

# Northumberland County Council

## **School Attendance Policy**

Hexham First School



## Introduction

The Department for Education (DfE) has produced statutory guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools, and local authorities. It is called "[Working together to improve school attendance](#)" and it includes a National Framework in relation to absence and the use of legal sanctions.

Our School Attendance Policy reflects the requirements and principles of that guidance including the importance of understanding the potential vulnerabilities of children who are missing education or absent from school

Excellent attendance promotes excellent learning. Regular school attendance is essential if children are to achieve their full potential.

Hexham First School believe that regular school attendance is crucial to allowing children to maximise the educational opportunities available to them and become emotionally resilient, confident and competent adults who are able to realise their full potential and make a positive contribution to their community.

Hexham First School values all pupils. As set out in this policy, we will work with families to early identify the reasons for poor attendance and try to resolve any difficulties.

Hexham First School believe attendance is a shared responsibility, involving the whole school community and local community; Our Attendance Policy should not be viewed in isolation; it is a thread that runs through all aspects of school improvement, and is supported by our policies on safeguarding and behaviour. This policy also takes into account the Human Rights Act 1998, the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and the Equality Act 2010.

Hexham First School define our key levels of attendance as:

Attendance	Description
98 – 100 %	Excellent
95 - 98%	Good
93 - 95%	Satisfactory
91 - 92%	Unsatisfactory
Under 90%	Persistent Absence

## Principles

Hexham First School believe the following important principles underpin our approach to managing attendance:

- Pupils and parents/carers understand the issues and procedures for attendance and punctuality.

- All school staff, including governors, administrative and support staff understand the issues and procedures for attendance and punctuality
- Clear procedures for enabling pupils to come to school
- Attendance issues are addressed in the curriculum
- Parents/carers and pupils having the opportunity to raise concerns and share in addressing those concerns
- Allocating resources e.g. time, people, space to support the policy
- Identifying patterns of absence and intervening early. Patterns of attendance are established early in a school career. Children who miss significant amounts of their education in primary schools are more likely to truant later on. The headteacher will work with the school partnership using data to identify students early
- Sanctions for failing to ensure regular attendance are fully understood by the whole school community and parents/carers.

Each of these principles is explained in full detail in the following guidance.

### **Rights/Roles/ Responsibilities**

There is a clear link between poor attendance at school and lower academic achievement. Of pupils who miss more than 50 per cent of school only three per cent achieve five or more GCSEs at grades 9 to 4 including Maths and English

Hexham First School believe that improved school attendance can only be achieved if it is viewed as a shared responsibility of the school staff, governors, parents/carers, pupils and the wider school community.

### **The Governing Body will:**

- Ensure that the importance and value of good attendance is promoted to pupils and their parents/carers.
- Have a named senior attendance for attendance (SAL)
- Annually review the school's Attendance Policy and ensure the required resources are available to fully implement the policy
- Identify a member of the governing body to lead on attendance matters
- Ensure that *The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007* (and subsequent amending and related legislation,) is complied with together with statutory and non statutory guidance such as *Working together to improve school attendance, 2024* issued by the Department of Education.
- Monitor the school's attendance and related issues through termly reporting at Governing Body Meetings

- Ensure that attendance data is reported to the Local Authority and Department of Education as required and on time
- Have clear systems in school to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site
- Ensure that there are procedures for collecting and analysing attendance data frequently to identify causes and patterns of absence
- Ensure that data is understood and used to devise solutions and to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions

A positive learning climate is essential for promoting good attendance

**The Headteacher will:**

- Actively promote the importance and value of good attendance to pupils and their parents/carers.
- Form positive relationships with pupils and parents/carers
- Ensure that there is a whole school approach which reinforces good school attendance; with good teaching and learning experiences that encourage all pupils to attend and to achieve.
- Monitor the implementation of the Attendance Policy and ensure that the policy is reviewed annually
- Make staff aware of the Attendance Policy and are adequately trained to address attendance issues
- Ensure that The *Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007* (and subsequent amending and related legislation,) is complied with together with statutory and non-statutory guidance such as *Working together to improve school attendance, 2024* issued by the Department of Education.
- Have a named senior manager (SAL) to lead on attendance and allocate sufficient time and resource
- The Headteacher will ensure that the school office will contact parents / carers of an absent pupil to ascertain the reasons for absence.
- Return school attendance data to the Local Authority and Department of Education as required and on time
- Report the school's attendance and related issues through termly reporting to the Governing Body and on a half termly basis to the lead governor for attendance
- Have systems in place to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site.
- Collate and analyse attendance data frequently to identify causes and patterns of absence
- Interpret the data to develop solutions and to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions
- Involve Education Welfare and develop a multi-agency response to improve attendance and support pupils and their families
- Document interventions used to a standard required by the local authority should legal proceedings be instigated

