



# Attendance Policy

<b>Attendance Policy</b>	The Michael Syddall C of E (Aided) Primary School
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School attendance is subject to various education laws and this school attendance policy is written to reflect these laws and the guidance provided by the Department for Education and North Yorkshire County Council. The attendance policy is also consistent with the following school policies:

- Admissions;
- Anti-bullying;
- Behaviour and rewards;
- Child protection;
- Exclusion;
- Mental health and wellbeing;
- Safeguarding;
- Special educational needs;
- Teaching and learning.

The level of attendance and punctuality expected from all our pupils is included in our school's Home School Agreement, which parents must sign annually following their child's admission to this school. It is very important, therefore, that you make sure your child attends regularly and this policy sets out how together we will achieve this.

## 1. Policy Statement

For a child to reach their full educational achievement a high level of school attendance is essential. At The Michael Syddall C of E (Aided) Primary School we are committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all our pupils and endeavour to provide an environment where all pupils feel valued and welcome. Parents and pupils play a part in making our school successful. Every child has a right to access the education to which they are entitled. Parents and teachers share the responsibility for supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and punctuality for all.

It is our duty to consistently strive to achieve a goal of 100% attendance. Every opportunity will be used to convey to pupils, and their families, the importance of regular and punctual attendance. This will include discussing attendance with pupils during assembly on Fridays and publishing attendance figures in the school's weekly newsletter.

For our children to take full advantage of the educational opportunities offered it is vital your child is at school, on time, every day the school is open, unless the reason for absence is unavoidable.

Good attendance is important because:

- National statistics show a direct link between under-achievement and attendance below 95%;
- Regular attenders make better progress both socially and academically;
- Regular attenders find school routines, school work and friendships easier to cope with;
- Regular attenders find learning more satisfying;
- Regular attenders are more successful in transferring between primary school, secondary school and higher education, employment or training;
- The Michael Syddall C of E (Aided) Primary School's termly Wellbeing Survey results reveal that children with attendance below 95% have lower educational and social wellbeing than their peers.

## **2. Scope**

This policy document describes the school's approach to attendance and promoting regular attendance and punctuality for all pupils. This policy is intended as guidance for parents and carers of our school pupils, all staff including non-teaching staff and governors.

The foundation of good attendance is a strong partnership between the school, parents and the child. The Home School Agreement will contain details of how we will work with parents and families and our expectations of what parents need to do to ensure their child achieves good attendance.

To help us focus on this we will:

- Provide information on all matters related to attendance in our weekly newsletter and on our website;
- Report to you how your child is performing in school, what their attendance and punctuality rate is and how this relates to their attainments;
- Set targets for the whole school and individual classes for attendance and celebrate class achievements;
- Reward good or improving attendance.

## **3. Lead Members of Staff**

Whilst all staff have a responsibility to promote good attendance and punctuality in school, staff with a specific, relevant remit include:

Alison McHarg - Headteacher

Neil Saunders – Deputy Headteacher

Nickie Young – Pastoral and Wellbeing Mentor

The school's SLT will oversee, direct and coordinate the school's work in promoting regular and improved attendance and will ensure the attendance policy is consistently applied throughout the school. The SLT will ensure that attendance is both recorded accurately and analysed, ensuring that attendance issues are identified at an early stage and that support is put in place to deal with any difficulties.

If absence is frequent or continuous, except where a child is clearly unwell, staff will discuss with parents/carers and the child the need and reasons for the child's absence and will encourage them to keep absences to a minimum. A note or explanation from a pupil's home does not mean an absence becomes authorised. The decision whether or not to authorise an absence will always rest with the school.

Responsibilities of classroom staff:

- Ensure that all pupils are registered accurately;
- Promote good attendance with pupils at all appropriate opportunities;
- Liaise with the SLT on matters of attendance and punctuality;
- Communicate any concerns or underlying problems that may account for a child's absence;
- Support pupils to engage with their learning once they are back in school.

Responsibilities of pupils:

- Attend every day unless they are ill or have an authorised absence;
- Arrive in school on time.

Responsibilities of parents / carers:

Ensuring your child's regular attendance at school is a parent/carer's legal responsibility (Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act) and permitting absence from school that is not authorised by the school creates an offence in law.

Parents should:

- Inform the school on the first day of absence;
- Discuss with the class teacher any planned absences well in advance;
- Support their child in aiming for 100% attendance every year;
- Make sure that any absence is clearly accounted for by telephone or text on the first and subsequent days of any absence, or by letter if a phone is unavailable;
- Avoid taking their child out of school for non-urgent medical or dental appointments;
- Only request leave of absence if it is for an exceptional circumstance.

