ATTENDANCE POLICY

Northgate Primary School

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1. **Mission Statement / Vision**

We believe that children cannot learn if they are absent from school. Therefore, we aim to ensure that all our children and young people take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them and to raise standards by promoting regular attendance and punctuality of all pupils.

2. **Aims / Expectations**

- To create a culture in which good attendance is accepted as the norm.
- To demonstrate that good attendance and punctuality is valued by the school.
- To maintain and develop effective communication regarding attendance between home and school.
- Attendance Targets/Attendance Registers
- to keep whole school attendance above 96%.
- The rules governing the maintenance of registers, including removal from roll, are contained in the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006. Attendance registers are legal documents that may be required as evidence in court cases

3. **Leadership and Management**

- Offer a clear vision for attendance, underpinned by high expectations and core values, which are communicated to and understood by all staff, pupils and families.
- Make sure all staff, pupils and families understand that absence from school is a potential safeguarding risk and understand their role in keeping children safe.
- Expect good attendance and punctuality from all members of the school community and make sure that all pupils understand its importance.
- Convey clear messages about how absence affects attainment, wellbeing and wider outcomes. Empower all staff to take responsibility for attendance
- Recognise attendance as an important area of school improvement. Make sure it is resourced appropriately (including through effective use of pupil premium funding) to create, build and maintain systems and performance.
- Have a designated attendance champion in the senior leadership team with clearly assigned responsibilities which are identified within the attendance policy, escalation of procedures and school improvement plan.
- Make sure staff receive professional development and support to deploy attendance systems effectively.
- Governors should have an accurate view of school attendance and engage in escalation procedures where appropriate

4. **Role of the Headteacher**

The Head is responsible for:

- the implementation of the policy.
- all staff knowing and understanding their responsibilities for attendance.
- agreeing whether an absence should be authorised. The power to authorise an absence rests with the Headteacher or delegated person within the school, and not with parents or the local authority – see Appendix A for circumstances under which an absence will be authorised;
- working actively to maximise attendance rates, both in relation to individual pupils and the pupil body as a whole.
- having clear policies in place to address persistent absence.
- ensuring that all staff adopt a consistent approach in dealing with absence and lateness.
- ensuring that the attendance, pastoral and SEND staff who are skilled in supporting pupils and their families to identify and overcome barriers to attendance.
- monitoring trends.

- Implementing a system for all parents to report a child's absence.
- reporting to the Governing Body the attendance figures and progress to achieving the set targets.
- reminding all parents of their commitment to this policy.
- Building respectful relationships with all staff, pupils, families and other stakeholders in order to secure their trust and engagement. Make sure there is a welcoming and positive culture across the school.
- Communicating openly and honestly with all staff, pupils and families about their expectations of school life and performance so that they understand what to expect and what is expected of them.
- Liaising with other agencies working with pupils and their families to support attendance, for example, where a young person has a social worker or is otherwise vulnerable.
- Modelling respectful relationships and appropriate communication for all staff and pupils. This will help relationships between pupils and staff to reflect a positive and respectful culture.
- delivering clear messages about expectations, routines and consequences to new pupils and families through prospectus and admission/transition events
- using physical presence to reinforce routines and expectations on arrival and departure
- regularly communicating expectations for attendance and punctuality and school performance through your regular channels of communication with staff, pupils and parents
- monitoring implementation of policy and practice
- Monitoring and analysing attendance data regularly to allow early intervention to address issues. This includes raising concerns with other agencies like children's social care and early help services which are working with families.
- establishing, implementing and monitoring robust arrangements to identify, report and support children missing education (CME)

See guidance on HCC Grid regarding Children Missing Education https://thegrid.org.uk/admissions-attendance-travel-toschool/attendance/children-missing-from-education

- developing good support for children with medical conditions (including the use of individual healthcare plans), mental health problems and special educational needs (SEND)
- engaging all pupils in consultation on attendance policy, practice, rewards and sanctions
- Ensuring that parents fully understand the demands and responsibilities of elective home education See guidance on HCC Grid when a parent is considering EHE https://thegrid.org.uk/admissions-attendance-travel-toschool/attendance/elective-home-education

5. Role of the Teaching Staff

Teachers are responsible for:

- setting an example of punctuality and good attendance.
- implementing the policy;
- ensuring that the registers are taken at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session and are accurate and up to-date;
- monitoring class and individual attendance patterns;
- informing the school office of any concerns;
- emphasising with children the importance of punctuality and good attendance.
- reminding parents of their commitment to this policy and to trying identify barriers and reasons for absence
- Building respectful relationships with all staff, pupils, families and other stakeholders in order to secure their trust and engagement. Make sure there is a welcoming and positive culture across the school.