**Parents/Carers will:**

- Talk to their child about school and what goes on there. Take a positive interest in their child's work and educational progress
- Instil the value of education and regular school attendance within the home
- Encourage their child to look to the future and have aspirations

- Contact the school if their child is absent to let them know the reason why and the expected date of return. Follow this up with a note where possible.
- Avoid unnecessary absences. Wherever possible make appointments for the Doctors, Dentists etc. outside of school hours.
- Ask the school for help if their child is experiencing difficulties
- Inform the school of any change in circumstances that may impact on their child's attendance.
- Support the school; take every opportunity to get involved in their child's education, form a positive relationship with school and acknowledge the importance of children receiving the same messages from both school and home
- Encourage routine at home, for example, bed times, home work, preparing school bag and uniform the evening before
- Not keep their child off school to go shopping, to help at home or to look after other members of the family
- Avoid taking their child on family holidays during term-time.

### **Legal Framework**

Under the requirements of s7 of the Education Act 1996 ("the 1996 Act") it is the duty of a parent to ensure that every child of compulsory school age receives efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs or additional learning needs they may have either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

A child is of Compulsory School Age at the beginning of the term following their 5<sup>th</sup> birthday. A child ceases to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday in June of the school year in which they reach the age of 16.

Under the 1996 Act, the Local Authority has a statutory responsibility to ensure that parents secure education for children of compulsory school age and where necessary and appropriate, consider and use legal enforcement. This responsibility is undertaken by Education Welfare team.

Schools must take the attendance register at the start of each morning session of each school day and once during each afternoon session. On each occasion they must record whether each registered pupil is physically present in school or, if not, the reason they are not in school by using the appropriate national attendance and absence codes from regulation 10 of the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024

### **Categorising absence**

Where pupils of compulsory school age are recorded as absent, the register must show whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.

Absence can only be authorised by the school and cannot be authorised by parents/carers. All absences will be treated as unauthorised unless a satisfactory explanation and or evidence for the pupil's absence has been received.

Parents/carers should advise the school by telephone on the first day of absence and provide the school with an expected date of return. This should be followed up in the form of a written note from the parent/carer, though verbal explanations may be acceptable where this is considered appropriate. Alternative arrangements will be agreed with non-English speaking parents/carers.

Absence will usually be categorised as set out below, however, this is not an exhaustive list and should be read in conjunction with relevant legislation and statutory guidance (for example - The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 / [Working together to improve school attendance](#))

### **Illness**

In most cases a telephone call or a note from the parent/carer informing the school that their child is ill will be acceptable. Where there are repeated absences due to reported illness parents/carers may be asked to provide medical evidence. This will usually be in the form of an appointment card, prescription etc.

### **Medical/Dental Appointments**

Parents /carers are advised where possible to make medical and dental appointments outside of the school day. Where this is not possible, pupils should attend school for part of the day. Parents should show the appointment card to school.

### **Other Authorised Circumstances**

This relates to occasions where there is cause for absence due to exceptional circumstances which will be considered on a case-by-case basis by the Headteacher.

### **Excluded (No alternative provision made)**

Exclusion from attending school is counted as an authorised absence. The child's class teacher/form tutor/Head of Year will make arrangements for work to be sent home.

### **Religious Observance**

Hexham First 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 and is recognised as such by a relevant religious authority. Where this occurs, the school will consider either authorising the pupil absence or making special leave for religious observance. Parents are requested to give advance notice to the school.

