



# **Nelson Primary School**

**Inspiring Ambition, Achieving Success**

## **Attendance Policy**

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**Written February 2012**

**Updated March 2014**

**Updated July 2017**

## **Introduction**

This Policy has been agreed by the Governors, Staff and Pupils of Nelson Primary School. It represents our commitment to striving for 100% attendance and punctuality, which is achievable, and achieved by many children. It sets out the principles, procedures and practice the school will undertake. Strategies, sanctions and possible legal consequences of poor Attendance and Punctuality are also detailed, as well as rewards for, and benefits of good attendance. This policy will be reviewed, amended as necessary and published annually in accordance with current legislation and guidance.

## **Principles**

- Receiving a full-time, suitable education is a child's legal entitlement.
- It is parents /carers' legal responsibility to ensure this happens.
- Attending school regularly aids intellectual, social and emotional development
- Attending school regularly safeguards the welfare of children whilst they are not in the care of their parents.
- All children whose attendance is poor will be treated as vulnerable.

These principles are enshrined in British law, within the Education Act 1996, the Children Act 1989, and other associated pieces of legislation.

## **Aims of the Policy**

- To ensure that all children attend as near full-time as possible, in order to maximise their educational achievement and social development.
- To discharge the school's duty to safeguard its pupils to be best of its ability
- To ensure that all those responsible for children's education, including parents, carers, staff and governors understand and accept their responsibilities in relation to attendance.
- To minimise absence from school, thereby reducing levels of persistent absence.
- To improve the life chances of Newham's children and young people and prepare them to be fully contributing citizens when they reach adulthood.

## **Policy objectives:**

- **To safeguard the welfare, health, social and emotional development of children**
- **To reduce persistent absence**
- **To reduce or eliminate term time holidays/leave of absence**
- **To promote commitment to education and high achievement**
- **To maximise the potential of every individual pupil**

**Promoting Attendance:**

The Governors, Head teacher and staff will use all possible opportunities to promote the importance of good attendance and punctuality. These will include:

- Home/school agreement
- Weekly year group attendance information in the school newsletter
- Letters, newsletters, child's reports
- "Traffic light" attendance letters sent home at the end of each term
- Parent meetings
- Weekly awards for 100% class attendance and best punctuality (presented in assembly)
- Rewards and incentives for outstanding individual attendance (termly and annual treats for pupils with 100% attendance)

**Absence during term-time:**

Holidays during term time are actively discouraged because they have a detrimental effect on children's learning and emotional welfare. All holidays will be unauthorised. The Head teacher will not grant leave of absence during term-time unless there are exceptional circumstances for which evidence is provided by parents/carers. The Head teacher will determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted. If a child is taken on holiday during term-time, without obtaining the school's agreement, the school may ask the Local Authority to issue a Penalty Notice. A Penalty Notice may also be issued if a child's return from a school holiday is delayed. We are unable to accept medical evidence provided from overseas. If a child has been unwell whilst abroad, medical evidence from the child's GP or Hospital in the UK is required upon return to School. A Penalty Notice carries a fine of £60, per parent, per child. If the fine is not paid within 21 days it rises to £120 per parent, per child. If not paid at all, court action may be initiated by the Local Authority. If a term-time holiday exceeds 10 school days, the school may refer the child to Newham Attendance Management Service for action under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 rather than issuing a Penalty Notice. This could lead to fines, or even imprisonment.

**RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARENTS/CARERS**

Parents / carers should ensure that their child is at school in good time for the start of the school day every day the school is open, unless the child is genuinely ill or there is some other unavoidable reason.

**Understanding types of absence coding**

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school as AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required, preferably in writing. Medical evidence may also be required in the form of a copy of a prescription, GP note, etc. Types of absence that are likely to be authorised are illness, medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies. Reasons must be given by a responsible adult by 9.30am on the first day of the child's and each consecutive day of the absence.

