



Attendance Policy

Introduction

The Northleigh House School seeks to ensure that all its students receive an education which gives each student the best opportunity to realise her or his potential. We provide a caring, welcoming environment, so that each member of the school community feels valued and secure. The strong pastoral ethos of the school, and our good links with our parents/carers, means that all staff work with students and their families to ensure that each student attends school regularly and punctually.

We recognise that attendance monitoring is an important aspect of safeguarding. The school seeks to develop and maintain good relationships with parents/carers, and to communicate regularly and effectively with them over issues of attendance and punctuality.

Aims

- To maintain and improve the overall percentage attendance of students at school.
- To maintain a framework which defines agreed roles and responsibilities and promotes consistency in carrying out designated tasks.
- To provide support, advice and guidance to parents/carers and students.
- To maintain and develop positive and consistent communication between home and school.
- To work effectively with external agencies when necessary.
- To recognise the needs of the individual student when planning reintegration following significant periods of absence.

1. To maintain and improve the overall percentage attendance of students at school

- All members of staff should apply the attendance policy consistently, detailing absences on appropriate forms.
- The school and all members of staff should establish and maintain a high profile for attendance and punctuality.
- All attendance issues should be related directly to our ethos, our values and our curriculum.

2. To maintain a framework which defines roles and responsibilities, and promotes consistency in carrying out designated tasks

- We have clear unambiguous procedures for statutory registration. If parents/carers do not telephone the school, they are requested to email our admissions email account.
- Telephone contact with parents/carers is made after 9.30 am on the first day of absence by a member of staff.
- We respond promptly to lateness, in respect of both parents/carers and students.
- Northleigh has procedures in place for tracking and responding to absence and lateness.
- The School Director refers students to external agencies when necessary.
- Attendance is reviewed regularly by the School Director and/or the senior management team.

3. To provide support, advice and guidance to parents and students

- When parents/carers share concerns about a student's attendance, attitude to school or punctuality, we act promptly to support parents/carers.
- We share concerns about students' attendance or lateness with parents/carers at an early stage.
- We provide support for students who are apprehensive about coming to school eg by giving them a mentor to speak to, or by giving them strategies to follow if they are finding the pressures of a school day, or of academic work, too demanding.
- When parents/carers request absence for family holidays, the legal and academic guidelines and consequences are made clear to them.

4. To develop positive and consistent communication between home and school

- We make clear to parents/carers that we expect phone calls on the first morning of absence. If parents/carers do not telephone, they must email the school to explain the absence.
- When parents/carers do not phone on the first day of absence, a member of staff phones home after 9.30 am.

5. To promote effective partnerships with the Education Social Work Service, and other services and agencies

- The School Director is responsible for liaising with the Education Social Work Service and other agencies.
- The School Director will carry out initial enquiries or intervention prior to referral and give priority to meetings arranged with external agencies.
- When necessary the School Director will also organise multi-agency liaison meetings and develop an understanding of agency constraints and operating environments.
- The School Director is also responsible for checking that students who leave this school have been enrolled at another school, pre 16. When there is cause for doubt, the relevant Local Authority will be informed. Post 16, we liaise with

educational institutions with regard to special educational needs, access arrangements and sending students' files.

- If a student attending the school with an Education, Health, Care Plan/is looked after/a child in need/on the Child Protection Register has an unexplained absence of more than five days, the School Director will inform the Local Authority.

6. To recognise the needs of the individual pupil when planning reintegration following significant periods of absence

- We are sensitive to the individual needs and circumstances of students returning after prolonged absence.
- The School Director may be involved in discussing with the student and their parents/carers with regard to a structured programme, with an agreed time scale, for the student's return. A timescale will also be agreed for reviewing the reintegration plan.
- The student is given a mentor, (although students may choose their own mentor if they wish), to whom they may turn for counselling, support or feedback.
- The student's peers or friendship group are encouraged to provide support on a student's return.
- The student is given a "safe place" where she/he may go during the day if the pressure of being at school becomes too much to cope with.
- All teaching staff are kept informed through weekly staff briefings about the progress and needs of the student, including the possible need to go to their mentor, or their "safe place".

Understanding Types of Absence

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents/carers), 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 like illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, 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 includes:

- parents/carers keeping students off school unnecessarily
- truancy before or during the school day
- absences which have never been properly explained
- students who arrive at school too late to get a mark
- shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed.

Whilst any student 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/carers and the student. If the student is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse

them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually make things worse.

Persistent Absenteeism (PA)

A student becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 20% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any student's educational prospects and we need parents/carers fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

We monitor all absence thoroughly. PA students are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system and we also combine this with academic mentoring where absence affects attainment.

Occasionally, you may need to apply for permission to be absent. Such permission can generally be sought in advance by parents/carers applying in writing to the School Director. Authorisation is not automatically guaranteed. The following list gives some of the reasons where permission may be granted:

- medical appointment (when it cannot be arranged out of school time)
- appointment with CAMHS
- driving test
- if you are officially responsible carer for a family member and an emergency arises
- representing the school at an outside event
- bereavement.

For other activities such as participation in significant extra-curricular activities (other than those organised by school) or in a religious holiday/festival pertinent to your faith, a parent/carer should write directly to the School Director seeking leave of absence. Similarly, requests for leave of absence for occasions such as a family wedding or funeral should be made in writing to the School Director giving as much notice as possible.

Holidays

Holidays are not permitted in term-time – and this includes odd days at the beginning or end of term. Amendments made to the 2006 regulations in the *Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013* make it clear that School Director may not grant students leave of absence during term-time unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Previously permission could be granted for students to have a leave of absence (of up to ten days) for the purpose of a family holiday in special circumstances. The strengthening of these regulations means that such leave can only very rarely be authorised. Parents/carers should therefore avoid taking holidays in term-time altogether.

This includes odd days at the beginning or end of term eg to enable travelling. In exceptional circumstances, a request should be made in writing directly to the

School Director explaining the situation and giving as much notice as possible (usually at least six weeks).

If permission is not granted and leave is taken anyway, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised, and parents/carers should note that in condoning unauthorised absence, they may be breaking the law and could be fined. The school also has a duty to notify the Local Authority if students are in receipt of an Education Health Care Plan.

The school reserves the right to investigate the validity of any non-negotiated absence further with parents/carers.

Some Vital Statistics on Attending School

Each year there are only 195 statutory school days, which means that if your child misses 8 days they are out of school more than they are in school. This means there are 170 days for:

Shopping

Birthday treats and trips

Non-urgent medical and dental appointments.

Use these – not precious school time. None of the above are authorised reasons for being out of school and time off school will hinder your child's learning and progress in school. They will appear on your child's school report as unauthorised absences and can lead to legal action being taken against you as the parent/carer.

Northleigh House School website confirms term time as being 185 days, however, we include a further 10 contact days in our extended school holidays by setting work and marking assignments/projects, work experience, outside activities.

Remember school time is precious – don't waste it!

95% Attendance = 9 school days missed per year

90% Attendance = half a day absent per week

85% Attendance = 5 lessons missed per week

80% Attendance = 1-day absence per week = 20 lessons missed per month

17 days absence between Year 7 – 11 = 1 GCSE number grade reduction

Unnecessary days off school can soon mount up so that students have gaps in their knowledge which can be hard to fill.

Date: **September 2018**

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