



# Northampton School *for Boys*

## Attendance Policy

**Approved by:**

**Date:**

**Review Date:**

**Governor Welfare Committee**

**September 2019**

**September 2020**

# **ATTENDANCE POLICY**

Regular school attendance is essential if students are to achieve their full potential. Northampton School *for Boys* believes that regular attendance is the key to enabling students to maximise the educational opportunities available to them and to become resilient and confident adults who are able to realise their full potential and make a positive contribution to their community.

## **POLICY AIMS**

- To emphasise the importance of, and secure from students and their parents, maximum attendance 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 levels
- 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 (teachers, parents, students) 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

## **Introduction**

Student attendance is a national priority and is a key indicator of an effective school and, as such, will be scrutinised by Ofsted. National data clearly shows a correlation between high attendance and high examination performance.

Regular and punctual attendance of students at school is a statutory requirement under section 7 of the Education Act 1996. It is a legal requirement for parents being responsible for ensuring that any child of compulsory school age receives efficient full-time education that is suitable to the child's age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs the child may have.

Compulsory school age is defined as commencing at the start of term on or after a child's fifth birthday and concluding on the last Friday in June of the school year in which the student becomes 16.

Whilst at school, The Education (Student Registration) (England) Regulations 2013, require schools to take an attendance register twice a day, once at the start of the morning session and again during the afternoon session.

The register must be recorded whether the student was;

- a. Present
- b. Absent
- c. Present at approved educational activity; or
- d. Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstance.

Northampton School *for Boys* Attendance Policy should not be viewed in isolation; it is a strand that runs through all aspects of school improvement, supported by our policies on safeguarding, bullying, behaviour and SEN.

### **Attendance Concerns**

If the school is becoming concerned with a particular attendance issue following a period of investigation and intervention, then it may refer the case to The Educational Inclusion and Partnership Team (EIPT) who supports the Local Authority in carrying out their statutory duties with regards to promoting regular attendance at school. The EIPT investigate cases of irregular attendance and instigate statutory intervention where appropriate.

Irregular attendance raises complex issues as it leads to students missing important lessons and therefore not fulfilling their true potential. It also places children at risk and may result in them being drawn into patterns of anti-social or criminal behaviour. Therefore, we take the issue of attendance very seriously and do all we can to obtain very high attendance from all our students.

In any case of attendance concern, we understand that students may be failing to attend school for a variety of reasons. Some reasons may be outside the immediate control of the school, but as a school we aim adopt good practice and appropriate responses within the school to identify the needs which can help to improve attendance. The importance of early identification, assessment and intervention cannot be over emphasised.

### **What is an acceptable attendance rate?**

The vast majority of our students achieve over **96%** attendance and this is seen as a **minimum target**. Student attendance is closely monitored at Northampton School *for Boys* and may be shared with the Local Authority and other agencies if a student's attendance is a cause for concern. The school will use a robust sequence of strategies which will be put in place to address any issues regarding students who's attendance drops below this minimum target.

At Northampton School *for Boys* we require students to aim for unbroken weeks of attendance (i.e. those where the student is marked present on all ten sessions – a session is either one morning or one afternoon). Students should aim to NOT have more than one or two broken weeks in the course of an academic year. Regular broken weeks are a cause for concern and will be followed up by the school.

The school recognises that poor attendance can be an indication of difficulties in a child's life. This may be related to problems at home or in school. Parents should make school aware of any difficulties or changes in circumstances that may affect their child's attendance and or behaviour in school. These may include a recent bereavement or parental divorce or separation. This communication with the school will help identify any additional support that may be required. Support offered to families will be child centred and planned in discussion and agreement with both parents and students.

Where parents fail or refuse to engage with the support and further unauthorised absence occurs then Northampton School *for Boys* will consider referring the case to the Education

Inclusion and Partnership Team (EIPT) to investigate further, which may result in legal sanctions.

### **Absence Authorisation**

Absence can only be authorised by the Headmaster and cannot be authorised by parents. All absences will be treated as unauthorised unless satisfactory explanation for the student's absence has been received.

