

COMMON ATTENDANCE PROTOCOL

PROMOTING AND MAXIMISING SCHOOL ATTENDANCE ACROSS NOTTINGHAM CITY

EVERYBODY'S BUSINESS!

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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
- d) responding to 'Requests for service' from schools for intervention with those pupils on-track to 'persistent absentee' (PA) status.

A PA is any pupil that has accrued 10% (38 sessions) absence over the academic year (380 sessions)

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, a 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/carers as well as any 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 the School Nurse)
- ❖ It is good practice for statutory attendance to be monitored every half term. Schools should have in place trigger points and processes for their interventions.

- ❖ 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

Authorised absence from school

Authorised absence' means that the school has either given approval in advance for a pupil of compulsory school age to be away, or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as justification for 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. The NAHT Guidance is available for Head Teachers or their designated persons to refer to. ([LINK](#))

<p align="center">School attendance – Statutory guidance and departmental advice November 2013</p>

- 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. They should take into account the previous twelve months based on the equivalent of 380 sessions. 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.

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| <p>3.2 'Keeping Pupil Registers' – Guidance on applying the Education Pupil Registration Regulation 2006.</p> |
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"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) Leave of Absence (For the purpose of a holiday)

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.
(NAHT Guidance)

<p>School attendance – Statutory guidance and departmental advice November 2013</p>
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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.**

Unauthorised absence from school

Unauthorised absence is where a school is not satisfied with the reasons given for the absence.

(Code G) Holiday not authorised by 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.

The information above should be shared as widely as possible so that parents can be in no doubt as to the expectations of the school. For example, in the school Behaviour/Attendance Policy, school brochures, newsletters and on the school web site.

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3.4 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.

3.5 If the Local Code of Conduct allows, parents can be given a Penalty Notice or prosecuted for periods of unauthorised absence. As an alternative to prosecution parents can be issued with an Advisory Notice in the first instance, putting parents on notice for six months. Breach of this notice can result in further action being taken by the Local Authority. In Nottingham City, this is the case.

‘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 of the Education Act 1996.

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

3.8 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.

For any cases resulting in prosecution the Head Teacher/Attendance Officer or any other relevant member of staff should provide an impact statement.

4.0 DEALING WITH PUNCTUALITY ISSUES

- 4.1 **Registration periods will last for a minimum of 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.
- 4.2 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.
- 4.3 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. Once persistent lateness has been brought to the attention of the parent, they must be given an opportunity to affect change.
- 4.4 All of the above should be reflected in the school attendance policy, school brochures, correspondence to parents, newsletters and on the school web-page.
- 4.5 Schools can make an **online 'Request for service'** to the Education Welfare Service triggered at 10% unauthorised absence inclusive of general unauthorised absence, lateness and/or unauthorised absence. This is to avoid as many pupils as possible becoming a persistent absentee at the end of the school year.
- 4.7 Head Teacher/relevant member of staff to provide an impact statement in any case that result in prosecution.

5.0 DEALING WITH COMMON AILMENTS

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

For children and young people who are regularly absent from school due to repeated bouts of illness, you may wish to liaise with the Community Public Health Nursing Service (5-19). A referral to this service may require the consent of the parent. i.e. someone with parental responsibility. Click [here](#) for the referral form.

6.0 RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE

- 6.1 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.
- 6.2 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.
- 6.3 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.
- 6.4 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.

7.0 CHILDREN AT RISK OF MISSING SCHOOL (REMOVING PUPILS FROM THE SCHOOL ROLL)

- 7.1 All schools (including academies) must inform their Local Authority of any pupil who is going to be deleted from the admission register where they:
- Have been taken out of school by their parents and are being educated outside the school system e.g. home education (see below on home educated children);
 - Have ceased to attend school and no longer live within reasonable distance of the school at which they are registered;
 - Have a medical condition certified by the school medical officer that the pupil is unlikely to be in a fit state of health to attend school;
 - Are in custody for a period of more than four months due to a final court order and the proprietor does not reasonably believe they will be returning to the school at the end of that period; or,
 - Have been permanently excluded.

The Local Authority [Education Welfare Service] should be notified in advance of the deletion, when the school becomes aware that the deletion will be made.

8.0 SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Definition of a Child Missing Education and a Child Missing from Education

- 8.1 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 the area where the child lives.
- 8.2 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.

School attendance – Statutory guidance and departmental advice November 2013

Except in the cases of permanent exclusions (follow procedure), notify cme.educationwelfareservice@nottinghamcity.gov.uk of any pupil likely to be deleted from the school roll. See Regulation 5 [here](#) of The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2016 which amends the Education (Pupil Registration) England) Regulations 2006 as from 1st September 2016.

Please ensure that you await confirmation by email from the Education Welfare Service before any child is removed from roll.

10 KEY DOCUMENTS AND REFERENCES

- 'Keeping Pupil Registers' – Guidance on applying the Education Pupil Registration Regulation 2006.
- School attendance – Statutory guidance and departmental advice November 2013

11 KEY MESSAGES FOR SCHOOLS

- Ensure that parents are aware that Penalty Notices are issued per parent, per child
- Check that the child to whom the Penalty Notice refers was of **statutory school age** when the unauthorised absence occurred
- Update newsletters, web pages, standard letters
- Ensure that parents of new in take or children/young people who commence school at a time other than at the start of the academic year have the School Attendance Policy and any sanctions brought to their attention
- DO NOT give letters refusing requests for leave of absence to a child/young person to give to their parents. Either do so face to face with parents or send by first class post, noting the date, time or place of posting. The Magistrates Court accepts first class post as good service
- Ensure correspondence/publicity emphasises the fact that there is no right of appeal against the issuing of a Penalty Notice
- Keep the Education Welfare Services abreast of any changes in a child's circumstances e.g. change of address

Year 11 Pupils

Pupils who have reached the end of their compulsory education (last Friday in June) and are not continuing their education at school should be deleted from the school register.