



# Attendance Policy

## 2021 v1

This policy was agreed by the Governing Body of Newcroft Primary Academy on 5<sup>th</sup> July, 2021 and will be reviewed as required.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Chair of Governors Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### ***Non-Statutory Policy***

## 1. Introduction

Newcroft Primary Academy is committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all its pupils and recognises this can only be achieved by supporting and promoting excellent school attendance for all. This is based on the belief that only by attending school regularly and punctually will children and young people be able to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them:

- attendance at school supports children's social emotional, mental and physical health and development
- the best way to safeguard children is to ensure they attend school regularly
- good school attendance supports children in reaching their maximum potential
- membership of a school community builds confidence, gives children a sense of belonging and teaches them to contribute to and be responsible for the well-being of others
- good school attendance supports engagement in further education, employment or training in the future, which in turn helps to support a prosperous and fulfilling life-style
- schools and the Local Authority have a statutory duty to promote the safety and welfare of children

The whole school community – pupils, parents and carers, teaching and support staff and school governors – have a responsibility for ensuring good school attendance and have important roles to play.

## 2. School's roles and responsibilities

All staff at Newcroft Primary Academy have a key role to play in supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and will work to provide an environment in which all our pupils are eager to learn, feel valued members of the school community and look forward to coming to school every day. Staff also have a responsibility to set a good example in matters relating to their own attendance and punctuality.

### **Attendance Leader/ support**

The Head teacher (referred to as Attendance Leader in this policy) will oversee, direct and co-ordinate the school's work in promoting regular and improved attendance and will ensure the Attendance Policy is consistently applied throughout the school. The Attendance Leader is provided with day to day support in his/her role by Attendance Support Administrator, who works in the school's office. The Attendance Leader will ensure that up-to-date attendance data and issues are shared with the Senior Leadership Team, relevant staff, pupils and parents. Governors will receive this information in the termly Head teacher's report to Governors. The Attendance Leader will ensure that attendance issues are identified at an early stage and that support is put in place to deal with any difficulties.

### **Registration**

The school is required to mark the attendance register twice each day: once at the start of the day and once during the afternoon session. Teachers or an authorised member of support staff will mark the register. The office staff are responsible for completing the attendance registers on the school's data management system.

The register will be called promptly at 8.50 am and 1.15 pm by each class. Registers will close at 9.20 am and 1.25 pm. Any pupil who arrives after the closing of the register will count as absent. Pupils who arrive after 8.50am, but before the register closes at 9.20 am or 1.10 pm, will be counted as 'late before register closes.'

## **Categorising absence**

A mark will be made in respect of each child during registration. Any child who is not present at this time will be marked unauthorised absent unless leave has been granted by the school in advance or the reason for absence is already known and accepted by the school as legitimate. Where a reason for absence is given and accepted by the school at a later stage, the register will be amended in such a way that the original entry and the amendment / correction are distinguishable. The decision about whether the absence should be authorised or unauthorised rests with the Head teacher.

Newcroft Primary Academy recognises the clear links between attendance and attainment, and attendance and safeguarding children. It recognises that inappropriate authorisation of absence can be as damaging to a child's education as authorised absence, will potentially send a message to parents that any reason for non-school attendance is acceptable. If absence is frequent or continuous, except where a child is legitimately unwell, staff at Newcroft Primary Academy will therefore challenge parents about the need and reasons for their children's absence and will encourage them to keep absences to a minimum. An email, phone call 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.

If no explanation about an absence is received by the school, the absence will remain unauthorised.

## **Absences may be authorised in the following circumstances:**

Where leave has been granted by the school in advance:

- A pupil is to participate in an approved performance for which a licence has been granted by the Local Authority.
- A pupil is involved in an exceptional special occasion – in authorising such an absence the individual circumstances of the particular case and the pupil's overall pattern of attendance will be considered.
- In exceptional circumstances, permission has been granted for a family holiday for which the parents have sought permission in advance.
- Where *the school is satisfied* that the child is too ill to attend.
- Where the pupil has a medical appointment (although parents should be encouraged to make these out of school hours wherever possible, and to return their child to school immediately afterwards – or send him/her to school beforehand).
- Where there is an unavoidable cause for the absence which is beyond the family's control, e.g. extreme weather conditions.
- Where absence occurs on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parent belongs.
- The pupil is of no fixed abode, his/her parent is engaged in a trade which requires him/her to travel, the pupil has attended school as often as the nature of the trade permits **and**, having reached the age of six, he/she has attended 200 sessions in the preceding 12 months.
- In other exceptional circumstances (e.g. a family bereavement) and for an agreed limited period (attendance patterns considered).
- For an approved educational activity or dual registration (e.g. with a Alternative Provision unit). The school will call daily to check attendance.