The Headmaster has the authority to exercise discretion to authorise absence based on exceptional circumstances being presented.

The Department for Education (DfE) has issued guidelines (School Attendance November 2013) to all schools detailing valid reasons for authorised or justified absences:

- a. When a child is ill or receiving medical attention
- b. Days of religious observance notified in advance
- c. Absence due to exceptional family circumstances (e.g. bereavement, serious illness)

If your child is sick, parents must advise the school by telephone on the first day of absence and provide the school with an expected date of return. This should be followed up in the form of a written note from the parent/carer to the Form Tutor.

Illness comes usually in a block of time over a continuous period. Parents may be asked to provide medical evidence to allow the Headmaster to authorise absence where appropriate.

There are other circumstances where the school may authorise absences such as when a student is selected to represent the school by either the school or a schools-based organisation.

The Headmaster may also use their discretion when considering requests for a student to represent the county, region or country.

### **Professional Sport Absence**

If a student is chosen to be part of a professional academy (e.g. football or rugby academy) which requires a regular commitment of time out of school such as a 'day release programme', then such absences must be formally requested directly to the Headmaster in the first instance.

The Headmaster may consider this request under Section 6 (4)a of The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 if the activity is 'of an educational nature' and the pupils will be 'supervised by someone authorised by the school'.

The Headmaster may use discretion on a case by case basis to authorise such an absence and may include a condition of signing an agreement about maintaining good academic progress, a good attendance rate and a good behaviour record.

If the Headmaster believes that these conditions are not being met, the school reserves the right to withdraw authorisation, and will notify both the parents and the organisers in writing.

The school will need to be satisfied that the persons in charge of the activity have been trained regarding safeguarding of children's welfare and can be authorised as a suitable person by the school. The school must also be satisfied to all other relevant safeguarding and welfare aspects of the provision by any club or association.

### **Medical Appointments**

At Northampton School *for Boys*, we expect absences to be kept to a minimum. Routine medical and dental appointments should be arranged out of school hours wherever possible. Where appointments in school time are unavoidable, the school should be informed in advance. A "present" mark may still be awarded if the student attends for as much of the session as possible. It is always better to attend for some time, rather than missing the whole school day.

### **Study Leave**

During examination periods the school will normally set a revised timetable of attendance for some students. This will involve changing the expectation to attend school on a number of sessions over a period of time for particular students depending on their individual timetable of exams. Where a student has an exam during a session, or a timetabled study/revision session, then the student attending these will be recorded as present. Where there is no such timetabled activity for a session, then the student will be recorded as S (Study Leave). This is an authorised absence. In Y11, the arrangements for study leave will normally continue until the final Friday in June, after which the student is taken off roll.

### **Exclusions**

If your child is excluded from attending school, it will be counted as authorised absence. We will make arrangements for work to be sent home which will be detailed in an exclusion letter.

### **Exceptional Circumstances**

Parents who need to take their child out of school during term time due to exceptional circumstances must send a written request to the school. The Headmaster will consider each request based upon the individual circumstances. Retrospective requests will not be considered and therefore will result in the absence being categorised as unauthorised.

### **Unauthorised Absences - Holidays in Term Time**

At Northampton School *for Boys*, we have always said that the best place for students to make educational progress, to reach their potential and realise their ambitions is to be in the classroom learning. We strongly discourage holidays from being taken in term time as learning is disrupted and the lost time is detrimental to the educational progress of the child. From September 2013 the government regulations changed and to this end **the**

**Headmaster will NOT sanction holidays taken during term time.** This means that any requests from parents for holidays will be rejected and if any parents do take holidays during term time, the register will be marked as an unauthorised absence (code G).

The Headmasters decision is in line with the Education (Student Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2006. In addition, Education (Penalty Notice) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 set out the procedures for Local Authorities to issue fixed penalty notices (fines) to each parent who fails to ensure their child's regular attendance at school. Parents must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days.

The schools term time dates for the forthcoming year will be available on the school website or can be sought through the school reception.

