




# Newfield School

## Attendance Policy and Procedures

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<b>Governors:</b>	Local Governing Body
<b>Signature of Chair:</b>	
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# **Newfield School Attendance Policy and Procedures**

At Newfield School we want our students to:

- Be motivated and enjoy learning
- Develop a range of skills to equip them for a successful adult life, such as independence and ambition
- Be confident, responsible, happy and feel safe
- Be friendly, respectful, caring and polite
- Experience success every day

In a school that:

- Fosters individual talents and abilities in every child
- Has high expectations for all
- Celebrates success and achievement in all its forms
- Values the role parents and carers play
- Is continually striving to improve

## **1. Introduction**

We believe that for children to gain the greatest benefit from their education and consequently to have the best start in life, it is vital that they attend school on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for absence is unavoidable.

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning. Students often find it difficult to catch up on learning that they have missed through absence. If absence is frequent, the student will experience a slowing of their progress and feel they are falling behind their peers. This can affect how a student feels about school and can make their attendance even worse. A downward spiral of attendance can occur rapidly.

There is a clear link between attendance and academic attainment. Statistics suggest that a student whose attendance is below 90% will drop at least one grade across all their subjects.

Regular patterns of attendance are vital for young people to maintain friendships and peer networks. Students with regular absence can quickly feel isolated from their peers and this again affects how they might feel about coming to school. Good attendance is important if students are to participate in and enjoy school community events like sporting fixtures, drama and music productions and charity fundraising events.

Student absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class. Teachers are not always in a position to provide one-to-one tuition to students who fall behind in their learning.

Post 16 establishments and employers will want to be sure that the people they are thinking of recruiting are reliable. So students who have not attended school regularly have less chance of getting a Post-16 course of their choice or have less chance of getting a job.

Young people who absent from school for no good reason are at risk of becoming victims of crime or abuse. They may also be drawn into anti-social behaviour.

## **2. Policy**

Newfield School will work in partnership with parents/carers and students to maximise every student's attendance. In addition to preventative strategies to promote attendance, flexible educational support plans will be devised to support students with persistent absence. If an individual referral is made to the Multi-Agency Support Team (MAST) then the school will continue to collaborate with others to resolve the attendance problem. School will use the full range of voluntary and statutory procedures available to it in an escalated approach. Safeguarding children procedures will always override any escalated response.

### **Linked policies**

Behaviour and Discipline Policy  
Safeguarding Children Policy and Procedures  
Complaints Policy and Procedures  
Exceptional Leave During Term Time Policy

## **3 Procedures**

### **3.1 The law**

Under Section 7 of the Education Act 1996, parents/carers are responsible for making sure that children of compulsory school age receive full-time education. Parents have a legal responsibility to ensure that their child has regular attendance at school where they are registered.

If a child of compulsory school age who is registered at a school fails to attend regularly at school then the parent/carer is guilty of an offence under Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996.

Since March 2001 there has been a further offence where a parent/carer, knowing that their child is failing to attend regularly at school, fails without reasonable justification to cause him/her to attend (Education Act 1996, Section 444(1A) as amended by Criminal Justice and Court Service Act 2000).

The definition of a parent/carer is any adult who lives in the home or homes where the student resides.

By law a student must currently remain in education until the last Friday in June in the school year in which she/he reaches the age of 18.

### **3.2 Types of Absence**

Every half day of absence from school has to be classified as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. The classification decision is taken by school and not by parents/carers.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason such as genuine illness, medical/dental appointments that unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

Wherever possible parents/carers should seek to make appointments for regular medical/dental check-ups outside school time. When a medical/dental or similar appointment is known in advance, parents/carers should notify school of the date and time of the absence. This enables 'leave of absence' to be recorded prior to the absence. Only sufficient time to the appointment should be taken from school. A student is expected, where possible, to attend school before an appointment or return to school following an appointment.

Unauthorised absences are those that the school do not consider reasonable or for which no "leave" has been given. When school considers a student's absence to be high or following an unusual pattern, then parents/carers may be asked to provide additional medical evidence to help explain any illness absence. Additional medical evidence may include a doctor's appointment card or photocopy of a pharmacy prescription with medical details erased. The purpose of parents/carers providing additional medical evidence is to help school make fair and objective decisions over which absences are genuine and which are non-genuine illness. School will not pay for any charges incurred by the writing of a doctor's note.

If the school has requested that the parent/carer provides such additional medical evidence as exemplified above and none is provided then the absence will be classified as unauthorised.

