



**COMMON ATTENDANCE POLICY FOR
PROMOTING AND MAXIMISING SCHOOL
ATTENDANCE ACROSS NOTTINGHAM CITY**

EVERYBODY'S BUSINESS!

CONTENTS

1 Introduction and Statement of intent

Dealing with Absence

2 Getting Started – A Good Foundation

3 Leave of Absence

4 Unauthorised leave flowchart

5 Safeguarding children and young people

6 Dealing with persistent lateness

7 Persistent lateness flowchart

8 Dealing with common ailments

9 Religious observance

Key documents and references

1.0 INTRODUCTION AND STATEMENT OF INTENT

1.1 Nottingham City Council (the Local Authority) and Nottingham City Schools are committed to raising the educational attainment of pupils within the city and affording them the best possible life chances following statutory education. In order to achieve this, children and young people need to attend school regularly and be equipped to learn. The latter, including punctuality is a precondition of social inclusion and a prerequisite to effective learning. Irregular school attendance is a contributory factor in social exclusion and underachievement. Pupils who fail to attend school regularly are more likely to be the victim of crime themselves or to become exposed to offending behaviours by others. City children should attend the school in which they are registered, on time.

1.2 The Local Authority aims to improve school attendance and punctuality by:

- a) promoting the value and importance of regular school attendance;
- b) providing consistent information to schools and families;
- c) reducing all forms of unauthorised absence

1.3 The Children and Young People's Plan incorporates a range of statutory and non-statutory attendance and absence targets. Targets are best achieved where active and meaningful partnerships have been formed and the entire attendance agenda is fully owned and supported by all.

1.4 Targets for attendance need to be understood and owned by parents, pupils, parents and Governors alike. The expectation applies throughout the education system, ranging from Early Years, Primary and Secondary phases including any alternative learning provision. Every school should have clear incentives which encourage and support the drive for good attendance.

1.5 The Local Authority expects that where alternative learning arrangements are in place, then the standard Service Level Agreement is used and completed fully.

DEALING WITH ABSENCE

2.0 GETTING STARTED – A GOOD FOUNDATION

2.1 Parents choosing to have their children attend at Foundation Stage are under no legal obligation to do so and therefore the child is not of compulsory school age. However, the engagement in education at this stage in a child's development is crucial. Regular attendance is encouraged from the outset and will create good habits for the future. This early message communicated to parents will underpin the expectations of the statutory requirements once the child actually is registered on roll at school, the term following their fifth birthday.

2.2 Schools and the Local Authority will work together with other agencies and services to ensure the consistent delivery of this message.

Addressing concerns around non-attendance at Foundation/Early Years:

Every attempt must be made to address the concern, initially by trying to engage the parent(s)/carer(s) by talking with them when they either bring the child to the provision or by any home visit that may be undertaken

Such intervention should be followed up with telephone contact [and logged within school, confirmed in writing to the parent/carer or further verbal communication](#). If this fails to bring out the desired outcome without good reason, speak directly to the parent(s)/carer(s) inviting them to meet with you or invite them in writing. A face to face invite should be attempted, if you can get the parent\carer to communicate with you.

If your school uses any form of School Comms, it is advisable to put the details your Foundation Stage children on it as you do for the children of statutory school age.

The responsibility for the children attending the provision is solely that of the parent/carer. However, if you do operate a 'walking bus' system, then particular families found to fall in to this category may well benefit from it.

The provision of a place could be at risk if a child does not access it regularly.

Minor ailment clinics could be used in conjunction with School Health (Speak to your School Nurse).

Statutory Attendance should be monitored every half term. Every child who falls below 90% - parent/carer should receive a letter; every child whose attendance is below 85% - parent/carer should be invited to meet with the Head Teacher or Senior Designated member of staff

For any child whose attendance falls below 60% - the school should take full account of all that is known about the child in line with the Family Support Pathway to prevent an increase in calls to Social Care.

3.0 LEAVE OF ABSENCE

(Code C) Only exceptional circumstances warrant an authorised leave of absence. Schools should consider each request individually taking into account the circumstances, such as: the nature of the event for which leave is sought; the frequency of the request; whether the parent gave advance notice; and the pupil's attainment, attendance and ability to catch up on missed schooling.

School attendance – Statutory guidance and departmental advice August 2013

3.1 Head Teachers' must use their own discretion to determine the period of which they will consider a pupil's attendance record at the point of any request. This is likely to be twelve months prior taking into account attendance levels of 94% or above. Leave of absence is generally a period that has not been planned for or where the absence is authorised, but not a holiday. E.g. an emergency which requires a child to accompany their parent abroad; extended absence for religious purposes.

3.2 'Keeping Pupil Registers' – Guidance on applying the Education Pupil Registration Regulation 2006.

“The regulation on leave of absence applies to all special schools and maintained schools. Whilst it does not apply to independent schools there is nothing that prevents them adopting the principles in both the legislation and this guidance. Some schools may have funding agreements that require them to comply with the regulation.

54. All applications for leave of absence must be made in advance by the parent(s), carer(s) or corporate parent that the pupil normally resides with.

55. Head Teachers are able to refuse the whole period requested by a pupil's parents, grant part of the period and refuse the remainder, or grant the whole of the period requested. Any leave of absence granted by a school must be recorded as authorised using the appropriate national code. Periods that are refused must be recorded as unauthorised.

56. All requests should be treated on a case by case basis within the school's published attendance policies which should give it the flexibility to respond to difficult circumstances whilst discouraging unnecessary absence

58. It is good practice for schools to respond to all requests for a leave of absence in writing giving the reasons for the decision. It is particularly important that letters approving a request clearly state:

- a. the expected date of return;
- b. that the parents are expected to contact the school if anything delays the pupil returning to school when expected; and
- c. what action will be taken if the pupil fails to return when expected.

59. Similarly, a letter refusing a request should explain the reasons for the refusal and what action will be taken if the parents ignore the refusal and keep their child away.”

(Code H) Holiday authorised by the school

Head Teachers should not grant leave of absence unless in exceptional circumstances. The application must be made in advance and the Head Teacher must be satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances which warrant the leave. Where a leave of absence is granted, the Head Teacher will determine the number of days a pupil can be away from school. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the Head Teacher's discretion.

**School attendance – Statutory guidance and departmental advice
August 2013**

Nottingham City Council does not encourage absence from school for the purpose of taking holiday.

3.3 A pupil who **is absent for 10 days** (whether authorised or not) in an academic year will only attain **94.7%** attendance.

If a school agrees absence **for the purpose of a holiday code H must be used.**

(Code G) Holiday not authorised by the school or in excess of the period determined by the Head Teacher.

If a school does not authorise a leave of absence for the purpose of a holiday but the parents still take the child out of school, or the child is kept away for longer than was agreed, the absence is unauthorised. The regulations do not allow schools to give retrospective approval. If the parents did not apply for leave of absence in advance, the absence must be recorded as unauthorised.

**School attendance – Statutory guidance and departmental advice
August 2013**

All of the above should be reflected in the school attendance policy, school brochures, newsletters and on school web sites.

3.4 *Keeping Pupil registers' – Guidance on applying the Education Pupil Registration Regulation 2006.*

Holidays which are requested for the following reasons should not be authorised:

- availability of cheap holidays;
- availability of the desired accommodation;
- poor weather experienced in school holiday periods; and
- overlap with beginning or end of term.

64. Whilst the application must be made by the parent(s) that the child normally resides with, there is no restriction on who the holiday is taken with. This is a matter for the parent(s) not the school.

65. If the Local Code of Conduct allows, parents can be given a Penalty Notice or prosecuted for periods of unauthorised absence. **'Penalties are set at £60 if paid within 21 days rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days. If the penalty is paid, the absence covered by the Penalty Notice cannot be cited again.'** Failure to pay will result in prosecution under Section 444, Education Act 1996.

67. Leave of absence cannot be aggregated with days that the school is closed.

68. In a small number of cases schools could have concerns about a pupil's welfare, such as that the pupil will be forced into marriage whilst abroad. In such cases, the school should seek support from their local authority. Further information is available at <http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/socialcare/safeguarding/forcedmarriage/>

4.0 SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

4.1 Any safeguarding issues pertaining to a child being taken out of school in circumstances that cause concern should be addressed directly to Children's Social Care in area where the child lives.

4.2 In the secondary phase, if there are concerns that the pupil may be coerced into forced marriage, the following information should be obtained (discreetly) prior to any pupil going abroad; the child's name and date of birth, parents names, any address where the pupil may be staying overseas, details of travel plans and contact details of relatives remaining in the U.K.; a photocopy of the child's passport; information that only the pupil is aware of. This information would assist any investigation by the relevant Embassy/High Commission, should the pupil fail to return.

5.0 DEALING WITH PUNCTUALITY ISSUES

5.1 **Registration periods will last for ten minutes** after which time the register will close. Any pupil arriving after the start time, but within the ten minutes will be recorded as an **L** which signifies late.

5.2 Any pupil arriving after the ten minutes will be recorded as **U** which signifies that they arrived after the official close of the register and will therefore denote an unauthorised absence.

5.3 Issues relating to punctuality should be addressed with the pupil/parents by speaking with them; correspondence, meeting in school etc. All interventions should be clearly recorded. Schools should be aware of individual family circumstances if the children of the family are in a number of schools and to decide the course of action on an individual basis. Head Teachers are advised to use their discretion at this point.

5.4 All of the above should be reflected in the school attendance policy, school brochures, correspondence to parents, newsletters and on the school web-page.

5.5 The Local Authority will use the following as a trigger that allows schools to request a Penalty Notice. This applies to both Primary and Secondary phase:

Any pupil registered late (recorded as U) ten times in a four-week period. (Minimum) (Refer to the 'Lates' Penalty Notice Flow Chart).

6.0 DEALING WITH COMMON AILMENTS

The web link below has been provided by NHS colleagues. It contains the most up to date information with regard to incubation and exclusion periods.