- Communicating openly and honestly with all staff, pupils and families about their expectations of school life and performance so that they understand what to expect and what is expected of them.
- Liaising with other agencies working with pupils and their families to support attendance, for example, where a young person has a social worker or is otherwise vulnerable.
- Modelling respectful relationships and appropriate communication for all staff and pupils. This will help relationships between pupils and staff to reflect a positive and respectful culture. All staff members should:
    - treat pupils with dignity
    - build relationships rooted in mutual respect and observe proper boundaries
    - take into consideration the vulnerability of some pupils and the ways in which this might contribute to absence handling confidential information sensitively
    - understand the importance of school as a place of safety where pupils can enjoy trusted relationships with staff and pupils particularly for children with a social worker and those who have experienced adversity
    - communicate effectively with all families regarding pupils' attendance and well-being
    - considering the individual needs and vulnerabilities of pupils

5.1 Pupils at risk of persistent absence

Teachers work with the pastoral lead to consider strategies are to support pupils who are at risk of persistent absence. This may include:

- welcome pupils back following an absence and provide good catch-up support to build confidence and bridge gaps. eg: buddy support , one to one support with our pastoral lead,
- meet with parents and pupils to discuss absence, patterns, barriers and problems
- establish action plans to remove barriers, provide additional support and set targets. This could include:
    - lunchtime arrangements
    - support with uniform, transport, wake up routines or emotional wellbeing
    - lead regular check-ins to review progress and the impact of support
    - make regular contact with families to discuss progress
    - consider what support for re-engagement might be needed, including for vulnerable groups

5.2 Pupils who are persistently absent

Teachers work with the pastoral lead to consider strategies are to support pupils who are persistently absent. This may include:

- prepare supporting resources to ensure pupils can access learning when they return
- develop targeted intervention to address gaps and build pupils' confidence (including considering small group additional support)
- contribute to action plans which attendance staff draw together where appropriate
- provide tailored praise and encouragement when pupils attend and arrive on time.

6. Role of parents

Parents are responsible in law for ensuring that their children of compulsory school age receive an efficient education suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs that they may have. Most parents fulfil this responsibility by registering their children at a school.

Parents whose children are registered at a school are responsible for ensuring that their children attend and stay at school.

Parents are responsible for:

- ensuring that their children are punctual and know the importance of good attendance.
- instilling in their children an appreciation of the importance of attending school regularly.
- impressing upon their children the need to observe the school's code of conduct.
- informing the school on the first day of absence, by 9.30 am at the latest.
- providing the school with an explanation for the absence.
- informing the school of any changes to their contact details.
- taking an active interest in their children's school career, praising and encouraging good work and behaviour and attending parent's evenings and other relevant meetings.
- working in partnership with the school to resolve issues which may lead to non-attendance.
- avoiding arranging medical/dental appointments during school hours.
- not booking holidays during term-time.
- treating staff with respect
- actively supporting the work of the school
- calling on staff for help when they need it
- communicating as early as possible circumstances which may affect absence or require support

7. Role of Attendance/ admin officer in conjunction with School Attendance Officer

The admin officer is responsible for:

- keeping the Head and all school staff informed of attendance figures and trends by providing regular reports to enable them to track the attendance of all pupils and to implement attendance procedures
- compiling attendance data for the Head, the Governing Body and the Local Authority Attendance Officer (LAAO).
- ensuring registers are distributed to the teaching staff and are kept up to date;
- consultations with the LAAO.
- contacting parents if they have not reported their child's absence by 9.30 am.
- sending a letter/email if no contact is made.
- ensuring that the Local Authority is notified of any pupil who fails to attend school regularly via a 10 Day Absence Form. See guidance on HCC Grid for form – https://thegrid.org.uk/admissions-attendance-travel-toschool/attendance/attendance-guidance-and-statutoryresponsibilities

8. Pastoral Lead

The pastoral lead supports children who are struggling to attend school and vulnerable children. Their role includes;