Examples of types of absence that are not considered reasonable and which will not be authorised under any circumstances are:

- Going shopping with parents
- Birthdays
- Minding other, younger children in the family
- Staying at home because other members in the family are unwell
- Day trips and holidays in term time that have not been agreed
- Arriving at school too late to get a present mark
- Truancy /Reluctant Attenders / School refusal

### **Reluctant attenders/school refusal**

Parents / carers should do everything possible to encourage their child to attend school every day. However if the reason for their reluctance appears to be school-based, such as difficulty with work or disputes with peers, parents should discuss this with the school at the earliest opportunity and the school will do everything possible to sort the problem out. Colluding with a child's reluctance to attend is likely to make the matter worse.

## **SCHOOL PROCEDURES**

### **1. Registration and punctuality procedures**

Registers are taken twice a day, once at the start of the school day at 8.50 a.m., and once during the afternoon session. Pupils arriving after 8.50 a.m. but before the end of the Registration period will be coded L (Late before registers close) which is a present mark. The number of minutes late will be recorded in the register. Pupils arriving after the registers have closed will be coded U (Late after registers close) which counts as an unauthorised absence.

<p>The morning registration period will start at 8.50 a.m. and end at 9.20.a.m. The afternoon registration period will start at 13.10 p.m. and end at 13.20 p.m.</p>
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Only the Head teacher or designated member(s) of staff acting on their behalf can authorise absence. If there is no known reason for the absence at registration, then the absence will be recorded as unauthorised, until a satisfactory reason is provided. If the reason given is not satisfactory in the school's view, and/or evidence of the reason cannot be provided, the absence will be coded as O (Unauthorised absence). Absence notes received from parents/carers will be kept for the remainder of the academic year in the school office and archived after that

### **2. First Day Absence Contact**

Parents are expected to notify the school by 9.30 on the first day of absence if their child is unable to attend for any unavoidable reason, such as illness. This may be in the form of a letter, phone call/voicemail, or by telling staff at reception. Explanations by the child are not accepted. If the school does not receive notification, it will text or telephone parents, to try

to ascertain the reason. This contact will be carried out as early as possible in the school day, in order to notify parents whose children may have set off for school but not arrived. If the school is unable to contact the parents at first, it will continue to make every effort to contact them. This may involve calling parents and other contacts or making a home visit.

### **3. Continuing Absence Procedures**

In the event of continuing absence without explanation from the family the school will continue attempts to contact parents/carers and a home visit will be made. Any child who is absent without explanation, who has a pattern of erratic attendance (under 90%) or persistent lateness after registers close will be highlighted as a high concern. The school Attendance Officer will contact parents / carers and try to resolve the problem by clarifying school expectations, offering advice and signposting sources of support if needed. If the pattern continues, parents /carers will be invited to a meeting with a senior member of staff to discuss the reasons for continued poor attendance. If attendance does not improve after an agreed period of monitoring, the school may ask the Local Authority Attendance Management Service (AMS) to issue a formal Warning Letter and / or initiate a Borough Attendance Panel Hearing (BAPH). At this meeting the AMS will examine the child's attendance history, consider evidence from school and parents / carers and decide either to set targets for improvement or recommend court action under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, which could lead to fines, or even imprisonment.

### **4. Frequent/Persistent Absence Procedures**

In addition to daily monitoring of registers to determine reasons for absence, weekly trawls of the registers will be made to identify pupils with a pattern of absences that may lead to Persistent Absence (PA), that is to say absence of 10% or more in a half term. The school's attendance officers will be responsible for identification of any emerging concerns, and putting in place actions for each pupil of concern. Initially the school will try to resolve the problem with parents/carers, but if the pattern continues, the school may refer to the School Nurse or ask parents' permission to approach the child's GP for information if the problem appears to be a medical one. In cases where there appear to be safeguarding issues requiring outside intervention to support the family and the child, referral may be made through the Triage system for external agency support.

If the child is regularly absent due to illness, medical evidence will be requested to support the absence. This can be a copy of a prescription, doctor's certificate or the label from prescribed medicine.

