



Attendance Matters

Attendance and Punctuality Policy Information for Parents

Updated September 2014

*Respect for Each Other
A Caring Partnership
Quality and Success for All*

***School starts at 8.55am every day
Attendance Target 97%***

Dear Parent or Carer

I would like to take this opportunity to present to you our publication '**Attendance Matters**' which highlights the importance of good **attendance and punctuality** at school. The booklet makes clear the school's **Attendance Policy** and the ways in which we aim to work in partnership with you to ensure that your child gains the maximum benefit from the time they have available to attend school.

Partnership



Supporting your child's schooling and maximising his or her opportunities to learn are amongst the most important things you will do as a parent. Making sure that your child attends school every day is one of the key ways that you, as a parent, support your child's education and work in partnership with the school. There is a very clear link between positive parental support, attendance at school and children's academic progress. Without good attendance and your support, your child's teachers will find it increasingly difficult to maximise the learning opportunities for your child.

We hope that you will work in partnership with us to ensure that your child grows in confidence and reaches his or her full potential through good attendance and punctuality for school.

Ian Beard
Headteacher

Thank you

We would first of all like to thank all those parents (the vast majority of you) who take seriously their responsibility to ensure that their child attends school every day and arrives on time and well-prepared for the school day ahead of them. It is good to know that so many Northenden parents value their child's time at school and the partnership between home and school. Please continue to support your child and the school in this way so that we can maximise learning for your child.

What the law says about attending school

The law states that it is a parent's **responsibility** to ensure that a child attends school from the age of 5 (compulsory school age) until the age of 16 years. It is, in fact, a **legal requirement** and the Education Act 1996 gives schools and local authorities the power to hold parents accountable for any pupil absence.

Pupils must attend school on 190 days during the year unless there are **exceptional** or **medical** reasons why they should not do so. The school must take a **register** of pupils twice each day, once in the morning and once in the afternoon.

These two 'sessions' for 190 days total 380 possible sessions during the school year. It is these 380 sessions on which your child's attendance is calculated as a percentage.



Maximising Learning

There is a very clear link between school attendance and academic progress. Children who are regularly absent from school often do not do as well as those who have good attendance. The reasons for this should be obvious



Put simply, a child who is absent from school will miss an **opportunity to learn**. This 'lost' opportunity may include ...

- a vital lesson which introduces a new topic
- an exciting art lesson which cannot be repeated
- an activity day or educational visit which provides the stimulus for future work
- feedback on an assessment test or homework which the teacher will struggle to find the time to repeat
- a lesson in which the 'penny drops' and child clearly sees the benefits of all their hard work

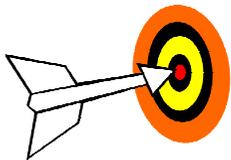
Absent pupils nearly always experience, whether they appear to or not, a level of anxiety when they return to school and realise that they cannot catch up or take part in what they have missed. Absence from school can affect their confidence, self-esteem and academic progress.

Attendance Percentages

In an ideal world, we would like all children to attend school each and every day and hope that they are fit and healthy enough throughout the whole year to do so. If this were the case, they would achieve 100% attendance and maximise every lesson and learning opportunity available to them during the school year. However, we accept that pupils will occasionally be absent because they are genuinely ill and perhaps, from time to time, because of **exceptional** family circumstances.

Attendance Targets

Each year, the school is expected to set a target for the pupil attendance it aims to achieve, including improving **overall attendance**, reducing **unauthorised absence** (family holidays during term time) and **persistent absence** (less than 85% attendance). Given previous attendance and the excellent attitudes to school life of the children and parents, the school expects that children will attend school for no less than **97%** of the school year.



97.0%

This is a high expectation but one that has and can be achieved.

Absence : It takes just a few days

Your child's attendance is reported as a percentage. Absence of just a few days can significantly affect your child's attendance percentage across the year and the grades and descriptions we, as a school, attach to different bands of attendance. These are based on 190 days possible attendance during a school year.