- Monitor and analyse attendance data regularly to ensure that intervention is delivered quickly to address absence (register inspections, code analysis, cohort and group monitoring, punctuality, lesson attendance across subjects and benchmarking).
- carry out robust first day calling procedures for targeted pupils including priority routine for vulnerable children including children with a social worker
- engage with feeder schools or organisations where required to access absence information in order to identify target cohorts prior to transfer, including mid-year transfers and managed moves
- provide appropriate support and challenge to establish good registration practice
- undertake home visits where required to engage families and ensure children are safe
- identify and, where possible, mitigate potential barriers to good attendance in liaison with families and relevant support agencies
- implement punctuality routines such as late gate or sign in procedures

- where pupils have additional vulnerabilities, which may require multi-agency meetings try to arrange those meetings outside of lesson time, where possible
- arrange meetings with parents to ensure clear channels of communication are in place and offer support/interventions where necessary.
- Making sure escalation procedures to address absence are initiated proactively, understood by pupils and families, implemented consistently and their impact reviewed regularly.

8.1. Pupils at risk of persistent absence

The pastoral lead to consider strategies are to support pupils who are at risk of persistent absence. This may include:

- provide regular attendance reports to facilitate weekly reviews with leaders (including special educational needs coordinators, designated safeguarding leads and pupil premium leads) for monitoring and evaluation purposes
- initiate and oversee the administration of absence procedures. This could include phoning the parents
- engagement with local authorities and other external agencies and partners
- work with families and the community to identify which methods of communication work best, recognising potential barriers in hard-to-reach families and find methods that work and are understood
- consideration if further interventions are required in line with the statutory guidance on parental responsibility measures
- provide regular reports to leaders on the at-risk cohort
- provide regular reports/caseloads to local authority attendance team or independent attendance organisations to raise awareness of emerging at-risk pupils

8.2. Pupils who are persistently absent

The pastoral lead to consider strategies are to support pupils who are persistently absence. This may include:

- Develop and implement persistent absence action plans with pupils and families which address barriers and help establish positive attendance routines
- Deliver interventions in a targeted way to improve attendance
- Monitor the impact of any intervention, making adjustments if necessary and using findings to inform future strategy
- Where interventions fail to address attendance issues, identify the reasons why and, where appropriate, change or adjust the intervention.
- Follow local authority codes of conduct, policies and procedures and make referrals for statutory intervention when interventions have not resulted in improved attendance and relevant triggers / thresholds are met.
- identify tailored intervention which meets the needs of the pupil, for example: mentoring or alternative provision where appropriate
- lead daily or weekly check-ins to review progress and impact of support
- make regular contact with families to discuss progress
- hold regular meetings or reviews of caseload with the local authority attendance team, external partners and alternative providers to check on welfare and review progress
- liaise with school leaders (designated safeguarding, special educational needs coordinator and pastoral leads) on referrals to external agencies and multi-agency assessments
- coordinate and contribute to multi-agency meetings to review progress and agree on actions

- work in partnership with local authority attendance team and other agencies to ensure the appropriate use of statutory parental responsibility measures
- provide regular reports to leaders on the impact of action plans and interventions

9. Encouraging good attendance

The School encourages good attendance by:

- Using clear and consistently applied systems and processes to improve, reward and incentivise attendance and address absences. Makes sure these systems are inclusive and appropriate for all pupils.
- publicising good attendance during assemblies, newsletters and the termly report to the Governing Body.

9.1. Dealing with Lateness

The office staff monitor lateness and inform:

- the Head/SLT/Teachers of patterns of lateness.
- parents of the school's concerns and arrange a meeting so that the problem can be addressed.
- The School doors are opened at 8.45am am and pupils are then expected to enter the school building and make their way to their classroom.
- Children who arrive after 8.55 am must be signed in by school for purposes of emergency evacuation etc.
- Pupils who arrive between 8.55 am and 9.15 am will be marked as 'late' but counted as present for that session (Code L).
- Pupils who arrive after the register has closed at 9.15 am and parent provides a satisfactory explanation will be marked as 'authorised absent' for that session.
- Pupils who arrive after the register has closed and parent fails to provide a satisfactory explanation will be marked as 'unauthorised absent' for that session (Code U)

9.2. Pupils at risk of Persistent Absence

Persistent absence occurs when a child's attendance falls below 90%. Absenteeism at this level will considerably damage a pupil's educational prospects and the school will work alongside parents/carers to tackle this issue by:

- establishing robust escalation procedures which are initiated before absence becomes a problem, for example by:
  - sending letters to parents and carers
  - having a weekly tutor review
  - creating attendance clinics o engaging with local authority attendance teams and/or independent attendance organisations o using fixed penalty notices
  - engaging with children's social care staff, including Virtual School Heads and social workers where appropriate
  - establishing a range of evidence-based interventions to address barriers to attendance
  - monitoring the implementation and quality of escalation procedures (and intervention), for example:
    - having a review and clinic drop in o sampling of case files
    - evaluating the impact of escalation procedures and seeking robust evidence of the escalation procedures that work and that reflect the school context best
    - attending or leading on attendance reviews and clinics in line with escalation procedures o engaging governors in attendance panels to reinforce messages and outline relevance in terms of training and employment.