All requests for leave of absence will be responded to in writing outlining the Headmasters decision.

If the permission to take leave is not granted and the parent takes their child out of school the absence will be coded as unauthorised. In such cases the school may request the Local Authority issue a Penalty Notice or consider legal sanctions including prosecution.

If a student fails to return and contact with the parents has not been made or received, the school may take the student off the schools roll in compliance with Education (Student Registration) (England) Regulations 2013. This means that the child will lose their school place.

In accordance with the Education (Student Registration) (England) Regulations 2013, students can be deleted from the register when one of the following circumstances applies;

- a. The student has ceased to be of compulsory school age
- b. Permanent exclusion has occurred and procedures have been completed
- c. Transfer between schools
- d. Student withdrawn to be educated outside the school system (Elective Home Education)
- e. Failure to return from an extended holiday after the school has tried to locate the student.
- f. A medical condition prevents attendance and return to the school before ending compulsory school age
- g. In custody for more than four months
- h. 20 days of continuous unauthorised absence and the school has tried to locate the student.
- i. Left the school but not know where he/she has gone after the school has tried to locate the student.
- j. Death of a student.

### **Child Missing from Education**

If a student has not attended for a period of 10 consecutive days, and there has been no explanation from parents/carers, despite attempts by the school to contact home, then the school will report the student as a Child Missing from Education to the Local Authority. This is part of the school's and the Local Authority's responsibility for Safeguarding.

## **Persistent Absences**

Persistent Absence was defined in September 2015 by The Department for Education as less than 90% attendance. It also reported following a recent audit that persistent absence is correlated with crime. The Audit Commission reported that a quarter of school age offenders have persistent non-attendance records and that persistent school non-attendance is associated with child and adolescent mental health difficulties. It is therefore vital that we at Northampton School *for Boys* tackle this issue robustly in order to reduce the number of students whose attendance is below 90% over the school year whatever the reason for their absence.

The school will seek to avoid students falling into the Persistent Absentee category by identifying students whose attendance is giving cause for concern at statistical thresholds. The school will bring the attendance rate to the attention of the parent/carer and seek ways in which working together the attendance rate can be improved.

The school will invite parents/carers to a meeting to discuss the issues behind the absence and stress the importance of improved attendance. If the attendance rate does not improve, the school will seek to establish a Parenting Contract with the parents/carers to set targets for future attendance. A Parenting Contract is a voluntary written agreement between you and either the Local Authority or the school's governing body. The aim of the contract is to investigate ways to improve your child's attendance. If you refuse to make a contract or you do not stick to it, it can be used as evidence if the Local Authority decides to prosecute you.

## **Punctuality to School**

When a student is late arriving for a session, a Late mark will be recorded. There are two possible records depending on circumstances. If a student arrives in the morning session after 8:50 am but before 10:30 am, then the code L will be recorded for the session and the time of arrival will be recorded in the register as a comment. This code is statistically a "present" code and indicates that the student was present for the session.

Where a student arrives after 10:30 am, then a code U will be recorded. This code is statistically an "absent" code. However, in the case of a Parent Contract for attendance, the school will regard 9:15 am as the point beyond which the code U is recorded. This is to encourage not only good recorded attendance for sessions but also good punctuality which means the student is accessing lessons regularly. In the afternoon session, the code L will be used between 2:05pm and 2:30pm and the code U will be entered for a student arriving after 2:30pm.

Given that there may be circumstances where statistically a "present" code (L) is recorded for a student for the session for a period between 8:50 am and 10:30 am even though that student was not at school, the school will normally record a lesson register within that session to indicate more precisely when the student was actually attending lessons. Once again, the school recognises a Safeguarding responsibility here to keep accurate records of the whereabouts of students on roll.

## **The Local Authorities Policy For Prosecution**

The Local Authorities statutory responsibility to oversee school attendance means they have the legal powers to carry out legal enforcement measures through the work of the Education Inclusion and Partnership Team (EIPT). If as a school we believe that a student is demonstrating persistent irregular or non-school attendance or unauthorised term time absence, then the school may refer the case to the EIPT.

