



New Town Primary School

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Expectations of good attendance at school

Dear Parents & Carers,

We felt that this was an ideal time to remind parents of our expectations regarding pupil's attendance over the coming academic year and ask for your support in improving the overall school attendance. Whilst we acknowledge many of our pupils achieve good attendance levels (over 95%) and were very pleased with our **'Good'** rating from Ofsted last term, attendance was a specific area they targeted our school to improve on.

Our attendance is not yet good enough. New Town's overall pupil attendance is below the expected standard of 95% and our absence levels are above the national average. Good attendance and punctuality are critical to children's learning.



Our Ofsted report states:

'Leaders are aware that attendance rates are too low and have implemented a number of strategies to increase rates of attendance. However, these have had too little impact, and levels of absence remain above the national average'.

What does the school need to do to improve further? Improve the attendance of all pupils, particularly of those who are persistently absent from school.

The Department for Education (DfE) published research in May 2022 which found that:

- The pupils with the **highest attainment** at the end of key stage 2 and key stage 4 **have higher rates of attendance** over the key stage **compared to those with the lowest attainment**
- **At KS2, pupils not meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and maths had an overall absence rate of 4.7%, compared to 3.5% among those meeting the expected standard.**
- Moreover, the **overall** absence rate of pupils **not meeting the expected standard** was **higher** than among those meeting the higher standard (4.7% compared to 2.7%).

Good attendance is crucial to every child's progress within their education. We consistently 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. If children are unable to attend school due to being unwell the school must be informed by 9.30am of the reason for absence. Our Admin Team will follow up on any uninformed absences. Any absences that do not have acceptable reasons against them will be recorded as **unauthorised**.

Satisfactory attendance at school is categorised as attending 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; warning and information letters, being asked to attend an Attendance Panel, Fixed Penalty Notices and court proceedings.

At New Town we have an unacceptable number of children who take extended time off during the school term.

The vast majority of this time the absence is unauthorised. Leave during term time can only be authorised by the Headteacher in **exceptional** circumstances.

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.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** may include:

- Illness/ serious injury (medical evidence may be requested)
- Medical/dental appointments – only where they cannot be made outside of school time. Advance notice and proof is required for authorising these absences. *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*
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil’s parents belong. Advance notice should be given where possible.
- The death or terminal illness of a close relative, only if Headteacher is satisfied that the circumstances are truly exceptional

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

Your support is requested

We ask for Parent’s support in improving their child’s attendance this year:

- to inform school on the first day of any absence, before 9.30am (0118 937 5509)
- take note of the attendance information regarding time off during term time
- to ensure you have other provision or support if you cannot bring your child to school yourself

For more information on school attendance please visit <https://www.gov.uk/school-attendance-absence/overview>.

Thank you in advance for continuing to support our school, and I again acknowledge that many of our pupils are already achieving 95%+ attendance and we thank their parents for this support. If you have any further questions about attendance please contact the school office.

Yours sincerely,

Miss P. Cornish
Headteacher