If the school believes it has good reason to classify an absence as unauthorised despite having contact with the parent/carer, then the parent/carer will be informed. Likewise, if a student absence is changed at a later date from authorised to unauthorised for whatever reason, then the parent/carer will be informed.

Unauthorised absence can lead to the Local Authority or the school using sanctions and/or legal proceedings.

These include:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- Truancy (missing lessons – whether the student stays on the school site or not)
- Absences which are not properly explained
- Students who arrive to school after registers have closed
- Students absent from school for inappropriate reasons such as shopping, looking after other children or because it is their birthday
- Day trips or holidays during term time which are not agreed by school

### **3.3 Punctuality**

The law covering the parental responsibility of ensuring their child attends school regularly also applies to students arriving to school on time. At Newfield School, students in Years 7 to 11 must be in their registration form room by 8:30am. If a student arrives at the Student Entrance later than 8:30am then they are late.

A student will have a comment written in their planner by a member of staff who is on duty at the main student entrance, when they are late to school. When a child has collected 2 or 4 late comments in a week, it serves as a reminder that they have a detention after school. Normally, the detention will be the following day.

A text message will be sent home to a parent/carer to state the date and reason for the detention. Those students who have collected more than one detention in a school

day, will serve their detentions on consecutive days after school. A daily list of after school detentions will be displayed on the Lower School/Upper School Office doors. It is the child's responsibility to attend their detention. Only acceptable late marks are for those students travelling on the school bus, which has arrived late.

If a student continues to be frequently late, parents/carers will be contacted by phone and by letter to remind them of their legal responsibility to ensure their child arrives to school on time.

### **3.4 Holidays in Term Time**

Taking holiday during school term time will affect a child's schooling as much as any other absence and school expects parents/carers not to take children away during term time. School believes that any savings that may be made by taking a holiday during term time is offset by the cost to the child's education.

There is no automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday. At Newfield School, the Headteacher will only authorise holiday in term time in the most exceptional circumstances.

Request for leave of absence during term time must be submitted on the 'Request for Exceptional Term Time Leave' form (available from Student Services) at least one month before the first date of absence and preferably before any booking has been made. School is not liable for any cancellation or alteration charges incurred by a family as a result of school not authorising a holiday during term time.

Parents/carers who do not request term time leave and take their child(ren) on 'unauthorised leave', or fail to keep the school informed of changes to leave arrangements, may receive a fine, be prosecuted and/or the child(ren) may lose their place at Newfield School.

### **3.5 Expectations of Key Stakeholders**

#### **Students**

- Arrive at school by 8:30am for registration
- Be on time for registration and all lessons. Lateness to school or lessons, without good reason, incurs a comment in the Student Planner.
- Hand in any letter or note from your parent/carer explaining an absence to Student Services
- If late in the morning, sign in at Student Services
- If you need to leave early from school, sign out at Student Services
- Tell your form tutor, Head of Year, or any other member of staff in school you trust if you are having any problems attending school, e.g. you are being bullied, feeling unhappy or have problems at home

#### **Parents/carers**

- Ensure that children attend school on time every day
- Telephone school to report that your child will not be in school and the reasons why on the morning of the first day of their absence
- Where possible make any medical or dental appointments outside of school hours or not in term time
- Do not book holidays or take children out of school during term time
- Notify school as soon as problems arise with your child's attendance

- Encourage children to report any bullying immediately to school staff

#### **Form tutors and teachers**

- Be good role models for students
- Give attendance and punctuality to lessons a high priority
  - Praise students for arriving on time
  - Share concerns with Heads of Year/Year Managers immediately if you suspect a pattern of absence, truancy and/or lateness to lessons
- Complete the register promptly and accurately
- Ensure students enter their cumulative and weekly attendance percentages on the attendance pages in the Student Planner on a weekly basis during the allocated attendance morning

#### **School Attendance Officer**

- Keep accurate records of responses from parents/carers when their child is absent. Amend the electronic register accordingly
- Make contact with parent/carer if no contact has been received in the morning of the first day of a child's absence (by text or telephone call)
- Authorise or unauthorise the child's absence according to school's Attendance Policy and Procedures
- Prepare weekly data to scrutinise and monitor levels of absence, especially students whose attendance has already been identified as a concern
- Refer to the MAST any student who has been absent for 10 consecutive sessions (5 days) without explanation

#### **Heads of Year**

- Help celebrate good attendance and punctuality in assemblies, with individual students and with groups of students
- Monitor students with poor attendance and punctuality and action the appropriate intervention and support strategy
- Contact Social Services immediately upon the first day of absence of any child who has a Child Protection Plan or is a Looked After Child (Child in Care)
- Work with other agencies, parents/carers and staff in school to support students with their health, wellbeing and progress in learning