### **Traveller Absence**

Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) pupils are among the lowest achieving groups of pupils at every key stage in education, although some GRT pupils achieve very well at school. We recognise that there are many complex and interwoven factors that may influence the educational attainment of GRT pupils. At our school, we have high expectations of all pupils, regardless of their background whilst recognising the lifestyle and cultural traditions of GRT communities. In line with The Education Act 1996, Section 444(6) the school will authorise the absence of a pupil who is a mobile child<sup>11</sup> and is unable to attend school because:

- the parent is engaged in a trade or business of such a nature as to require him to travel from place to place,

- that the child has attended at a school as a registered pupil as regularly as the nature of that trade or business permits, and
- if the child has attained the age of six, that he has made at least 200 attendances during the period of 12 months ending with the date on which the proceedings were instituted

This provision applies *only* when the family has no fixed abode and are engaged in a trade or business that requires them to travel and when the child is attending school as regularly as that trade permits. In these circumstances, parents have a duty to ensure that their children are receiving suitable education when not at school.

When a family is trading or otherwise conducting their business in or around Northumberland, if a family can reasonably travel back to their base school (see below) then the expectation is that their child will attend full-time. Hexham First School will be regarded as the base school if it is the school where the child normally attends when he or she is not travelling. However, the pupil must have attended Hexham First School in the last 18 months. Parents can register their children at other schools temporarily while away from their base school; in such cases, the pupil's school place at Hexham First School will be kept open for them whilst travelling. This is to protect them from unfairly losing their place at their school of usual attendance.

To ensure we can effectively support all our pupils, we ask that parents:

- Advise the school of their forthcoming travelling patterns as soon as these are known and before they happen; and inform the school regarding proposed return dates

## **Late Arrival**

Registration begins 8:45, pupils arriving after this time will be marked as present but arriving late. (L) The register will close at 8:50am pupils arriving after the close of register will be recorded as late after registration (U), this will not be authorised and will count as an absence for that school session.

On arrival after the close of register, pupils must immediately report to the school office to ensure that we can be responsible for their health and safety whilst they are in school.

Absence will only be **authorised** if a satisfactory explanation for the late arrival can be provided, for example, evidence of attendance at a medical appointment.

The absence will be recorded as **unauthorised** if the pupil has arrived late without justifiable cause, for example, if they woke up late or were waiting for their uniform to dry.

## **Un-authorised absence.**

Absence will not be authorised unless parents have provided a satisfactory explanation and that it has been accepted as such by the school.

Examples of unsatisfactory explanations include:

- A pupil's/family member's birthday
- Shopping for uniforms/shoes
- Having hair cut
- Closure of a sibling's school for training day(or other) purposes
- Illness where the child is considered well enough to attend school
- Leave of Absence taken without the authorisation of school

## **Deletions from the Register**

- Any deletions from the Register will be in accordance with regulation 9 of The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024,

## **Using Attendance Data**

Pupil's attendance will be monitored and may be shared with the Local Authority and other agencies if a pupil's attendance is a cause for concern.

Indicators next to a pupil's name will show if their attendance has, stayed the same, improved or deteriorated This pupil level data will be used to trigger school action as set out in the escalation of intervention ( EXAMPLE Appendix 1).

Attendance data will also be used to identify emerging patterns and trends to inform whole school/partnership strategies to improve attendance and attainment.

Hexham First School will share attendance data with the Department for Education and the local authority as required.

All information shared will be done so in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

## **Persistent and Severe Absence**

A pupil is defined by the Government as a '**persistent absentee**' (**PA**) when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for any reason; this can be authorised or unauthorised absence. Over a full academic year this would be 19 school days (38 sessions) missed. Absence at this level will cause considerable damage to any pupil's education and we need the full support and co-operation of parents to resolve this.

A pupil who has missed 50% or more schooling is defined by the Government as '**severely absent**' (SA). Pupils within this cohort may find it more difficult to be in school or face bigger barriers to their regular attendance and, as such, are likely to need more intensive support.

The attendance of all pupils at our school is monitored to identify children who are PA, or are on track to becoming PA. Where emerging concerns are identified we will instigate appropriate and timely interventions as outlined in our policy. Referrals may also be made to external agencies for targeted support

## **Support Systems**

School recognise that poor attendance is often a sign that there are more serious issues going on in a child's life. This may be linked to problems at home and or in school. Parents/carers should make school aware of any difficulties or changes in circumstances that may affect their child's attendance and or behaviour in school, for example, bereavement, divorce/separation, incidents of domestic abuse. This will help the school identify any additional support that may be required.

Hexham First School also recognise that some pupils are more likely to require additional support to attain good attendance, for example, those pupils with special educational needs, those with physical or mental health needs, migrant and refugee pupils and looked after children.