The EIPT will seek to enforce that parent/s of any student of compulsory school age who fails to achieve regular attendance will be considered for legal processing unless there are extenuating circumstances.

The EIPT will pay due consideration to the Education Act 1996 Section 444 - Failure to Ensure Regular Attendance.

- a. Section 444(1) Where a parent/carer is failing in their duty to ensure regular attendance at school and school have made attempts to engage and support. Where, following this intervention the unauthorised absence continues and no statutory defences apply, the EIPT will consider instigating legal proceedings.
- b. Section 444(1A) Where a parent/carer is failing in their duty to ensure regular attendance at school and school have made attempts to engage and support. Where, following this intervention the unauthorised absence continues and no statutory defences apply, the EIPT will consider instigating legal proceedings. Where it can also be proved the parent/carer knew about the poor attendance and failed, without reasonable justification to ensure regular attendance then legal enforcement will be taken under this section.

The EIPT may also use the Education (Penalty Notice) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 to enforce Penalty Notices.

- a. Penalty Notices (PN) for Non-School Attendance;

These will be issued as an alternative to Magistrates' Court proceedings wherever it is appropriate and in accordance with the Local Authority Code of Conduct. To issue a PN, there should be 5 days (10 sessions) or more unauthorised absences in a 6-week period however we would expect schools to follow their attendance procedures in identifying the issues and putting support in place.

- b. Penalty Notices for term time absence;

These will be issued as an alternative to Magistrates Court Proceedings whenever it is appropriate and in accordance with the Local Authority Code of Conduct. To issue a PN, there should be 5 days (10 sessions) or more of consecutive unauthorised absence.

An unpaid Penalty Notice (issued in accordance with the Local Authority Penalty Notice Code of Conduct (revised September 2016) may form part of the evidence towards prosecution.

## **Home/School Partnership**

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

- a. Do all you can to ensure your child arrives on time for morning and afternoon school. The first lesson begins at 8.45am and afternoon registration is at 2.00 p.m. Parents can be referred to the EIPT if their child persistently arrives late. We will monitor persistent late comers and there will be consequences for any student arriving late persistently.
- b. If your child is ill, notify the school **on the first day** with an estimation of the likely length of absence;
- c. Send in a written note with your child on the first day they are back at school. This should be given to the Form Tutor. This is required for our records and also authenticates the telephone message.
- d. Check your child's attendance records on the school website and notify us of any discrepancy, especially if a record displays an 'N' code as this means that we have not been informed as to the reason for the absence on this day.
- e. Get in touch at an early stage about any concerns you have about your child's attitude to school.

In return the school will:

- f. Contact home on day 2 of absence if no message has been received from home
- g. Contact home on day 1 of absence if no message has been received from home where the student has an attendance record of less than 90% and is therefore identified as requiring intervention and support
- h. Contact home over any unexplained absences
- i. Follow up promptly any concerns that parents pass on to us that may be affecting their child's attitude to, or feeling of wellbeing in, school
- j. If appropriate, involve the Additional Intervention Team to help students re-integrate into school after illness or other individual circumstances
- k. Regularly and consistently remind students of the importance of good attendance and punctuality
- l. Reward good or improving attendance and action any concerns promptly

## **Sixth Form**

Sixth Form students, whilst beyond legislation regarding compulsory attendance at school are, nevertheless, subject to the same high expectations as the rest of the school. In the

case of absence, the Attendance Secretary will contact home in the same way as for Years 7 to 11 on the second day of absence.

### **Rewards for Good Attendance**

To promote good attendance and to emphasise its importance in Years 7-11 the school presents certificates for 100% attendance and certificates for 100% attendance and punctuality. The certificates are presented by Year Team Leaders and become part of the student's record. Prospective employers and Colleges of Further Education view attendance as an important indicator of motivation/attitude and the Certificates are very valuable evidence of reliability.

During the course of the year individual rewards and House points to form groups are allocated for excellent attendance.

