

# Nether Green Junior School

## Attendance Policy



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## Policy Statement

During the 4 years that children attend Nether Green Junior School, we aim to educate the whole child, preparing them to enter secondary school with positive self-esteem, a sound foundation of learning and an eagerness to further develop their intellectual and moral faculties. The school works in partnership with parents and the Local Authority (LA), Sheffield City Councils' "Working Together to Improve Attendance" to recognise and value individuals' needs and to respond to these needs.

Good attendance and punctuality are vital if pupils are to reach their maximum potential. At Nether Green Junior School, we are committed to working with parents/carers and pupils to ensure that each pupil benefits from the academic, personal and social opportunities. These aims can only be fulfilled by commitment from parents and are dependent upon children's regular and punctual attendance.

## Aims of the Policy

- To give clear procedures encouraging pupils to achieve their maximum potential by maintaining good attendance and punctuality
- To ensure that parents/carers understand and support the procedures in place to record and monitor attendance and encourage them to take an active role in promoting good attendance and punctuality by building positive relationships
- To ensure that all staff and governors understand and support the policy
- To address attendance and inclusion issues in the curriculum
- To monitor individual and whole school attendance and measure against agreed targets
- To ensure that attendance data informs policy

## Legislation and Guidance

Schools, local authorities, parents/carers and the wider community all have a role to play in improving attendance. The Education Act 1996 and 2002 place statutory duties on parents, the LA and the school:

- Schools have a statutory duty under Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.
- Parents/Carers must ensure that children of compulsory school age receive a suitable full-time education by regular attendance at school or otherwise (S444).
- The LA must provide school places to parents/carers who wish their children to be educated at school.
- The School must complete attendance registers at the beginning of the morning session and during the afternoon session.
- The school must report to the LA pupils who fail to attend regularly or are absent for more than 10 days without explanation.
- The LA have a duty to ensure that parents/carers fulfil their legal responsibilities.
- Failure by parents/carers to ensure the regular attendance at school of a registered pupil is an offence punishable by law.
- Legal proceedings can be brought by the LA if a parent/carer fails in their duty to secure the regular attendance of their child.
- This policy meets the requirements of the working together to improve school attendance from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on school attendance parental responsibility measures. These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:
  - Part 6 of The Education Act 1996
  - Part 3 of The Education Act 2002
  - Part 7 of The Education and Inspections Act 2006
  - The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments)
  - The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013
  - This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.

## Partnership

### What the school expects of pupils;

- to attend regularly and arrive on time and ready to learn
- to be prepared for the day by bringing suitable equipment e.g. PE kit etc.
- to report to the school office, should they arrive after the official registration time
- to work towards a target of at least 97% attendance
- To tell a member of staff if there is any problem which may prevent them from attending school.

### What the school expects of parents/ carers;

- It is vitally important that parents/carers are actively involved in promoting good attendance and fulfil their legal parental responsibility by ensuring their children attend school regularly and on time.
- Parents / carers should report any absences **to the school office by 9.30am each day** by telephone, stating the reason for absence / nature of illness.
- To ensure that pupils are adequately prepared for the school day
- To take holidays in school holiday time. Term time holidays will be classed as unauthorised holidays (marked as code G in the register). In line with the Sheffield City Council policy for “Exceptional Leave during Term Time”, if parents choose to take their child on holiday in term time, they may be issued with a fixed penalty notice (a fine).
- To make routine appointments out of school hours and, in the case of unavoidable emergency appointments, to obtain an authorised absence pass from the school office for any appointments during school time. It is the parent’s/carer’s responsibility to provide evidence of the appointment in order for the absence to be authorised. Office staff should record if they have seen the evidence of an appointment. For children whose absence is a concern and the school is working with the parent/carer to support improvement, photocopied evidence of the appointment will be kept.
- Inform staff if there are issues which might prevent attendance. Please contact the Learning Mentor who will offer a time to talk through any problems and offer support.