The school will implement strategies to support improved attendance. Strategies used will include:

- Discussion with parents and pupils
- Attendance panels/ School Attendance Contracts ( EXAMPLE Appendix 2)
- Attendance report cards
- Referrals to support agencies
- Learning mentors
- Pupil Voice Activities
- Friendship group
- PSHE
- Family learning
- Reward systems
- Time limited part time time-tables
- Additional learning support
- Behaviour support
- Inclusion units
- Reintegration support packages
- Support offered to families will be child centred and planned in discussion and agreement with both parents/carers and pupils.
- Where parents/carers fail or refuse to engage with the support offered and further unauthorised absence occurs, Hexham First School will refer to Education Welfare and the use of legal sanctions will be considered

## Legal Sanctions.

Where intervention by school and the Education Welfare Team fails to bring about an improvement in attendance, enforcement will be considered. A referral may be made to the Local Authority for enforcement action as appropriate. Parents do need to realise their own responsibilities in ensuring attendance at school and most importantly about returning children to education.

Enforcement action may include (but is not limited to):

- (a) the issue of a **Penalty Notice**, (*see below for further information relating to Penalty Notices*) which would require payment of a sum of **£80** (if paid **within 21 days** from receipt of the Notice), or **£160** (if paid **after 21 days** and **before 28 days** from the date of receipt);
- (b) **prosecution** in the Magistrates' Court for an **offence** under section 444 of the 1996 Act, for which the penalties on conviction are:
  - (i) a fine of up to **£1,000** for an offence under section 444(1); or
  - (ii) a fine of up to **£2,500** for an offence under section 444(1A) **and/or** a **custodial sentence** of up to **3 months**;
- (c) an application to the Magistrates' Court for a **Parenting Order** of up to **3 months** should the Local Authority be successful in a prosecution under section 444;
- (d) an application under section 36 of the Children Act 1989 for an **Education Supervision Order** to authorise the Council to take responsibility for advising, assisting and giving directions to you and the Child to secure that the Child is properly educated.

Penalty notices may be issued to a parent as an alternative to prosecution for irregular school attendance under s444 of the 1996 Act.

## Penalty Notices

There is now a single consistent national threshold for when a Penalty Notice must be considered by all schools in England, of 10 sessions (usually equivalent to 5 school days) of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10 school week period. The 10 sessions of absence do not have to be consecutive and can be made up of a combination of any type of unauthorised absence (G, O and/or U coded within the school's registers). The 10-school week period can span different terms, school years or education settings.

- Sanctions may include issuing each parent (for each child) with a Penalty Notice which would require payment of a sum of **£80** (if paid **within 21 days** from receipt of the Notice), or **£160** (if paid **after 21 days** and **before 28 days** from the date of receipt).
- A **second Penalty Notice** issued within a three-year period will result in a fine of **£160** per parent, per child.
- If a third offence is committed the matter may be referred to the local authority for consideration of prosecution via the Magistrates Court.

As stated above if prosecution is instigated for irregular school attendance, the penalties on conviction are:

- (i) a fine of up to **£1,000** for an offence under section 444(1); or
- (ii) a fine of up to **£2,500** for an offence under section 444(1A) **and/or a custodial sentence of up to 3 months;**

Penalty Notices will be issued in accordance with Northumberland County Council's Code of Conduct.

**There is no entitlement in law for pupils to take time off during the term to go on holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure or recreation, or to take part in protest activity in school hours.** In addition, the Supreme Court has ruled that the definition of regular school attendance is "in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school."

Should a penalty notice be issued, it should be noted that this is a direct alternative to prosecution, non-payment of the penalty notice may lead to a prosecution under section 444 of the 1996 Act

### **Statutory Framework**

This policy has been devised with assistance from the Education Welfare Team. Relevant legislation and statutory guidance has also been considered.