### **5. Consequences of Poor Attendance /Punctuality**

- 1) If pupils have been taken on unauthorised term-time leave, the school may ask the Local Authority to issue a Penalty Notice on its behalf. A Penalty Notice carries a fine of £60, per parent, per child. If the fine is not paid within 20 days it rises to £120 per parent, per child. If not paid at all, court action may be initiated.

If term-time leave exceeds 10 school days or the pupil already has an unacceptably high level of absence and parents take that child on unauthorised leave the school may ask the Local Authority initiate court action under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 rather than issuing a Penalty Notice. This could lead to fines of up to £2,500, or even imprisonment.

In some cases, action may be taken under the Children Act 1989 to protect the welfare and development of the child.

2) For pupils for whom section one does not apply and whose attendance and/or punctuality fails to improve, after a range of interventions and support measures have been tried by the school, the ultimate consequences may be one of the following:

- The school may ask the Local Authority initiate court action under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, which could lead to fines of up to £2,500, or even imprisonment.
- In some cases, action may be taken under the Children Act 1989 to protect the welfare and development of the child.

#### **6. Children who Cease to Attend without Prior Notification (CME) procedures**

Procedures for trying to trace children who cease to attend without prior notification are covered in detail in the Local Authority CME Policy. However, if, after ten days continuous absence school has been unable to ascertain the whereabouts of a pupil, they will refer the child's details to the Local Authority for it to perform further checks that are not available to school. If after 20 days continuous unauthorised absence, their whereabouts cannot be traced, they will be removed from the school roll.

#### **7. Non starters**

Pupils who are allocated places but fail to start are also treated as CME. If the school has been unable to make contact with the family during a ten-day period after their expected arrival, they will refer the pupils to the local authority CME team for further checks.

#### **Reporting absence:**

It is a legal responsibility to include attendance on a child's annual report. This information includes the number of authorised and unauthorised absence out of the maximum number of possible attendance, together with the number of late marks. It is of vital importance that this information is accurate. This is the responsibility of all staff.

Action taken by the Attendance Officer in relation to the absence or punctuality of an individual pupil is recorded and kept on file

#### **Vulnerable Children**

Children who have Child Looked after (CLA) status and children who are subject to a Child Protection Plan (CP) or Children in Need Plan (CIN) will be treated with highest priority and will be known to the Attendance Officers. Any unexplained absence will be followed up immediately by a text and telephone call to the home or a home visit. The Designated Lead for Safeguarding will be alerted of

every first day absence for these pupils. Children on the “at risk” register may not be taken off roll without permission from Social Services. This is usually communicated to the School Attendance Officer by the Designated Lead for Safeguarding.

Children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) will be treated with similar priority in order that their time in school can be maximised, and their learning supported to the greatest extent possible.

### **Punctuality**

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If any child misses the start of the day, they miss key learning in their first lesson. Pupils arriving late can miss important start of day information, disrupt lessons and be embarrassed by their lateness. The school doors open at 8.40 and close at the start of the school day at 8.50am and children are expected to be in class at that time. Any child arriving after 8.50. will receive a late mark (L). At 9:20 a.m., the registers are closed. In accordance with the DFE regulations, if any child arrives after that time they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will not count as a present mark and it will mean that they have an unauthorised absence. This is a U code which means arrival after registers have closed. Children in Years 1-6 who arrive late will spend morning break inside, catching up on their reading. The school Attendance Officers will review punctuality at the end of each half term and parents of pupils with poor punctuality will be sent a warning letter or invited to a meeting with the Head Teacher and Attendance Officer. Parents and carers can approach the school at any time if they are experiencing difficulty in getting their child to school and we will do our best to help. Our Pastoral Support Workers are very experienced in encouraging children who are reluctant to come to school.

# Appendix 1

## USEFUL INFORMATION FOR PARENTS AND CARERS

### Introduction

This is a successful school, and you and your child play a part in making it so. We aim to encourage all members of the school community to reach out for excellence. For children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend regularly, and your child should be at school in good time for the start of the school day, every day the school is open, unless they are genuinely ill or there is some other unavoidable reason. The school doors open at 8.40 and close at the start of the school day at 8.50am and children are expected to be in class at that time.

Some children are reluctant to go to school and say they do not feel well. It is for you as the adult, to judge whether they are genuinely unwell, or just unwilling. It will be better for them in the long run to go to school, rather than avoid it, as days off mean they will fall further behind and make them even more reluctant. Your job as the parent is to encourage them to attend.

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is YOUR legal responsibility and permitting absence without good reason is an offence in law and may result in legal action being taken, or a Penalty Notice being issued (see below).

### Learning

Any absence affects the child's learning, and the more they miss the harder it will be for them to catch up. Research has shown that for every percentage point of absence, attainment is significantly lower.

### Safeguarding

There is extensive research linking poor school attendance and exclusion with crime and anti-social behaviour, and risk of exploitation by unsuitable adults. For this reason, failure to attend regularly will be regarded as a safeguarding issue.

### Understanding absence percentages

You may wonder why a school would be concerned if your child's attendance is 95%. This may make it easier to understand:

95% equates to half a day off every two weeks

90% equates to a day off every two weeks

85% equates to one and a half days off every two weeks

80% equates to one whole day off every week

**A secondary age child whose attendance is 80% will have missed ONE WHOLE YEAR of education by the time they leave school**

Even the brightest and most enthusiastic learner will find it hard to keep up with their work with these levels of absence. That is why we encourage the highest attendance possible.



### **Understanding types of absence coding**

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school as AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required, preferably in writing. Medical evidence may also be required in the form of a copy of a prescription, GP note, etc. Types of absence that are likely to be authorised are illness, medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies.

Examples of types of absence that are not considered reasonable and which will be UNAUTHORISED under any circumstances are:

- Going shopping with parents
- Birthdays
- Minding other, younger children in the family
- Staying at home because other members in the family are unwell
- Day trips and holidays in term time that have not been agreed
- Arriving at school too late to get a present mark
- Truancy

### **Reluctant attenders**

You should do everything possible to encourage your child to attend. However if the reason for their reluctance appears to be school-based, such as difficulty with work, or disputes with peers, please discuss this with the school at the earliest opportunity and the school will do everything possible to sort the problem out. Colluding with your child's reluctance to attend is likely to make the matter worse.

### **Persistent Absence**

A pupil is classed as a persistent absentee when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year, **for whatever reason, whether it be authorised or unauthorised, or a mixture of both.** Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to a child's educational prospects and we need parents' full support and encouragement to tackle it. PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system, and we combine this with tracking academic progress to assess the effect on the pupil's attainment

### **Reporting your child's absence**

If your child is absent you must contact the school as early as possible on the first day of absence by 9.30am and on each consecutive day of absence, either by telephone or in person.

### **Applications for leave of absence in term time**

This school's policy is not to authorise holidays during term time. Any applications for leave in term time must be made in writing to the Headteacher. There is no automatic right to term time leave of absence, and your request is likely to be declined except in the most exceptional circumstances. Each application will be considered on its own merit, and the attendance record(s) of the child/ren concerned will be taken into account when making a decision.

### Penalty Notices

Penalty Notices will be generally be issued for unauthorised term-time holidays. If the holiday is longer than 10 school days or if attendance officers consider that attendance has fallen too low, the school may refer the child to the Local Authority Attendance Management Service (AMS) instead of issuing a Penalty Notice. The AMS may initiate court action under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, which could lead to fines of up to £2,500, or even imprisonment.

### Your contact details

Please make sure that the contact details you have given to the school are kept up to date, so that in the event of an accident, emergency or any other need to contact you we have the correct details.

### Useful school contacts

Attendance Officers	Jenny Wheeler and Sue Davies
Headteacher	Fiona Cullen

### Legal References

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 states that *the 'parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him/her to receive efficient full time education suitable to his/her age, ability and aptitude, and to any special educational needs he/she may have, either by regular attendance at school, or otherwise.'*

Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 places a duty on local authorities and governing bodies to have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State with regard to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and students under the age of 18.

The Children Act 1989 provides for a number of actions that can be taken to protect children's safety and welfare, on the premise that the welfare of the child is paramount.