



Attendance Policy 2021-22

Named personnel with delegated responsibility for attendance:

Headteacher	Lead within Senior Leadership Team	Pastoral Support Lead
Nichola Draper	Nichola Draper	Lyndsey Warren

Policy review dates:

Model policy be reviewed at least annually by the trust's Head of Safeguarding and Welfare and then adapted by schools.

Version Control			
Author	Creation date	Version	Status
Administration Assistant (NR)	25 August 2021	0.1	Minor amendments to format model document for 2021-22 and ensured areas for adaptation for schools are highlighted in yellow so clear in final version.
Administration Assistant (NR)	26 August 2021	0.2	Highlighted content that is in 2018 model but not in West Walker's current policy (green). Added and highlighted content that was in West Walker's current policy but not in 2018 trust model (tracked and highlighted in blue). Amended content compared with 2018 trust model proposed by SG (tracked changes without highlight).
Administration Assistant (NR) and Head of Governance and Corporate Affairs	26 August 2021	0.3	Comments added to content for review by policy author. Suggested content added for review by policy author (tracked changes and highlighted in teal).
Head of Governance and Corporate Affairs (SH)	31 August 2021	0.4	Comments/green/blue/teal highlights reviewed with SG and amends made to reflect proposed model policy with replacement Appendix 2.

Our school aspirational target is 96%

1 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that the school has an effective framework for promoting good attendance and punctuality and that parents/carers and staff understand the actions that they and the school should take to ensure all learners have every possible opportunity to get the best learning experience they can.

2 Scope

Our policy applies to all children registered at this school. This includes Nursery and Reception aged children in order to promote good habits at an early age.

It is made available to all parents/carers of pupils who are registered at our school on our school website or available from reception for those without access to the internet.

3 Policy statement

Regular and punctual school attendance is important. Pupils need to attend school regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them by law. We fully recognise our responsibilities to ensure pupils are in school and on time, therefore having access to learning for the maximum number of days and hours.

It is the responsibility of parents/carers to ensure that their child(ren) attend school. We will encourage and help all parents and carers to achieve their legal responsibility as a good education will undoubtedly increase opportunities for their child(ren). The NEAT Schools as one community will work with professionals and agencies to ensure the very best support is made available to support with this. Each school will also work closely with their relevant local authority to utilise their support in terms of fixed penalty notices and prosecutions when all other avenues have been communicated and explored and attendance remains at such a low level, educational outcomes will be impacted upon, we will utilise all external agencies including social care to support the people in improving outcomes.

As one community of NEAT Schools we are supporting the aspirations of all our children by providing opportunities through learning. This means attendance has to be at least good. It is a responsibility of the parent/carer to ensure children attend regularly. Children who are persistently late or absent soon fall behind with their learning. Children who are absent from school frequently develop large gaps in their learning which will impact on their progress and their ability to meet age related learning expectations. A child whose attendance drops to 90% each year will, over their time at primary school, have missed two whole terms of learning. As NEAT is one community, supporting the aspirations of all our children by providing learning opportunities and supporting good attendance.

Through this policy we aim to:

- Improve pupils' achievement by ensuring high levels of attendance and punctuality.
- Understand that good habits are important for life
- Achieve a minimum of 97% attendance for all children, apart from those with chronic health issues.
- Create an expectation that good attendance and punctuality are the norm and are seen to be valued by the school.
- Raise awareness of parents/carers and pupils of the importance of uninterrupted attendance and punctuality at every stage of a child's education.
- Work in partnership with pupils, parents/carers, staff and the Attendance Service so that all pupils realise their potential, unhindered by unnecessary absence.

- Promote a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure, and valued, and encourage in pupils a sense of their own responsibility.
- Establish a pattern of monitoring attendance and ensure consistency in recognising achievement and dealing with difficulties and constantly review.
- Recognise the key role of all staff in promoting good attendance.
- Recognise the role of class teachers as they will be able to identify where attendance is having an impact on attainment.