<http://www.nhs.uk/Planners/birthtofive/Pages/Childhoodillnesshub.aspx>

6.1 Minor Ailment Clinics have been found to be success in a number of schools.

7. RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE

7.1 Nottingham City is a vibrant and diverse city that promotes respect for the faiths and values of all its communities. There are many religions celebrated in our schools and it is important that we recognise the diversity of the school population.

7.2 It is acknowledged that different schools have different arrangements according to the ages of the children, the type of school and the percentage of pupils from different religious backgrounds. This section promotes community cohesion by recognising the diverse needs of all sections of the school community.

7.3 In Nottingham City one day for each religious festival (no more than three days in any one academic year) should be counted as authorised absence using the 'R' code. The Pupil Regulations 2006 state that absence for religious observance should be treated as authorised (absence) **'on a day exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parent belongs'**. Additional days off for shopping or for extended celebrations should be treated as unauthorised absence.

7.4 In respect of pilgrimages, schools may request to see copies of visas. Dates of return should also be agreed prior to the period of leave. Parents should be advised about this policy and procedures regarding unavoidable delays in returning or taking extended leave that has not been authorised by the school.

KEY DOCUMENTS AND REFERENCES

'Keeping Pupil Registers' – Guidance on applying the Education Pupil Registration Regulation 2006.

School attendance – Statutory guidance and departmental advice August 2013

Penalty Notices Code of Conduct (below)

Penalty Notice Request Form (below)

NOTTINGHAM CITY COUNCIL: CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Penalty Notices for Truancy, Excluded Pupils, Persistent Lateness, Unauthorised Holidays in Term Time - Local Code of Conduct

Introduction

1. This Code of Conduct will govern all Penalty Notices issued in respect of children of compulsory school age who are registered at a maintained school, a Pupil Referral Unit, an Academy, a City Technology College, or a City College for the Technology of the Arts, and those attending alternative provision within the jurisdiction of Nottingham City Council, hence referred to as the LA (Local Authority).
2. In the context of the Local Code of Conduct the term “school” will cover all the above-mentioned educational establishments, including Pupil Referral Units and attendance at alternative provision arranged by the LA.
3. The purpose of the Code is to ensure that Penalty Notices are issued consistently and fairly across the LA.
4. Penalties are set at £60 if paid within 21 days rising to £120 if paid after 21 days but within 28 days. If the penalty is paid, the absence covered by the Penalty Notice cannot be cited again.
5. The LA is responsible for the operation and administration of the Penalty Notice scheme. To ensure consistency all Penalty Notices shall be issued by the LA for and on behalf of those persons designated by the regulations as having authority, i.e. schools, limited to Head Teachers, Deputy Head Teachers and Assistant Heads Teachers, authorised LA staff, the Police, Community Support Officers and other accredited persons.
6. An unauthorised absence level of 25% or more over a period of six school weeks will be used as a general trigger guide. However, shorter timescales may be applied depending on the circumstances of the unauthorised absence or truancy.

Penalty Notices that can be issued by the LA on behalf of schools

7. When a child has been absent without the authorisation of the school in accordance with paragraph 6.
8. Holidays taken in term time not authorised by the school.
9. Persistent lateness after the register has closed where there has been a minimum of 10 Us recorded in a 4 week period.
10. Excluded pupils failing to attend provision after the fifth day of exclusion.
11. Excluded pupils seen in a public place within the first five days of the exclusion.

Penalty Notices that can be issued directly by the LA or on behalf of other partners

12. Cases recommended by a Legal Intervention Officer following a case review.
13. As part of the LA’s fast-track to attendance procedure.
14. Where a pupil has been stopped on more than one occasion during a three-month period by the Youth Issues Team or other accredited persons having authority to do so.
15. On behalf of neighbouring local authorities in accordance with agreed protocols.

Limitations

16. A parent will be issued with no more than three Penalty Notices, relating to the same child, in any twelve month period.

17. A Penalty Notice shall only be issued in compliance with the Local Code of Conduct. The Targeted Family Support Manager for the school must be informed.

18. Penalty Notices shall not be issued if legal proceedings under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 are under consideration or are in progress, unless used within the framework of the LA's fast-track procedure.

19. The LA reserves the right to limit or restrict the use of Penalty Notices at any time if the number of requests or court cases resulting from non-payment compromises the effective administration and/or integrity of the scheme.

Non-payment

20. If the Penalty Notice is not paid in full before the expiry of the period for paying it, the LA shall institute proceedings in accordance with Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

Withdrawal of Penalty Notice

21. The LA may only withdraw a Penalty Notice where:

- it ought not to have been issued i.e. it has been issued outside the terms of the Local Code of Conduct or where no offence has been committed; or
- it has been issued to the wrong person; or
- it contains material errors.

Service of Penalty Notices

22. Service will be by first class post and 2 days are allowed for postal delivery.

Definition of parent

23. The term "parent" used in the code of conduct is that defined by Section 576 of the Education Act 1996 and Section 2 of the Children Act 1989.