**Except in the circumstances described above, absences will be unauthorised.** Some examples of reasons for not authorising absence may be:

- no explanation has been given by the parent;
- the school is not satisfied with the explanation;
- the pupil is shopping during school hours;
- the pupil is absent for unexceptional reasons, e.g. a birthday;
- the pupil is absent from school on a family holiday without prior permission;
- the pupil has been stopped during a truancy sweep and is unable (or the parent is unable) to give a satisfactory reason for the absence.

### **3. Collection and analysis of data**

The Attendance Leader, supported by the Attendance Support Administrator, will ensure that attendance data is complete, accurate, analysed and reported to the senior leadership team, parents and the governing body. The data will inform the school's future practice to improve attendance.

Attendance is monitored by pupil, year group, class group and by reasons for absence. It is also analysed by gender, ethnicity, language, Free School Meal status, special educational needs status, those vulnerable to poor attendance and children classed as vulnerable by Social Care.

#### **4.1 Systems and strategies for managing and improving attendance**

Attendance has a very high profile at Newcroft Primary Academy and is regularly discussed at assemblies and in classes. Parents are regularly reminded in letters, newsletters and school meetings about the importance of good attendance and its links to attainment. 'Every Day Counts' is a key theme of the school's ethos.

4.1 Newcroft Primary Academy has procedures for dealing with unexplained absences within a week. The Attendance Support Administrator calls parents to seek clarification and informs the Head teacher if further action is required.

#### **4.2 First-day contact**

Parents are asked to telephone school by 8:40 am on the first day of absence, indicating the reasons and likely length of time of the absence. If this telephone call is not received, Newcroft Primary Academy has in place a system of first-day contact. This means that parents will be telephoned or a WEDUC message sent on the first day a pupil is absent without explanation to establish a reason for the absence. This helps to identify at an early stage, pupils who do not have a good reason for absence. Where it is not possible to make contact with parents on the first day of absence, the school will continue to try to make contact by text.

#### **4.4 School Strategies to Tackle Absence**

The Attendance Leader is responsible for the school management of attendance, policy and systems to ensure that Newcroft Primary Academy intervene in non-attendance at an early stage.

Where there is an emerging pattern of a pupil's absence the school will send Letter 1 to parents, to seek partnership working to improve attendance. If on the next monitoring cycle (daily and formally in 4 week intervals), attendance has not improved, Letter 2 will be issued, requesting a meeting with parents to discuss the reasons for the absences.

Plans should be put in place with the parents and pupil to resolve any difficulties and improve the attendance within a specified time limit. It will be explained to parents that any future absences will be unauthorised unless there is clear evidence of a good reason for them. The school may request to see 'medical evidence' of a pupil being unwell at this

stage. This can be in the form of a doctor's note, an appointment card or text. Until this is received, the absence will remain unauthorised.

Newcroft Primary Academy may organise Attendance / Governor Panels to intervene in levels of non attendance when parents will be invited to discuss the issues of the attendance.

#### 4.5 Referral to the Education Welfare Officer

If there continue to be unauthorised absences by the end of the specified time (or sooner if the pupil is failing to attend school at all), the matter will be referred to the school's Education Welfare Officer (EWO) who will work with the school and parents to support them in improving their child's attendance.

The Education Pupil Regulations (2006) require schools to inform the Local Authority of every pupil who has been continuously absent without a good reason (i.e. the absence is unauthorised) for 10 school days or more. Schools must also inform the LA of every pupil who fails to attend regularly, which is interpreted to mean those pupils who have patterns of unauthorised absence without amassing 10 continuous absences. If a case has been referred to the school's EWO, then they will report the case to the Local Authority.

#### 4.6 Lateness and punctuality

Pupils are expected to arrive at school on time every day. It is very disruptive to their own education and wellbeing, and that of others in their class, if they are late. Pupils who arrive after the register closes, will be marked absent for the whole session (a session being a morning or an afternoon). This absence will be unauthorised unless the school is satisfied that there is a legitimate reason for the pupil to be late (in this case, the absent mark will be changed to a late mark). A pupil who is persistently absent by reason of lateness will be dealt with in the same way as other student with an emerging pattern of absence. If the matter is not resolved quickly, it will be referred to the Education Welfare Officer for support for the family and the school.

4.7 Pupils who arrive late for school but before the register closes will be marked late.

4.8 For health and safety reasons it is important that the school knows who is in the building. Pupils arriving late should therefore report to the school office.

