for nursery age pupils.

**9.3** Children who attend for 100% each term receive an award whilst children who attend for 100% all year additionally receive certificates, an attendance treat (in the form of a trip) with the Principal and additionally a prize for the best overall primary attender in each leaving Y6 cohort. On a weekly basis pupils who achieve 100% attendance are entered into a prize draw for the half termly 'Cinema Bus' treat.

**9.4** All classes have an attendance Piggy Bank in which £1 is deposited for every day where there is full, punctual whole class attendance. As a class children decide how they will spend this money once it reaches £25 – this may take the form of purchasing resources such as games etc or in treats such as ice creams or pizza.

**9.5** Individual pupils whose attendance / punctuality is beginning to cause concern will have either individual or group activities targeted for them – these may include attendance workshops or reward charts etc.

- 9.6** The PSA will also liaise with families in need of support over attendance issues which may include short term monitoring, attendance plans and the use of CAF with the intention of improving attendance prior to the involvement of the Local Authority attendance officer. This support begins with nursery pupils who are identified as being irregular attenders so that the importance of good school attendance begins as early as possible.

## **APPENDIX 1 REGISTRATION PROCEDURE**

1. Electronic registers will be completed as quickly as convenient, preceding both daily sessions. Only ten minutes of the school day have been allocated for the registration procedure. Registers will be 'closed' by the classteacher following this registration period.
2. Children present will be marked with a / or \ in the appropriate column.
3. Children not present will be marked with 'N' until an authorised reason is provided.
4. Children arriving at school after registration in the mornings must report to the school office.

If they arrive after close of registration (30 minutes after the start of the school day), they will be marked as an unauthorised absence late for session. An explanation note may authorise this absence, e.g. visit to doctor/dentist. Otherwise it will be treated as unauthorised. However, if a child should arrive part way through a session a note must be made in SIMS to show that child is present for safety, fire evacuation etc. purposes.

5. Once we receive a valid reason for an absence, we can authorise that absence by recording the appropriate letter in SIMS. Reporting by telephone, verbally to a member of staff or by a note are acceptable.

A list of symbols used for demarcating AUTHORISED absence is included in Table 1 in this document. Only school can authorise an absence. If an absence does not fit one of the categories listed, it is likely to be UNAUTHORISED.

6. Parents removing their child from school during a session will be required to explain to and record their reasons for this removal, for example medical appointment.
7. If the child returns to school with no notification of the reason for absence the absence will be unauthorised – school will not follow up such absences as it is the parents' responsibility to keep school informed.
8. If no response is forthcoming within 3 days of absence the attendance must be recorded as UNAUTHORISED. Regular unauthorised absence may also trigger further action or a referral to the Attendance Officer.
9. Any regular authorised absence or any notes or occurrences which give cause for concern are monitored by the PSA and may lead to intervention.

## APPENDIX 2

### IMPROVING PUNCTUALITY

1. When children are regularly late for school or a pattern is emerging over a period of time, the class teacher will bring this to the attention of the PSA who will then arrange either, a letter to be sent home or an appointment to discuss this with the parents/carers. Alternatively, a visit may be arranged directly from the school PSA following monitoring.
2. Regular newsletters home emphasise the need for regular and punctual attendance at school and also remind parents of the importance of not taking holidays in term time

**APPENDIX 3**

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