



ATTENDANCE POLICY

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Introduction

From the DCSF's "Policy and Practice on the Categorisation of Absence."

"Regular school attendance has always been important. Without it, the best efforts of the best teachers and the best schools will come to nothing. Education provides a means of advancement for all young people. Pupils need to attend regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them in law. Irregular attendance undermines the educational process and leads to educational disadvantage. It places children at risk and, in some cases, can result in pupils being drawn into patterns of anti-social or criminal behaviour."

Aims

- To emphasise the importance of, and secure from pupils, high level of attendance and punctuality at school to enable them to take full advantage of their educational opportunities.
- To make explicit to all relevant parties the school's expectations over attendance and punctuality expectations.
- To promote a consistent approach across the school to all matters relating to attendance.
- To clarify the roles and responsibilities of all parties with respect to attendance.
- To communicate to all relevant parties (staff, governors, parents, pupils) the legal position with respect to attendance and the categories of absence which are deemed "authorised".
- To stress the need for home and school to work in close partnership to achieve high attendance.

Regular attendance at school is vital. Without it the learning process becomes fragmented and unsatisfactory. Irregular attendance leads to pupils missing important lessons and therefore not fulfilling their true potential.

Attendance is a national priority and all schools have to submit data electronically (both in an aggregated form and on an individual pupil basis) every term. National data clearly shows a correlation between high attendance and high examination performance.

What is an acceptable attendance rate?

We aim to ensure that all students have over 97% attendance and we actively encourage students to aim for 100% attendance. Sickness comes usually in a block of time over a continuous period, what we look at are unbroken weeks (i.e. those where the pupil is not marked present on all 10 sessions). Pupils should not have more than one or two broken weeks in the course of the academic year. Regular broken weeks are a cause for concern and will be followed up by the school.

'Back to school' interview – less than 95% attendance



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We aim to ensure that all students have over 95% attendance and we actively encourage students to aim for 100% attendance. If a student's attendance drops below 95% then a 'Back to school' interview will take place with a member of the Pastoral team. Students will be expected to collect work from lessons missed and complete within 3 days of the meeting. Failure to complete this will result in a 45 min sanction. If a student fails to complete this on 3 occasions then they will be placed into Internal Exclusion. We do not want students to fall behind on class work due to absence.

Authorised Absences

The department for children and Families (DCSF) has issued guidelines to all schools detailing valid reasons for authorised or justified absences:

- When a child is ill or receiving medical attention.
- Days of religious observance notified in advance.
- Absence due to family circumstances (e.g bereavement, serious illness).
- Lateness due to student living outside the catchment area. Consideration will be made as to whether parents choose to reside outside the catchment area when deciding if an absence is authorised.

There are other absences, such as "Approved Sporting Activity" that can be authorised and there will be events affecting families, some unforeseen, which will necessitate absence from school and professional discretion will need to be used in these cases about whether the absence can be authorised. This will be at the discretion of the Principal.

We expect absences to be kept to a minimum: routine medical and dental appointments should be arranged **out of school hours wherever possible.**

Unauthorised Absences

Unauthorised absences are those where:

- No letter or acceptable explanation is provided by parent(s)/ carers.
- The reason for the absence does not fall into one of the categories of authorised absence above.

The DFE guidelines state that the following activities would classify as **unauthorised**:

- minding the house
- caring for relatives
- awaiting repair people



- shopping
- a birthday or family celebration
- unauthorised holiday
- parental illness
- excessive illness without a medical reason

The DFE's guidelines look at the area of "Special Occasions" and make clear that only **truly exceptional** occasions should be classified as authorised. This will be decided at the discretion of the Principal.

We ask parents to **notify the school well in advance** (preferably 4 weeks notice) of any proposed special occasion to ascertain whether the school would view the reason for absence as valid or not.

The DFE's guidelines make it plain that, in the final analysis, it is the **school** that judges whether an absence is authorised or not. **A note from home therefore does not automatically make an absence valid/justified/authorised.**

Example of 'exceptional circumstances' include:

- Funeral of parent, grandparent or sibling – Headteachers should use their discretion having heard from parents about travel and funeral arrangements and taking into account the distance to be travelled ☒
- Sudden loss of housing through eviction or domestic violence - up to a maximum of 3 days. ☒
- Serious illness of a close relative – only if Headteacher is satisfied that the circumstances are truly exceptional ☒ Teenage parents responsible for the care of their own child – at the Headteacher's discretion. ☒
- Out of school programmes such as music, arts or sport operating at a high standard of achievement and agreed by the LA – as appropriate. Bournemouth Education Social Work Service can advise schools on individual circumstances if required. ☒
- Time-off relating to Child Entertainment Performances, subject to a license being issued by Education Social Work Service ☒
- Religious observance – The Education Act 1996 S444(3) (c), states "on any day exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which his/her parent belongs". This would include the Islamic Eids, as well as religious observance days of the orthodox Christian, Jewish and other religions. Headteachers may specify that only one day will be authorised at a time (most of the families who request leave on religious grounds are Muslim and the request is for the two Eids). ☒
- Weddings of parents and siblings – weddings can be arranged at weekends or during school holidays; however, we acknowledge that there are times when the dates are dependent on other factors, such as the needs of the couple getting married. Leave should only be authorised for this purpose when a Headteacher is satisfied that there is a persuasive reason for holding the wedding during term time. In difficult family situations the Headteacher may use his/her discretion in granting leave, for example where natural parents are separated, and in new relationships and it may cause a child further difficulty if



he/she is excluded from a wedding. Each case should be addressed on its individual merits, considering the overall welfare of the child.

Examples of circumstances NOT considered as exceptional ☒

- Holidays abroad for the purpose of visiting a sick relative, excepting where that person is seriously ill. Medical evidence may be requested. ☒
- Pilgrimages by parents (eg. Hajj). These are rare but can result in children being away from school for significant periods of time (at least 5 days). They are not regarded as exceptional as children themselves do not perform Hajj, but tend to travel with their parents when they go. ☒
- Holidays taken in term time due to lower cost/parental work commitment.
- To care for other family members
- Birthdays
- To interpret for other family members
- No school uniform/shoes
- Bullying
- Friendship problems
- Head lice
- Learning difficulties
- Family holiday
- Family Anniversaries
- Death of a pet
- Travel problems
- School refusal

Holidays

The Law states that requests for leave can only be granted in exceptional circumstances, and family holidays do not fall into this category. Any requests for leave must also be made to the Academy in advance, as the guidance from Department for Education (DfE) is schools cannot authorise any absences after they have been taken.

Learning is disrupted and the lost time is detrimental to the educational progress of the child (this message is conveyed in our information booklet to parents and in letters home). The saving you will make by taking a holiday in term time is offset by the cost to your child's education.

The Academy, in conjunction with all other 11-18 secondary schools in the county, asks parents who feel it is absolutely unavoidable to take their annual holiday in term time to write explaining the circumstances to the Principal **at least 4 weeks in advance**.

However, the Academy does not authorise absence during term time as per Government Legislation explained above. Any requests for term time holidays will not be authorised, and you may be made subject to a fixed penalty notice of £60 per parent per child payable within 21 days, then £120 per parent per child if paid after this date. Failure to pay within 28 days may result in a court summons. Exceptional circumstances may be authorised



if provided in writing to the Principal and Education Welfare Officer, but please note this should not be assumed that the exceptional circumstance will be granted.

Punctuality

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. Vital information is given out during tutor time and your child will be at a disadvantage because of this. The school day starts at 8.45am and we expect your child to be in tutor time at that time. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons during the day.

How we manage lateness to school and lessons

Lateness to school

Any student arriving after 8.40am is issued a 45 min SLT sanction after school*. Failure to attend an after school sanction will result in a 1 day Internal Exclusion.

For Sixth Form students see Sixth Form Student Handbook on procedure for signing in and out of school, using our visitor entry system.

*Please note we will allow 1 late per term (maximum 3 in total for year) for students where lateness is out of their control e.g. car accident. The parent/carer **must contact the school to make us aware before the student arrives for this to be authorised.** If this does not happen then the 45 min SLT sanction will remain in place.

If lateness happens more than once in a half term then the parent/carer **must put in writing to the school, before 12pm the following day, the reason why the lateness was out of the students control for this to be authorised.** If this does not happen then the 45 min SLT sanction will remain in place.

Punctuality letters will be issued to parents after their child have been late over 10 times in an academic year.

A student will be placed into IE after 3 occasions of being late to school. This will also happen every 3 times of being late after this e.g. when they hit 6 lates, 9 lates, 12 lates, 15 lates etc...

*Please note we adjust for students with ADHD to every 4 lates

Lateness to lessons

Any student who arrives after the bell will have a 45 min SLT detention. For Sixth Form, refer to Student Handbook.