4.9 For the same reason it is important that pupils / students leaving the premises legitimately (e.g. for a medical appointment), or returning to school later in the day leave with an approved adult from the main reception area; having informed the office staff or Head teacher that they are leaving. There is an electronic register (Passtab) in the school's office for parents to sign children as late or to sign them out, giving a reason for not being in school.

### 5. Term-time holidays

Newcroft Primary Academy will consider every application individually; its policy is *not* to grant leave of absence for a holiday other than in the most exceptional circumstances. To apply for a term time holiday, parents should complete the holiday form on WEDUC, or complete a paper copy of the form found in Appendix 1.

**The law states that schools should not authorise leave of absence unless:**

- An application has been made **in advance** by the parent with whom the pupil normally resides AND
- The Head teacher considers that there are exceptional circumstances relating to the application.

**Newcroft Primary Academy will consider authorising holidays for (exceptional circumstances):**

- service personnel who are prevented from taking holidays out of term-time;
- when a family needs to spend time together to support each other during or after a crisis;
- parents who are subject to a strict and un-negotiable holiday rota and evidence is provided to this effect.

**Requests for holidays for the following reasons will not be authorised:**

- cheaper cost of holiday;
- availability of the desired accommodation;
- poor weather experienced in school holiday periods; and
- overlap with beginning or end of term.

Newcroft Primary Academy will respond to all requests for a leave of absence via WEDUC or in writing, giving the reasons for the decision.

**Newcroft Primary Academy will NOT authorise a holiday during periods of national tests e.g. SATs examinations.**

**6. Extended leave of absence**

In considering absence for extended trips overseas Newcroft Primary Academy will take account of the following:

- a visit to family overseas has a very different significance from a normal 'holiday';
- such visits may be important in terms of children's identity and self-esteem as they grow up;
- parents may feel that the reasons for their visit outweigh the importance of their child's uninterrupted attendance at school (although parents could be encouraged to use the school holiday periods for at least part of their trip);
- the reasons for wishing to make a visit is more difficult, particularly for minority ethnic families, where huge distances and high costs are involved.
- Where extended leave of absence is granted there will be an expectation that the pupil undertakes some school-set work during this period.

**7. Parents' / carers' responsibilities**

The prime responsibility for ensuring children receive an appropriate and full-time education rests with parents / carers (defined by the Education Act 1996 as those with parental responsibility and those who have the care of a child), who will be supported and encouraged by Newcroft Primary Academy.

**Newcroft Primary Academy expects parents / carers will:**

- ensure their children attends the school regularly;
- support their children's attendance by keeping requests for absence to a minimum;
- not expect the school to automatically agree any requests for absence, and not condone unjustified absence from school.

**Parents will also be expected to:**

- notify Newcroft Primary Academy on the first and each day of absence by telephone, WEDUC/ email message or in person at the school office;

- ensure their children arrive at school on time, properly dressed and with the right equipment for the day;
- work in partnership with the school, for example by attending parents' meetings and consultations, supporting with homework and writing in Home-School Diaries when asked to do so, taking an interest in their children's work and activities;
- contact the school without delay if they are concerned about any aspects of their children's school lives. Newcroft Primary Academy will endeavour to support parents to address their concerns following the procedures set out in our Complaints Policy.

## **8. Pupils' responsibilities**

All pupils should be aware of the importance of regular school attendance. If they are having difficulties that may prevent them from attending school regularly, they should speak to a trusted adult in school. For pupils of Primary School age, the main responsibility for attendance rests with the parents.

## **9. Governors' responsibilities**

The governing body should review attendance termly, with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children who are pupils at the school.

Appendix 1

**REQUEST FOR LEAVE OF ABSENCE FORM**

Please **complete all shaded boxes on this form**

Name of School	<b>Newcroft Primary Academy</b>
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Name of Child(ren)	Year Group(s)

Name of Parent(s)/Carer(s)	Date(s) of Proposed Absence	No. of school days child(ren) would miss

Please indicate the reasons for this absence. If this is for a holiday, please indicate why this holiday could not take place in the course of the normal holiday pattern (please see the attached – guide for parents before writing your reasons)

<b>Signature</b> of Parents/Carers with <b>Legal Responsibility for the Child</b> <small>(please use an electronic signature where possible – we will send this back to you for signing if not)</small>	Date	<b>If this request is for a term time holiday, I confirm that the holiday has been...</b>	
		booked	Not booked

**Please return this form to school before any booking is made if this is for a holiday to be taken during term time for office use only**

Child(ren)'s name(s)	Attendance percentage(s) over last 12 months

Dates Requested

THIS <u>ABSENCE REQUEST</u> IS	Authorised	Not Authorised	Subject to further information from parents

**Reasons** for the decision\*

	Name	Signed	Date
<b>Head teacher</b>			

\*please refer to the school's attendance policy