Attendances and absences are also included in Form Tutor reports home on an annual basis.

### **Reported Attendance Targets**

As a result of the school's minimum attendance target being 96%, we will use the following guidance in reporting to parents each year in the Form Tutor's report comment on attendance:

<u>Percentage present</u>	<u>Comment</u>
100%	Outstanding
96 -99.9%	Good
Below 96%	Unsatisfactory

The Form Tutor will apply discretion in cases where absence has been unavoidable but, even so, every absence means lessons missed, learning interrupted and progress dented.

### **Northampton School for Boys - Roles and Responsibilities**

Outstanding attendance levels are achieved as a result of staff, students and parents working closely together with a sense of shared responsibility.

**Attendance secretary and Assistant Attendance secretary:** responsible for acting upon information as received from parents on the first day of illness. Operates the signing in and signing out record for those arriving late or leaving early and entering this record onto the registers. Contacts home on day 2 of an absence where no communication has been received from parents/carers (day 1 in the case of those students whose attendance is of concern i.e. less than 90% attendance). Produces the weekly records on attendance and punctuality for YTLs, SLT and Headmaster.

**Form Tutor:** responsible for keeping an up-to-date and accurate register of attendance and punctuality for morning and afternoon sessions for each student in the form. Essential point of contact for communications about absences. Receives, records and files messages from parents and communicates these to others as appropriate. Contacts parents/carers where information has not been given about absences. Promotes the value of good attendance.

Monitors students' attendance and punctuality weekly and intervenes with students whose attendance is showing cause for concern.

**Year Team Leader:** promotes the values of good attendance to the whole year group. Monitors weekly attendance and punctuality statistics for the year group. Oversees intervention and support for those students whose attendance is starting to show cause for concern. Works directly with the form tutor concerning those students who are Persistent Absentees (90% or less) and those who are in danger of becoming persistent absentees. Sets up Parent Contracts as necessary and ensures formal records are kept for any EIPT involvement. Works with EIPT as necessary.

**Assistant Headteacher responsible for attendance:** coordinates work of YTLs so that procedures and processes are fit for purpose and consistently applied. Develops the promotion of good attendance amongst students, staff and parents. Monitors the attendance of Persistent Absentees through the weekly returns, ensuring that Action Plans are in place and being followed. Delivers staff training on attendance issues as appropriate. Organises termly focus weeks on attendance and punctuality. Leads the Attendance development of the Welfare Development Plan. Supports YTLs on work regarding Parent Contracts and work with EIPT.

**SENCO:** If there are students with significant medical issues which adversely affect their attendance at school, the SENCO will work with Hospital and Outreach, as well as other relevant agencies, to support the student's attendance at school or educational provision elsewhere.

### **Roles and Responsibility of the Parent**

Talk to your child about school and education. Take a positive interest in your child's work and educational progress.

Instil the value of education and regular school attendance within the home environment.

Encourage your child to have high aspirations and plan for the future.

Follow the school Attendance Policy by contacting the school if your child is absent to inform the school of the reason for the absence and expected date of return.

Follow up any absence with a note.

Try to avoid unnecessary absence. Wherever possible make appointments for the doctors or dentist outside of school hours.

Ask the school for help if your child is experiencing difficulties.

Inform the school of any change of circumstances that may impact your child's attendance.

Support the school by taking every opportunity to become involved in your child's time at school.

Form a positive relationship with the school and acknowledge the importance of your child receiving the same messages from both school and home.

Encourage a routine at home which includes bed times, home learning, preparing for the next day and school uniform.

Avoid taking your child out of school during term time for reasons such as holidays as this will be unauthorised.

When requesting authorisation for term time absence, ensure a written letter with the detailed exceptional circumstances is sent to the Headmaster in good time.

Approved by:

Date:

Review Date:

Governors Welfare Committee

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Deputy Head, Pastoral  
Assistant Headteacher, Pastoral

Matt Kneeshaw  
Craig Armstrong

Related Policies include Child Protection, Equality, and Behaviour.