Absence	Percentage	Grade	Description
0 days	100%	A*	Outstanding
0 – 3 days	98% – 100%	A	Excellent
4 – 7 days	96% – 97%	B	Good
8 – 11 days	94% – 95%	C	Below Target
12 – 15 days	92% - 93%	D	Needs Improving
16 – 19 days	90% - 91%	E	Poor
20 – 28 days	Below 90%	N	Near Persistent
29 days +	Below 85%	P	Persistent
	Below 80%	VP	Very Persistent

It is our aim that **NO CHILD** in school will ever have an attendance level of less than 90% except in very **exceptional (usually medical) circumstances**. 90% attendance is the equivalent of **missing half a day of school** each week or **95 lessons** during the whole school year.

Registration

Registration is the time during which your child's class teacher will complete the register. School opens at **8.50am** for children to prepare for the school day. Registration starts at **8.55am** (all children in classrooms) and closes at 9.00am.



Class registers are returned to the school office at **9.00am**. It is after this time that your child is considered to be marked absent or **late for school**.

Absence

The school must record all absences for every pupil and the reason for every absence. It is therefore very important that you let us know the reasons why your child is not in school. This should be done by telephone on the first morning of absence and should be followed up in writing on your child's return to school. If you do not make contact, the school will call you to investigate any absence.

There are essentially two types of absence, **authorised and unauthorised**. An **authorised** absence is one which the Headteacher feels is valid and reasonable. These include genuine illness, hospital appointments which cannot be rearranged, days of religious observance and other exceptional circumstances which have discussed and agreed with the Headteacher.

An **unauthorised absence** is one which the Headteacher does not feel is valid or exceptional. Such absences include:

- medical or other family appointments which could have been arranged at another time
- birthdays, special days out or shopping days
- family holidays or days out during term time
- absence at the start of the school year in September
- absence which may affect school or other tests
- arrival later than 9.30am (other than medical appointment)

Absence during Term Time / Family Holidays

Pupils should attend school every day of term unless there are **exceptional** reasons not to do so. **Parents do not have an automatic right to remove their child from school during term time for any reason.** The law (September 2013) is quite clear in stating that headteachers may authorise a pupil's absence during term time only in **exceptional circumstances**.

Exceptional circumstances do not include family holidays taken during term time. In most cases, a request for a family holiday during term time will be refused. If the refusal is ignored by parents, a request will be issued to the Local Authority for parents to receive a **Penalty Notice** (a fine).



Seeking Permission for Planned Absence

If you wish to seek the Headteacher's permission to take your child out of school during term time, please do so in writing by completing the application (Pupil Leave of Absence) form which is available from the school office and the website.

The Headteacher will consider your request and, in making a decision, will consider whether or not the circumstances for absence are exceptional. That is, that the absence does not follow a pattern of previous absence, is a rare occurrence and that the reasons for absence are justified. Please note that only one or two days of absence may be considered as 'exceptional'.

If your child has been absent from school already during the school year and has a projected attendance of **below 97.0%**, it is likely that the **request will be refused** as any further absence will affect your child's overall attendance. Any request which is simply a statement of intent to take a family holiday and does not seek permission or explain the exceptional circumstances will **not be authorised**. Any family holiday taken without permission will **not be authorised**.

The school investigates all absences, including making home visits during a child's absence if we do not feel that adequate contact has been made with parents to explain the absence.

Work Missed

Please note that it is the policy of the school **not** to provide any additional work for any pupil who is on holiday during term time. This is because the work often depends on the teacher's input and cannot often be planned or prepared in advance.

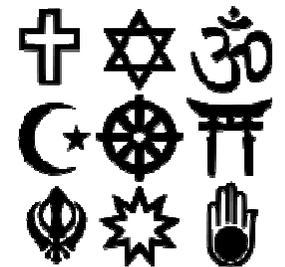
Medical and Other Appointments



Unless the appointment is urgent, you are asked to make appointments at the dentist, doctors, opticians or other practitioner outside school hours. If the appointment cannot be arranged for another time, your child should attend school for part of the day. Please let us know if your child has an appointment during the school day.

Religious Observance

The school acknowledges the multi-faith nature of the school and recognises the right of individuals to celebrate religious festivals. Where these fall during term time, the school will give permission for a pupil to be absent for **one day** for any individual occasion, up to a maximum of **three days** in any one academic year.