#### **Senior Leadership Team**

- Support and developed the roles and responsibilities as outlined previously
- Work on strategic plans and actions, including reviewing school policies and procedures that are required to bring about improvements in student attendance

#### **Governors**

- Support staff in school in high level intervention strategies, namely school attendance panels and prosecution panels
- Act as the school's critical friend and challenge the appropriateness and effectiveness of Attendance Policy and Procedures

### **3.6 Promoting and Celebrating Regular Attendance**

**Attendance Display Boards** – Whole school attendance (year-to-date) will be calculated monthly and compared to the School's attendance target. This will be published to all staff and students via the school's attendance notice boards for Lower School and Upper School.

**Weekly Attendance Display Shows** – A PowerPoint show is displayed on the plasma screens on the lower level of the school on a weekly basis.

**School reports home** – Year-to-date individual student attendance records will be attached to all academic reports that go out to parents/carers at different times of the academic year or at parent's evenings.

**Attendance Reward System** – Rewards for attendance are linked to the whole School Consistent Discipline Model rewards system and is based on rewards stamps. Each member of staff will be allocated a stamper that is personalised.

During tutor time students can also be awarded a stamp each Friday for each of the following criteria related to attendance and punctuality:

- 100% attendance for the week
- Being on time throughout the whole week

The awarding of stamps is collected in the Student Planner. Members of staff will stamp a student's planner in the appropriate week on the appropriate planner page.

As part of the criteria for the 'Half Termly Rewards Trips/Events' students have to have had 95% attendance for the half term. The rewards trip/event time period runs for one half term and is reset for the next half term to allow students a fresh opportunity six times a year to access the opportunity to attend the rewards trips/events provided by the school.

### **3.7 Monitoring Interventions and Legal Sanctions**

**Interviews with students and letters of cause for concern** – as a first step, a weekly attendance meeting is held involving the Attendance Officer, Attendance Support Officer and the senior member of staff with responsibility for attendance. Where any students with a drop in attendance the previous week are discussed and the next step confirmed. Attendance is monitored by using a 'Whole Year Group Weekly Analysis' spread sheet. The attendance team will then allocate appropriate interventions depending on the student's level of attendance. Intervention may be split into 3 different categories:

Attendance Category	Action
<b>Heads of Year</b>	<p>Heads of Year conduct half termly meetings (minimum of two conversations per half term) with the students they have been assigned. Completed meeting notes should be returned to the Attendance Office at the end of each half term to support accurate next wave intervention.</p> <p>Heads of Year will also collect Unexplained Absence sheets from the Attendance Office on a weekly basis and meet with students to discuss their absence. Completed meeting notes should be returned to the Attendance Office.</p>
<b>Attendance Support Officer</b>	<p>Home visits are carried out to those students that are persistently absent to identify reasons for non-attendance and to work closely with families and others to achieve regular attendance. The Attendance Support Officer uses a range of letters for students with poor levels of attendance:</p> <p><b>Monitoring Letter</b> – Where attendance concerns arise a monitoring letter is sent to parents/carers to open dialogue between the school and the family about the student’s attendance. This monitoring letter explains that if the student’s attendance does not improve they will move onto Stage 1 of the schools attendance procedures and receive a 6 week monitoring letter.</p> <p><b>Stage 1 (6 Week Letter)</b> - Student meetings will take place where an attendance target is set for the student to achieve over the next 6 weeks and this will be subsequently monitored. Parents/carers will be sent a letter outlining the concerns over absence and the target agreed.</p> <p><b>Stage 2 (3 Week Letter)</b> - At week 3 if students have made no significant improvement then parents/carers will receive another letter. The letter will state the date and time of a meeting that parents/carers need to attend to discuss the situation. Another 3 weeks monitoring will then take place.</p> <p><b>Stage 3 (Penalty Notice 15 Day Warning Letter)</b> - If following the different levels of attendance stages a student’s attendance has still not significantly improved then prior to a Fixed Penalty Notice (fine) being issued to the parents/carers, or a decision to take the parents/carers to court, a final warning letter will be issued and a meeting with parents/carers convened if appropriate. The final warning letter will state that the child must have no Unauthorised Absence during a 15 school day period in order to avoid further action and that any absences as a result of illness must be supported by medical evidence.</p>
<p>During all meetings the importance of good attendance is explained and student’s attendance patterns will be discussed. Students have a chance to open a dialogue about the attendance and share any issues that as a school we may be able to support the student with.</p>	



**Fixed Penalty Notice** – A member of the Local Authority with responsibility for attendance will liaise with the Newfield School Attendance Support Officer and issue penalty notices to parents/carers of children who do not attend school regularly following a penalty notice 15 day warning letter. The fine is £60, rising to £120 if not paid within 28 days of receipt of the notice. If the fine is not paid then the parents/carers will be prosecuted.