### What parents/carers and pupils can expect of the school;

- a broad and balanced curriculum.
- efficient, accurate recording and monitoring of attendance and punctuality
- first day calling contact with parents/carers where absence is unexplained and for the school to follow LA guidance when no explanation is obtained
- prompt action and contact with home when a problem has been identified
- close liaison with the appropriate agencies to assist and support pupils and their families where needed
- Regular communication with parents/carers
- Promotion of good attendance and punctuality at school, and regular encouragement and rewards

# Roles and responsibilities

## Governors

- Maintain an overview of attendance through reports provided by the Headteacher and the LA/CYPD via the Headteacher report.
- Have a named governor with responsibility for attendance.
- Attend School Attendance Panels as necessary.

## Headteacher

- The headteacher, Mr Allen, is responsible for the strategic approach to attendance at school, has overall responsibility for attendance within the school and will ensure that attendance data is monitored.
- Provides advice and support to school staff regarding attendance and punctuality issues.
- Has responsibility for investigating and, where necessary, reporting incidents of children who are Missing from Education.
- Will report to governors on attendance percentages at every full governing body meeting.
- Liaises with the other officers of the LA to implement attendance strategies
- Works with the Deputy Head/Learning Mentor to implement targets, review statistics and amend the policy as necessary
- Works with other schools and agencies to promote attendance and punctuality within the cluster.
- Has responsibility for monitoring the progress of Children Looked After by the Local Authority.
- Has responsibility for investigating, and where necessary, reporting incidents of children who are Missing from Education

## Class Teachers

- Accurately mark registers using appropriate codes and return to the school office (if manual registers are used) promptly following registration, in line with Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2001.
- Ensure that Office staff receive any notes from parents/carers on the day received.
- Report to appropriate staff any issue or concern which may affect the attendance or punctuality of a pupil.
- Promote good attendance and punctuality within the classroom and the school.

## Office Staff

- Will register any pupil who arrives late
- Will update the registers in SIMS with the appropriate codes for absence or lateness.
- Will maintain the SIMS attendance database and update on a weekly basis
- Will pass to Learning Mentor any cause for concern
- Compile daily list of absentees and complete first-day calling, followed by texts home, and report to the learning mentor/head teacher when there is no response from parents/carers.

## Learning Mentor

- Maintains an overview of attendance and manages the day to day implementation of attendance plans and strategies
- Will monitor the data and issue letters of concern re absence and/or punctuality
- Will follow up concerns with parents/carers
- Will liaise and work with the LA Attendance & Inclusion Officer.
- Will ensure penalty notices are issued as appropriate
- Will make home visits with a member of SLT by day 3 of any unexplained absence if there is believed to be a safeguarding risk.
- Will keep the headteacher informed of pupils whose attendance and/or punctuality are a cause for concern
- Will attend attendance reviews in school

## LA and Attendance and Inclusion Team

- Rigorously track school attendance data
- Provide a linked Inclusion and Attendance Specialist and linked Attendance Social Worker to every school
- Provide advice to school
- Arrange support meetings at least termly to meet with the Learning Mentor.
- Provide access to multi-disciplinary support for families
- Legal interventions when required

## External agencies

- Will receive referrals from the school in situations where families have requested and agreed to whole-family support
- Will work in line with the local authority's "Working Together to Improve Attendance"
- Will work with families where there are issues which might prevent good attendance

## Recording Attendance

Registers are a legal document. Great care must be taken to ensure registers are marked accurately either on the computer or, in ink, on a paper copy. Attendance of all pupils is monitored and evaluated regularly using the following procedures

### Registration Procedures

- Children can arrive at school from 8.40 a.m. and come straight into the school building. They should remove coats, visit the toilet, hang up their bags etc. and go to their classroom.
- A bell will ring at 8.50 am to signal the start of the school day. Morning registration will take place between 8.50 a.m. and 9.00 a.m.
- The register officially closes at 9 a.m.
- The gates will be closed at 8.55 a.m. and entry to school after this time should be through the Main Entrance, where pupils must report to the office.
- Pupils arriving after 9 a.m. will be marked L for Late.
- Pupils arriving at 9.20 a.m. or later will be given the U code, which indicates that they have arrived in school 20 minutes or more after the register has closed, and 30 minutes after the start of the school day.
- Afternoon registration is at 1 p.m.
- Class teachers/cover assistants must ensure that the register is completed and sent to the office at 9 a.m. and at 1.05 p.m.

### Children leaving during the school day

- Children will not be allowed to leave school alone during the school day. They must be collected by a parent/carer.