#### **4. Recording attendance**

Legally the register must be marked twice daily. This is once at the start of the school day at 08:45, and again for the afternoon session at 13:00.

##### **Lateness**

It is important to arrive at school on time. The start of school is used to give out instructions, organise work and for Key Stage 1 it is when vital phonics input is carried out. If your child is late they miss work time with their class teacher which is noticeable in their attainment levels. It can be embarrassing for your child to have to enter the classroom late and it causes disruption to the class. This may discourage your child from wanting to attend school.

- The school day begins at 08:45 and **all pupils are expected to be in school at this time**. The school doors are open from 08:35.

- All lateness is recorded daily, from 08:45. The amount of time your child is late is also recorded. This information is required by the courts, should a prosecution for non-attendance or lateness be necessary.
- Registers are closed at 09:00. Arrival after the close of registration will be marked as unauthorised absence and coded **U** in line with North Yorkshire County Council and Department for Education guidance. This mark shows them to be on site but is legally recorded as an absence.
- If a pupil is late due to a medical appointment, they will receive an authorised absence, coded **M**. Please be advised that, where possible, doctors and dentist appointments are to be made outside of school hours or during school holidays.

Ongoing and repeated lateness is considered as unauthorised absence and will be subject to legal action (see Section 6 of this policy for further detail).

Parents, guardians or carers of pupils who have patterns of lateness will be contacted to discuss the importance of good timekeeping and how this might be achieved. If lateness persists parents, guardians and carers will be invited to attend the school to discuss the problem and support offered, including a referral to North Yorkshire's Early Help or Healthy Child teams. If support is not appropriate or is declined and a child has 10 more sessions of unauthorised absence due to lateness recorded in any 10-week period, the school or North Yorkshire County Council will be required to issue parents with a Penalty Notice in accordance with North Yorkshire County Council's Code of Conduct for the use of Penalty Notices (see Section 6 of this policy for further detail).

### **What to do if my child is absent?**

A child not attending school is considered a safeguarding matter. This is why information about the cause of absence is always required.

If your child is absent you must contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence, either via School Gateway or by leaving a telephone message stating the reason for absence. If your child is absent we will:

- Telephone or text you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you – this is because we have a duty to ensure your child's safety as well as their regular school attendance.
- Invite you in to discuss the situation with our Pastoral and Wellbeing Mentor, Deputy Headteacher or Headteacher if absences persist.
- Refer the matter to North Yorkshire County Council.

Please ensure we always have up-to-date contact numbers. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year.

### **Third Day Absence**

If, after three days of absence, your child is not seen and contact has not been established with any of the named parents/carers we will make all reasonable effort to establish contact including making enquiries to known friends, wider family and visiting the family home.

### **Ten Days Absence**

We have a legal duty to report the absence of any pupil who is absent without an explanation for 10 consecutive days. If the child is not seen and contact has not been established with any of the named parents / carers, then school will notify the Children Missing Education (CME) Coordinator at North Yorkshire County Council. Working with the school and other agencies, the CME Coordinator will make reasonable enquiries as to the whereabouts of the child. If, at any time during this process, significant concerns are raised about the child, the police and NYCC Children and Families will be notified.

### **Continued or ongoing absence**

If your child misses 10% (three weeks / sessions) or more schooling across the school year, for whatever reason, they are defined as *persistent absentees*. Absence for whatever reason disadvantages a child by creating gaps in his or her learning. Research shows these gaps affect attainment when attendance falls below 95%. The results of our school's termly wellbeing survey show that children who have absence levels below 96% have lower social and educational wellbeing. Therefore, we monitor all absence thoroughly and all attendance data is shared with the local authority and the Department for Education. If your child has been absent and their attendance level is falling towards 90% we will contact you and may consider implementing an Attendance Plan.

## **Section 4**

### **Request for leave of absence**

Amendments to school attendance regulations were updated and enforced from September 2016: The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations state that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. It is important to note that headteachers can determine the length of the authorised absence, as well as whether absence is authorised at all. The fundamental principles for defining *exceptional* are rare, significant or unavoidable, which means the event could not reasonably be scheduled at another time. There are no rules on this as circumstances vary from school to school and family to family. There is, however, no legal entitlement for time off in school term time to go on holiday and in the majority of cases holiday will not be authorised. Parents / carers wishing to apply for leave of absence need to fill in an application form (available from the school office) in advance and before making travel arrangements.

