

Arnbrook Primary School  
Attendance and Punctuality Policy  
Review Date: September 2020

## Contents

1. Aims, Objectives & Rationale
2. Registration
3. Punctuality and lateness
4. Authorised and unauthorised attendance
- 5 Leave of Absence in Term Time (including holidays during term time)
6. Tackling poor attendance and punctuality (including persistent absenteeism)
9. Promoting Good Attendance
7. Promoting good attendance
8. Monitoring & Reviewing Attendance
8. Removing children from the register
9. Roles & Responsibilities

## **1.1 Aims**

- All pupils and their families value their education;
- Few pupils are absent or persistently absent.
- Pupils are punctual and rarely late.
- No groups of pupils are disadvantaged by low attendance.
- The attendance of pupils who have previously had exceptionally high rates of absence is showing marked and sustained improvement.

## **1.2 Objectives**

- To ensure a consistent approach to registration
- To monitor lateness and follow it up consistently
- To adopt a positive approach to promoting attendance and punctuality via rewards
- To reduce persistent absentees.
- To provide strong support and robust action for parents and carers of children whose lateness or attendance is a concern.

## **1.3 Rationale**

Children can only achieve their full intellectual potential if they arrive at school regularly and on time. The effect of poor attendance and late arrival is apparent in the achievement of the child as early as Foundation Stage.

Poor attendance disadvantages children. We aim to ensure that all children attend school regularly and on time to enable them to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available.

Attendance is a key whole-school improvement issue: it has a direct relationship with the attainment of individuals and groups of students and the standards thereby achieved by the school.

All children, regardless of their circumstances, are entitled to a full time education which is suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have.

Every opportunity will be used to convey to pupils and their parents or carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance. For our children to take full advantage of the educational opportunities offered it is vital your child is at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.

The routines children develop around attendance and punctuality at school are the same as the expectations of any future employer in the world of work. High attainment, confidence with peers and staff and future aspirations depend on good attendance.

Good attendance is important because:

- Statistics show a direct link between under-achievement and absence below 96%.
- Regular attenders make better progress, both socially and academically
- Regular attenders find school routines, school work and friendships easier to cope with
- Regular attenders find learning more satisfying
- Regular attenders are more successful in transferring between primary school, secondary school, and higher education, employment or training.

## **2. Registration**

- School opens at 8.40am, classroom doors close at 8.50am promptly, and registers are completed at this time, and closed at 9.30am.
- All teaching staff will attempt to register children accurately, as this is a legal requirement.
- All absences are investigated by our Attendance Support Workers. If no reason is forthcoming from parents/carers regarding an absence, we have a clear protocol which is explained in Section 'Unexplained absence – children missing education & safeguarding
- Afternoon registration is at 1pm.
- Attendance registers are kept electronically.
- Arnbrook Primary School complies with and uses the DFE compulsory national attendance codes.

## **3. Punctuality & Lateness**

It is important that classes make a prompt and effective start at the start of the school day. Lateness into school causes disruption to that individual's learning and to that of the other pupils in the class. It is of extreme importance therefore that all pupils arrive at school on time.

We are unable to take responsibility for children on the school premises before 8:40am. It is very important that children do not play on the play equipment before or after school as there is no supervision at these times.

- Classroom doors close promptly at 8:50am. If children arrive after this time, they must be brought into school by an adult, a late slip needs to be completed and signed by the parent/carer. If the register has closed this late will be recorded as unauthorised.
- If a child arrives late, it is unfair to send your child into school alone when they are late as very often they do not know how to complete this form
- Attendance Support Workers will ascertain reasons for late arrivals. Where a child is arriving persistently late, the Attendance Officer will write to the parents inviting them into school for a meeting to discuss why their child is not arriving at school on time, this could include the completion of a parenting contract, signed by all parties. If after the meeting has been held, the lateness continues this could lead to a referral being made by the school for a Penalty Notice to be issued to both parents for failure to ensure regular attendance.
- Support will be given to families (i.e. home visits/review meetings/free breakfast club) as far as possible within the resources available to the school but children will not be directly collected from home by staff members other than in extremely unusual circumstances on a "one off" basis.
- Children who have 5 or more lates within a half term will be given a punctuality chart to monitor their punctuality and this will earn them a reward if they achieve a week on time every day. This will end once their lateness falls below 5 lates in a half term.

## **4. Authorised & Unauthorised Absences**

Only the school, within the context of the law, can approve absence not parents and it is a statutory requirement for the Headteacher to decide with every absence whether it is authorised or unauthorised.

If a child is absent from school parents should contact the school on the first day of absence on or attendance phone line (0115 9649388) and maintain contact with the school throughout the absence following the procedure below:

Phone the school's attendance number, 0115 9649388, to speak to one of our attendance team. This phone is manned from 8:30am -11:00am. If you are calling outside these times, or no-one is available, then please leave a voicemail message with the following information:

- Name of your child (please spell if necessary)
- Name of class
- The relationship to the child of the person who is reporting the absence
- Callers must provide the reason for absence or exact nature of their child's illness. We cannot accept; illness, poorly, feeling under the weather or tired. In order to authorise the absence we need to know exactly what is wrong with your child

The Headteacher reserves the right to declare any absence unauthorised if there is no explanation given, not a reasonable explanation for the absence or if the school has good reason to doubt the explanation given. In line with the 1996 Education Act, we expect all children on roll to attend school every day, when the school is in session, as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so.

Examples of unsatisfactory explanations include:

- A student's/family member's birthday
- Shopping for uniform
- Closure of a sibling's school for INSET or other purposes
- "Couldn't get up"
- Illness where the child is considered well enough to attend school
- Illness of a family member
- Bus not running or car broken down

All absences that are not accounted for will be actioned immediately by our Attendance Support Workers, following the protocol described below.

#### Unexplained absence – children missing education & safeguarding

Attendance, absence and exclusions are closely monitored. A child going missing from education is a potential indicator of abuse and neglect, including sexual abuse and sexual exploitation. The DSL, in conjunction with the attendance team, will monitor unauthorised absence and take appropriate action including notifying the local authority, particularly where children go missing on repeated occasions and/or are missing for periods during the school day. Staff must be alert to signs of children at risk of travelling to conflict zones, female genital mutilation and forced marriage. At least two different contact numbers will be held on file for a child which can be accessed and used by the school in case of an absence/emergency

During Days 1-5 of any pupil absence which is not accounted for (no contact between home-school/no reason provided for absence), the following procedure is followed. Parents/carers are called by 10:00am each day (all contacts provided). If there is no answer, a text is sent to the first contact number asking for a call back to school. If there is no response to this, a contact letter is sent to the home address, and an email sent to the child's class teacher, assistant head, and headteacher (Senior DSL) from the attendance support worker. On the fifth day of any unexplained absence, a home visit will be carried out by senior leaders to establish if the child is safe and well.

Where a pupil who fails to attend regularly, or has been absent without the school's permission for a continuous period of more than 5 school days, the school follows the Nottinghamshire County Council's Attendance Flow chart

The school uses contextual safeguarding information to assess the risk level around any unexplained absence and reserves the right to carry out safe and well checks and home visits as and when appropriate at any point within the first 5 days of absence, to locate and establish whereabouts of the child, and assess their safety and well-being.

Once a child has been identified as missing and cannot be located within school, the Designated Safeguarding Lead will be informed.

Staff will use their professional judgement and risk assess the urgency of the situation to help inform the timeframe required in establishing the child's whereabouts before notifying the police and/or social care. Parents/carers will always be informed before contact with the police is made, unless a child is at immediate risk of harm and a police response is needed. This will be judged on a case by case basis.

If a pupil returns to school and no reason has been provided for absence, the school will continue to attempt to establish the child's whereabouts during their absence by; asking the pupil, asking the parents/carers in person/via post/via phone.

At all times, school staff will liaise with the relevant colleagues in safeguarding/education within Nottinghamshire County Council for pupils who are to be removed from the admission register and include circumstances where the pupil:

- has been taken out of school by their parents and the school has received written notification from the parent they are being educated outside the school system e.g. home education – this will be communicated with the home elective education team
- does not arrive at the school as part of an admission process and we are not aware of their whereabouts
- has ceased to attend school and no longer lives within reasonable distance of the school at which they are registered and has been discussed with the children missing officer (CMO) as they have not been registered at a new school

### Illness

It is a school's decision whether to accept a reason for a child's absence and whether to authorise that absence. Parents must provide the exact nature of their child's illness. We cannot accept; illness, poorly, feeling under the weather or tired. In order to authorise the absence we need to know exactly what is wrong with your child. In some circumstances we may request further evidence of a child's illness to allow the absence to be authorised. We reserve the right to seek additional evidence related to the illness if we have any concerns regarding a child's attendance. In fact it is good practice to have clear systems in place to escalate any concerns about high levels of absence due to illness, including agreements about accessing additional services in order to provide appropriate support to pupils, particularly for long term illness.

The types of scenarios when medical evidence may be requested include:

- Attendance is lower than 96%
- There are frequent odd days absences due to reported illness.
- The same reasons for absence are frequently repeated.
- Where there is a particular medical problems and school may need evidence to seek additional support/provide support.
- When absences occur either side of a school holiday or weekend.

Arnbrook Primary School follows the guidelines from the Public Health Agency on 'infection control in schools and other childcare settings' which outlines the recommended period to be kept away from nursery/school (See Appendix 1). Pupils who are absent for a period of time longer than that recommended may have these additional absences unauthorised. The guidelines have been distributed to all staff and will be reviewed on an ongoing basis.

Wherever reasonably possible, we expect parents to make routine appointments (e.g. medical, dental) outside of school time - if this is not possible please give as much written notice as possible with a copy of the appointment slip.

## Authorised Absence

Absence may also be authorised for Religious Observance. Arnbrook Primary School acknowledges the multi-faith nature of British society and recognises that on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside school holiday periods or weekends. In these circumstances, parents and carers should request a leave of absence following the procedure below.

There are other, infrequent, occasions where absences are permitted and coded as 'Authorised Circumstances'. This relates to where there is cause for absence due to exceptional circumstances, e.g. serious family illness or bereavement. Parents/carers should communicate with school if there are such circumstances. The Head teacher's decision is final in such matters.

## Leave of Absence in Term Time (including holidays during term time)

The Government have issued new regulations in September 2013 regarding Leave of Absence; The Education (Pupil Regulations) (England) Regulations 2006 as amended by Education (Pupil Regulations) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013.

- Head teachers shall not grant any Leave of Absence during term time unless they consider there are exceptional circumstances relating to the application.
- Exceptional circumstances being defined as being of unique and significant emotional, educational or spiritual value to the child which outweighs the loss of teaching time.
- Parents do not have any entitlement to take their children on holiday during term time. Any application for leave must establish that there are exceptional circumstances and the Head Teacher must be satisfied that the circumstances warrant the granting of leave.
- Head Teachers will determine how many school days a child may be absent from school if the leave is granted.
- Applications for Leave of Absence must be made in advance and failure to do so will result in the absence being unauthorised.
- The school can only consider applications for Leave of Absence which are made by the resident parent.
- Applications for Leave of Absence which are made in advance and refused will result in the absence being unauthorised which may result in legal action against the parent, by Fixed Penalty Notice, if the child is absent from school during that period
- If a Fixed Penalty Notice is issued and is not paid within the timeframe set out in that Notice, the matter may be referred to Legal Services to consider instigating criminal prosecution proceedings under S444 of Education Act 1996.

Each application for a Leave of Absence will be considered on a case by case basis and on its own merits. Arnbrook Primary School understands that holidays are generally less expensive during term time but this does NOT count as an exceptional circumstance. The school will, as far as possible, attempt to schedule training days in such a way that parents are able to book a slightly cheaper holiday without their child missing school. Leave of absence will only be authorised if school feel there are exceptional circumstances.

Leave of absence which is taken for the following reasons will not be authorised and does not count as exceptional circumstance:

- Availability of cheaper holidays
- Availability of desired accommodation
- Poor weather experienced in school holidays

- Overlap with beginning or end of term
- Booked the wrong dates by mistake or without checking
- Booked by another family member
- Attending a family wedding
- Family birthdays.
- Availability of time off work
- Day trips
- Holidays taken without following school procedure.
- Valuable family time

Parent/carers must follow school procedures when requesting leave of absence for their child:

- Requests should be made at least 4 school weeks in advance of the proposed absence, by completing a Leave of Absence request form, available from the Attendance Support Worker. If school is aware of any language difficulties that may preclude a request form being completed and appropriate support will be offered to the parent/carer.
- A letter should be addressed to the Attendance Officer explaining why the leave is essential and the reasons why it needs to take place during term time.
- Written Travel documentation and accommodation details must be supplied before a request can be considered.
- Once the decision has been made by the school it cannot be reversed and there is no appeals procedure. The head teacher's decision is final.
- If the Head teacher deems that the reasons for the request are exceptional and authorises the absences a reply confirming that the request has been authorised will be sent to the parent/carer.
- If the Headteacher deems that the reasons are not exceptional and the leave of absence will not be authorised, a reply informing the parents of this decision for each child and warning of the legal implications of the absence been taken will be sent to each parent/carer.
- If the decision is to not authorise the leave of absence and the child is absent from school, in all cases the school will request that the Local Authority issues a Penalty Notice to the parents/carers concerned.

There is no right of appeal against an Education Penalty Notice once it has been issued correctly and in line with the Nottinghamshire Code of Conduct. Penalty Notice fines can only be withdrawn in specific circumstances as set out within the national regulations and the local code of conduct. If a parent believes that the reason for their child's unauthorised leave of absence from school in term time was not properly understood and that it should have been considered as exceptional by the Head Teacher then the parent/carer should contact the school to discuss the matter and, if still not satisfied, follow the complaints procedure. The local authority cannot overturn a Head Teacher's decision to unauthorise a pupil's absence from school during term time.

**Instances where parents/carers don't inform school of reason for absence, or give a false reason, can still result in a penalty notice being issued if school have reasonable grounds to believe the absence wasn't due to illness/exceptional circumstances. Arnbrook Primary School reserve the right to carry out home visits and contact parents/carers either via phone/ or post to establish the correct reason for absence.**

**If parents/carers take their children on any unauthorised holiday, school reserve the right to refuse to authorise any further absences for the remainder of the year without medical evidence and the pupils' attendance will be subject to additional monitoring.**



## **Tackling poor attendance and punctuality (including persistent absenteeism)**

Staff within the school's attendance team, alongside school leaders, analyse pupil attendance proactively on an ongoing basis.

All parents and carers are sent a half termly attendance summary of their child(ren), indicating their attendance for the year to date and which band this is within.

If a child's attendance falls below 93%, parents/carers are sent a letter explaining that their child's attendance is a cause for concern. They are informed that school will not authorise any further absences until further notice, unless provided with medical evidence.

Parents/carers are warned of the risk of being referred for a penalty notice if their child's attendance does not improve and/or there are further unauthorised absences.

Parents/carers are reminded to contact school if they need any support or wish to discuss the matter further. School staff will also consider whether support (either internal or external) is appropriate and act accordingly. This may come in the form of, but is not limited to; school minibuss service, support with parenting and behaviour management, and referral to outside agencies such as 'Healthy Families' or 'Early Help'.

Their child's attendance will be monitored on a daily basis and parents/carers will receive a weekly update on their child's attendance until further notice. Parents/carers with pupils with attendance below 93% may also be subject to additional home visits if their child is absent and meetings to discuss their child's attendance. If a child's attendance remains poor or falls below 90%, then the following procedure is followed:

Attendance Officer will write to the parent and invite them into school for a meeting to discuss their child's absences, during this meeting they will be informed that their child's attendance is a major cause for concern and that if it persists, they will be referred to the Attendance Enforcement Team at either Nottingham City Council or Nottinghamshire County Council (depending on pupils' address). They are reminded that school will not authorise any absences until further notice, unless provided with medical evidence. At the meeting, means of supporting the family and improving attendance are discussed and an action plan agreed. If a parent fails to attend the arranged meeting the Attendance Officer will write to the parents informing them of the above.

This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the child to the Local Authority (see section below).

Parents and carers are also reminded that pupils' attendance is constantly monitored. If a child's attendance begins to fall, then appropriate intervention and support may be offered to prevent the situation worsening.

If the unauthorised absence is in excess of 3 days (6 sessions) over a 6 week rolling period then the school can issue or ask the Local Authority to issue Penalty Notices to each parent for each child to whom persistent absence applies. In these cases the Local Authority may also consider what services or measures may be provided to prevent or reduce further unauthorised absence including support and interventions through the Family Service. Local Authority Attendance Specialists work with schools, families and other professionals to reduce persistent absence and improve overall attendance. If attendance does not improve, legal action may be taken in the form of a Penalty Notice, prosecution in the Magistrates Court or the application of an Education Supervision Order, designed to strengthen parental responsibilities and ensure improved attendance.

**At all stages, the attendance support workers and attendance officer will liaise with the DSL and deputy DSLs and make any necessary safeguarding and/or early help referrals if necessary.**

**The school will support all families and pupils with ensuring pupils are at school on time, every day, far as resources allow, recognising that ultimately, a child's attendance at school is the responsibility of the parent.**

### **Promoting good attendance**

- The school will give high profile to awards for attendance and punctuality in weekly Awesome Arnbook assemblies every Friday. The school will value good punctuality and attendance by an award to the class with the lowest number of late marks and highest attendance each week, across the whole school.
- The Headteacher will lead a whole school assembly on a termly basis focusing on the importance of good attendance and punctuality.
- The school will give half-termly certificates to all children achieving 100% attendance with no late arrivals recorded and be invited to a special cinema evening.
- Termly prizes for all children with 100% attendance in the form of Autumn, Spring & Summer pin badges.
- Any children achieving 100% attendance for the year will have the chance to win a large prize (Bike) and be rewarded with a gift bag. Any children achieving 99% will have a chance to win a smaller prize. Families will be invited to an 'end of year' attendance assembly in which prizes will be awarded
- At the end of the year, the class with the highest attendance across school will be rewarded with a class cinema trip.
- During the Autumn, Spring & Summer Attendance Fortnight (a fortnight identified as having lower attendance across school) children who achieve 100% attendance with no lates will be rewarded with a family-based prize.

### **Monitoring & Reviewing Attendance:**

Attendance and punctuality data is regularly reviewed to ensure that improvements are being made across the school, especially for key groups of pupils (disadvantaged pupils).

Whole school attendance data is included within the fortnightly school newsletter for all families. It is also communicated with members of staff; the Headteacher and Attendance Officer meet once a week to review attendance across the school and key messages are disseminated to all staff, and attendance figures are a standing item on the weekly Senior Leadership Team meetings.

The Attendance Officer prepares an attendance report every term which is discussed by the leadership team and by the governing body. There is a named governor with a specific responsibility for monitoring and reviewing Attendance & Punctuality.

Attendance figures are included within each child's annual report, along with a grading of their level of attendance. Attendance levels are also shared at parents' meetings in the Autumn & Spring term.

### **Removing children from the register**

Arnbrook Primary School follows the guidance from Nottinghamshire County Council in relation to removing children from the school's register. L.

## **Roles and Responsibilities:**

### **Responsibilities of Teachers**

- Ensure that all students are registered accurately & on time.
- Promote & reward good attendance at all appropriate opportunities.
- Liaise with the appropriate member of staff on matters of attendance and punctuality.
- Communicate with pupils and parents/carers regarding absences and poor punctuality.

### **Responsibilities of Pupils:**

- Attend every day unless the reason for absence is unavoidable.
- Arrive in your classroom on time, every day.

### **Responsibilities of Parents and Carers**

- Ensure your child attends school every day unless the reason for absence is unavoidable.
- Ensure your child arrives in their classroom on time, every day.
- In the event of being late, take your child to the main entrance, complete and sign a late slip at the Attendance Office and include a reason for lateness.
- In the event of any absence, inform the school on the first day of absence and every subsequent day of absence by phone (0115 9649388) or at the attendance office, unless a doctor has supplied written evidence for a specified length of time.
- Avoid taking their child out of school for non-urgent medical or dental appointments.
- Provide written medical evidence to support any absence if requested by the school.
- Only request for leave of absence if it is for an exceptional circumstance - ensuring our school procedures are followed.

**Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is a parent/carers' legal responsibility as per the Education Act 1996 Section 444 and permitting absence from school that is not authorised by the school creates an offence in law.**

**Linked policies: Safeguarding Policy, Behaviour Policy.**

### **Key Documents:**

[KCSIE \(2019\)](#)

[Children Missing Education](#)

Nottinghamshire [Missing Children Protocol:](#)

**Reviewed September 2019**

