

Attendance Policy

Norman Street Primary School



Approved by Governors:

Chair of Governors: Rev K Teasdale

Acting Headteacher: K Hodges

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Statement of Intent

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.

At Norman Street Primary School, we believe that good attendance and punctuality are important in helping students achieve the best that they can be. Students should be at school on time; dressed in accordance with the school uniform policy, and ready to learn, every day the school is open, unless the reason for absence is unavoidable. Promoting excellent attendance is the responsibility of the whole school community including students, parents, governors and staff.

The school's attendance policy is part of the school children's well-being system.

The aim of this policy

To promote consistent high rates of attendance and punctuality in order to provide each child with every opportunity to access the curriculum in order to raise their achievement, as well as promoting and safeguarding the welfare of all pupils.

Why is attendance important?

A good education is every child's right and provides the best possible start in life. Setting high standards of attendance and punctuality in the early years is most important given the research, which confirms that early intervention in this way can improve attendance throughout the period of compulsory schooling. Good attendance and punctuality are crucial if children are to keep up with their work. Good habits are formed in primary school, and work opportunities later in life will be difficult if children have not attended school regularly and on time.

Statutory Framework

Under Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act, a student is required to attend regularly at school should a student fail to attend regularly legal action may be taken. A parent may receive a Fixed Penalty Notice or could be fined up to £2,500 face three months in prison and receive a parenting order. An Education Supervision Order could be sought.

- The school is required to complete a register twice during the school day. This is once at the start of the school day, 9:05am, and again for the afternoon session at 1:30pm.
- The school is obliged by law to differentiate between authorised and unauthorised absence. A letter or telephone message from a parent does not itself authorise an absence. It is for the school to determine if an absence is to be authorised (The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006).

Education Law defines a *parent* as:

- All natural parents, whether they are married or not;
- Any person who has parental responsibility for a child or young person; and,

- Any person who has care of a child or young person, ie. lives with and looks after the child on a daily basis.

It is important to note that even though a parent may not live in the same home as the student that parent is still responsible for ensuring the child attends school every day.

School will:

- Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence; ensure every pupil has access to full-time education to which they are entitled and differentiate between authorised and unauthorised absence in order to act early to address patterns of absence.
- Keep parents fully informed of their child's attendance/punctuality record and follow up unexplained absences by text phone calls and letters as necessary
- Contact parents on the first day when a student fails to attend school without providing good reason - firstly via a phone call, followed up by a text message if necessary
- Take timely action on any problem notified to the Attendance Team and involve appropriate outside agencies in order to support students and their families. This may include a 'home visit' or a request to the police to undertake a 'Safe and Well' welfare visit.
- Liaise with any alternative learning providers, eg. in the case of a dual placement or a pupil who is attending, for example, a Pupil Referral Unit, to ensure that the child is attending regularly.
- Mrs Hodges is our attendance champion. She is responsible for overseeing processes and driving improvements. Mrs Ramshaw, who works on our admin team, manages the day-to-day attendance procedures in school.

Pupils will:

- Aim to achieve 100% attendance each academic year
- Attend school daily.
- Arrive on time and be appropriately prepared for the day.
- Tell a member of staff about any problem or reason that may prevent them from attending school.
- Go to registration and lessons on time.
- Take responsibility for registering at the school office if they are late or are leaving the school site during school hours.

Parents will:

- Support the school and their child in aiming for 100% attendance each academic year. If your child starts missing school, help us to put things rights. Make sure your child understands that you do not approve of them missing school.
- Ensure their child attends school daily and on time (ie. by 8.45am each morning)
- Ensure that their child attends school regularly, punctually, dressed in accordance with the school uniform policy, fully equipped, with a positive attitude to learn
- Notify the school before 9.15am of any absence.
- Avoid taking their child out of school for non-urgent medical or dental appointments. If you want permission for your child to miss school, for example, because of a medical appointment

you should send in a copy of the appointment form or card before the event. However, please note that this will still be recorded as an absence.

- Only request leave of absence if it is for an exceptional circumstance.
- Ensure the school has updated contact numbers.
- Take an interest in their child's school work and attend open evenings.
- Support the school's behaviour policy.
- Actively work with the school staff and relevant multi-agency staff, to solve any attendance issues as and when they occur. Make sure that your child comes to school regularly and arrives on time. Lateness is disruptive to your child and also to other children in the class.