9.3. Pupils who are persistently absent

The school may:

- establish clear and effective service level agreements with external partners to support pupils with persistent absence, including:
  - local authority attendance services
  - independent attendance organisations
  - alternative providers
  - youth services
  - school nursing and mental health professionals
  - children's social care staff where appropriate
  - establish good relationships with a network of voluntary organisations and charities to support vulnerable pupils including those with persistent absence, for example:
  - mental health charities
  - mentoring organisations
  - young carers association
- engage in or lead on attendance reviews and clinics in line with escalation procedures

10. Absence

Holidays during term time – changes to legislation which came into force in September 2013 made clear that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. If there are exceptional circumstances behind your request you should discuss these with the Headteacher. See letter from Jo Fisher, Director of Children's Services on HCC Grid when considering a term-time holiday – https://thegrid.org.uk/admissions-attendance-travel-toschool/attendance/holidays-in-term-time

- Religious Observance – a maximum of 3 days absence is allowed for recognised religious observance.
- Medical, Dental or Hospital Appointments – please ensure these appointments take place out of school time in order not to disrupt your child's education.

11. Part-time Timetables

As part of the framework for the inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after, and care leavers (Ofsted June 2015) local authorities are required to provide detailed data on school age children in their area who are not in receipt of full-time education and schools are similarly expected to maintain data on students of compulsory school age who are on their roll but attending on a part-time timetable.

- The Local authority has published guidance for all maintained school, academies, free schools, studio schools, UTCs, ESCs and PSBs on the use of part-time timetables for pupils of compulsory school age (the term after their fifth birthday to the last Friday in June following their 16th birthday)
- All schools are required to return information on children who are on part-time tables within five days of the pupil starting or ending a part -time timetable. Follow guidance on HCC Grid when considering a part-time timetable - https://thegrid.org.uk/admissions-attendance-travel-toschool/attendance/attendance-part-time-students

12. Monitoring

We believe this policy will be effective only if it is consistently monitored across the whole school.

Appendix A

Absences will be authorised if:

- The pupil is absent with leave as agreed by the Headteacher.
- The pupil is ill and has not been asked to provide proof of absence.
- The absence occurs on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parent belongs.
- The pupil is the child of Traveller parents who are known to be travelling for occupational purposes and have agreed this with the school but it is not known whether the pupil is attending alternative provision.
- There is a close family bereavement

Leave of absence has been applied for in advance and has been granted because of exceptional circumstances relating to the application (parents cannot expect, as of right, that the school will grant leave of absence).

- Leave of absence to allow a pupil to take part in a performance within the meaning of s37 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1963 © for which a child performance licence has been issued. HCC will not issue a child performance licence where absence is required without the written permission of the Headteacher. Only the school can authorise an absence. The fact that a parent has provided a note or other explanation (telephone call or personal contact) in relation to a particular absence does not, of itself, oblige the school to accept it, if the school does not accept the explanation offered as a valid reason for absence. If, after further investigation doubt remains about the explanation offered – or when no explanation is forthcoming at all – the absence will be treated as unauthorised and the parent informed.

Further resources Statutory guidance

- School behaviour and attendance: parental responsibility measures
- Children missing education
- Supporting pupils with medical conditions at school
- Keeping children safe in education
- Alternative provision
- Education for children with health needs who cannot attend school
- School exclusion Guidance and resources
- School attendance: guidance for schools
- Checklist for school leaders to support full opening: behaviour and attendance
- Mental health and wellbeing resources
- Mental health and behaviour guidance
- Approaches to preventing and tackling bullying
- Respectful School Communities Tool
- Skills for care: toolkit for social workers to support conversations about returning to education settings in September
- Education Endowment Foundation: research on texting parents
- Education Endowment Foundation: research on parental engagement
- National statistics: Pupil absence in schools in England