### Responding to Lateness

- Any child who arrives at school after registration must report to the Office to get a mark and explain the reason for lateness. Office staff will alert the Learning Mentor about pupils who frequently arrive late.
- Where a pupil is frequently late, parents will be contacted either by telephone, in person or usually in writing. This includes cases where minutes late are accumulating to a concerning level. For example, a child persistently arriving to class at 9.05 a.m., will have lost an hour and a quarter of learning time by the end of the week.
- Persistent lateness is discussed with parents at parent / teacher consultation meetings and with the Head teacher if improvements have not been achieved.

## Responding to absence

### Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 9:00am or as soon as practically possible by calling the school office (see also section 7). A message can be left on answerphone before 8:30am and will be collected by the office team at 8:30am.

We will mark absence due to illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask the pupil's parent/carer to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/carers will be notified of this in advance.

When a child cannot be located and appears to be missing, the Missing Children Team will be notified (See policy and procedures for Children Missing from Education).

### Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment. Parents should call or email the school office ahead of the appointment. However, we encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary. The pupil's parent/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence.

### Responding to poor attendance

- The school will always attempt to resolve any problems relating to attendance as early as possible
- Parents/carers will be contacted where there are attendance problems
- Ongoing attendance problems will be monitored
- Where attendance continues to be of concern support from LA will be requested.
- Parents will be informed if attendance drops below 95%.
- Where persistent non-attendance continues to be an issue, parents may be asked to provide evidence of attendance at all medical appointments.
- In cases where a child's non-attendance constitutes a safeguarding concern, this will be reported to Social Care professionals.
- Each case will be dealt with depending on needs and circumstances. Support will be offered where possible – for example, the family may want support from external agencies to improve attendance and help with morning routines for example.
- Persistent absence may result in a penalty notice and/or prosecution.

### Children Missing from Education

The headteacher is the nominated member of staff to liaise with the Local Authority's CME team. Pupils who cannot be located will be considered missing. The CME team will be informed and will pursue the matter in accordance with Local Authority procedures.

### Children in Public Care

The Deputy head teacher is the co-ordinator who liaises with the Local Authority's Children's Children Looked After team. CLA pupils will be set up as an Attendance group on SIMS, and their individual attendance will be checked each half term.

## Authorised and Unauthorised absence

### Term Time Leave

- Parents/carers wishing to take a pupil out of school for a holiday will be actively discouraged. Any leave during term time can only be authorised by the Head teacher under *exceptional circumstances*. If parents/carers wish to apply for term time leave under exceptional circumstances, a request form must be completed by the parent/carer, clearly stating what the exceptional circumstances are, and given to the Head teacher for consideration no less than 20 days prior to the date of the requested leave. Within ten days, the school will inform parents/carers, in writing, whether the leave has been authorised (it should be made clear why a decision has been made and the criteria used should be re-iterated).
- All requests for term time leave must be made to the Head Teacher on the Notification of Leave form, available from the school office or website. A return date must be provided and a prompt return is essential.
- Unauthorised absence may result in school requesting that the LA issue a penalty notice as set out in Government guidance 2013 and Sheffield City Council code of conduct for the issuing of penalty notices. Unpaid penalty notices may result in prosecution.
- If queries are raised about holidays, parents/carers may be asked to provide evidence of the days taken to further support their application to be considered by the head e.g. flight tickets or accommodation receipts. These can be asked for as further evidence prior to leave or following if family don't return when agreed and state they had to alter their flights which were out of their control.
- If the school has reason to believe a term time leave has been taken without request, it is the parent's/carer's responsibility to prove otherwise. Doctor's appointment card, proof of medication etc.

### Leave for religious observance

- School acknowledges the multi-faith nature of British society and recognises that
- religious festivals may fall outside school holiday periods or weekends occasionally and this necessitates a consideration of authorised absence or special leave for religious observance.
- Leave may be authorised on a day set aside for religious observance if recognised by the religious body to which the pupil's parents/carers belong.
- Parents/carers are requested wherever possible to give advance notice to the school if they intend their child to be absent.
- However, in the interests of fulfilling the academic requirements of school and limiting the authorised absence rate of the school, it is identified as reasonable that no more than two days be designated for any individual occasion of religious observance/festival and no more than a maximum of three days in total in any academic year



