



# NORTHSIDE Primary School

## Attendance and Punctuality Policy

Last review: October 2019  
Ratified: October 2019  
Review: October 2021

### Rationale

At Northside Primary School excellent attendance and punctuality are expected from all children regardless of gender, culture or socio-economic factors. This policy is therefore designed to ensure that all children have full access to the curriculum so they can achieve their full potential. We believe that regular school attendance is vital to enable children to maximise their educational opportunities. We therefore aim to ensure children attend school at all times, discouraging absence from school unless it is absolutely essential. Our current school attendance target is 98+%.

### Key Principles

We aim to meet our obligations with regards to school attendance by:

- Promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence
- Involve children and parents/carers in the process of improving attendance and punctuality

### Northside Values

- RESPECT** – children are taught to respect the importance of education so that they fulfil their full potential.
- PRIDE** – individual and class attendance is celebrated and rewarded.
- INCLUSION** – the school staff work closely with families to ensure that the children become lifelong learners.
- CHALLENGE** – we have high expectations of all our children's attendance, aiming for 97+% of the academic year.
- CREATIVITY** – through attending each day the children develop their creativity
- RESILIENCE** – through attending each day and being punctual the children develop the necessary life skills for their working career.

### UN Rights of the Child:

This policy links with the following article from the UN Rights of the Child Charter:

Article 28: Every child has the right to an education. Primary education must be free.

### Legal Framework:

Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act states that parents must ensure that children of compulsory school age receive sufficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude to any special educational needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise. A child is of compulsory school age at the beginning of the term following their 5th birthday. Under the Education Act 1996, the Local Authority has a statutory responsibility to ensure that parents secure education for children of compulsory school age and where necessary, use legal enforcement.



The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, amended on the 1 September 2013, made it clear that head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances.

## **In Practice**

### Attendance register

The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, require all schools to take an attendance register twice a day. Class teachers are responsible for attendance registers and are completed online on the Barnet Integrus System. Morning registration takes place at 8:55am and afternoon registration takes place at 1.00pm.

Pupils are marked either;

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

### Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

Where pupils of compulsory school age are recorded as absent, the register must show whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised. Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school as either Authorised or Unauthorised.

### Authorised Absences:

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school, which include the following reasons:

#### *Illness*

In most cases a telephone call from the parent/carer informing the school that their child is ill is acceptable. Parents may be asked to provide medical evidence where there are repeated absences or longer periods of absence due to illness. This will usually be in the form of an appointment card, prescription but could be in the form of a doctor's note.

#### *Medical/Dental Appointments*

Parents/carers are expected where possible to make routine medical and dental appointments outside of the school day. Where this is not possible, pupils should attend school for part of the day. Parents will need to show the appointment card to school.

#### *Other Authorised Circumstances*

This relates to occasions where there is cause for absence due to exceptional circumstances, for example family bereavement or because of a part-time timetable agreed as part of a reintegration package.

#### *Religious Observance*

Northside Primary School acknowledges the multi-faith nature of British society and recognises that on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside school holiday periods or weekends and this will be an authorised absence. Parents are asked to request permission to be absent for a day for reasons of religious observance by completing a special leave request form which can be found in the school office.

#### *Medical and Related Conditions*

At Northside Primary School we automatically treat illness as authorised absence and with the local authority's help, support pupils' education throughout their illnesses. We also have an



understanding and sensitive approach to children who may have periods of absence due to disability or long-term ill health. In these circumstances pupils will usually have a health care plan.

#### *Excluded*

Exclusion from attending school is counted as an authorised absence. The child's class teacher will make arrangements for work to be sent home.

#### Unauthorised Absences:

Unauthorised absences are those where the parents/carers have been unable to provide a satisfactory explanation to the school or where no permission has been granted by the school. These include the following:

#### *Family Holidays and Extended Leave*

In line with the amendments to the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 which came into force on 1 September 2013, all requests for holiday during school time will be refused. **Parents taking their children out of school for the purpose of a holiday need to be aware that they may be liable for sanctions such as a Penalty Notice, a fine or a court summons issued by the Local Authority.**

#### *Absences which have not been properly explained*

All absences will be treated as unauthorised unless a satisfactory explanation for the child's absence has been received.

#### *Children who arrive at school too late to get a mark on the register*

The absence will only be authorised if a satisfactory explanation for the late arrival can be provided, for example, attendance at a medical appointment. Any other absence will be classed as unauthorised.

#### **Absence Procedures:**

If a child is absent the parent/carer must follow the following procedures:

- Contact the school as soon as possible of the first day of absence (before 8.55 a.m.) on **020 8445 4730** or call into the school office and report the absence in person

If a child is absent, a member of the school administrative team will send a text message to the parent/carer on the first day of absence if the school has not already been contacted by the parent/carer.

#### **Special Leave Requests:**

Parents/carers should not expect that the school will agree to authorise extended leave within term time. If there are special circumstances involved, permission should be sought from the head teacher, by completing a special leave form. In considering whether to grant requests for term-time leave, the following points will be considered:

- the circumstances involved
- the time and length of the proposed leave
- the child's attendance record
- any previous leave of absence requests made
- if it is close to any statutory tests

Parents/carers should rest assured that each application is treated sympathetically and on its own merits and that any decision not to authorise a leave of absence request is based on professional assessment.



### **Punctuality and Lateness:**

Punctuality is essential. At Northside learning starts promptly at 9.00am, if a child misses the start of the day they will miss important teaching and disrupt the lesson. Good time keeping is a vital life skill which will help our children as they progress through their school life and out into the wider world.

The school day starts at 8:55am in Reception, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. In the Nursery the morning session starts at 9.00 a.m. and the afternoon session starts at 12:45 p.m.

Registration begins at 8:55 a.m. Children are entered as late in the register if they arrive in school after the register has been taken but before 9:30 a.m. which is when the register closes. If they arrive after this time the register will show an unauthorised absence, but a record will be kept in the office for the purpose of an emergency evacuation. If parents know their child is going to be late for **any** reason, they should let the school office know. On arrival, after the close of register, pupils must immediately sign in at the school office to ensure that we can be responsible for their health and safety whilst they are in school.

### **Persistent Lateness:**

Parents/carers of children who persistently arrive or are collected late will:

- Be expected to attend a meeting with the Learning Mentor or Headteacher to explain their reasons.
- Be referred to the Education Welfare Officer and/or Social Services where persistent lateness occurs without an acceptable reason.

### **The Education Welfare Service (EWS):**

The Education Welfare Service is responsible for supporting good school attendance and high standards of pupil welfare. They have a duty on behalf of the Local Authority to ensure that parents/carers make sure that their children attend school regularly. The school is nearly always successful in resolving issues of absence/lateness with parents/carers before the school's designated Education Welfare Officer (EWO) has to become involved. Termly meetings are held between our Education Welfare Officer (EWO), the Learning Mentor and a member of the school administrative team. Children with persistent absence or lateness or attendance level below 90% are discussed at these meetings.

The EWO supports the school with individuals who are having difficulties with attendance or punctuality and together we will decide on what appropriate action should be taken e.g. meeting in school, phone call, letter or referral. The EWO will then be involved with monitoring the situation with the school until attendance or time keeping improves or the decision is taken for further action to be undertaken by the Local Authority. This can include Penalty Notices, Education Supervision Orders in the Family Proceedings Court, Prosecution in the Magistrates Court and deletion of the child from the school register.

### **Rewarding Attendance:**

- Attendance as a class is rewarded in celebration assembly every week with the award of a trophy for the class with the highest attendance. Classes who reach our target of 98% receive an additional 5 minutes play time with the top three classes receiving further additional play time.
- Attendance certificates are given out each term for 98+% and 100%.
- End of year attendance certificates are also given for 98+% and 100%.
- 100% club children are rewarded with a trip

### **Support Systems:**

At Northside Primary School, we recognise that poor attendance is often an indication of difficulties in a child's life. This may be related to problems at home and/or in school. Parents



should make us aware of any difficulties or changes in circumstances that may affect their child's attendance and or behaviour in school, for example, bereavement, divorce/separation, incidents of domestic abuse. This will help us to identify any additional support that may be required. We also recognise that some pupils are more likely to require additional support to attain/maintain good attendance, for example, those pupils with special educational needs, those with physical or mental health needs, migrant and refugee pupils and looked after children.