Parents can be prosecuted if their child persistently arrives late after the register has officially closed. We will monitor persistent late comers and action will be taken.



Home/School Partnership

Securing a high level of attendance requires the school and home to work closely together. To this end, we ask parents to:

- Do all they can to ensure that their child arrives at 8.40am in good time for registration at 8.45am. The first lesson commences at 9.05am.
- If their child is ill, notify the school **on the first day** with an estimation of the likely length of absence and a full explanation of the illness.
- Send in a written note with their child on the first day he/she is back at school. This should be handed into the Attendance Office. This is needed for our records and also authenticates the telephone message.
- Get in touch at an early stage about any concerns they have about their child's attendance and attitude to school.
- Sixth Form absence should be reported to the Sixth Form Office on 01604 210103.

In return the school will:

- Contact home on day 1 of absence if no message has been received from home. An automated truancy call is sent out to any absent students, with a manual phone call made if no response by 10.30am. Any student on the Child Protection register will be contacted by manual phone call by 9.15am and the Designated Safeguarding Lead will be informed of outcome.
- Follow up with welfare check at home will happen on day 3 of an absence if no contact from home (then every 3 days after). A Visit will happen on day 6 even if contact is made from home with reason for a welfare check. A visit may be made on first day of absence for any student on Child Protection register. We will also do home visits for regular non-attendees every 3 days.
- Follow up promptly any concerns that parent's pass on to us that may be affecting their child's attitude to, or feeling of wellbeing in, school.
- Contact home over any unexplained absences.
- If necessary, involve the School Support Services to help pupils re-integrate into school after illness or other individual circumstances.
- Regularly and consistently remind students of the importance of good attendance and punctuality.
- Reward good or improving attendance and action any concerns promptly.
- Ensure that tracking systems are in place to identify and monitor student attendance across the year
- Have regular attendance meetings in school to identify, monitor and support key students.



The Education Inclusion and Partnership Team

If attendance becomes a concern the school's Education Welfare Officer and Attendance and Admissions Manager or in the case of Sixth Form, a member of the Sixth Form Team; will start proceedings to address the concerns through a parent contract meeting (PCM) and offer of Early Help Assessment to help address concerns that may be impacting on the student's attendance in school.

If a student has an attendance of less than 90% then parents are invited into school for a PCM with the Admissions and Attendance Manager. An Early Help assessment (EHA) may be offered at this point. A target of 97% over the next 10 weeks is set (there is a review at week 5). If the target is met then attendance continues to be reviewed closely for 4 weeks. If the attendance does not show signs of hitting the 97% target then the case is referred to the local authority.

In order to try and avoid the PCM process, if your child has periods of absence you will be invited in as follows to meet to discuss and ensure there are no ongoing concerns.

3 periods of absence – Learning Manager

4 periods of absence – Director of Keystage

5 periods of absence – Assistant Principal

7 periods of absence – Vice Principal

The Education Welfare Officer and the Attendance and Admissions Manager liaises with the LA Education Officer Inclusion Officer (IO) and Senior Inclusion Officer (SIO) regarding irregular attendance, children missing from education, wishing to home educate and unauthorised holidays. The Academy works very closely with the IO regarding pupils who are giving a cause for concern. The IO/SIO visits homes and are a vital component in our efforts to secure high attendance.

In extreme cases the Education Welfare Service can also initiate legal proceedings against parents who have not fulfilled their legal responsibility of getting their child consistently to school. Parents may be made subject to a fixed penalty notice of £60 per parent per child payable within 21 days, then £120 per parent per child if paid after this date. Failure to pay within 28 days may result in a court summons. The legislation is the Education Act 1996 sec.444(1) and 444(1A).

'If any child of compulsory school age is a registered pupil at a school fails to attend regularly at the school, his/her parent is guilty of an offence'

Roles and Responsibilities

High attendance levels are achieved as a result of staff working closely together and knowing where their responsibilities lie. It is important that **all** members of staff are aware of: **a robust system is dependent upon everyone playing his/her part.**

Staff responsible for attendance at Northampton Academy are:

- Form Tutors,



- Education Welfare Officer Assistant,
- Learning Managers,
- Deputy Director of Key Stage
- Director of Key Stage,
- Admissions and Attendance Manager,
- Assistant Principal,
- Vice Principal
- Head of Year 12/13

Linked policies:

Child Protection Policy

Behaviour Policy

Sixth Form Student Handbook



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