- [Working together to improve school attendance, DfE \(August 2024\)](#)
- [The School Attendance \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2024](#)
- [Children missing education, DfE \(August 2024\)](#)
- [Keeping children safe in education, DfE \(September 2024\)](#)
- [Working together to safeguard children, DfE \(December 2023\)](#)

PROMOTING GOOD ATTENDANCE

(Appendix1)

% Attendance	Key Person	Action(s)	Support Entitlement
100% -98%	Class Teacher Admin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Encourage attendance</li> <li>● Ensure all absence is followed up.</li> <li>● First Day Call - office</li> <li>● Accurate and consistent marking of registers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Postcards/letters home for positive attendance</li> </ul>
98% -95%	Class Teacher Headteacher Admin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Encourage positive attendance</li> <li>● Inform Headteacher of any deteriorating attendance patterns and follow up.</li> <li>● Contact parent/carer</li> <li>●</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Continued school support</li> </ul>
95% -93%	Headteacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Contact parent/carer</li> <li>● Letter home and/or arrange meeting with parent/carer</li> <li>● Agree attendance plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Support for students in school - target set</li> </ul>
92% -91%	Headteacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Letter home-Review action plan</li> <li>● Meet with pupil and parent/carer</li> <li>● Advise parent /carer no further absence due to illness will be authorised without evidence</li> <li>● Attendance panel</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● EHA if appropriate.</li> </ul>
90% and below	Headteacher Education Welfare Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Letter home advising referral to EW.</li> <li>● EW case work undertaken</li> <li>● LA Action including:</li> <li>● Warning Notice</li> <li>● Penalty Notice</li> <li>● Education Supervision Order</li> <li>● Prosecution</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Continued support from school/EWO and student support and other agencies where appropriate</li> </ul>

## Appendix 2

### Hexham First School Attendance Contract

Name of Child:	DOB:            AGE: School Year Group:
Home Address:	
School : Address:	
Parent/Carer (1):	
Parent/Carer (2):	

#### **CONTRACT:-**

For your child to gain the greatest benefit from her education it is vital that he/she attends regularly and be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. It is very important therefore that you make sure that Name attends regularly.

#### WHY REGULAR ATTENDANCE IS IMPORTANT

Any absence affects the pattern of your child's schooling and regular absence will seriously affect her learning. Any pupil's absence disrupts teaching routines so may affect the learning of others in the same class.

Ensuring NAME regular attendance at school is your legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason creates an offence in law and may result in prosecution.

#### UNDERSTANDING ABSENCE

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (NOT BY THE PARENTS), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required, preferably in writing.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason, such as emergencies or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This includes:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- truancy before or during the school day
- absences which have never been properly explained
- children who arrive at school after registration has closed.
- shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed.

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If NAME is reluctant to attend, it is not acceptable to cover up his/her absence or to give in to pressure to excuse him/her from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually make things worse. If NAME attendance at school is affected by persistent illness the school will not authorize the absence until they are satisfied the absence is valid.

## PROCEDURES

If your child is absent you must:

- Contact the school as soon as possible on the first day of absence;
- Send a note in to school on the first day they return with an explanation of the absence and the dates of the absence – you should do this even if you have already telephoned.
- Or, you can call into school and report to reception, who will arrange for a member of staff to speak with you.

If your child's attendance deteriorates we will:

- Write to you.
- invite you in to school if absences persist to discuss the situation with the appropriate staff
- Refer you to the Education Welfare Service

## CONTACT DETAILS

There are times when the school and Education Welfare need to contact you about lots of things, including absence, so we need to have your contact details at all times. Help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have an up to date number – if we don't then something important may be missed

Parents/Carers are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, Education Welfare will become involved. The service will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve NAME attendance have failed and unauthorised absences persist, then sanctions such as Penalty Notices, Education Supervision Orders or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court will be used. Full details of the options open to enforce attendance at school are available from the Education Welfare Service/ Local Authority.

## LATENESS

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If NAME misses the start of the day he/she can miss work and time with his/her class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons, can be embarrassing for the child and can also encourage absence.

The school day starts at? and we expect NAME to be in class at that time. Registers are marked by twice a day and NAME will receive a late mark if he/she is not punctual.

In accordance with the Regulations, if NAME arrives after the close of registration she will receive a mark that shows her to be on site, but this will **not** count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence.

If your child has a persistent late record you will be asked to meet with staff in school to resolve the problem, but you can approach staff at any time if you are having problems getting your child to school on time

Leave of Absence in term time.

Any applications for leave must be made in advance and at the discretion of the head teacher. In making a decision the Head Teacher will consider the exceptional circumstances of each application individually, including any previous pattern of leave or absence in term time.

Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school, or in excess of that agreed, will be classed as unauthorised and may attract sanctions such as a Penalty Notice.

I have read and understood the terms and conditions of the School Attendance Contract.

Signed PARENT/CARER

SCHOOL

Date: