New Town Primary School

Attendance policy

Approved by:	[Name]	Date: 26.05.2023
Last reviewed on:	26.05.2023	
Next review due by:	25.06.2024	

Contents

1. Aims

We are committed to meeting 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

We will also support parents to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend regularly and will promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

2. Legislation and Guidance

This policy guidance meets the requirements of the working together to improve school attendance from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on school attendance parental responsibility measures. These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- o Part 6 of The Education Act 1996
- o Part 3 of The Education Act 2002
- o Part 7 of The Education and Inspections Act 2006
- o The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments)
- o The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 The governing board

The governing board is responsible for monitoring attendance figures for the whole school on at least a termly basis. It also holds the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy. Our link governor for attendance at New Town Primary School is Angela Morrish.

3.2 The headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for:

• Implementation of this policy at the school

• Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors

• Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils

• Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary

3.3 Office Manager and Attendance Support Officer

Either the Office Manager or the attendance support officer:

• Monitors attendance data across the school and at an individual pupil level

• Reports concerns about attendance to the headteacher

• Works with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence

• Arranges calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues

• Advises the headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices

3.4 Class teachers

Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office.

3.5 School admin staff

School admin staff are expected to take calls from parents about absence and record it on the school system.

3.4 Parents/carers

Parents/carers are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends school every day on time
- Call the school to report their child's absence as soon as possible on the day of the absence and on each subsequent day of absence, and advise when they are expected to return
- Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day

3.5 Pupils

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school every day on time

4. Recording attendance

4.1 Attendance register

We will keep an attendance register and place all pupils onto this register.

We will take our attendance register at the start of the first and second sessions of each school day. The register will mark whether every pupil is:

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

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Pupils must arrive in school by 8.45am on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at 8.50am and will be kept open until 9.30am. The register for the second session will be taken at 1.00pm.

4.2 Unplanned absence

Parents must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence – for example, if their child is unable to attend due to ill health as soon as practically possible (see also section 6).

Please call the school office on 0118 937 5509 (option 1) or email admin@newtown.reading.sch.uk by 9.00am. Please leave full reasons for your child's absence.

Absence due to illness will be authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask parents to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised, and parents will be notified of this in advance.

4.3 Planned absence

We encourage parents to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible.

Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence; advance notice is required for authorising these absences. The school requires parents to provide medical evidence of the appointment such as the appointment card or text confirmation of the appointment.

This can be emailed to admin@newtown.reading.sch.uk or brought into the office.

Applications for other types of absence in term time must also be made in advance. Information relating to whether the school can authorise such absences can be found in section 5.

4.4 Lateness and punctuality

If a pupil arrives late, it is very disruptive for the other pupils, the teacher, and the child. Parents should ensure their child arrives at the specified time each day.

A pupil who arrives late but before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code.

A pupil who arrives after the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code.

Late marks for pupils arriving late are recorded in the register and a late book. Parents of those pupils who are persistently late will be sent a letter from the school asking them to improve their punctuality. This may be referred to the Education Welfare Office at Brighter Futures for Children if punctuality does not improve.

The school and the ASW (Attendance Support Worker) meet regularly to look at the registers and will agree action. This may be:

1. A letter from the ASW.
2. A home visit from the ASW.
3. An invitation to an Attendance Panel.

In some cases, the EWS (Education Welfare Service) may agree to start legal proceedings for non-attendance.

4.5 Following up absence

The school will follow up any absences to ascertain the reason, ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary, identify whether the absence is approved or not and identify the correct attendance code to use. This will be done via phone and/or text.

If a pupil is absent for 3 consecutive days, with no reason supplied for their absence/ no contact from parents, then that pupil will be assumed 'missing'. This will be escalated to the Education Welfare Service who may carry out a welfare check and/or inform the police. Where there are concerns about a child's immediate welfare, the school may choose to involve the police to help ascertain their safety at any point during the absence.

4.6   Reporting to parents

Parents will be provided a copy of their child's attendance certificate for the current academic year with their academic reports which are sent out twice-yearly. If a parent wishes to check their child's attendance in the meantime, then this can be obtained from the school office.