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### Registration Procedures;

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- A bell will ring at 8.50 am to signal the start of the school day. Morning registration will take place between 8.50 a.m. and 9.00 a.m.
- The register officially closes at 9 a.m.
- The gates will be closed at 8.55 a.m. and entry to school after this time should be through the Main Entrance, where pupils must report to the office.
- Pupils arriving after 9 a.m. will be marked L for Late.
- Pupils arriving at 9.20 a.m. or later will be given the U code, which indicates that they have arrived in school 20 minutes or more after the register has closed, and 30 minutes after the start of the school day.
- Afternoon registration is at 1 p.m.
- Class teachers/cover assistants must ensure that the register is completed and sent to the office at 9 a.m. and at 1.05 p.m.

### Children leaving during the school day;

- Children will not be allowed to leave school alone during the school day. They must be collected by a parent/carer.

### Responding to Lateness;

- Any child who arrives at school after registration must report to the Office to get a mark and explain the reason for lateness. Office staff will alert the Learning Mentor about pupils who frequently arrive late.
- Where a pupil is frequently late, parents will be contacted either by telephone, in person or usually in writing. This includes cases where minutes late are accumulating to a concerning level. For example, a child persistently arriving to class at 9.05 a.m., will have lost an hour and a quarter of learning time by the end of the week.
- Pupils who are persistently late will receive a letter from the headteacher detailing how many sessions late there have been, and the impact of this on the child's learning. Persistent lateness is discussed with parents at parent / teacher consultation meetings and with the Head teacher if improvements have not been achieved.

### Responding to absence;

- When a child is absent from school, a telephone call or email giving the reason is required.
- Staff in the school office will ensure that the reasons for absence are recorded in the register.
- If the absence is for an illness, a clear reason must be given. Where the reason is accepted, the absence will be authorised using the appropriate symbol. Other acceptable reasons would be unavoidable medical/ dental problems etc., agreed religious observance, bereavement and exceptional circumstances. The school may request medical evidence if there are frequent absences due to illness.
- If there are any doubts about the legitimacy of any medical evidence, this should be reported immediately to the Headteacher and contact will be made with the parent/carer.
- If an explanation of absence is not provided within two weeks, the child will receive an unauthorised absence mark (O).
- When a child cannot be located and appears to be missing, the Missing Children Team will be notified (See policy and procedures for Children Missing from Education).

### Responding to poor attendance

- The school will always attempt to resolve any problems relating to attendance as early as possible
- Parents/carers will be contacted where there are attendance problems
- Ongoing attendance problems will be monitored

- Where attendance continues to be of concern support from LA will be requested.
- Parents will be informed if attendance drops below 95%.
- Where persistent non-attendance continues to be an issue, parents may be asked to provide evidence of attendance at all medical appointments.
- In cases where a child's non-attendance constitutes a safeguarding concern, this will be reported to Social Care professionals.
- Each case will be dealt with depending on needs and circumstances. Support will be offered where possible – for example, the family may want support from external agencies to improve attendance and help with morning routines for example.
- Persistent absence may result in a penalty notice and/or prosecution.

### **Responding to good attendance**

Good attendance will be positively promoted in school by all staff. The headteacher, learning mentor and office staff work closely together to encourage good attendance with parents and make expectations clear.

## **Attendance monitoring**

Attendance will be monitored daily by the office team who will alert the headteacher of any concerns, including parents who have not been able to be contacted, emerging patterns of attendance that may be of concern, reasons for absence which may not be justified.

### **Monitoring attendance**

The school will:

- Monitor attendance and absence data half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil level Identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern
- Pupil-level absence data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics.
- The school will compare attendance data to the national average, and share this with the governing board.

### **Analysing attendance**

The school will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these pupils and their families
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns

### **Using data to improve attendance**

The school will:

- Provide regular attendance reports to class teachers and other school leaders, to facilitate discussions with pupils and families
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies

### **Reducing persistent and severe absence**

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school.

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence Hold regular meetings with the parents of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance
- Work closely with parents to try to improve attendance including writing letters to parents, meeting with parents and making referrals to external agencies who may offer further support. .

### **Monitoring arrangements**

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum every 3 years by the headteacher. At every review, the policy will be approved by the full governing board.

