



# ATTENDANCE POLICY

NORTHBOURNE.SP.003

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Northbourne CE (A) Primary School

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## Attendance Policy

Northbourne CE (A) Primary School is committed to providing the best possible education for all of our pupils and embraces the concept of equal opportunities for all. We strive to provide an inclusive environment where all pupils feel valued, can learn about themselves and the world, and can learn and grow together.

For a child to reach their full potential, a high level of school attendance is essential. We will consistently work towards a goal of 100% attendance for all pupils. Every opportunity will be used to convey to pupils and their parents the importance of regular and punctual attendance including, for example, through newsletters and end-of-term reports. Attendance of all pupils, especially those where levels of absence are causing concern, is analysed regularly, as is attendance at a class, group (for example, children in receipt of Free School Meals compared to those who are not) and school level. Systems used to improve attendance are reviewed at regular intervals to ensure that we are meeting our set targets.

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. This policy outlines the procedures the school will use to ensure it meets its attendance targets.

### School-set target for 2018-19:

**97.2% for overall attendance; 0 Persistent Absentees (0%)**

*Based on planning to improve on last year's total attendance of 96.9%, and on reducing number of Persistent Absentees (10 90% and below)*

### 1. School procedures

Any child who is absent from school at the morning or afternoon registration period must have their absence recorded. If there is no known reason for the absence at registration, it is recorded as unknown (N) in the first instance. When further information is obtained, for example, from the school answer machine or through first-day absence phone-calling, the code will be amended to reflect the reason for the absence. Where absence is not due to illness or for medical reasons, the headteacher or, in his absence a member of the Senior Leadership Team, will determine whether the absence is authorised or not, and, again, the code will be amended to reflect this (U for unauthorised absence).

All authorisation of absence is at the discretion of the headteacher or, in his absence, a member of the senior leadership team with this delegated responsibility. The provision of a note or message does not authorise absence. Absence can only be authorised within the context of the law.

### 2. Lateness

Morning registration will take place at the start of school at 8:55am. The registers will remain open for 20 minutes. Any pupil arriving after this time will be marked as having an unauthorised absence (U) unless there is an acceptable explanation; for example, school transport was delayed. Any cases where absence was for attending an early morning medical appointment, for example, the appropriate authorised absence code will be used. Afternoon registration will be held at 12:25pm for Foundation Stage and Key Stage One and 12:55pm for Key Stage Two, with registers closing 5 minutes after these times.

Pupils arriving after the start of school but before the end of the registration period as outlined above will be treated as present for statistical purposes, but will be coded as L – late before registers close.

Parents must inform the school if their child is going to be absent on or before the first day.

When making medical appointments, every effort must be made to ensure appointments are outside school hours but we acknowledge that this is not always possible. Pupils must attend as much of the school day around the appointment as possible.

### 3. Absence procedures

**3i. First day absence** Parents are requested to inform the school on the first day of a child's absence. This can be done through a message on the school answer phone; through a written note sent to school; or verbally to a class teacher or member of the office staff. Messages from siblings are not accepted as reports of absence.

After the close of registers, any unexplained or unexpected absences are followed up by a phone call from a member of the office staff. Helen Cliff, school secretary, has responsibility for ensuring this happens. Where there are concerns about a child's absence, the first-day phone call is made by the headteacher or member of the Senior Leadership Team.

Information obtained from phone calls or from notes is transferred into the electronic register by the person making the phone call in the form of an attendance code.

**3ii. Third day absence** Where a child is still absent and it has not been possible to make contact with parents, the School Secretary will continue to use all of the contact details held by school to get in touch with parents or other family members. This will continue throughout the first and second day of absence. Where contact has not been made by the third day, a standard letter will be sent by first class post asking parents to contact the school immediately.

**3iii. Continuing absence** Where contact is still not made after four days, the headteacher will speak to the Attendance and Engagement Officer for the school (currently Ali Sim, contact [alison.sim@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:alison.sim@oxfordshire.gov.uk)) or the Local Authority's Children Missing Education Administrator (currently Alan Blackmore, contact [alan.blackmore@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:alan.blackmore@oxfordshire.gov.uk)) and seek advice about next steps. Where no immediate action is suggested, the school's Missing Pupil Policy (see Safeguarding Manual) will apply from the tenth day of unexplained absence. In the meantime, attempts to make contact using all of the details held by the school will continue on a daily basis.

### 4. Frequent absence

It is the responsibility of each class teacher to be aware of any emerging attendance concerns and to bring these to the attention of the headteacher. Weekly monitoring of the attendance of each class is carried out by the headteacher and, where this shows low attendance in any particular class, this will also be investigated to identify specific children contributing to the levels of absence.

