

**NETHERTON
JUNIOR AND
INFANT SCHOOL**

**ATTENDANCE
POLICY**

January 2018

Aims

1. We want children to make the best possible progress with their education and we believe that to do this they need to attend school regularly.
2. We also regard punctuality as of very important in order that there may be continuity of learning and to assist in the prompt and accurate process of registration and orders for catering.
3. We want to encourage good attendance. To this end staff try to foster good relationships with children, promoting a positive atmosphere for learning and helping children to grow in confidence and independence.
4. We aim for attendance of 97% or higher for all classes.

Implementation: Registration (see appendices for detailed procedures)

- Electronic registration of pupils is carried out twice daily, on entering school in the morning and after the lunch break. The register is taken at 9.00 am. Registration will end when the last name has been called.
- A record of children who arrive or leave school during a session will be kept in the main office. This will be used as an added check on numbers in the event of an emergency evacuation.

Recording and Monitoring

- Attendance for groups and individuals will be analysed by the Head Teacher on a weekly and half termly basis and where there are concerns about a pupil's attendance or the attendance for a term drops below 90% without an acceptable underlying reason, s/he will be added to a weekly monitoring group, with parents informed by letter or telephone call.
- Attendance figures for the best attending class/year group and whole school will be published weekly through Friday's weekly newsletter to parents.

Parental Responsibilities

- It is the responsibility of parents to inform school of the reason for a child's absence. We expect this to be done on the first day of absence. It may be done in person, by note, by telephone or by email to admin@netherton.wakefield.sch.uk The person receiving the message should note briefly the details supplied on the pupil absence record sheets in the office. Office staff will then update the pupil's record after registration has closed.
- Where no message has been received administration staff will make enquiries on the first morning to check reasons for absence.
- For absences in excess of a week the class teacher may consider setting some form of catch up homework, where this is appropriate.
- New parents will be informed about attendance/absence procedures through a standard letter, a section on the school website and introductory talks. Periodic reminders about the aspects of attendance policy will be issued through newsletters.

- Parents are asked to report to the office before collecting and on returning children who attend appointments during the school day. A record of ins and outs during the day is kept for evacuation purposes.

Categorising Absence

- Absences will be categorised according to DFE codings. Where unauthorised absences occur these are brought to the Head Teacher's attention.
- All leave of absence requests should be made by completion of a leave of absence form available from the Office, addressed to the Head Teacher. Each request will be considered on its own merits and parents will be informed whether the absence will be counted as authorised or not. DFE and LA guidance will be used as a basis for decisions of this nature.
- Holidays in term time are not normally authorised, following guidance from the DFE in 2014.
- Where authorisation is not given subsequent absence will be reported as a matter of course to the Education Welfare Service. A note to this effect will be included on the letter to parents explaining why leave of absence is not granted.
- Where no reasons for absence are supplied enquiries will be made by administration staff on the Head Teacher's behalf. Where reasons are considered invalid, the absence will be counted as unauthorised.

Identifying Poor Attendance

- Attendance is monitored on a day to day basis by administration staff and class teachers. Any absence causing concern is brought to the attention of the Head Teacher or Education Welfare Officer to follow up.
- Pupils whose attendance falls below 90% in any half term and over a year will be monitored on a weekly period until secure improvement is apparent. Those pupils with attendance less than 85% (this is the 'persistent absence' definition by DFE) are earmarked for the closest scrutiny. Parents of these pupils are likely to receive invitations to come into school to discuss attendance e.g. at face to face meetings with the Education Welfare Service.
- Random checks on punctuality will be carried out and parents of regular latecomers will be notified about the late arrival of their children. We are concerned when a pupil is late on 5 or more occasions per half term.
- **Pupils who have attendance below 85%, irregular absence patterns, absence without parental notification or excessive time away from school where reasons are not wholly accepted may be at risk; this is a safeguarding issue**

Promoting Good Attendance

- Pupils who achieve 100% attendance each half term will be entered for a 100% prize draw held at the end of the year. They are also given 100% certificates at the end of each half term.
- Good attendance will be celebrated in the weekly Friday assembly and through the weekly newsletter to parents.
- Pupils with good attendance will receive a termly certificate and a full year certificate and medal.

Actions to address poor attendance

We have a duty of care, shared with the Local Authority, to challenge poor attendance. We will work to identify:

- where attendance levels are low and where there are invalid reasons (judged by the Education Welfare Service, not the parent) for a pupil's frequent absence
- where parents condone absence (e.g. by taking children out of school on unauthorised holidays)
- where there are patterns of absence that give rise for concern – e.g. Fridays and Mondays off
- where absence is tied closely to that of siblings

- The Education Welfare Service will take legal action against parents if there is clear evidence of condoned absence and attendance does not improve after advice and support is offered.

- Formal procedures may involve a Penalty Notice of £60 per pupil per parent. This can be doubled if the fine is unpaid within a set timescale (now 21 days) and can ultimately lead to a criminal conviction. Of course, no one wants this to happen but we need to be very clear about the issue.

Reporting on Attendance

- Attendance matters will be included in periodic newsletters to parents. The Governing Body will receive reports from the Head Teacher on attendance as part of the normal cycle of reporting at meetings. Where attendance has improved for individual pupils, parents will receive a congratulatory letter.

