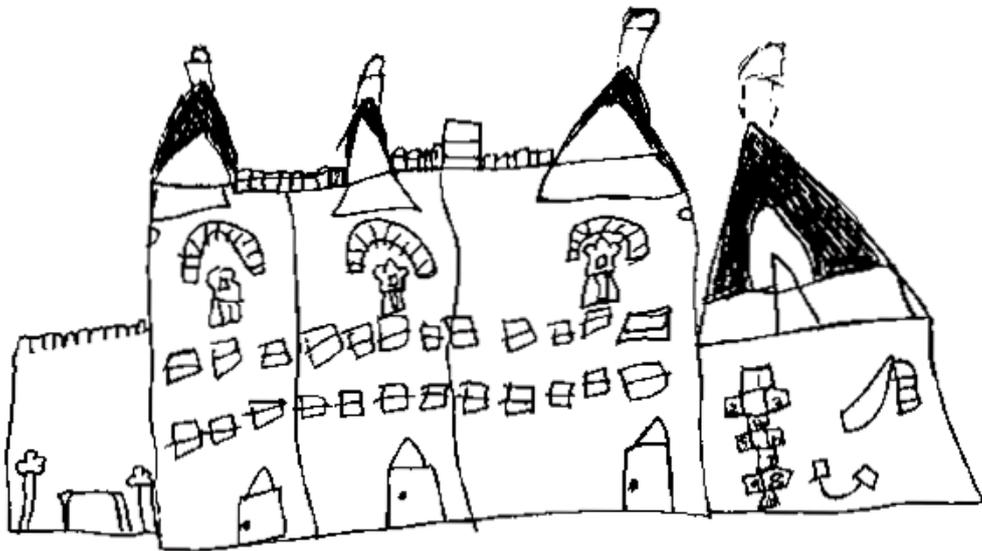


# Netherthorpe Primary School



## Attendance Policy

Reviewed by Elizabeth Gray: March 2016  
Next review: March 2019

### Introduction

Here at Netherthorpe Primary School we believe that regular school attendance is the key to enabling children to maximise the educational opportunities available to them and help them to become emotionally confident and competent adults. By attending school regularly and

punctually, children are more able to realise their full potential and make a positive contribution to their community. Netherthorpe School values all pupils. As set out in this policy, we will work with families to identify the reasons for poor attendance and try to resolve any difficulties. We recognise that attendance is a matter for the whole school community. Our Attendance Policy should not be viewed in isolation; it is a strand that runs through all aspects of school improvement, supported by our policies on safeguarding, bullying, behaviour and inclusive learning. This policy also takes into account the Human Rights Act 1998, the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and the Race Relations Act 2000.

### **Parental Expectations**

Parents have a legal obligation to ensure their children receive a full time education. For Key Stage 1 children, full time means 21 hours. For Key Stage 2 children, full time means 23.5 hours per week. This is achieved by regular attendance at school.

When a child is unwell, parents should contact the school before 9.00am on the first day of absence informing the school of the reason for absence.

Regular attendance is vital to a child's education and progress. The school maintains an expectation that children should achieve 100% attendance.

### **Monitoring**

Registers are completed twice a day, at 8.50am and 1.00pm. Registers close at 9.00am each morning. If a child arrives between 9.00am and 9.20am, they will be classed as arriving late and this will appear in the register as a late mark. Any child arriving after this time will be marked in as unauthorised, unless there is evidence of having attended a medical appointment, and parents will be asked to supply a reason for this lateness. The number of latenesses will be monitored and may trigger Learning Mentor involvement.

Any child who has not arrived by 9.00am will be classed as absent. If no reason for absence is provided, then parents are contacted via the first day response text messaging system. If still unable to obtain a reason for the absence then a telephone call is made by the Learning Mentor or admin staff.

If school is unable to make contact with parents and carers via texts and emails, a letter will be sent home along with a home visit, wherever possible. If school is still left uncertain as to the whereabouts of children, a referral to MAST and/or CME (Children Missing in Education) will be made in line with school's safeguarding procedures.

Attendance issues are reported to the full Governing Body. Reasons for absence are recorded in line with codes provided. Each child's attendance is monitored on a weekly basis.

Parents withdrawing a child during the school day are required to obtain an absence pass. Parents are asked to provide evidence of medical appointments if they are requesting that children leave before the end of the school day. If children are out of school without an absence pass, parents could face a Penalty Notice and £50 fine in accordance with Local authority guidelines.

## **Legal Framework**

- Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act states that parents must ensure that children of compulsory school age receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude to any special educational needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.
- A child is of Compulsory School Age at the beginning of the term following their 5<sup>th</sup> birthday. A child ceases to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday in June of the school year in which they reach the age of 16.
- Under the Education Act 1996, the Local Authority has a statutory responsibility to ensure that parents secure education for children of compulsory school age and where necessary, use legal enforcement.
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, require schools to take an attendance register twice a day, once at the start of the morning session and then again during the afternoon session.
- The register must record whether the pupil was:
  - present;
  - absent;
  - present at approved educational activity; or
  - unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

## **Requesting term time leave**

**Holidays during term time are strongly discouraged due to the inevitable disruption caused to learning. Parents do not have an automatic right to withdraw pupils from school for a holiday and in law, have to apply for permission in advance. Such permission may or may not be granted in accordance with arrangements made by the governing body. Holidays are not authorised in September or May. The school follows recommendations, guidance and procedures outlined by Sheffield City Council.**

- Requests for term time leave must be made at least 20 school days (locally agreed) in advance of any arrangement being made. This will allow sufficient time for the request to be considered by the school. The request will be made in writing by the parent/carer.
- All requests for term time leave must be made in writing (letter or email). We will make arrangements to support parents/carers who have low literacy skills or for whom English is not their first language.
- Term time leave requests must include specific start and end dates, as this will formally constitute the leave period. Where no specific dates are provided, then the request cannot be considered or granted.

## **Children who are travelling abroad**

- Parents/carers who are intending to travel abroad should not book travel prior to securing approval from school. Parents/carers should let school know of the intended travel dates as soon as possible. School will be able to make a decision in principal based on the intended travel dates.
- Parents/carers will be required to confirm actual dates (departure and return) once travel arrangements have been made. Any changes between the 'intended' and 'actual' dates must be agreed with the school prior to departure.
- Where parents/carers have booked tickets prior to getting a decision from school it cannot be guaranteed that the leave request will be authorised.
- As part of the request for leave process, parents/carers will be expected to demonstrate a willingness to make arrangements that cause the least disruption to their child's learning. This may involve:
  - a. Wrapping days of absence around existing school holiday periods;
  - b. Considering whether it is wholly appropriate for their child to accompany the adults in the circumstances;
  - c. Avoiding times where there are national assessment tests, eg, SATs;
  - d. Certain times of the school calendar where it is important for children to be in school. This would include the beginning of a new academic year (September), revision periods running up to the SAT's assessments.

## **Where no leave is requested – Family Emergency**

- Where parents/carers have not requested leave from school, the child is at risk of losing their place at the current school in accordance with Section 8(h)<sup>1</sup>.
- However there will be some occasions where it has not been possible for the parent/carer to make a request for term time leave, for example a family bereavement. Whilst these are difficult situations, parents/carers are still required to contact school at the earliest possible opportunity and submit a written request for term time leave. This written request can be made on behalf of the parent/carer by someone nominated by the parent/carer. The request must include a specific leave period including a return date.
- Parents/carers taking their child with them due to family emergency, must demonstrate:
  - That they have considered the impact and appropriateness for their child on travelling abroad ;
  - Whether or not alternative care arrangements could be made for the child to remain in the UK, and attend school e.g. stay with an extended family member aunt/uncle/grandparent; and

- that they have looked at limiting the amount of time absent from school e.g. earlier return to the UK.

### **Considering the leave request**

- We will consider the term time leave request and provide a written decision to the parent/carer within 10 school days of the request being received.
- We will consider all requests for term time leave in accordance with the current legislation and CYPF guidance.
- It is considered good practice for schools to meet with parents/carers (wherever possible) to discuss the leave request prior to making the decision.
- The Head teacher will not feel obliged or under pressure to approve a request for term time leave just because it has been made by the parent/carer.

**The school will need to consider each request on its own merits and whether there are 'special circumstances' for authorising the absence. The following are provided for illustration purposes as examples which may be considered 'special' and the approved for term time leave (this is not a definitive list):**

- Parent/carer required to take leave during factory or workplace close down
- Inflexible leave allocation in the parents profession/s
- Death of a close family member
- Critical or life threatening illness of parent/carer or sibling
- Parent/carer requiring time to recover from a critical illness or major surgery
- Once in a lifetime opportunities
- Events of religious or cultural significance.