We maintain and promote good attendance and punctuality through:

- Set the expectation that all parents/carers understand their responsibility towards raising awareness of attendance and punctuality issues among all staff, parents/carers and pupils.
- Ensure that parents/carers have an understanding of the responsibility placed on them for making sure their child attends regularly and punctually.
- Equip children with the life skills needed to take responsibility for good school attendance and punctuality appropriate to the child's age and development.
- Maintain effective means of communication with parents/carers, pupils, staff and local governing committee members on school attendance matters.
- Develop and implement procedures for identifying, reporting and reviewing cases of poor attendance and persistent lateness.
- Support pupils, parents and families who have been experiencing any difficulties at home or at school which are preventing good attendance.
- Develop and implement procedures to follow up non-attendance at school.

4 Legal considerations

This policy has been written to adhere to the relevant Children Acts, Education Acts, Regulations and Guidance from the Department for Education, in addition to guidance from the relevant local authority.

5 Procedures to ensure this policy is implemented effectively

Our school undertakes to follow the following procedures to support good attendance:

- To maintain appropriate registration processes.
- To maintain appropriate attendance data.
- To inform parents/carers what constitutes authorised and unauthorised absence.
- To communicate clearly the attendance procedures and expectations to all staff, governors, parents/carers and pupils.
- To have consistent and systematic daily records which give detail of any absence and lateness.
- To follow up absences and persistent lateness if parents/carers have not communicated with the school. This will be done via the school office. School systems will ensure that children are identified and families are communicated with in accordance to escalation procedures.
- To strongly discourage unnecessary absence through holidays taken during term time.
- To work with parents/carers to improve individual pupils attendance and punctuality.
- To refer to the Attendance Service or appropriate agencies including Early Help, Social care of any child whose attendance causes concern and where parents/carers have not responded to school initiatives to improve. This will also involve working with the relevant police authority, as appropriate, to develop effective community liaison.
- To report attendance statistics to the Local Authority, the DfE and the NEAT Central Team where requested.
- All staff should be aware that they must raise any attendance or punctuality concerns to the nominated person with responsibility for monitoring attendance.

6 Roles and responsibilities

All members of school staff have a responsibility for identifying trends in attendance and punctuality. The following includes a more specific list of the kinds of responsibilities which individuals might have.

The Headteacher is responsible for:

- Maintaining admissions and attendance registers.
- The head **MUST** ensure systems in school support the aim of supporting aspiration through attendance by:
 - Monitoring of attendance
 - Triaging outcomes
 - Monitoring effectiveness of strategies by relating it to pupil outcomes. And ensuring attendance issues do not become safeguarding issues by
 - ensuring safeguarding systems are robustly and effectively followed when pupils are not attending school site.
 - Offsite provision – students attending off site provision (e.g. Bridges).

Class teachers are responsible for:

School classroom staff (all staff with responsibility assigned to them (this will primarily be the teacher) must take the attendance register at the start of each day and once during the second session. On each occasion the member of staff must record whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances or
- Not attending due to circumstances relating to covid
- Raise any safeguarding issues immediately and follow appropriate procedure.
- Work with nominated staff to support child/family to improve attendance promote aspiration and have a working knowledge of the attendance policy
- This includes supply staff on site which includes induction around procedures for completing register.

Staff in the School Office (or staff with responsibility register scrutiny) must be operating in the following areas:

- Ascertaining the reason
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not, and
- Identify the correct code to use before entering it on the school's electronic register, or management information system which is used to download data into the School Census.
- Notifying the Designated person and following safeguarding procedures in the event of any Cause for Concern
- Regularly triage information to identify those pupils most at risk.
- Must promote a positive and welcoming atmosphere on entry into school. (Culture and climate) Raise profile through appraisal?
- Ensure that policy is also applied to nursery and reception children to encourage positive attendance from an early age.

Family Support /Parent Support Adviser/Attendance Officer and other job roles with responsibility for attendance within the pastoral remit must be operating in the following areas:

We offer additional support to parents/carers and pupils about attendance. This includes support in relation to:

- Provide support to office staff re: registers
- Work with the Designated Safeguarding Lead to ensure safeguarding procedures are robust
- Carry out regular data analysis to identify risks for pupils
- Carry out bespoke family/pupil work to overcome any barriers
- Make referrals to external agencies as appropriate

Parents/carers are responsible for:

- Ensuring that their child attends school regularly and punctually unless prevented from doing so by illness or attendance at a medical appointment.
- Contacting the school office on the first morning of absence.
- Informing the school in advance of any medical appointments in school time. For the absence to be recorded as a medical absence we do require evidence from the doctor or dentist. (Appointment card/letter)
- Making requests for authorised absence in term time, only if absolutely necessary as these are not automatically authorised.
- Talking to the school as soon as possible about any child's reluctance to come to school so that problems can be quickly identified and dealt with.