If term-time leave is taken without prior permission from the school, the absence will be unauthorised and if the number of sessions absent hits the thresholds described in North Yorkshire County Council's Code of Conduct, parents/carers will be issued with a fixed penalty fine or other legal action in accordance with the code (see Section 6 for detail).

Taking holidays in term time will affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking children out during school time.

## **Section 5**

## Understanding types of absence

Pupils are expected to attend school every day for the entire duration of the academic year, unless there is an exceptional reason for the absence. There are two main categories of absences:

- **Authorised absence:** is when the school has accepted the explanation offered as satisfactory justification for the absence or given approval in advance for such an absence. If no explanation is received, absences cannot be authorised.
- **Unauthorised absence:** is when the school has not received a reason for the absence or has not approved a child's leave absence from school after a parent's request. This includes:
  - o Parents giving their children permission to be off school unnecessarily, such as for shopping, birthdays, to look after siblings;
  - o Truancy;
  - o Absences which have not been explained

A school can, if needed, change an authorised absence to an unauthorised absence and vice versa if new information is presented. Any changes will be communicated to parents / carers. An example of this would be where a parent states a child is unwell but on return to school there is evidence they have been on holiday.

## Section 6

### Penalty Notices for non-attendance and other legal measures

In education law, parents/carers are committing an offence if they fail to ensure the regular attendance of their child of compulsory school age at the school at which the child is registered, unless the absence has been authorised by the school.

### Legal measures for tackling persistent absence or lateness

North Yorkshire schools and North Yorkshire County Council will use the full range of legal measures to secure good attendance. Legal measures will only be considered when there is unauthorised absence and:

1. The child or family do not require support from any agency to improve the attendance;
2. The child has 10 or more sessions (five school days) of unauthorised absence during any 100 possible school sessions, these do not need to be consecutive
3. The child is persistently late (coded *U*) for up to 10 sessions (five days) after the register has closed.
4. The child is persistently late before the close of the register (coded *L*) but the school has met with parents and has clearly communicated that they will categorise as unauthorised any further lateness (code *O*), and where the threshold of 10 sessions (five days) has been met.
5. The child is absent for any public examinations of which dates are published in advance.
6. The child is absent for any formal school assessments, tests of examinations where the dates have been published in advance

Where a child has unauthorised absence the school must enforce North Yorkshire County Council's *School Attendance Support Pathway* and follow its guidance on other legal measures for non-attendance. The *School Attendance Support Pathway* is a statutory document that ensures that powers for legal sanctions are applied consistently and fairly across all school and their families within the authority. A copy is available

from: [School Attendance | CYPInfo \(northyorks.gov.uk\)](http://northyorks.gov.uk). The North Yorkshire County Council's *School Attendance Pathway* outlines the following actions:

**Stage 1 – Initial Warning Letter** issued by the school with Flowchart and Information for Parents enclosed.

**Stage 2 – Attendance Panel Meeting** held by the school with Support Plan / Parenting Contract, attendance targets and recommendations agreed as an outcome.

**Stage 3 – PACE Formal Caution Interview / LA Panel meeting** arranged by the Local Authority's Attendance and Enforcement officer following consultation with relevant parties. The parent and a senior member of school staff will be present and the interview and subsequent Panel Meeting will be chaired by the Attendance and Enforcement Officer for the area.

The NYCC Code of Conduct states that schools or North Yorkshire County Council will issue a Penalty Notice for any unauthorised absence where the pupil has been:

Unless the issuing of a Penalty Notice would conflict with other intervention strategies in place or other sanctions already being processed.

If a child's unauthorised absence meets any of the above criteria and the family or child do not require any agency or support to improve the attendance, the school and North Yorkshire County Council will consider the following legal disposals:

- NFA / Review Meeting to be arranged;
- 15 day Penalty Notice Warning Letter (*a Penalty Notice will be issued if any further unauthorised absence occurs within the time scale of 15 school days*)
- Education Supervision Order
- Prosecution under the Education Act Section 444 (1) or (1A)

The Penalty Notice is a fine that is issued to each parent / carer who condoned (or was responsible for the child) during the period of unauthorised absence for which the fine has been issued. For each case of unauthorised absence, the school or North Yorkshire County Council will decide whether a Penalty Notice is issued to **one or more parents/carers** for each child. This could mean **four** Penalty Notices for a family with two siblings both with unauthorised absence for holiday, i.e. one Penalty Notice for each child to each parent.