The procedure outlined below is a staged response to irregular school attendance and poor punctuality, with reference to the Local Authority guidelines, which the school uses as guidelines only. The school works closely with the Inclusion Officer (Attendance), a Local Authority officer, to regularly monitor attendance and punctuality; the school produces a weekly attendance summary and it is hoped that problems about attendance can be resolved quickly.

Concerns raised about a child's absence are discussed with the class teacher, who will log any information on the child's chronology sheet and inform the head teacher. Information is shared openly and reasons for absence are discussed. The school follows the Carlisle City Council Attendance procedures.

Regular, efficient and accurate recording of attendance

Under the 2006 Education Regulations, **it is a legal requirement that a register is taken at the start of the day.** Not only does the process allow us to monitor attendance but also to act as a student checklist in respect of health and safety issues – eg. Fire Drill the school

School starts at 8.45am when all students should be in their classrooms in preparation for the register being taken. At this time students should collect items for the day and make sure that they are aware of any changes/arrangements to the day's activities. The afternoon register is taken at 1:30pm. It is essential that all students are registered on both occasions.

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

- 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 Education Act 1996.
- 3. Approved Educational Activity**
Pupils recorded in this category are deemed to be present for attendance returns purposes.
This covers types of supervised educational activity undertaken off site but with the approval of the school.

This would include:

- Work experience placements
- Field trips and educational visits
- Sporting activities
- Link courses or approved education off site

Under the 1996 Education Act, parents commit an offence if the child does not attend school regularly. If your child cannot come to school because of illness parents should advise the school on the first day of absence by telephone. If no message is received the school will make every effort to contact you. It is essential that the school is kept informed of changes of contact details such as phone numbers and addresses. In cases where we continue to be concerned we may make a 'home visit' or request the police to undertake a 'Safe and Well' welfare visit.

The school will only authorise a medical absence if the circumstances are unavoidable. If a parent rings the school to confirm the child is unwell, the school may request supporting evidence: medical appointment card with one appointment entered, letter from a professional, doctor's note, medication prescribed by a doctor, copy of prescription, print screen of medical notes, as well as letters concerning hospital appointments or any other relevant evidence. The school may choose not to authorise absence without this supporting evidence as it is for the school to determine if an absence is to be authorised.

Parents are asked to make routine medical and dental appointments outside school hours wherever possible. Where such appointments in school time are unavoidable, parents should inform the school in advance and submit a copy of the appointment card. The absence will be marked unauthorised if the parent fails to submit the appointment card.

We will closely monitor your child's attendance and alert you if we feel there is an issue. The school undertakes a range of measures to support students where attendance is an issue. Where we fail to see an improvement in a student's attendance it may be necessary to make a referral to an appropriate external agency to ensure the student receives the support required it is important that parents work with the relevant external agency in order to improve their child's attendance.

If your child is experiencing difficulties you should contact the school at an early stage and work together with staff in resolving the difficulties. This is nearly always successful. If the difficulties cannot be resolved in this way, the school will make a referral to the Local Authority Attendance Service they will assess the case to determine the appropriateness of use of statutory enforcement procedures ie. Fixed Penalty Notices, Magistrates Court or seek an Education Supervision Order on the child. The maximum penalty on conviction is a fine of £2500 and/or 3 months imprisonment a parenting order can also be imposed.

Punctuality/Lateness

Pupils who arrive after registration must signed in by an adult, in accordance with the school procedures on the electronic system at the school office. Arrival after the close of registration with no valid reason will be marked as unauthorised absence and coded "U" in the register. Parents of pupils who have patterns of lateness will be contacted to discuss the importance of good time keeping and how this might be achieved. If lateness persists, parents will be invited to attend a meeting in school and discuss

the problem. If the lateness continues a referral will be made to the Local Authority Attendance Service and a Fixed Penalty Notice could be issued or ultimately the parent could be prosecuted.

It is important to note that any student who arrives to school after 9:15am will be marked with a letter 'U' in the register. This means that, despite being in school, they will technically be marked absent from school for the morning sessions. It will be recorded on the register as an unauthorised absence and could result in the issuing of Fixed Penalty Notice.