**Prosecution** – The local authority may prosecute parents/carers whose children do not attend school regularly. This could result in a fine of up to £2,500 per parent, a community order or, in extreme cases, a jail sentence of up to 3 months. Successful prosecution will result in parents/carers getting a criminal record. If the court thinks it will stop a child from missing school, then it will impose a Parenting Order.

**Parenting Order** – A Parenting Order is a court order that requires the parents/carers to attend parenting education or support classes. Parents will also have to comply with whatever the court believes is necessary to improve the behaviour and attendance of their child at school.

### **3.8 Support available for Students and their Families**

A range of support is available in and outside school to support students and their families to achieve good attendance.

They include:

- Head of Lower and Upper School/Heads of Year/Form Tutor – a role in school dedicated to supporting the safety, wellbeing and progress of students in school
- Adjusted curriculum – in addition to the normal personalised curriculum offered to all students (e.g. setting, curriculum pathways and options choices), some students may be offered an adjusted timetable to help support a return to good attendance
- CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service) – referral to CAMHS has to be through either school health or the family's own GP
- Home tuition – when supported by CAMHS, Sheffield Local Authority will provide an entitlement to education at home or at off-school-site location. Home tuition is only available for a limited period of time and a transition plan will be drawn up with the view of returning the child to school. Home tuition is also normally conditional on continued engagement with CAMHS.

When School has exhausted internal support systems we may refer to MAST. The Attendance & Inclusion Officers, who are specialists within MAST, will offer advice and support to ensure that needs are identified and appropriate support is requested.

Where the issue identified is a simple single agency issue, this will be requested via the completion of a 'Request for Support' proforma. Where the issues presented are more complex it may require a multi-agency discussion, to address issues within the whole family, and will therefore require the completion of a Family Common Assessment Framework (FCAF) assessment.

## **Appendix 1 – Exceptional Performance**

### **Background:**

Newfield School supports children from any starting point, including those demonstrating 'Exceptional Performance' in a given area such as academic ability, in sports, the arts or any other area as determined by the school. 'Exceptional Performance' applies to all pupils who are eligible under the guidelines stated below. Care and consideration will be given to all applications received.

The school acknowledges its duty to support pupils in fulfilling their individual talent, we believe exceptional individuals should be nurtured to ensure they reach their potential. Please note that the Headteacher's decision on individual applications is final. An appeal may be heard by the school's Chair of Governors and ultimately by the CEO of Mercia Learning Trust. Please note all exemptions are subject to review, at the discretion of the Headteacher.

### **Rationale:**

The school will consider an exemption from school attendance for pupils participating in Elite Sports or Elite Arts events where there are scheduled training/rehearsal for periods. This may also apply to any other area as determined by the school where exceptional performance is being displayed. The Headteacher will make a decision on what qualifies as exceptional performance on a case by case basis. The school is absolutely clear that it must support its pupils in achieving exceptional levels of performance in sport, the arts outside of school or any other area as determined by the school. However, pupils are expected to participate and contribute to school enrichment.

### **For the Purposes of this Policy Document:**

Eligible Elite Sports programs include: regional, national and international sports organisations which run coaching for athletes and national sports squads - in which pupils have been selected to participate. Eligible Elite Arts is defined as an opportunity for a pupil to participate in an event or program that is beyond the opportunities that Newfield School offers. For example, this might relate to a regional, national or international musical/dramatic/artistic organisation.

There may be other areas in which a student demonstrates exceptional performance in other aspects of their school life and these will be judged on a case by case basis by the school.

### **Applying for Elite Performance Exemption:**

The school will only consider attendance exemptions once it has received the following:

1. A supporting letter from an accredited individual (e.g. a coach, musical director) or an approved governing body outlining the child's aptitude in the relevant discipline;
2. A letter from a parent/carer outlining the duration of absence and any supporting evidence they feel supports their child's application for an attendance exemption.

### **Applications will not be approved if:**

1. A pupil's attendance falls below 95%;
2. The school believes the student is under-performing academically;
3. A pupil is not fulfilling Newfield School expectations in regard to their behaviour in and around school