



ST NICHOLAS PRIORY CE VA PRIMARY SCHOOL

WHOLE SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY

'I did not come to be served but to serve.' Matthew 20.28

St Nicholas Priory CE VA Primary School is committed to providing a full and efficient education to all pupils and embraces the concept of equal opportunities for all.

We will endeavour to provide an environment where all pupils feel valued and welcome.

For a child to reach their full educational achievement, a high level of school attendance is essential. We will consistently work towards a goal of 100% attendance for all children. Every opportunity will be used to convey to pupils and their parents or carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance. The school staff and governors, alongside the Local Authority and DfE firmly believe that ALL pupils benefit from regular attendance.

School attendance is subject to various education laws and this school attendance policy is written to reflect these laws and the guidance produced by the Department for Education [DfE]. A definition of the terms 'authorised' and 'unauthorised' feature in the 'Categorisation of Absence' section of this policy. These will reflect both national and Norfolk attendance targets.

Each year the school will set attendance/absence targets and evaluate its figure in line with both Norfolk and National targets and figures.

The school will review its systems for improving attendance at regular intervals to ensure that it is achieving its set goals.

This policy will contain within it the procedures that the school will use to meet its attendance targets.

Expectations

"Central to raising standards in education and ensuring ALL pupils can fulfill their potential is an assumption so widely understood that it is insufficiently stated. Pupils need to attend school regularly to benefit from their education. Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind. Children with poor attendance tend to achieve less in both primary and secondary schools," (DFE advice on school attendance updated November 2016).

The Government expects schools and LAs to:

- Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent lateness
- Ensure every pupil has access to full time education to which they are entitled
- Act early to address problems of absence
- Support parents in performing their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age who are registered at school to attend regularly
- Encourage all members of the school community to be punctual to school
- Meet for at least 380 sessions or 190 days during any school year to educate their pupils

The school may extend the register period in exceptional circumstances e.g. adverse weather

Promoting attendance

The foundation for outstanding attendance is a strong partnership between the school, parents/carers and the child.

The 'Home/School Agreement' will contain details of how we will work with parents/carers and our expectations of what parents/carers will need to do to ensure their child(ren) achieve good attendance.

We will ensure that our pupils are made aware of the importance of outstanding attendance and how this will benefit them.

Leave of absence in term time.

An amendment in the Education (Pupil registration) (England) Regulations 2006 have removed reference to family holidays and extended leave as well as the threshold of 10 school days. The amendment makes it clear that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances such as a funeral. Headteachers should determine the number of days a pupil can be away from school if leave is granted. Parents MUST apply in advance using the school leave of absence form. If parents do not apply in advance the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. Parents who withdraw their children without authorisation may face a penalty notice warning which could lead to a fine/prosecution (see appendix 2 : Notices and Legal Actions).

School Procedures

Any child who is absent from school during the morning or afternoon registration period must have their absence recorded as being authorised, unauthorised or as an approved educational activity [attendance out of school]. Only the headteacher or a member of staff acting on his/her behalf can authorise absence. If there is no known reason for the absence at registration, then the absence will be recorded in the first instance as unauthorised.

The coding for any absences will be in accordance with the guidance provided by the DfE. Attendance will be regularly monitored by the SLT and governors

Within the school it is the responsibility of the school attendance officer to be aware of and bring attention to, any emerging attendance patterns or concerns and to take the necessary steps to improve attendance, but ALL members of the school staff are expected to promote outstanding attendance as part ownership of attendance as a whole school priority.

Lateness

The morning registration will be at 8.40 AM.

The registers will close at 8.50 AM.

Any pupil arriving between 8:50AM and 9:10AM will be marked as late (L), and any arrivals after 9:10AM will be marked as having an unauthorised absence (U) unless there is an acceptable explanation. In cases for example, where the absence at registration was for attending an early morning medical appointment, the appropriate authorised absence code will be entered.

The afternoon registration will be at 12.45 PM for KS1; 1.30PM for KS2.

The registers will close at 12.55PM for KS1; 1:40 PM for KS2.

Pupils arriving after the start of school but before the end of the registration period will be treated for statistical purposes, as being present, but will be coded as late before registers close.

Once a pupil has had four lates during a four week period, a letter will be sent to his/her parents/carers advising them that if said pupil continues to be frequently late, they will be invited to attend a 'Late Panel' meeting during which advice and support will be offered regarding ways to resolve the issue.

Pupils arriving late without any appropriate authorisation will be treated as a safeguarding issue.

First Day Absence

Parents/carers are expected to contact the school office to provide an explanation for their child's absence. This should be done before the end of the registration period. If the child has a pre-arranged appointment e.g. hospital or dental appointment, the office staff need to be informed at the earliest opportunity. If, following the registration period the office staff have not received an explanation for a child's absence they will undertake first day calling. If they are unable to make telephone contact with the child's parents/carers they will contact all other contacts including emergency contacts as provided on the child's admission form. Any unexplained absences will be marked as unauthorised and may result in a member of the Behaviour, Inclusion and Community staff carrying out an unannounced visit at the child's home to ascertain a reason for absence which is then relayed back to the office staff to amend the register on SIMS (the School's Management Information System). *The headteacher and Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) will be alerted of any well-being/safeguarding issues arising from attendance interventions.*

Continuous Absence, school will consider the following criteria;

- If the school has been notified of a child's illness school staff may continue to contact home for an update of a child's condition and expected return. It is also for this reason that we expect parents to inform school of their child's condition if their absence will continue longer than previously expected.
- Advice to be sought from the school's Attendance Support & Enforcement Officer (ASEO).
- If a pupil is absent without an explanation for 10 consecutive days the Local Authority will be notified, by submitting a referral to the Children's Services Attendance Team, which will include details of the action the school has taken.
This is a legal requirement.

Absence notes

Notes received from parents explaining absence should be kept for the remainder of the academic year. If there are attendance concerns about the pupil that may require further investigation, then the notes may need to be retained for a longer period.

Persistent Absences, school will consider the following criteria;

- If the pupil's attendance is regularly below 90% either an 'Attendance Support Panel' meeting will be offered or a letter will be sent stating that no further absences will be authorised without medical confirmation.
- Parents/carers will be advised of the Local Authority's statutory duty to potentially prosecute parents who do not work cooperatively to meet their child's educational needs.
- Parental consent may be requested to contact the G.P. for confirmation of medical illness.
- If parents are non-cooperative, the Attendance Support & Enforcement Officer (ASEO) would, as a matter of course, request information from the G.P. under s47 CA 1989.
- Parents/carers will be encouraged to send their child to school with minor ailments such as headache, colds and stomach ache where they will be monitored and looked after by staff.
- Advice may be sought from the School Health Advisor.
- Where there is a genuine medical issue, the school can offer a wide range of support.
- Advice may be sought from the school's Attendance Support & Enforcement Officer (ASEO).
- Action may also include the use of the 'Fast-track' system and/ or fixed penalty notices.

Persistent Absence [PA]

All pupils whose attendance level falls below 90% will be subject to an action plan to support their return to full attendance. These action plans will be set up by the school Attendance Officer.

The action plan will include engagement with all parties who can support the pupil's attendance such as School Health. Also at this point an initial FSP (Family Support Programme) may be considered.

A Welcome Back

It is important that on return from an absence that all pupils are made to feel welcome. The pupil may work one to one with a teaching assistant to catch up on missed work and brought up to date on any information that has been passed to the other pupils.

Attendance Awards

The school uses the following system to reward pupils who have outstanding or improving attendance:

- Classes are rewarded weekly with £10 going to the highest attending class and £3 to any class achieving 95% attendance and above. This money can be spent on extra classroom equipment or saved up for class trips etc.

- Individual pupils also receive an attendance certificate and a prize with a school logo on attainment of 100% attendance both termly and yearly.
- The school will use as many opportunities as possible to promote outstanding attendance including making clear the links between attendance and attainment.
- Outstanding attendance and pupils making significant improvement will be recognised in assemblies.
- Class teachers will reinforce the impact of good/outstanding attendance and display class attendance figures.

Record Preservation and Security

We will ensure compliance with attendance regulations by keeping attendance records for at least 3 years.

The registers are recorded on SIMS (the School’s Management Information System).

Attendance Targets

The school will set attendance targets each year. A system for analysing performance towards the targets will be established and a senior school manager will be responsible for overseeing this work. The school will make use of the attendance data available on the “RAISEONLINE” system, when setting its target. Targets will relate to national averages.

Our attendance targets are:

2017-2018 - 96% overall

This policy was reviewed and updated in November 2017.

Signed Date 5th February 2018

Name

(On behalf of the Governing Body)

Signature of Headteacher..... Date

Name

Review date: November 2020

- **Appendix 1**

Categorisation of Absence

Any pupil who is on roll but not present in the school must be recorded within one of these categories.

1. Unauthorised Absence
2. Authorised Absence
3. Approved Educational Activity

1. Unauthorised absence

This is for those pupils where no reason has been provided, or whose absence is deemed to be without valid reason.

2. Authorised absence

This is for those pupils who are away from school for a reason that is deemed to be valid under the current legislation and guidance

3. Approved Educational Activity

This covers types of supervised educational activity undertaken off site but with the approval of the school.

Note: Pupils recorded in this category are deemed to be present for attendance return purposes.

This would include:

- Field trips and educational visits
- Sporting activities
- Link courses or approved education off site
- Most types of dual registration

If a pupil is receiving education off site or is attending at a school they are dual registered with, the school will liaise with the other education provider to check on attendance.

Appendix 2

The registration system

The following national codes will be used to record attendance information.

| 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 |
| F | Extended family holiday (agreed) | Authorised absence |
| G | Family holiday (NOT agreed <u>or</u> days in excess of agreement) | Unauthorized absence |
| H | Leave of absence (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 | Untimetabled sessions for non-compulsory school-age pupils | 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 |

Appendix 3

The Law

The Education Act 1996 Part 1, Section 7 states:

The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable-

- [a] To his age, ability and aptitude and
- [b] To any special needs he may have either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

For educational purposes the term 'parent' is used to include those that have parental responsibility and/or those that have the day to day care of the child.

The legislation that appertains to children who are of compulsory school age and are registered at school is contained within this Act.

Part V1 Section 444 contains the details of when an offence is committed if a child fails to attend school.

Register and Admission Roll keeping.

The legal requirements are found in:
The Education [Pupil Registration] (England) Regulations 2006

Attendance Targets

The legal requirements are found in:
The Education (School Attendance Targets)(England) Regulations 2007

Guidance documents on attendance.

The following DfE documents are used to guide attendance recording.

<http://media.education.gov.uk/assets/files/pdf/a/advice%20on%20school%20attendance%202013.pdf>

Absence and Attendance codes (Guidance for Schools and Local Authorities)

Keeping Pupil Registers (Guidance on applying the Education Pupil Registration Regulations)

Fixed Penalty Notices

Information for parents

Regular and punctual attendance at school is a legal requirement under Section 7 of the Education Act 1996.

You have been issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice in relation to your child's unauthorised absence from school.

This guide is produced to answer any questions you may have.



 **Norfolk** County Council
at your service

The Legal Context:

Under Section 444 of the Education Act, an offence occurs if a parent/carer fails to secure their child's regular attendance at the school where they are a registered pupil, and the absence is not authorised by the school. Only headteachers can authorise absence and the only legal reasons for absence are:

1. that the absences are with leave (i.e. that they have been agreed by the Headteacher)
 2. that the absences are because of sickness or unavoidable cause. Parents may be asked to provide evidence to support absences due to ill-health, this can be through a copy of an appointment card or prescription or information from a medical practitioner
 3. that the absences fall on days of religious observance for the religion to which parents belong
 4. that the child is entitled to free transport to school and the LEA have failed to provide this
- If absences do not fall into any of these four categories or the school have not been informed of reasons for absence, absences will be marked as unauthorised

Section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 introduced powers for issuing Fixed Penalty Notices for unauthorised absence from school. The Education (Penalty Notices)(England) Regulations came into force on 27th February 2004. This was updated with amendments in 2007, 2012 and 2013.

In Norfolk, Penalty Notices are issued in accordance with the Norfolk Local Protocol. Your child's school will have provided you with information regarding the criteria in which they will refer cases of unauthorised absence to the Local Authority for issuing of a Fixed Penalty. The criteria are:

- 10 consecutive sessions of unauthorised absence
- 15% unauthorised absence within a six week period.

Failure to pay a Fixed Penalty Notice reverts back to a Section 444 1 Education Act 1996 offence and you will face prosecution in the Magistrates Court.

Frequently asked questions:

1. Can I dispute the Fixed Penalty Notice?

Only a headteacher can authorise absence from school. If there are other exceptional and compelling circumstances of which the school were not aware of, you can make a representation to the headteacher. If the school maintain the absence was unauthorised, the Penalty Notice will stand. There is no right to appeal against a Fixed Penalty Notice, but you may choose not to pay and make your representations in the Magistrate's Court. You should be aware that should the court find you guilty of the offence of irregular school attendance, they can impose a higher punishment upon conviction. The court may also charge you with court costs.

2. I do not live with the child or I am a step-parent, can I still be fined?

Yes, Section 576 Education Act 1996 defines 'parent' as:

- Any natural parent, whether married or not
- Any parent who, although not a natural parent, has parental responsibility as defined in the Children Act (1989) for a child or young person
- Any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of a child or young person

3. Why do some schools authorise absence and another does not?

The headteacher is the only person who can authorise absence. Headteachers only able to authorise absence requests for exceptional reasons and each circumstance will be individual and likely to receive a different response.

4. My child has never had unauthorised absence before?

The notice has been issued based on the referral criteria; which meets the threshold for irregular attendance at school. School attendance is crucial to children and any absence will have an impact upon

your child's education. Your child's headteacher will have based their decision on whether the absence request was exceptional rather than based on your child's attendance level.

5. I cannot afford to pay the fine, can I pay in instalments?

The Local Authority has issued the Fixed Penalty Notice in accordance within the timeframe as laid out in law. The Local Authority is unable to assist with instalment payments. If you cannot afford to pay the only place where this can be resolved is in the magistrate's court following non-payment. The magistrate's court can make collection orders (paying by instalments) and will take your financial circumstances into account.

6. Can the Local Authority withdraw the Penalty Notice?

The only grounds in which a Penalty Notice can be withdrawn are:

- It ought not to have been issued i.e. where it has been issued outside of the terms of the Local Protocol or where no offence has been committed.
- It has been issued to the wrong person
- It contains material errors
- The Fixed Penalty Notice remains unpaid and the Local Authority opt not to proceed with a prosecution under Education Act 1996 Section 444 (1).

If your question has not been answered here, please contact:

**Norfolk County Council Customer Services on:
0344 800 8020 or via Norfolk County Council website**

Details on how to pay your Fixed Penalty Notice are listed on your invoice.