Holidays during term time

Time off school for family holidays cannot be authorised. In exceptional circumstances, the Headteacher has the discretion to authorise short periods off school.

Applications for Leave of Absence where dates are known ahead must be made at least 4 weeks in advance of the requested date. Consideration is given to each request before a decision is reached by the Headteacher, on behalf of the Governing Body (Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006). Each case will be judged on its individual circumstances.

- When parents/carers accept a place in school they should take their holidays during school holidays. No holidays will be authorised during term time. Parents/carers should not expect the school to agree to a family holiday during term time. A week missed in school amounts to approximately 6 hours per day, 30 hours per week. This is a tremendous amount of missed learning opportunity not only academically, but socially and emotionally.
- If parents/carers believe there are exceptional circumstances you may ask the school to consider holidays during term time, stating the exceptional circumstances. They must put this request in writing to the Head teacher at least two weeks before the proposed dates.

Leave of absence requests:

- Occasionally children will need leave of absence to attend events which occur infrequently, eg. observance of a religious event, a wedding of a parent, a funeral, or an examination. Parents/carers need to apply in writing and, if agreed, a mark of C (Other Authorised Circumstances) will be registered on your child's attendance record, indicating that the absence has been authorised.

Any leave of absence that has been declined or the parent has not sought approval for will be recorded as unauthorised. These cases will be referred to the Local Authority and a Fixed Penalty Notice may be issued to each parent for each student.

Attendance

Pre-Stage One

The school will discuss the matter with the parents and try to offer support and guidance on how to improve the child's attendance. If this contact is not successful the school will then follow the following procedure:

Stage One

The school has agreed that any child's attendance that is a cause for concern, eg. no notification of pupil absence by 9:30 on the first day of absence; no reason given for a full week of absence, persistent absences over a full term which is not explained, will be a trigger point for action.

At this stage, the appropriate in-school person (Parent Liaison, Inclusion lead, then the Head teacher) will address the attendance pattern of the pupil. Plans for dealing with the problem should be devised with the involvement of parent or carer(s) and any support agencies available to the school, depending on the pupil and their circumstances.

These staff should adopt in-school policies to identify underlying problems and where appropriate, develop suitable strategies to address them.

If attendance falls to 90% - 85%, parents/carers receive a initial concern letter, highlighting the issue, setting a 100% attendance target for a 4week period in addition to requesting they contact the officer with any issues preventing regular attendance.

If attendance improves no further action will be taken at that time. If not, a letter will be issued requesting contact via home visit in first instance). Where intervention at school level fails to bring about improvement in attendance, the pupil will fall into the Stage One category, discussed by the School Attendance Lead (normally the Headteacher) at a scheduled meeting and a decision taken on how to proceed.

Following the Concern Letter, if the pupil's attendance does not improve immediately or continues to cause concern a referral to Stage Two should be made by the School. In all but exceptional circumstances, referral should be made within two weeks of the Concern Letter. The school should record all cases being moved to Stage Two.

Stage Two

The school is responsible for arranging these meetings

If attendance below 85%, a letter will be issued explaining to parents/carers that child is recorded as 'persistently absent' and that the attendance officer will be in touch. The school's attendance officer will organise a meeting with the parent or carer. The parent will be interviewed and discuss any issues preventing regular attendance, any unmet support needs etc. following visit. A result of visit letter is issued detailing what discussed and setting a target to allow a period of monitoring. Any issues are passed to school, ie. if parent states bullying or that child is struggling. Support may be offered from school or in the form of an Early Help referral to support the family. A copy of the minutes will be available to the appropriate Governor. One of the following recommendations will be made:

- a) That the matter be referred to Stage Three of the procedures immediately,
- b) Issue a Fixed Penalty Warning Notice
- c) That the situation should be monitored and a review date set to allow for an improvement in the pupil's attendance.

If the parent or carer is not at home on the scheduled meeting date, a further letter will be issued requesting contact by a given date.

***If the attendance target is not reached within the agreed timescales, the case will automatically be referred to Stage Three. Where Fixed Penalty Warning Notice has been issued the case should be monitored for 15 school days and if the attendance has not improved the case should be handed to the school's legal representative.
If the situation is resolved, monitoring will continue for four weeks then the case will be closed.***

Stage Three

Attendance targets will be monitored closely by the attendance officer and school and, if there is no improvement, further visits/meetings/letters will be issued, in order to support to facilitate a change, as case progresses letters differ and move more towards emphasis on legal responsibility to ensure attendance as opposed to support etc. The Inclusion Officer will continue a dialogue with parents/carers and the Headteacher and a governor will meet with the parent(s) and pupil. The individual pupil attendance target will be reviewed.