**In addition to the purpose for term time leave request, in line with Local Authority guidelines, the school will also consider the following factors, in helping to reach a decision:**

- Time of the academic year when the leave has been requested
- Duration of the absence – number of school days being missed
- The child's current attendance and punctuality rate (if the child attendance falls below the school target then the request WILL NOT be authorised).
- Term time leave requested/taken in previous academic years for a similar purpose
- Whether parent/carer have considered limiting the amount of time the child would be absent from school e.g. wrapping around school holiday
- Have alternative care arrangements been considered by the parent/carer to limit the time away from school
- Impact on any interventions, assessments or referrals being undertaken with the child or family e.g. family support, social care assessments, CAMHS, SEN
- The impact that the absence will have on the child.

- There is no entitlement or obligation that Head teachers should authorise the maximum 10 days under 'special circumstances' rule. A Head teacher could authorise anything between 1 and 10 days.

### **Exceptional circumstances (granting of more than 10 school days)**

- School should not authorise more than 10 school days term time leave. However there will be rare occasion where parents/carers have requested term time leave in excess of 10 school days. These situations should be considered under the 'exceptional circumstances' rule. Parents/carers requesting the leave would need to prove why the particular leave request should be considered as being 'exceptional'
- The following situations **would not normally** be considered as being 'exceptional circumstances' for requesting leave of more than 10 school days:
  - visits abroad to attend weddings of extended family members
  - repeated visits to see sick/elderly family members
  - inability to secure childcare arrangements
  - visits to renew UK visa's
  - returning abroad because parents/carers work or studies have finished earlier than the academic year
  - separate holidays with parents who do not live together at different times of the year
  - Whilst visits to counties of family origin would not in themselves demonstrate the need for exceptional leave. Factors such as the purpose and frequency of the visit, distance to destination, costs involved, may be factors which are considered by Head teachers when considering such requests.

### **The decision and informing the parent/carer (School)**

- Once we have considered all the relevant information we will reach a decision and send a written response to the parent/carer within 10 school days of the leave request being received. A written response will still be sent to the UK address, even if the family have left the country.
- We will ensure that appropriate arrangements are made to communicate the decision to families who have low levels of literacy or where English is not the first language.
- A decision may result in the term time leave request being (a) Authorised<sup>2</sup>, (b) Unauthorised<sup>3</sup> or (c) part Authorised and Unauthorised. The unauthorised leave could be combined with other periods of unauthorised absence for the pupil and referred to CYPF for consideration for a fixed penalty fine or prosecution.

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<sup>2</sup> Authorised- where the school has agreed that the leave is granted

<sup>3</sup> Unauthorised- where the school does not agree that the leave request should be granted

**Even if the leave is authorised, because the child is absent from school it will be taken off their overall attendance figure and this will affect their percentage.**

### **Using Attendance Data**

- Pupil's attendance and punctuality will be monitored and will be shared with the Local Authority and other agencies if a pupil's attendance is a cause for concern.
- The Office Manager/Learning Mentor will provide weekly attendance figures for all children who are attending school for less than 95% of the time. (Appendix 2)
- The Learning Mentor will provide the Inclusion Team with attendance and lateness data for the previous four weeks for each pupil within school.
- The Deputy Headteacher has responsibility for Inclusion receives a complete set of data.
- This pupil level data will be used to trigger school action as set out in the escalation of intervention (Appendix 1).
- Attendance data will also be used to identify emerging patterns and trends to inform whole school strategies to improve attendance and attainment.
- Attendance for FS1 and FS2 will also be monitored by school in order to help develop expectations regarding attendance when children reach statutory school age. During home visits before children join school, parents and carers are made aware of school's high expectations regarding attendance.
- Parents and carers of children in F1 (Nursery) are made aware that school has the right to withdraw places if children are absent for two weeks or more without a significant reason for their child's absence.
- Netherthorpe Primary School will share attendance data with the Department for Children, Schools and Families and the local authority as required.
- All information shared will be done so in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

### **Support Systems**

- School recognises that poor attendance is often an indication of difficulties in a child's life. This may be related to problems at home and or in school. Parents should make school aware of any difficulties or changes in circumstances that may affect their child's attendance and or behaviour in school, for example, bereavement, divorce/separation, incidents of domestic abuse. This will help the school identify any additional support that may be required.

- Netherthorpe Primary School also recognises that some pupils are more likely to require additional support to attain good attendance, for example, those pupils with special educational needs, those with physical or mental health needs, migrant and refugee pupils and looked after children.
- The school will implement a range of strategies to support improved attendance. Strategies used will include:
  - Discussion with parents and pupils
  - Attendance panels (Learning Mentor/Deputy Headteacher/Headteacher)
  - Referrals to support agencies
  - Learning mentors
  - Pupil Voice Activities
  - Friendship groups
  - PSHE
  - Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) materials
  - Family learning
  - Reward systems
  - Time limited part time time-tables
  - Additional learning support
  - Behaviour support
  - Reintegration support packages
- Support offered to families will be child centred and planned in discussion and agreement with both parents and pupils.
- Where parents fail or refuse to engage with the support offered and further unauthorised absence occurs, Netherthorpe Primary School will consider the use of legal sanctions in accordance with guidance and recommendations for Sheffield City Council.

## Appendix 1

### Escalation of Attendance Interventions

#### Pupils with 100 % attendance

Parents will receive a letter home congratulating them on their child's excellent attendance.

Pupils with this level of termly and annual attendance will receive a certificate of achievement and their names will be displayed on the school attendance board (termly). They are also given a reward in school to celebrate their excellent attendance, eg, tree planting, craft sessions, book token.

#### Pupils below the government target of 95%

Deputy Headteacher/Headteacher and Learning Mentor hold half termly meetings with parents of any children whose attendance has fallen below the school target. At these meetings the LM and AHT/HT will speak to the parents to:

- Identify underlying home/school issues that may be causing the pupil's absence.
- Make explicit the amount of learning time that has been lost due to lateness and/or absence.
- Review the pupil's academic progress and make links to the pupil's attendance eg. If you attended all your classes you could achieve...
- In some cases arrangements will be made for the pupil to catch up on work they have missed.
- Implement a Pastoral Support Plan or review other existing pupil plan to include support to improve attendance
- Set an individual attendance target for the pupil using sessions rather than percentages that will see the pupil move to the band above.

After the meeting, the child's attendance is monitored throughout the next half term.

Where improvement has not occurred by the end of the term, parents will be invited to a meeting where the possible outcomes will be:

- Referral to Tracey Rice – Attendance and Inclusion Officer (West MAST Team)
- Parenting contract agreed
- Agree a review date

#### Pupils with attendance below 90%

Pupils who have attendance below 90% are considered to be persistently absent from school. In these rare cases the following will take place:

- Daily monitoring through telephone
- Home visits
- Medical evidence regarding the reason for absence – i.e. a note on headed paper from the doctor
- Referral made to MAST through use of CAF

- Multi-agency meetings held on a regular basis to monitor/support/improve attendance.

The Deputy Headteacher will monitor the effectiveness of interventions. This will be used to review and inform whole school strategies.

Attendance will be a standing item on the agenda of the Inclusion Team meetings where the progress of these groups will be reported and the effectiveness of interventions measured. This will be used to review and inform whole school strategies and will also have links to performance management.

The Head Teacher will report to the Chair of Governors/Governor for Attendance each half term and will report termly to the Governing Body.

Any children who do not return to school after authorised or unauthorised absences will be referred to CME (Children Missing in Education). This is part of school's standard safeguarding procedures to ensure that no child is missing. Parents and carers are made aware of the importance of supplying school with regular up to date information regarding the whereabouts of their children.

## Appendix 2

### **Learning Mentor, Office staff and SLT roles and responsibilities in improving absence and punctuality before it becomes chronic**

1. The Office Manager will print out attendance that is less than 95% for every child from FS1 onwards for analysis by HT/AHT on a weekly basis.
2. The office staff will keep a record of children who come to school late. They will ask parents/carers for reasons to explain lateness. Lists will be analysed on a weekly basis.
3. The LM will liaise with class teachers to meet informally with parents/carers to ensure that they are aware of the level of their child's absence. This will usually be 'catching' parents on the playground at the beginning or end of the day.
4. HT/AHT will monitor attendance/punctuality for an improvement after this initial meeting. If there is an improvement that brings child in line with school's target, there will be no further action.
5. If attendance/punctuality does not improve, the LM will arrange to meet with parents/carers to discuss possible reasons for absence and work with family to improve attendance/punctuality. Discussions will include an explanation of possible consequences for the parent if there is no improvement. If there is an improvement that brings child in line with school's target and/or shows a significant improvement, there will be no further action.
6. If attendance/punctuality does not improve after this meeting, the HT/AHT and LM will meet formally with parent to discuss reasons why attendance has not improved and work towards finding a solution that will improve attendance/punctuality. At this point the school will ensure that parents understand that the next step would be to inform Attendance and Inclusion Officer.

After this point, Appendix 1 procedures for pupils with below 80% attendance come into play.

Reviewed September 2012

Next review September 2013