5.   Authorised and unauthorised absence

5.1   Granting approval for term-time absence

The Headteacher will not grant any leave of absence to pupils during term time unless they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'.

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, considering the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the headteacher's discretion who will consider the impact on the child's learning and their overall attendance at the time of the application being submitted.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence include**:
- Illness and medical/dental appointments – as explained in sections 4.2 and 4.3
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh Gypsies, Irish and Scottish Travellers, Showmen (fairground people) and Circus people, Bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and New Travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a Traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision
- The death or terminal illness of a close relative, only if Headteacher is satisfied that the circumstances are truly exceptional
- Passport or visa application appointments, where they cannot be made out of school hours

In all the above cases, it is very unlikely the school will approve more than one day's unauthorised leave, even if travelling overseas.

Exceptional circumstances do not include:
- Going on holiday or travelling abroad
- Lower cost holidays and flights during term time will not be considered as "exceptional" circumstances.
- Holidays abroad for the purpose of visiting a sick relative, excepting where that person is seriously ill (medical evidence may be requested) will not be considered as "exceptional" circumstances.
- Holidays taken in term time due to parental work commitments will not be considered as "exceptional" circumstances
- Days off for birthdays, shopping trips, or trips to theme parks for example
- Feeling tired or recovering from holidays
- Non-urgent appointments, including those of siblings or family
- A parent or carer not being able to bring their child to school. Legally you must have other provision to bring your child to school if you are unable.

5.2   Reducing persistent absence

The school will regularly monitor attendance in partnership with the Council Education Welfare Department. It is a legal requirement for children of school age to be in school every day unless ill. Satisfactory attendance at school is categorised as attending school 95% and above. Children whose attendance falls below 95% will be fully investigated. The Council's Education Welfare Officer and school leaders will put in place an action plan to improve the pupil's attendance. Action taken includes but is not limited to:
- Informal communication with parents

- Invitation to a meeting to discuss attendance concerns, understand the reasons and strategies to improve pupil attendance
- Individual attendance targets for pupils
- Warning letters from the Headteacher
- Home visits by the Education Welfare Officer (ASW)
- Warning letters from the ASW
- Being asked to attend an Attendance Panel
- Fixed Penalty Notices
- Court proceedings

5.3   Legal sanctions
The school or local authority can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

If issued with a fine, or penalty notice, each parent must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days.

The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

Penalty notices can be issued by a headteacher, local authority officer or the police.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice may consider:
- The number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

6.   Strategies for promoting attendance
The school encourages good attendance and punctuality by means of a range of strategies, such as:
- Ensuring that New Town Primary School is a happy, safe and stimulating place that pupils want to attend
- Establishing and maintaining good, positive relationships with pupils and pupil's families
- Special events, such as attendance challenges
- Rewards, such as certificates, prizes, etc.
- Governors' celebration events for those pupils with high rates of attendance
- Being committed to dealing effectively with instances of poor behaviour and supporting our pupils mental well-being through strong pastoral provision.

7. Attendance monitoring

The attendance officer at our school monitors pupil absence on a daily basis.

A pupil's parent/carer is expected to call the school in the morning if their child is going to be absent due to ill health (see section 4.2).

If a pupil's absence goes above 3 days, the school will contact the parent/carer of the pupil to discuss the reasons for this.

If a pupil's absence continues to rise after contacting their parent/carer, we will consider involving an education welfare officer.

The persistent absence threshold is 10%. If a pupil's individual overall absence rate is greater than or equal to 10%, the pupil will be classified as a persistent absentee.

Pupil-level absence data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. The school will compare attendance data to the national average and share this with the governing board.

The school collects and stores attendance data using Arbor.

8. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum annually by the headteacher. At every review, the policy will be approved by the full governing board.

9. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:
- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Behaviour policy

Appendix 1: attendance codes
The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
J	Interview	Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment
P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school
W	Work experience	Pupil is on a work experience placement

Code	Definition	Scenario
Authorised absence		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
S	Study leave	Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations
T	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence	Pupil from a Traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
Unauthorised absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
N	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed

Code	Definition	Scenario
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend Covid related absence
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody
Z	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
#	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day