- In-school support from the Learning Mentor for the pupil
- In-school support from the Family Support Worker for the parents/carers
- Reward charts
- Referrals to support agencies

### **Roles and responsibilities:**

We all have a shared responsibility to ensure that all pupils attend school so they can achieve their full potential.

#### *Governors will:*

- review this policy annually and ensure it is fully implemented.
- monitor the school's attendance and related issues through termly reporting at Governing Body meetings.
- ensure the wider school community is aware of the Attendance Policy via the school website.

#### *The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) will:*

- actively promote the importance and value of good attendance and punctuality to pupils and their parents/carers
- make clear the link between good attendance and progress/achievement e.g. via assemblies, newsletters
- celebrate good attendance and punctuality
- ensure that attendance and punctuality data is collected and analysed frequently and identify causes and patterns of absence
- develop a multi-agency response to improve attendance and support pupils and their families if required
- document interventions and support provided to a standard required by the local authority should legal proceedings be instigated.

#### *Parents/carers should:*

- avoid unnecessary absences by their children
- ask for help if their child is experiencing difficulties
- inform the school of any change in circumstances that may impact on their child's attendance
- contact the school if their child is absent, letting us know the reason why and the expected date of return

### **Legal Sanctions:**

Where poor attendance continues, even after the interventions outlined in this policy, the following legal sanctions may be applied:



### *Fixed Penalty Notices (Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003)*

Section 23 of this Act gives powers to the Local Authority and other designated bodies to issue Penalty Notices where a parent/carer is considered capable but unwilling to secure an improvement in their child's school attendance.

Penalty Notices will be considered when:

- A pupil is absent from school for the purpose of a holiday in term time
- A pupil has accumulated 20 sessions of unauthorised absence in any six-week period
- A pupil has been late for 12 or more sessions in any six-week period and further unauthorised absence/lateness has occurred following written warning to improve

In such a case each parent/carer receives a Penalty Notice for their child who has unauthorised absences, and/or persistent lateness after the registers close. A Penalty Notice gives the parent the opportunity to discharge themselves of their legal responsibility if a £60 fine is paid within 28 days or £120 if paid within 42 days of the date the Notice was issued.

If the penalty is not paid in full by the end of 42 days the LA must either prosecute for the offence or withdraw the notice. This prosecution is for the offence of failing to secure attendance at school not for non-payment of the fine.

If prosecution is proven this can attract a range of fines up to £2500 and/or a range of disposals such as Parenting Orders, Community Sentences or custody, depending upon circumstances.

### *Application to the Family court for an Education Supervision Order*

This can be granted for up to 12 months. Parents will be legally obliged to comply with the directions/advice given by the Education Welfare Officer and if they do not, the matter may be referred to the Magistrates Court. The consequence of this could include a fine or in an aggravated offence imprisonment. In addition, if there is a persistent non-compliance with directions/advice, then it is a legal requirement that the Local Authority Children's Social Care Department investigate.

### *Prosecution*

Where all other intervention, including Penalty notices and/or Education Supervision Orders, fail to bring about an improvement in attendance, the Local Authority will be notified and legal action in the Magistrates' Court may be taken. The school will provide the Local Authority with evidence required for a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 and will appear as a prosecution witness if required by the court.

This is to ensure that parents realise their own responsibilities in ensuring attendance at school and most importantly about returning children to education. Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 states that if a parent fails to ensure the regular school attendance of their child and if he/she is a registered pupil at a school and is of compulsory school age, and then they are guilty of an offence.

### **Fines are as follows:**

Education Act 1996 s.444 (1) - Magistrates can fine each parent up to £1,000 per child, plus prosecution costs and impose a Parenting Order  
Education Act 1996 s.444 (1A) - Persistent Absence - Magistrates can fine each parent up to £2,500 per child, impose Parenting Orders/Community Rehabilitation Order and/or impose a period of imprisonment of up to 3 months