One of the following recommendations will be made:

- a) If the level of unauthorised absence is sufficient the matter should be referred to Stage Four of the procedures immediately and the case referred to the LA.
- b) Issue a Fixed Penalty Warning Notice.
- c) That the situation should be monitored and a review date set to allow for sufficient improvement in the pupil's attendance (If there is no improvement or there is a subsequent deterioration, the matter should be referred to Stage Four).

A copy of the minutes will be given to the parents/carers and the school representative.

If the situation is resolved, monitoring will continue for 8 weeks then the case will be closed.

***It is not considered appropriate to offer more than two appointments to parents. The school will be responsible for arranging the Attendance Review and for notifying any relevant agencies of the outcome.
Where Fixed Penalty Warning Notice has been issued the case should be monitored for 15 school days and if the attendance has not improved the case should be referred to the LA.
Following the interview, if the pupil's attendance does not improve immediately or continues to cause concern the Headteacher and governor will oversee the completion of the Formal Attendance Review paperwork prior to handing over the case to the LA.
The parent will be issued with a Final Notice to Attend request.***

Stage Four

If the family fail to engage despite repeated and varied attempts to get them to do so, or if no improvement is made and no evidence is collected which suggest a statutory defence to prevent prosecution then the matter can be referred following full discussion with school in which all evidence gathered will be presented for a decision to be made in conjunction with the attendance officer's recommendations.

If the Stage Four recommends immediate prosecution the attendance officer will prepare the appropriate documentation for the LA.

If the recommendation is to monitor and there is no improvement or deterioration after the Stage Four interview, legal proceedings will be initiated against the responsible parent(s).

If the attendance has improved during the agreed monitoring period the team will continue to monitor for a further 8 weeks if the attendance is sustained, the case will be closed and returned to the school.

Reactivated cases re-enter the process at Stage Three.

Stage Five

At the request of the school, the Attendance Enforcement Team can prepare the papers for legal proceedings in conjunction with the attendance officer against the responsible parent. The Attendance Enforcement Team can use the information submitted by the Inclusion Officer to prepare summonses. The magistrate's court will be contacted for the next available court date. The Attendance Enforcement Team will keep the school's Inclusion Officer informed of the current status of the case.

Following a conviction If the pupil's attendance does not improve the Attendance Enforcement Team will return the case to the magistrate's court under Section 444(1A) of the Education Act 1996 (where, if found guilty, the penalty is greater).

The Enforcement Team will monitor the case for 12 weeks if the attendance improves the case will be returned to the school's Inclusion Officer. Reactivated cases re-enter the process at Stage Three.

Should a child leave Norman Street Primary School without the school being advised by the parent which new school the child is to attend, the school office manager will notify the Inclusion and Attendance Team and complete a CME (Child Missing in Education) form. If the child is the subject of a Child Protection plan, or should the school have particular child protection concerns, the school would immediately inform Children's Services social care. This include the following concerns: absence, frequent absence (10 continuous days or more), medical absences, transfers, exclusions, dual registration, Radicalisation, Child Sexual Exploitation, Female Genital Mutilation, runaways and young carers.

Punctuality [Lateness]

- Stage 1: 10 morning sessions late for start of school day.**
- Letter from school.
- Stage 2: No improvement following Stage 1, ie. 5 further late sessions [15]**
- Letter from school
 - Meeting with Head Teacher
- Stage 3: No improvement following Stage 2, ie. 5 further late sessions [20]**
- Referral to Inclusion and Attendance Service
 - Meeting with Inclusion and Attendance Service and Headteacher
 - Continued lateness will be marked as Unauthorised following this meeting and the Local Authority procedures implemented
- Stage 4: No improvement following Stage 3, ie. 5 further late sessions [25]**
- Monitored by Inclusion and Attendance Service
 - Meeting with Inclusion and Attendance Service and Head Teacher
 - Referral to Governing Body.

This document should be read in conjunction with guidance from the DFE regarding the local authority statutory roles.