



# Attendance Procedure

## Nottingham Free School



Approved by: TILT

Date:

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## 1. Aims

We are committed to meeting our obligation with regards to school attendance through our whole-school culture and ethos that values good attendance, including:

- Promoting good attendance
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address patterns of absence
- Building strong relationships with families to ensure pupils have the support in place to attend school

We will also promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

## 2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the [working together to improve school attendance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of [The Education Act 1996](#)
- Part 3 of [The Education Act 2002](#)
- Part 7 of [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006 \(and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments\)](#)
- [The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.

## 3. Roles and responsibilities

### 3.1 The governing board

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The governing board is responsible for:

- › Promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos
- › Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- › Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data
- › Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school
- › Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance
- › Holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy

### **3.2 The headteacher**

The headteacher is responsible for:

- › Implementation of this policy at the school
- › Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- › Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- › Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- › Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary

### **3.3 The designated senior leader responsible for attendance**

The designated senior leader is responsible for:

- › Leading attendance across the school
- › Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
- › Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- › Having an oversight of data analysis
- › Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data
- › Arranging calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- › Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance is Kay Gray and can be contacted via [kgray@nottinghamfreeschool.co.uk](mailto:kgray@nottinghamfreeschool.co.uk)

### **3.4 The attendance officer**

The school attendance officer is responsible for:

- › Monitoring and analysing attendance data (see section 7)
- › Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
- › Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance and the headteacher
- › Working with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence
- › Advising the headteacher/Kay Gray (authorised by the headteacher) when to issue fixed-penalty notices

The attendance officer is Susan Seymour and can be contacted via [SSeymour@nottinghamfreeschool.co.uk](mailto:SSeymour@nottinghamfreeschool.co.uk)

### 3.5 Class teachers/Tutors

Class teachers/tutors are responsible for recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the school office.

### 3.6 School admin staff

School admin staff will:

- Take calls from parents about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system
- Transfer calls from parents to the Head of Year in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance

### 3.7 Parents/carers

Parents/carers are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day on time
- Call the school to report their child's absence before 8.15am on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence, and advise when they are expected to return
- Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day

### 3.8 Pupils

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school every day on time
- Attend every timetabled session on time
- Sixth form - the school to report their absence before 8.15am on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence

## 4. Recording attendance

### 4.1 Attendance register

We will keep an attendance register, and place all pupils onto this register.

We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. It will mark whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment

See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

We will also record:

- Whether the absence is authorised or not
- The nature of the activity if a pupil is attending an approved educational activity
- The nature of circumstances where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Students are advised to arrive in school by 8.20am so that they are given the opportunity to get ready for the day. Students must arrive in school by the bell at 8.28am, which sounds to notify students that they have 2 minutes to get to tutor set which starts at 8.30am.

The register for the first session will be taken at 8.30am and will be kept open until 8.35am. The register for the second session for KS3 will be taken at 13.05pm and KS4 will be taken at 13.55pm. Both sessions will be kept open until 13.10pm for KS3 and 14.00pm for KS4.

## 4.2 Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent/carers must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 8.15am or as soon as practically possible by calling the school office staff (see also section 7).

If your child is ill or absent for any other reason, contact the school on every day of absence by 8.15 am on 0115 8964949.

If your child is attending a medical appointment during the school day, you can notify the school by emailing [contact@nottinghamfreeschool.co.uk](mailto:contact@nottinghamfreeschool.co.uk) or writing a note in your child's planner.

We will mark absence due to illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask the pupil's parent/carers to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/carers will be notified of this in advance.

## 4.3 Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent/carers notifies the school in advance of the appointment.

- If your child is attending a medical appointment during the school day, you can notify the school by emailing [contact@nottinghamfreeschool.co.uk](mailto:contact@nottinghamfreeschool.co.uk) or writing a note in your child's planner.
- Parents will also need to provide evidence of appointments

However, we encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

The pupil's parent/carers must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Go to section 5 to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

## 4.4 Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code
- After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code

Being on time is vital to a pupils education. Arriving late to school can be very disruptive to a child, the teacher and other pupils in the class. Our registers open at 08.30am and close at 08.35am. Any pupil who arrives after 08.35am is considered late and will be coded as U. Any 10 U codes accrued in any 10 week period can be referred for a fine with Nottingham City Education Welfare Department, set at £60 per parent, per child. Therefore to avoid these steps we have a tiered response to pupils who arrive late to school (beyond 08.30am):

- First late = email home from the attendance officer and students receive an R20 detention the same day.
- Second late = email home from the attendance officer, call home from their tutor to discuss if there are concerns + students receive an R40 detention the same day.
- Third late = email home from the attendance officer, call home by their Head of Year to discuss what supportive measures can be put into place + students receive an R40 detention the same day.
- Fourth late = email home from the attendance officer, meeting with parents, Head of Year, attendance officer and pupils to receive an R40 detention for any further lates.
- It is important to note, that parents are responsible for communicating any concerns with the school so that we are able to put in place the right support for children. Please contact their Head of Year or Susan Seymour if you seek further support.

## 4.5 Following up unexplained absence

Where any pupil we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the school will:

- Call the pupil's parent/carer on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the school cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts, the school may conduct a home visit to ascertain if the pupil is safe and well.
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the session
- Call the parent/carer on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the school will consider involving an education welfare officer and contacting the police to complete a safe and well check on the pupil.

## 4.6 Reporting to parents/carers

Adapt the following to explain when and how your school reports to parents on their child's attendance record. The DfE expects you to do this regularly.

The school will regularly inform parents about their child's attendance and absence levels for example, via

- 3 Pupil Reports
- Half termly attendance letters from our attendance officer
- Individual letters sent to parents to inform them of when their child has reached a trigger percentage

- Parents have access to their child's attendance via MCAS

## 5. Authorised and unauthorised absence

### 5.1 Approval for term-time absence

The headteacher will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the headteacher's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for.

We define 'exceptional circumstances' as an event/s that is an emergency and exceptional in its entirety.

*Taking holidays in term time will affect a child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking children away in school time. There is **no** entitlement to time off in school time to go on holiday.*

The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least 4 weeks] before the absence, and in accordance with any leave of absence request form, accessible via the attendance section on the school website. From here you will be able to download the leave of absence form. The headteacher may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments (see sections 4.2 and 4.3 for more detail)
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parents belong. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travellers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and new travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision

### 5.2 Legal sanctions

The school or local authority can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

If issued with a fine, or penalty notice, each parent must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

Penalty notices can be issued by a headteacher, local authority officer or the police.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice may take into account:

- The number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

## 6. Strategies for promoting attendance

Attendance to school is the number one priority for achievement. Therefore, we reward pupils by using the following:

- 98+ challenge – students who achieve 98+% each half term earn tokens. There are 6 tokens to collect in a year. Students can hand in their tokens at any point to claim a prize.
- Attendance Cup – weekly tutor groups are ranked with the tutor group with the lowest attendance for that week to be knocked out. The winning tutor group at the end of the half term earns breakfast for their tutor set.
- Treat Friday – the tutor set within each year group are awarded with a treat each Friday.
- Achievement assemblies – each half term students are recognised for their attendance.
- Students who achieve 100% attendance over 5 years are rewarded with £100.

## 7. Attendance monitoring

Analysing attendance and absence data is key to identifying pupils or cohorts that require support for their attendance. AT Nottingham Free School we do the following:

- Attendance Officer and Senior Leader meet fortnightly to discuss each year group and individuals.
- Attendance spreadsheet identifies which trigger points have been met and when action was taken.
- Data is provided on all key groups and what actions are in place for these groups.

### 7.1 Monitoring attendance

The School will:

- Monitor attendance and absence data half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil level
- Identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern

Pupil-level absence data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. The school will compare attendance data to the national average, and share this with the governing board.

### 7.2 Analysing attendance

The School will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these pupils and their families
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns

### 7.3 Using data to improve attendance

The School will:

- Provide regular attendance reports to tutors, Heads of Year and other school leaders, to facilitate discussions with pupils and families
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies



## 7.4 Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school.

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Trigger letters are sent home to parents when their child has reached a certain percentage
- Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school
- Daily monitoring of key students who have reached 90%
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance

## 8. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the DfE is updated, and as a minimum every year by Kay Gray, Assistant Head Teacher/Susan Seymour, Attendance Officer. At every review, the policy will be approved by the local governing body.

## 9. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Behaviour policy

## Appendix 1: attendance codes

The following codes are taken from the DfE's guidance on school attendance.

| Code | Definition                    | Scenario   |
|------|-------------------------------|--|
| /    | Present (am)                  | Pupil is present at morning registration                                       |
| \    | Present (pm)                  | Pupil is present at afternoon registration                                     |
| L    | Late arrival                  | Pupil arrives late before register has closed                                  |
| B    | Off-site educational activity | Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school  |
| D    | Dual registered               | Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered |
| J    | Interview                     | Pupil has an interview with a prospective employer/educational establishment   |

|          |                           |   |
|----------|---------------------------|---|
| <b>P</b> | Sporting activity         | Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school |
| <b>V</b> | Educational trip or visit | Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school     |
| <b>W</b> | Work experience           | Pupil is on a work experience placement   |

| Code                        | Definition                        | Scenario   |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|--|
| <b>Authorised absence</b>   |                                   |  |
| <b>C</b>                    | Authorised leave of absence       | Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances |
| <b>E</b>                    | Excluded                          | Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made         |
| <b>H</b>                    | Authorised holiday                | Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances   |
| <b>I</b>                    | Illness                           | School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness        |
| <b>M</b>                    | Medical/dental appointment        | Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment                                |
| <b>R</b>                    | Religious observance              | Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance                      |
| <b>S</b>                    | Study leave                       | Year 11 pupil is on study leave during their public examinations           |
| <b>T</b>                    | Gypsy, Roma and traveller absence | Pupil from a traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school  |
| <b>Unauthorised absence</b> |                                   |  |
| <b>G</b>                    | Unauthorised holiday              | Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school                  |

|          |                            |   |
|----------|----------------------------|---|
| <b>N</b> | Reason not provided        | Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time) |
| <b>O</b> | Unauthorised absence       | School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence   |
| <b>U</b> | Arrival after registration | Pupil arrived at school after the register closed   |

| <b>Code</b> | <b>Definition</b>                                 | <b>Scenario</b>  |
|-------------|---|--|
| <b>X</b>    | Not required to be in school                      | Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend   |
| <b>Y</b>    | Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances | School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody |
| <b>Z</b>    | Pupil not on admission register                   | Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school  |
| <b>#</b>    | Planned school closure                            | Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day  |