Monitoring and Addressing Poor Attendance

The school monitors attendance on a weekly basis. Where absence falls below certain limits (usually 94%), the school will take the following actions to help parents address any issues:

- seek a full explanation from parents
- a letter from the Headteacher
- arrange a meeting between the school and parents
- arrange a home visit from the School Nurse
- devise a pastoral support plan to support the family
- put in place a Parenting Contract
- arrange the support of external agencies (family support)
- ask the Local Authority to issue a Penalty Notice (fine)
- monitor attendance closely and review with parents

Persistent Absence

When absence falls below **85%**, this is the equivalent of missing **6 weeks (30 days) of school** throughout the school year. This is known as **persistent absence** and is reported to and monitored by the Local Authority. The school must report pupils who are **persistent absentees** to the Local Authority and take steps to work with parents to ensure that attendance improves.



Parenting Contracts

If your child's attendance falls below acceptable limits, the Local Authority may issue a Parenting Order or Education Supervision Order. This is often a step taken before prosecution and aims to establish an agreement between the school and parents that the child's attendance will be improved, sometimes with the support of outside agencies.

Legal Sanctions : Fines and Prosecutions

Where parents fail to improve the attendance of their children or proceed with a family holiday without permission, the school has the right to ask the Local Authority (LA) to issue a **penalty notice (fine) or a penalty notice warning**. Fines are set by central government. The fines are currently (September 2014) **£60 per child per parent**, rising to **£120** if paid after 21 days but within 28 days. Failure to pay a fine after 28 days may result in a prosecution.

Parents need to be fully aware that fines apply to each child and to each parent. For example, two parents taking their three school children on holiday during term may face a total fine of £360 (£60 x 3 children x 2 parents) if paid on time.

The LA may prosecute parents where no improvements in their child's attendance are made. This includes parents who choose to take their children out of school during term again and again.



Support for Parents

We accept that a child's attendance is often affected by circumstances or events at home. In some cases, we appreciate that it is the parent or the whole family who need support rather than the individual child. The school can help parents to find support, if needed. Please get in touch with us to discuss any changes in your circumstances which may affect your child's attendance.

Reporting

The school reports attendance to parents on a regular basis. Parents are usually given printed copies of attendance registers at each parents' evening (November and March) and a more detailed report and projections at the mid-point of the school year (February). Attendance grades are also included in the end-of-year report to parents.

Attendance and punctuality for each class are also reported regularly in the school newsletter.

The attendance records for every pupil are reported to the Local Authority on a weekly basis, usually on a Friday afternoon and, in turn, the Local Authority reports its information to the government's Department for Education. Attendance rates for each school are published nationally each year.

Punctuality

School starts at 8.55am and any child who is not in school at registration is considered **late for school**. Any child arriving after **9.00am** should report to the school office, provide an explanation and complete an entry in the '**late book**'.



Any child who arrives **later than 9.30am** is considered **absent** (unauthorised) for the morning session.

A child who is late for school may

- not want to enter the classroom and get upset
- feel embarrassed in front of their classmates
- disrupt learning for the rest of the class
- miss the morning task or an important explanation
- feel anxious about school if it happens too often
- develop poor routines and bad habits
- develop an attitude that being on time does not matter
- develop an attitude that school does not matter
- feel that parents do not care about their education

Being punctual for school is therefore as important as attendance. The school monitors punctuality in the same way it monitors attendance. Grades and descriptions are also used. Parents will be contacted where punctuality falls below acceptable limits.

NOTES

When we talk to children about punctuality, we realise that it is often parents who cause a late arrival for school. Whilst we accept that unforeseen traffic or other circumstances sometimes cause a problem, regular lateness can be avoided by:

- having good morning routines (breakfast, bathroom, etc.)
- having a reliable alarm clock and setting it correctly
- being organised and getting things ready the night before
- having lunch boxes, book bags and homework ready
- children (and parents) going to bed at a reasonable hour
- not watching television or playing games beyond bedtime
- ensuring everyone gets a good night's sleep
- agreeing a set time for leaving the house (in plenty of time)
- anticipating traffic and parking problems
- attempting to leave the house just 5 minutes earlier

Attendance Rewards

We recognise good attendance throughout the year and offer certificates and prizes at the end of the year for outstanding attendance.



Partnership with Parents

Please get in touch with us if you wish to discuss your child's attendance at school or anticipate circumstances which may affect your child's attendance or punctuality for school.