

# Newton Hill Community School



## Attendance Policy 2023-2025

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## **Introduction:**

Newton Hill Community School is committed to equality of opportunity and valuing diversity. We aim to create and promote an environment in which pupils, parents/carers and staff are treated fairly and with respect, and feel able to contribute to the best of their abilities.

There is a direct correlation between Attendance and Attainment. The aim of the Attendance Policy is to raise levels of attendance and punctuality for children and young people, therefore maximising their opportunities for improved attainment.

The policy intends:-

To raise attainment and achievement levels by having high expectations of attendance and punctuality, to report back weekly on attendance to parents, to work effectively with parents/carers and different agencies to maintain high attendance levels. Any absence leads to missed learning and may cause difficulties with social relationships. Encouraging good attendance and punctual arrival is the shared responsibility of the school and parents. Parents/carers have a responsibility to see that their children receive the appropriate education and it is the responsibility of the school to ensure that this happens.

### **Aims of the Policy**

- To deliver a motivating, relevant, accessible curriculum to all children.
- Reduce absence and lateness, and raise awareness of the importance of school attendance. Track Persistent absence data.
- Maintain high expectations in relation to attendance; all children should be aware that every day counts and that their attendance is important.
- To encourage and celebrate good attendance through our reward systems.
- Include all school staff, parents, pupils and governors in School Attendance Matters strategies.
- Develop a robust electronic data handling system, enabling school staff, the LA and DfE to access statistical data in order to work effectively in partnership.
- Work effectively with parents/carers and partner agencies, using a range of strategies to improve the attendance of individual pupils and the whole school. The strategies may include assemblies, rewards and added support for individual families.

### **Collection of data:**

Electronic registration takes place between 8.50am-9.00am and 1.00pm-1.05pm. All class teachers are responsible for the sending of registers to the Learning Mentor on time.

Children arriving after registration will be given a late mark. Children arriving ½ hr after the start of the school session will be recorded as unauthorised absence for that session.

The efficient collection of the data is essential to the development of effective strategies for action. Data is required to monitor individual absence and lateness at school. Patterns of lateness and absence and the identification of trends by

- Year Groups
- Seasonal patterns
- Patterns and nature of absence.

## **The Law:**

Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act states:

**If a child of compulsory school age fails to attend regularly, the parent is guilty of an offence.**

Parents/carers, therefore have a legal responsibility to ensure their child's school attendance. Failure can lead to legal action being taken by the LA in the Magistrates Court, or the need to issue Fixed Penalty Fines. Since March 2001 there has been a further offence, Section 444 (1A) where a parent knowingly allows their child to be absent from school. This offence can carry a custodial sentence.

## **Absence from school:**

Any absence from school is detrimental to a child's education and progress. It disrupts learning, routines and progress. Government research shows that 17 days lost learning in one school year can lead to a drop of one grade at GCSE and SAT level.

Authorised absence is where the school accepts there is good reason for absence. An authorised absence requires parents/carers to complete a request form or telephone communication. A child's own word cannot be taken as reason for absence. Phone calls home are made on the first and every successive day of absence for all children unless word has been received from parents about reasons for an extended absence.

## **Authorised Absence:**

Some absences are unavoidable, usually due to illness, bereavement or difficult family circumstances. These absences should be supported by medical evidence where possible or an explanation from the parent/carer. The decision to authorise an absence lies with the Headteacher.

All requests must be made in writing on the standard absence request form (available in the school office) which will be reviewed by the Headteacher and the Learning Mentor.

## **Unauthorised Absence:**

These are absences which are not permissible in Law, e.g birthdays, shopping trips, days out and Term Time Holidays, and absences where no explanation has been received. The school will discuss unauthorised absence with the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) and further action may be agreed.

The Headteacher cannot authorise holiday taken in term time. The school works in close partnership with the EWS regarding the issue of Fixed Penalty Fines. Penalty notices will be issued if a child is taken on a term time holiday for 5 days or more. This doesn't necessarily have to be 5 consecutive days. Parents are asked to complete a request form for any absences from school.

Home visits will be carried out where school feel it is required. Calling cards will be posted which states the family must contact school as soon as possible. Failure to do this may result in referrals to additional agencies including the Police and Social Care Direct.

## **Persistent Absence:**

Each child's personal circumstances and needs will be considered case by case and then, if deemed necessary, letters will be sent to parents of children with attendance of less than 90%. Attendance is monitored daily, weekly and monthly by the Learning Mentor/Headteacher and letters can be distributed at any stage as a result of this. Education Welfare will support the school in this process and decisions will be made as to whether the families need to enter a 'Fast Track' process to rapidly improve attendance. Should the targets for improvement fail to be met then the school will work with the Education Welfare team to accelerate this to the next level.

## **Punctuality:**

The Law states that children should arrive at school on time, every day. The school **doors open at 8.50am** and the expectation is that pupils should be ready to learn at 9.00am. Poor punctuality is unacceptable and persistent lateness, whereby a pupil arrives after the close of registration at 9.30am may be marked as an unauthorised absence, leaving parents/carers at risk of legal action.

Contact will also be made with families of children who are arriving at school after the start time for each morning and afternoon session. Often this first contact will be via phone call and supported with a letter. A child's own word cannot be taken as a reason for lateness and in all circumstances late arriving children must be brought to the main reception with the adult who has brought them to school. Only the adult will be allowed to give the reason for late arrival. This will then be recorded for our records.

## **Roles and Responsibilities:**

Newton Hill Community School will:

- Set high expectations for pupil attendance, and monitor individual and whole school attendance on a weekly basis.
- Identify causes of concern with regard to pupil attendance.
- Make initial contact with parents where there is unexplained absence.
- Invite parents/carers into school to discuss concerns if there is no improvement.
- Work in partnership with the LA, and with EWO particularly.
- Maintain electronic registration data systems effectively and deploy them robustly to facilitate presentation of reports.
- Provide attendance data for parents.
- Promote attendance at all levels – within school, the community, the LA, regionally and nationally.
- Celebrate excellent and improved attendance.

Parents and Carers will:

- Ensure pupils arrive at school on time every day and that routines are in place at home to support this.
- Contact the school as soon as possible if absence is unavoidable, and follow this up with a written explanation.
- Obtain evidence where appropriate to support medical absence.
- Avoid term time holidays, and attempt to minimise school time appointments.
- During and after meetings parents must adhere to agreed Attendance Action Plans.

Education Welfare Service will:

- The EWS will work in partnership with the school to promote and facilitate improved attendance, at an individual level and whole school using proactive strategies.
- The EWS will meet with the Learning Mentor/Headteacher every half term to discuss concerns and agree the next steps.
- The EWS will work with children and families to ensure their school attendance and safeguarding is maintained.
- EWS will provide advice and guidance with regards to Children Missing Education.
- EWS will work in partnership with other agencies and will offer advice and signposting for referrals to appropriate organisations.
- EWS will undertake legal action on behalf of the School.
- The LA will support the school with networking and training events and with individual School Audits and Action Plans.

The school complies with GDPR and data and documentation will be stored in line with the School's Retention guidance (copy available on request).