Appendix 1: Key Information

Types of Absence

Each absence is classed as authorised or unauthorised. Absences are coded as authorised where reasons are considered valid and unauthorised where no explanation or unacceptable reasons are given.

Unacceptable Reasons

The following reasons are not acceptable:

- shopping visits
- care for family members
- days out to theme parks or to attend concerts/shows
- parents' work commitments or business trips
- holidays taken in term time (including long weekends taking Friday and/or Mondays)
- parental illness

Unauthorised absences where necessary will be referred to the Wakefield Education Welfare Service.

Illness and First Day Call

If your child is unable to attend school through illness you should inform us by telephone on the first day of absence before 9.00am. Alternatively you can email us at admin@netherton.wakefield.sch.uk or call in in person at the Office. It is useful to know the expected day of return. If you do not supply us with this information we have a duty to contact you for so that we may be sure of the child's whereabouts as this is a safeguarding measure.

Where the child is absent through illness or medical appointments this will normally be counted as authorised. Where we have concerns over excessive absence patterns through illness we will need to discuss this with parents in order to gain a better understanding of the problems and to offer support – for example by involving the School Health Service.

Medical/Dental Appointments

It is generally better if these can be arranged outside school hours, but we know this is not always possible. Where children need to attend such appointments during the school day it is important that parents come first to the Office before collecting children. Please bring your child to the office on returning from the appointment. Please indicate whether s/he will be returning for the midday meal. Medical and dental appointments count as authorised absences.

Emergency Occasions

There are some occasions e.g. bereavements, family problems, etc where it may be inappropriate for children to attend school; we will be sympathetic to such needs.

Lateness

Please try to ensure that your child arrives at school when doors open at 8.50 so that they are present for registration at 9.00 am each day. If a child is arriving after 9am they will receive a late mark and this will become an unauthorised absence after 9.10am.

However where there is a genuine reason for lateness exists this will be recorded as an authorised absence.

Leave of Absence:

Approved Public Performance

Where children are invited to perform in a licensed show or concert (e.g. orchestra, pantomime) you are asked to consult with staff about how much time away from school is required. Where possible such requests will be granted provided that the child's education is unlikely to suffer.

What we are aiming for

We aim for attendance of 97% or higher for all classes.

What is considered as poor attendance

Anything below 95% is weak, under 90% is poor and if attendance dips below 85% we will have serious concerns. Below 85% is regarded as persistent absence by the DFE. We monitor attendance and provide termly reports on each pupil's attendance.

At the end of each term we identify all those pupils whose attendance is below 90% and issue a courtesy letter informing parents where required. We then monitor the pupils' attendance on a weekly basis and hope to see a pattern of unbroken weeks developing.

Our duty of care in responding to unauthorised and persistent absence – possible consequences

We have a duty of care, shared with the Local Authority, to challenge poor attendance. Where attendance levels are low and where there are invalid reasons (judged by the Education Welfare Service, not the parent) for a pupil's frequent absence or where parents condone absence (e.g. by taking children out of school on unauthorised holidays) then parents render themselves liable to a fine of £60 per pupil per parent.

This could mean a fine of £360 for two parents of three children. This would be doubled to £720 if the fine is unpaid within 21 days and could ultimately lead to a criminal conviction. Of course, no one wants this to happen but we need to be very clear about the issue.

Appendix 2: Registration Procedures

REGISTRATION PROCEDURES

Daily procedures - teachers

1. Registers will be taken electronically at 9.00 am and as soon as all children are in from the playgrounds after lunch break ends, using the Integris system. This allows us to read attendance data in 'real time' and act quickly if need be.

If a child arrives after 9.00 am the child should be directed to the Office to be marked in. After 9am the child will be classed as late. Office staff will check on school meals as part of this procedure. Office staff will note the absence; staff in classrooms do not need to worry about this.

Daily procedures - Office

1. Once registration has closed at 9.10 am the office staff will update individual pupil records where telephone calls have been received during the morning. If a child arrives after 9.10 they will receive an unauthorised mark.
2. When this has been completed Office staff will then contact the appropriate year group about any pupils left on the list to check that the teacher is not aware of the reason for the child's absence or to make sure they have not arrived late.
3. Once it has been clarified that the reason is still not known, staff will telephone or text parents the parent to make contact and ask the whereabouts of the child. The reason will then be recorded if known.

Procedures for monitoring

Daily

1. Head Teachers meet and greet pupils and parents at the school gates from 8.45 am.
2. Office staff check registers, make first day calls or text.

Weekly

1. On Fridays, Office staff provide the Head Teacher with the attendance data for the current week so far.

Half termly

1. Run off attendance data reports for whole school and groups for the Head Teacher.
2. Identify on going individual concerns and brief the Head Teacher in readiness for EWO meeting
3. Prepare data half termly to inform Head teacher reports for full Governors.

Termly

1. Run off attendance data reports for whole school and groups for the head teacher.
2. Print off lists of pupils with 97% plus and 100% attendance for the term and issue certificates.
3. Identify individual concerns and brief the Head Teacher in readiness for EWO meeting

Annually

1. Prepare certificates for those receiving 100% and attendance medal