Each Penalty Notice carries a fine of £60 if paid within 21 days of the Penalty Notice being posted, if the fine is not paid within 21 days the penalty is automatically increased to £120 if paid within 28 days. If the fine remains unpaid North Yorkshire County Council will consider prosecution for the non-attendance. Payment methods are detailed on the Penalty Notices themselves. Penalties are to be paid to North Yorkshire County Council and revenue resulting from the payment of penalties is used by the County Council to help cover the costs of issuing Penalty Notices and/or the cost of prosecuting recipients who do not pay.

**Please note:** if you pay the Penalty Notice and your child has further unauthorised absences additional legal action will be taken. For example, in the event that a Penalty Notice has previously been served to you due to unauthorised holiday, should your child have any further unauthorised leave this will result in a further legal action for you.

## Section 7

### 7.1 My child is trying to avoid coming to school. What should I do?

Children are sometimes reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents/carers and the child. If a child 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 may make things worse.

Contact your child's class teacher immediately and openly discuss your worries. Your child could be avoiding school for a number of reasons – difficulties with school work, bullying, friendship problems, family difficulties. It is important that we identify the reason for your child's reluctance to attend school and work together to tackle the problem. In some cases you may find it helpful to discuss the circumstances of your child's difficulties with another professional.

#### What can I do to encourage my child to attend school?

Make sure your child gets enough sleep and gets up in plenty of time each morning. Ensure that they leave home in the correct clothes and properly equipped. Show your child, by your interest, that you value his/her education. You could ask them:

'what made you smile today?'

'who did you sit with for lunch?'

'what was the best thing that happened today?'

For many parents, your child attending school may be your first experience of being separated from them. This can seem daunting at first for both of you, but consistency and a caring, supportive home and school life will make the transition a quick and easy experience for you both.

### 7.2 Leavers

If your child is leaving our school (other than when transferring to secondary school) please will you give the office comprehensive, written information about your plans, including date of move and your new address and telephone numbers, your child's new school and their intended start date.

If pupils leave and we do not have the above information they will be considered a *child missing in education*. This requires schools and local authorities to carry out investigations to try and locate the child, which include liaising with Children's Services, the Police and other agencies. By giving us the above information, these investigations can be avoided.

### 7.3 Absence through child participation in public performances, including theatre, film or television work and modelling

The regulations related to children participating in public performances are separate to those around authorising leave of absence. Parents of a child performer can seek leave of absence from school for their child to take part in a performance which can be authorised by the Headteacher. Parents / carers must contact the Headteacher to discuss the nature and frequency of the work, whether the child has a valid performance licence and whether education will be provided by the employer during any further leave of absence. It is, however, down to the Headteacher's discretion as to whether to authorise this

The Michael Syddall C of E (Aided) Primary School, Noels Court, Mowbray Road, Catterick Village, North Yorkshire, DL10 7LB



and they will wish to discuss with you how learning will continue if absence occurs. Any absence recorded as part of a child's participation in a public performance is recorded as C, an authorised absence.

#### **7.4 Absence through competing at regional, county or national level for sport**

Parents of able athletes can seek leave of absence from school for their child to take part in regional, county, national and international events and competitions. It is, however, down to the Headteacher's discretion as to whether to authorise this and they will wish to discuss with you the nature and frequency of the absence and how learning will continue if absence occurs. Permission for your child to leave early or arrive late to attend coaching and training sessions is also at the discretion of the Headteacher and is not likely to be approved if it is a regular event, unless the sports club or association is providing an education tutor as part of their coaching.

#### **7.5 Gypsy, Roma, Traveller and Showman families**

Absence of a child from a Traveller family that has left the area may be authorised if the absence is for work purposed only and it is believed that the family intends to return. To ensure the continuity of learning for Traveller children, dual registration is allowed. That means that a school cannot remove a Traveller child from the school roll while they are travelling. When the Traveller is away, the home school holds the place open and records the absence as authorised through the *T* code. Distance learning packs for Traveller children are not an alternative to attendance at school.

### **Section 8**

#### **Record preservation**

School registers are legal documents. We will ensure compliance with attendance regulations by keeping attendance records for at least three years. Computer registers will be preserved as electronic back-ups or microfiche copies.

#### **Policy Review**

This policy will be reviewed every two years as a minimum. The next review date is: **September 2024**

Additionally, this policy will be reviewed and updated as appropriate on an ad hoc basis. This policy will always be updated to reflect personnel changes.