The Local Governing Committee will scrutinise and evaluate the impact of the school's approach and strategies for improving attendance for the school as a whole and for specific groups of pupils (not of individual pupils), identifying any further actions that should be taken in conjunction with the school's leadership team. Strategic oversight of the trust-wide approach and strategy is by the Trust Board.

7 Authorised absence

An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or carer. For example, if a child has been unwell and the parent telephones the school to explain the absence.

Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents/carers do not have this authority. Consequently, **not all** absences supported by parents/carers will be classified as authorised.

8 Unauthorised absence

An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the school.

Therefore, the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent/carer. Important to note that absence due to illness should not be authorised when a child's overall attendance is below 90%, unless medical documentation is provided.

9 Registers

- Registers are legal documents and will be marked twice a day
- Parents/carers must always give reasons for absence to the school.
- Schools are to determine whether absence is authorised or unauthorised in exceptional circumstances, considering factors such as frequency, duration, attendance patterns, i.e. within reason. Staff must be observant of situations where absence is continually condoned by parents/carers.

10 Reintegrating long-term absentees

Following a period of absence, it is highly likely that a child will be vulnerable or feeling vulnerable for a number of reasons. It is essential the school identify these vulnerabilities and work with pupil and family to overcome the barriers that are being faced. It may be that in exceptional circumstances, a support plan will be used to share strategies amongst staff to best support the pupil. The aim of this is to ensure that smooth steps are taken and understood by the whole school community to support the pupil.

11 Registration

All the school doors open at 8.50 a.m. until 9.00 a.m. This time is sufficient for all pupils to come into their classroom.

Each class teacher has the responsibility for keeping an accurate record of attendance. Any pupil who is absent must be recorded at the beginning of the morning and afternoon session. The attendance register must be completed by the class teacher by 9.00 a.m. and 1.25 p.m. (Nursery 1.00 p.m. and Reception 1.10 p.m.)

All attendance records are documented. Attendance registers are legal documents and these must be kept secure and preserved for a period of three years after the date they were last used.

12 Lateness

Children who are persistently late miss a significant amount of learning, often the most important aspect, as the beginning of the day is where the teacher explains the learning and what each child is expected to achieve.

Repeated absence at the beginning of a school session can amount to failure to attend regularly for the purpose of 1996 Education Act. The school seeks to improve general punctuality and to improve attitude of persistent offenders by:

- Informing parents/carers of our expectations and offer ways of helping combat lateness.
- Parents/carers of persistent offenders must be contacted, and reported to the Attendance Officer if no improvement.
- Praise and acknowledge latecomers who improve.
- Ensure that staff set a good example by arriving punctually for lessons.
- All children and parents/carers must understand that lateness is actively discouraged, although sensitivity may be appropriate in some cases.
- Schools may use other incentives to improve levels of punctuality
- The Primary Welfare Officer will support pupils and families with any of the above issues.

Once the external school gates are closed at 9.00 a.m. the only way to get into school is via the school office. Any pupil who comes into school this way from 9.00 a.m. will be marked as late in the attendance record. Records are kept of those pupils who are late, this is documented on the electronic register for each pupil (Attendance code L). Any child who arrives for school later than 9.30 a.m. will be marked as having an unauthorised absence for the morning. (Attendance code U).

Children who have attended a dentist or doctor's appointment and subsequently come to school later than 9.05 am will have the absence recorded as a medical absence (Attendance code M) providing they provide proof of appointment and at the discretion of the Headteacher.

Where there have been persistent incidents of lateness parents/carers will receive a letter advising them of the concerns and the school will provide opportunities for parents/carers to seek support and advice to address these issues.

13 Absences

Parents/carers should contact the school on the first day of their child's absence. When parents/carers notify us of their child's absence it is important that they provide us with full and accurate details of the reason for their absence and expected date of return. This information is used to determine whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised. The Headteacher has the responsibility to determine whether absences are authorised or unauthorised

Where we have not received reasons for a child's absence, staff within school will contact the parent/carer to clarify the reason for the absence. Support staff will initially try to contact parents via Class Dojo. If no response, this will be followed up by a phone call or a home visit.

14 First day contact

Where a child is absent from school and we have not received any verbal or written communication from the parent/carer, then we initiate a first day contact process. Office staff check all of the registers from 9.00 until 9.30 a.m. on a daily basis, to identify those pupils who are absent. If a key worker is supporting the family, they will be notified and a home visit will be carried out. This may be the school's Primary Welfare Officer / Attendance Officer or a member of the NEAT Central Team. There are occasions when we are unaware why the child is absent and we will attempt to contact the parent/carer to check the reasons for the child's absence.

15 Illness

When children have an illness that means they will be away from school long term, the school will do all it can to send material home, so that they can keep up with their school work. Schools can request medical evidence from the parent/carer where there are concerns around overall attendance to seek clarity on the absences and will engage with other professional agencies as appropriate to support the welfare of the child.

If the absence is likely to continue for an extended period, or be a repetitive absence, the school will contact the relevant support services to see if arrangements can be made for the child to be given some home tuition outside school.

Where over the course of an academic year, a child has repeated periods of illness, the school will write to parents/carers to ask them to provide medical evidence for each future period of illness related absence. This evidence could be a Doctor's note, appointment card/letter or copy of a prescription. We may seek written permission from you for the school to make their own enquiries. Alternatively, we may make a referral to the School Health Advisor to offer support but will need parental permission to seek this support.

16 Parental request for absence from school for holiday

With effect from September 2013 the government abolished the right of Headteachers to authorise absence specifically for holidays of up to 10 days per year if special circumstances exist. Instead, Headteachers will only be allowed to grant leave of absence for any reason if they are satisfied exceptional circumstances exist.

Parents/carers are encouraged to keep open lines of communication with school over absence as persistent absence can be considered a safeguarding matter. If a parent or

guardian chooses to go ahead with a holiday that has been refused by the headteacher the school will notify the LA of intention to initiate legal proceedings. This may result in a penalty notice being issued.

If a child has attendance in the 'green zone' (currently 95%+) for three terms prior to a holiday and the holiday is up to a maximum of 5 days, the school may not make a decision to prosecute.

Every effort will be made to liaise across schools (where there are siblings) to ensure consistency around messaging and practice around holidays. If leave isn't granted, you will be considered for a fixed penalty notice or prosecution.

17 Addressing attendance concerns

The school expects attendance of at least 95%.

It is important for children to establish good attendance habits early on in their primary school career. It is the responsibility of the Headteacher and the governors to support good attendance and to identify and address attendance concerns promptly. It is the parents/carers legal responsibility to ensure their child attends school regularly and punctually and therefore when we become concerned about attendance we will inform parents/carers of our concerns. Initially concerns about attendance are raised with parents/carer via a letter sent home or through initial contact through attendance support staff. If attendance does not improve after a conversation, a parent contract or attendance support programme may be offered. This is an agreement / action plan which looks at ways to work together to improve attendance (see Appendix 1) There will be opportunities for the parent/carer to discuss reasons for absence and support to be given by the school with the aim to improve attendance. Where a child's attendance record does not improve over a period of time then the school has a responsibility to make a referral to the LA Attendance Officer.

The Attendance Service will look at each case and may issue fixed penalty notices to parents/carers where there is poor attendance.

The LA Attendance Service working jointly with Legal Services may also consider:

- Applying for a parenting order
- Applying for an education supervision order
- School Attendance Order (If parent/carer has not registered their child in a school)
- Community Order

The LA Attendance Officer can remotely check and monitor attendance levels. The LA Attendance Officer regularly carries out register checks to identify children with low attendance.