In cases where a pupil begins to develop a pattern of absences, or where attendance over time is lower than 90%, the school will try to resolve the problem by making contact with parents. Initially this will be done through an informal discussion, either face-to-face or by phone, which will be followed up by a letter to the parent from the headteacher to document the conversation. The headteacher will liaise with the Attendance and Engagement Officer to ensure necessary action is taken when incidents of poor attendance and / or punctuality are identified.

If attendance continues to be a problem despite these actions, the headteacher will invite parents in to school to discuss the causes of the problem and possible ways forward. At this point, a parenting contract will be agreed in consultation with parents. The Early Intervention Service may be involved at this point through the attendance of a Hub worker at this meeting. The headteacher will also consider the potential for involvement of other specific agencies and the possible need to complete an Early Help Assessment and begin Team Around the Family processes.

### 5. Penalty Notices and Legal Action

**Persistent absenteeism** A pupil becomes a persistent absentee (PA) when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year *for whatever reason*. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parents' fullest support and co-operation to tackle this. Monitoring of absence will identify when any case has reached, or is at risk of reaching, the PA mark. These cases are given priority and parents informed of this immediately. The attendance of pupils classed as being persistent absentees is carefully tracked by

the headteacher. It is expected that, before the point attendance falls below 90%, the headteacher will have followed the procedure outlined in section 4 and informed the parents of their child's current level of attendance.

PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully by the school and a parenting contract meeting will be offered between parent, pupil and school to try to resolve any issues. All PA cases are automatically made known to the Attendance and Engagement Officer and, if necessary, they can use a range of legal powers to enforce attendance open to them, including parenting orders, education supervision orders and prosecutions. If convicted of an offence, a parent could face a fine of up to £2,500 and three months imprisonment.

In cases of persistent absenteeism, the school reserves the right to ask the Attendance and Engagement team to issue a Penalty Notice Warning which could result in a fine or further legal action through the courts. A Penalty Notice is a fine that the Attendance and Engagement team may issue instead of taking legal action through the Magistrates' Court system. A parent can be issued with a Penalty Notice if:

- They fail to ensure that their child attends school regularly – as defined by six or more unauthorised absence sessions over a six week period;
- They allow their child to take leave of absence during term time without the school's authorisation;
- They fail to return their child to school on an agreed date after a period of authorised leave of absence;
- Their child persistently arrives late for school after registration is closed.

## 5. Record keeping

Notes received from parent explaining absence are summarised and entered into Integris, the school's Management Information System (MIS).

By law, attendance registers must be kept for at least 3 years. At Northbourne, registers are completed using Integris software, which are backed up and retained for the length of time required by law.

## 6. Promoting attendance

The school uses all opportunities to remind parents of their responsibility to ensure their children receive full-time education. This is done through regular reminders in the weekly newsletter, discussions with parents when children start Foundation Stage, and through ongoing discussions with parents of children where attendance is a cause for concern.

Regular attendance is rewarded through a whole-school system. Certificates and stickers are given out for 100% (gold), 98 – 99% (silver) and 95% - 97% (bronze) attendance each term (6 times a year). Children with 100% attendance also receive a small prize. The class with the best attendance over each of these periods receives a special treat, for example, a non-school uniform day or a party. At the end of each year, pupils with 100% attendance receive an additional reward and the class with the best attendance over the school year receives a reward, such as a visit to the cinema.

## 7. Leave of absence

As of 1<sup>st</sup> September 2013, the headteacher will not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are **exceptional circumstances**. Parents / carers should seek permission from the headteacher prior to the leave of absence period in question.

The headteacher will determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted. Parents / carers who remove their children from school without authorisation or do not return their child to school on the agreed date following an unauthorised period of leave of absence, may face a Penalty Notice Warning which could lead to a fine / prosecution.

## **Appendix 1: Legal Basis for this policy**

The Education Act 1996 Part 1, Section 7 states:

*The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable:*

- a. To his age, ability and aptitude*
- b. To any special needs he may have.*

*either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.*

For educational purposes, the term parent is used to include those that have parental responsibility and / or those that have the day-to-day care of the child.

The legislation that appertains to children who are of compulsory school age and are registered at school is contained within the act named above; part VI section 444 of the act named above details when an offence is committed if a child fails to attend school.

Legal requirements around register and admission role keeping are found in the Education [Pupil Registration] (England) regulations 2006.

### Categorising absence

Any pupil who is on roll but not present in the school must be recorded within one of the following categories:

- a. Unauthorised absence: Where no reason has been provided or whose absence is deemed to be without valid reason
- b. Authorised absence: Where pupils are away from school for a reason that is deemed valid under the Education Act 1996

Approved educational activity: Supervised educational activity undertaken off site but with the approval of school (pupils in this category are deemed present for statistical purposes). This includes: field trips, educational visits, sporting activities, link courses or approved off-site education.

Attendance registers, by law, must be kept for 3 school years. At Northbourne, electronic registers are backed up and retained for at least 3 years.