



# Attendance Policy

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**Written May 2021**  
**Review due May 2022**  
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## Introduction

This Policy 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.

## Covid 19 Pandemic

During the Covid 19 pandemic, attendance procedures will be adjusted in line with Government and local Authority Guidance, and adapted to necessary changes in school routines.

## References

- Department for Education School attendance – guidance for schools:  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-attendance>
- Newham Attendance Management Service Pre-Statutory Intervention Process  
<https://www.newhamconnect.uk/Page/11948>
- Newham Attendance Management Service Children Missing Education  
<https://www.newhamconnect.uk/Services/3074>

## 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 pupils at Nelson primary School attend as near full-time as possible, in order to maximise their educational achievement and social development.
- To discharge the Nelson Primary 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 at Nelson Primary School. These will include:

- Regular year group attendance information in the school newsletter
- Learning review meetings and school reports
- Attendance letters
- Parent meetings
- Rewards and incentives for outstanding individual and class attendance.
- Use of ParentMail system for swift, direct communication with parents
- Sharing ideas and good practice within the new Vision Trust.

### **Absence during term-time:**

Holidays during term time are actively discouraged because they have a detrimental effect on children's learning and emotional welfare. 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.

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. If leave is granted, the Head teacher will determine the number of school days a child can be away from school. Usually in such cases, leave will usually be coded as unauthorised, but no Penalty Notice will be issued.

## 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.

During the Covid 19 pandemic, the school may, at times, not be open to all pupils. Attendance code "X" will be used to record absences due to a Covid 19 related legal requirement to stay home or self-isolate, in line with Government Guidance. Pupils who test positive for Covid 19 will be coded "I" (Illness).

### 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. 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. This can be done in a number of ways:

- By phoning 0208 472 0642 and leaving a message or speaking to a member of staff
- Via ParentMail, or email at [info@nelson.newham.sch.uk](mailto:info@nelson.newham.sch.uk)
- By sending a letter which must be signed by the parent / carer
- In person at reception.

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 at the beginning of 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 reason for being late and 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.

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 13.00 p.m. and end at 13.20 p.m.

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 scanned and stored on the child's attendance record. ParentMail messages will kept on the system for the remainder of the academic year.

### 2. First Day Absence Contact

Parents / carers are expected to notify the school by 9.30am 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, ParentMail absence notification, email, phone call/voicemail, or by telling staff at the school gate. Explanations by the child are not accepted. If the school does not receive notification, it will send a text message to parents/carers 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 no response is received, parents will be contacted by telephone. If the school is initially unable to contact the parents, it will continue to make every effort to contact them. This may involve calling parents and other contacts or making a home visit. Reasons provided by parents / carers will be recorded on the electronic register. Children with persistently poor attendance will be monitored through the school safeguarding procedures.

### 3. Continued Absence Procedures

- In the event of ongoing absence without explanation from the family, the school will continue attempts to contact parents/carers.
- If there has been no contact with a parent by the 3<sup>rd</sup> day of absence, school staff will call all contact numbers on the child's file. If there is still no contact or explanation of the child's absence, a risk assessment will be carried out and a home visit may be made. If nobody is home, the child may be reported to police or Newham Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).

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

In addition to daily monitoring of registers to determine reasons for absence, regular 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. Individual circumstances will be investigated, and the following escalation procedure will be carried out as appropriate:

- Parents/carers will receive a phone call or home visit from the attendance officer to discuss attendance concerns.
- If attendance does not improve, parents/carers will be invited to a meeting with a member of senior staff.
- If attendance still does not improve, a warning letter will be sent to parents/carers setting a monitoring period.
- If attendance still does not improve, parents/carers will be referred to a New Vision Trust Attendance Panel meeting, and will be asked to agree to a parenting contract.

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 or pharmacist's certificate, or the label from prescribed medicine. If the pattern continues and the problem appears to be a medical one, the school may refer to the School Nurse or ask parents' / carers' permission to approach the child's GP for information.

In cases where there appear to be safeguarding issues requiring outside intervention to support the family and the child, a referral may be made through the Triage system for external agency support.

#### **5. Other Regular Attendance procedures.**

- Parents/carers of pupils with below 90% Attendance in a half term, for any reason, will be sent a letter informing them of this and explaining why it is a cause for concern.
- At termly Pupil Progress meetings, pupils who have both poor attendance and poor attainment will be identified. A letter will be sent to parents/carers inviting them to a meeting with the AHT in charge of the phase to discuss these concerns.

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

- 1) If pupils have been taken on unauthorised term-time leave of more than 3 days, 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 to 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 school will follow the Local Authority Pre-Statutory Referral Process and refer to the Local Authority for Statutory Intervention. If there is no improvement 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.

#### **7. Children who Cease to Attend without Prior Notification (Children Missing Education /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 to the Local Authority CME team for it to perform further checks that are not available to school, and will remove the child from the school roll when advised to do so by the Local Authority.

#### **8. Non-starters**

Pupils of statutory school age 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.

#### **9. 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.

#### **10. 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 8.50am will receive a late mark (L). At 9:20am 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. 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 Worker is very experienced in encouraging children who are reluctant to come to school.

### **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.

### References:

The Children’s Act 1989 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents>

The Education Act 1996 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/56/contents>

Keeping Children Safe in Education <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2>



## 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.

#### 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

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, email/ParentMail 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 Head teacher. 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 of more than 3 days. 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 Sahanz Begum
Head teacher	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.