18 Monitoring attendance

Responsibilities for monitoring attendance are clearly defined. There will be regular meetings with appropriate staff to discuss attendance. The headteacher will facilitate this by ensuring that systems and procedures are followed each and every day to fulfil school's ambition to ensure that we can support the aspirations of our children by supporting good attendance

We follow a traffic light system. The purpose of colour coding helps staff, parents/carers and pupils have a clear understanding of our expectations:

- **Green Zone: 95% - 100%**
We expect pupils to have Green attendance throughout their education. Those in the Green are more likely to do well in examinations, have better job opportunities and develop strong friendships within school.
- **Amber Zone: 90% - 94.9%**

Pupils in this zone are at risk of underachieving due to the absence level. If your child is in the Amber Zone we will contact you and you may be offered support to improve attendance and avoid it falling into the Red Zone. There will also be informal monitoring by the school.

- **Red Zone: Under 90%**

Pupils in the red zone are more likely to underachieve, find making friendships difficult and misbehave. Parents/carers may be offered bespoke, time-limited support (including a parenting contract) to bring about improvement and will be referred to the local authority if attendance remains a concern and this may result in legal action.

Appendix 1 contains local authority guidance on parenting contracts. Appendix 2 sets out the trust's escalation process for pupils in the amber and red zones.

19 Rewards and recognition

Although good attendance is an expectation the school seeks to improve whole school attendance by offering incentives.

West Walker Primary School's reward system:

- Weekly Attendance Cup for the class with the highest attendance.
- Half termly/termly rewards – £50 for the class with the highest attendance / prize draw for 100% attendance pupils, including NUFC match tickets.
- Attendance Shop - points for every week with 100% attendance, tickets can be used to purchase items from the shop.

General

This policy is at the discretion of the trust and can be varied at any time. In the event of any conflict with primary legislation or statutory regulations, the legal provisions will have precedence over this policy in all cases.

Appendix 1

Parenting Contracts for attendance – guide for parents

What is a parenting contract?

A parenting contract is a formal written agreement between a parent or carer and either the school and / or the local authority. A parenting contract may be offered if your child has failed to attend school regularly.

A parenting contract is meant to support you, the school and the LA to identify and address the issues surrounding your child's irregular attendance at school and encourage a positive working relationship to improve attendance. It is not intended to be a punishment.

What does it involve?

Everyone signed up to the contract will agree to take certain actions which are realistic and which address the issues of non-attendance for a specified period of time. You might agree to do things like getting your child up on time, signing a daily report card and reporting any difficulties to school as soon as possible. School might agree to inform you if your child does not arrive at school, deal quickly with any problems and involve other agencies that might be able to offer you additional support. The contract will be reviewed regularly.

Do I have to enter into a parenting contract?

Entry into a parenting contract is voluntary but it does provide you with an opportunity to get support to improve your child's attendance at school. If you do take up the offer of a parenting contract and try to comply with it, this may assist your case if the local authority decides to take legal action against you for your child's irregular attendance. If you refuse the offer or don't comply without good reason this may also be presented as evidence.

If you decide not to enter into a contract, you will need to try to find other ways of improving your child's attendance and it may be worth discussing how you intend to do this with the school or local authority.

How is a parenting contract arranged?

You will be invited to a meeting in school with a school representative. The local authority Area Attendance Officer may also attend. Depending on their age and understanding, your child can attend part or all of the meeting.

At the meeting you will be asked your views on your child's attendance and whether there are any underlying issues. Try to think about the reasons behind your child's absences, any particular difficulties you are experiencing at the moment and what would help you to improve your child's attendance. Also think about what you can do to improve attendance.

School will explain what support they can offer and whether any other agency including the local authority might also be able to help you and your child. You will be able to discuss what is expected of both you and the school and then agree the actions that will support improved attendance. If you choose to accept the offer, the final contract will be signed by you, the school representative and in some cases the area attendance officer.

National contacts

www.direct.gov.uk School attendance, absence and your child

www.education.gov.uk/schools/pupilsupport Behaviour and attendance - Parental responsibility

familylives.org.uk Truancy Helpline: 0808 800 2222

Local contacts

www.newcastle.gov.uk Schools – Attendance

You can phone the Attendance Service on 0191 277 4500 or Email

attendanceservice@newcastle.gov.uk

If you require this information in audio, Braille or large print, please contact the Attendance Service to arrange.

West Walker Primary School Attendance Process

Although individual circumstances are taken into account as well as previous attendance history the usual route is:

