

New Islington Free School

Pupil Attendance Policy

December 2019

Next Review December 2020

Working in collaboration with



MANCHESTER
CITY COUNCIL

Contents

Introduction

Legal Framework

Categorising Absence

Illness

Medical/Dental Appointments

Other Authorised Circumstances

Excluded (No alternative provision made)

Leave of Absence

Religious Observance

Traveller Absence

Late Arrival

Unauthorised Absence

Deletions from the Register

Roles and Responsibilities

Of the Governing Body

Of the Leadership Team

Of School Staff

Of Parents

Using Attendance Data

Support Systems

Legal Interventions

Prosecution

Parenting Contracts

Penalty Notices

1. Introduction

1.1 Regular school attendance is essential if children are to achieve their full potential.

1.2 New Islington Free School believes that regular school attendance is the key to enabling children to maximise the educational opportunities available to them and become emotionally resilient, confident and competent adults who are able to realise their full potential and make a positive contribution to their community.

1.3 New Islington Free School values all pupils. As set out in this policy, we will work with families to identify the reasons for poor attendance and try to resolve any difficulties.

1.4 New Islington Free School recognise that attendance is a matter for the whole school community. Our Attendance Policy should not be viewed in isolation; it is a strand that runs through all aspects of school improvement, supported by our policies on safeguarding, bullying, behaviour and inclusive learning. This policy also takes into account the Human Rights Act 1998, the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and the Race Relations Act 2000.

2. Legal Framework

2.1 Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act states that parents must ensure that children of compulsory school age receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude to any special educational needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

2.2 A child is of Compulsory School Age at the beginning of the term following their 5th birthday. A child ceases to be of compulsory school age on the last Friday in June of the school year in which they reach the age of 16.

2.3 Under the Education Act 1996, the Local Authority has a statutory responsibility to ensure that parents secure education for children of compulsory school age and where necessary, use legal enforcement.

2.4 The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2013, require schools to take an attendance register twice a day, once at the start of the morning session and then again during the afternoon session.

2.5 The register must record whether the pupil was:

- present;
- absent;
- present at approved educational activity; or
- unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

3. Categorising absence

3.1 Where pupils of compulsory school age are recorded as absent, the register must show whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised.

3.2 Absence can only be authorised by the Head Teacher and cannot be authorised by parents. All absences will be treated as unauthorised unless a satisfactory explanation for the pupil's absence has been received.

3.3 Parents must advise the school by telephone on the first day of absence as early as possible but by 9:00 at the latest. This notification can be done via email to: d.kenny@newislingtonschool.co.uk or by ringing the office: 0161 273 8007. If school does not hear from the parents or carers then this absence will be classed as an unauthorised absence. Parents need to provide the school with an expected date of return. This should be followed up in the form of a written note from the parent/carer, though verbal explanations may be acceptable where this is considered appropriate.

3.4 Absence will be categorised as follows:

3.5 Illness Parents may be asked to provide medical evidence to allow the Head Teacher to authorise absence where appropriate. Any absence lasting for more than two days on medical grounds will be unauthorised unless an appointment card is produced for the third day of illness. We expect to see a medical appointment card for any absence longer than three days. This will usually be in the form of an appointment card, prescription etc.

3.6 Medical/Dental Appointments Parents are advised where possible to make medical and dental appointments outside of the school day. Where this is not possible, pupils must attend school for part of the day. Parents must show the appointment card to school.

3.7 Other Authorised Circumstances This relates to where there is cause for absence due to exceptional circumstances.

3.8 Excluded (No alternative provision made) Exclusion from attending school is counted as an authorised absence. The child's class teacher will make arrangements in line with the exclusions policy.

3.9 Parents who need to take their child out of school during term time due to exceptional circumstances must send a written request to the Head Teacher. Retrospective requests will not be considered and therefore will result in the absence being categorised as **unauthorised**.

3.9.1 All requests for leave of absence will be responded to in writing outlining the conditions of leave granted.

3.9.2 If a pupil fails to return and contact with the parents has not been made or received, school may take the pupil off the school's roll in compliance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2013. This means that the child will lose their school place.

3.9.3 If the permission to take leave is not granted and the parent takes their child out of school the absence will be **unauthorised**. In such cases the school may request the local authority issue a Penalty Notice or consider other legal sanctions including prosecution in the Magistrates' court.

3.10 Religious Observance New Islington Free School acknowledges the multi-faith nature of British society and recognises that on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside school holiday periods or weekends and this necessitates a consideration by written request by the parent of authorised absence.

3.11 Traveller Absence It is expected that Traveller children, in common with all other children, are to attend school as regularly and as frequently as possible.

3.11.1 To protect Traveller parents from unreasonable prosecution for non-attendance, the Education Act 1944, section 86, states that a Traveller parent is safe from prosecution if their child accrues 200 attendances (i.e. 200 half days) in a year. This is only when the family are engaged in a trade or business that requires them to travel and when the child is attending school as regularly as that trade permits.

3.11.2 When in or around Manchester, if a family can reasonably travel back to their Base School (see below) then the expectation is that their child will attend full-time.

3.11.3 New Islington Free School will be regarded as the base school if it is the school where the child normally attends when they are not travelling. However, the pupil must have attended in the last 18 months. Traveller children can register at other schools temporarily while away from their base school, in such cases, the pupil's school place at New Islington Free School will be kept open for them whilst travelling. This is to protect them from unfairly losing their place at their school of usual attendance.

3.11.4 New Islington Free School can only effectively operate as the child's base school if it is engaged in on-going dialogue with Traveller families. This means that parents must:

- advise of their forthcoming travelling patterns before they happen; and
- inform the school regarding proposed return dates

3.11.5 New Islington Free School will authorise absence of Traveller children if we are satisfied that a family is travelling for work or trade purposes and has given indication that they intend to return.

3.11.6 Traveller children will be recorded as attending an approved educational activity when:

- The child is on roll and attending another visited school
- Undertaking supervised educational activity under the jurisdiction of another Local Authority's Traveller Education Service
- The child is undertaking computer based distance learning that is time evidenced

3.11.7 Where Traveller children are registered pupils at a school and are known to be present either at a site (official or otherwise) or in a house and are not attending school, the absence will be investigated in the same way as that for any pupil and appropriate statutory action may be undertaken.

3.12 Late Arrival Registration begins at 8:50 and closes at 9:00.

3.12.1 Pupils arriving between 9:00 and 9:05 will be marked as Late (L)

3.12.2 Pupils arriving any time after 9:05 will be marked as an unauthorised absence. This time is 15 minutes after the doors first open.

3.13 On arrival after the close of register at 9:00. Parents must report their child immediately to the school office, and sign them in with the time of arrival to ensure that we can be responsible for their health and safety whilst they are in school.

3.14 Unauthorised absence - Absence will not be authorised unless parents have provided a satisfactory explanation and that it has been accepted as such by the Head Teacher.

3.14.1 Examples of unsatisfactory explanations include but are not limited to:

- A pupil's/family member's birthday
- Shopping for uniforms
- Having their hair cut
- Closure of a sibling's school for INSET (or other) purposes
- "Couldn't get up"
- Illness where the child is considered well enough to attend school
- Family holidays
- Illness of a sibling
- Illness of a parent
- School is not responsible for difficulties with
 - Traffic
 - Parking

4. Deletions from the Register

4.1 In accordance with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2013, pupils will only be deleted from the register when one of the following circumstances applies:

- The school is replaced by another school on a School Attendance Order
- The School Attendance Order is revoked by the local authority
- The pupil has ceased to be of compulsory school age
- Permanent exclusion has occurred and procedures have been completed
- Death of a pupil
- Transfer between schools
- Pupil withdrawn to be educated outside the school system
- Failure to return from an extended holiday after both the school and the local authority have tried to locate the pupil
- A medical condition prevents their attendance and return to the school before ending compulsory school-age
- In custody for more than four months (in discussion with The Youth Offending Team)

- 20 days continuous unauthorised absence and both the local authority and school have tried to locate the pupil
- Left the school but not known where he/she has gone after both the school and the local authority have tried to locate the pupil

4.2 New Islington Free School will follow Manchester City Council's Children Missing Education Protocol when a pupil's whereabouts is unknown.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

5.1 New Islington Free School believe that improved school attendance can only be achieved if it is viewed as a shared responsibility of the school staff, governors, parents, pupils and the wider school community. As such, the Governing Body will:

- Ensure that the importance and value of good attendance is promoted to pupils and their parents
- Annually review the school's Attendance Policy and ensure the required resources are available to fully implement the policy
- Identify a member of the governing body to lead on attendance matters
- Ensure that the Registration Regulations, England, 2013 and other attendance related legislation is complied with
- Agree school attendance targets and submit these to the Local Authority within the agreed timescale each year and where appropriate link these to the Performance Management of Senior Leadership within the school
- Monitor the school's attendance and related issues through termly reporting at Governing Body Meetings
- Ensure that attendance data is reported to the Local Authority or Department for Education as required and on time
- Ensure that there is a named senior manager to lead on attendance
- Ensure that the school has clear systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site
- Ensure that there are procedures for collecting and analysing attendance data frequently to identify causes and patterns of absence
- Ensure that data is understood and used to devise solutions and to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions

5.2 The Leadership Team will:

- Actively promote the importance and value of good attendance to pupils and their parents
- Form positive relationships with pupils and parents
- Ensure that there is a whole school approach which reinforces good school attendance; with good teaching and learning experiences that encourage all pupils to attend and to achieve
- Monitor the implementation of the Attendance Policy and ensure that the policy is reviewed annually
- Ensure that all staff are aware of the Attendance Policy and adequately trained to address attendance issues
- Ensure that the Registration Regulations, England, 2013 and other attendance related legislation is complied with

- Ensure that there is a named Attendance Officer to lead on attendance and allocate sufficient time and resource
- Return school attendance data to the Local Authority and the Department for Education as required and on time
- Report the school's attendance and related issues through termly reporting to the Governing Body and on a half termly basis to the lead governor for attendance
- Ensure that systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site are implemented
- Ensure that attendance data is collected and analysed frequently to identify causes and patterns of absence
- Interpret the data to devise solutions and to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions
- Develop a multi-agency response to improve attendance and support pupils and their families
- Document interventions used to a standard required by the local authority should legal proceedings be instigated

5.3 All staff will:

- Actively promote the importance and value of good attendance to pupils and their parents
- Form positive relationships with pupils and parents
- Contribute to a whole school approach which reinforces good school attendance; with good teaching and learning experiences that encourage all pupils to attend and to achieve
- Comply with the Registration Regulations, England, 2013 and other attendance related legislation
- Implement systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site
- Analyse attendance data to identify causes and patterns of absence
- Contribute to the evaluation of school strategies and interventions
- Work with other agencies to improve attendance and support pupils and their families
- Document interventions used to a standard required by the local authority should legal proceedings be instigated

5.4 Request that Parents will:

- Talk to their child about school and what goes on there. Take a positive interest in their child's work and educational progress
- Instil the value of education and regular school attendance within the home environment
- Encourage their child to look to the future and have aspirations
- Contact the school if their child is absent to let them know the reason why and the expected date of return. Follow this up with a written explanation.
- Try to avoid unnecessary absences. Wherever possible make appointments for the Doctors, Dentists etc. outside of school hours
- Ask the school for help if their child is experiencing difficulties
- Inform the school of any change in circumstances that may impact on their child's attendance
- Support the school; take every opportunity to get involved in their child's education, form a positive relationship with school and acknowledge the importance of children receiving the same messages from both school and home
- Encourage routine at home, for example, bed times, home work, preparing school bag and uniform the evening before

- Not keep their child off school to go shopping, to help at home or to look after other members of the family
- Avoid taking their child out of school during term-time, where this is unavoidable, and only in exceptional circumstances send a written leave request to the Head Teacher.

6. Using Attendance Data

6.1 Pupil's attendance will be monitored and may be shared with the Local Authority and other agencies if a pupil's attendance is a cause for concern.

6.2 The Attendance Officer will provide the Leadership Team with attendance data on a daily basis, listing the children who are absent from school and the reasons for this absence.

6.3 This pupil level data will be used to trigger school action. (See section 7 below – Support Systems)

6.4 Attendance data will also be used to identify emerging patterns and trends to inform whole school strategies to improve attendance and attainment.

6.5 New Islington Free School will share attendance data with the Department for Education and Manchester local authority and New Islington Free School works in collaboration with the local authority.

6.6 All information shared will be done so in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018.

7. Support Systems

7.1 School recognise that poor attendance is often an indication of difficulties in a child's life. This may be related to problems at home and or in school. Parents should make school aware of any difficulties or changes in circumstances that may affect their child's attendance and or behaviour in school, for example, bereavement, divorce/separation, incidents of domestic abuse. This will help the school identify any additional support that may be required.

7.2 New Islington Free School also recognise that some pupils are more likely to require additional support to attain good attendance, for example, those pupils with special educational needs, those with physical or mental health needs, migrant and refugee pupils and looked after children.

7.3 The school will implement a range of strategies to support improved attendance. Strategies used may include:

- Discussion with parents and pupils
- Attendance panels
- Parenting contracts
- Attendance report cards
- Referrals to support agencies
- Learning mentors
- Pupil Voice Activities

- Friendship groups
- PSHE
- Family learning
- Reward systems
- Time limited part time time-tables
- Additional learning support
- Behaviour support
- Reintegration support packages

7.4 Support offered to families will be child centred and planned in discussion and agreement with both parents and pupils.

7.5 Where parents fail or refuse to engage with the support offered and further unauthorised absence occurs, New Islington Free School will consider the use of legal sanctions.

8. Legal Sanctions

8.1 Prosecution Where intervention fails to bring about an improvement in attendance, the Local Authority will be notified and legal action in the Magistrates' Court may be taken. The school will provide the Local Authority with evidence required for a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 and will appear as a prosecution witness if required by the court. This is to ensure that parents realise their own responsibilities in ensuring attendance at school and most importantly about returning children to education.

8.1.1 Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 states that if a parent fails to ensure the regular school attendance of their child if he/she is a registered pupil at a school and is of compulsory school age, then they are guilty of an offence.

8.1.2 A parent found guilty of this offence can be fined up to £2500 and or be imprisoned for a period of three months.

8.1.3 Alternatives to Section 444 prosecution are Parenting Contracts, Penalty Notices or an Education Supervision Order.

8.2 Parenting Contracts (Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003) A Parenting contract is a voluntary agreement between school and the parent, it can also be extended to include the child and any other agencies offering support to resolve any difficulties leading to improved attendance.

8.2.1 The contract will outline attendance targets and will detail agreed actions that will help to achieve the target. The contract will be reviewed regularly.

8.2.2 The contract can be used as evidence in a prosecution should parents fail to carry out agreed actions.

8.2.3 Parenting Contracts will be used in accordance with Manchester City Council's Parenting Contract Protocol.

8.3 Penalty Notices (Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003) Penalty Notices will be considered when:

- A pupil is absent from school and the absence has not been authorised by the school
- A pupil has accrued unauthorised absence without reasons provided and/or accepted as exceptional by the Head Teacher.

8.3.1 A Penalty Notice gives the parent the opportunity to discharge themselves of their legal responsibility if a £120 fine is paid within 28 days, reduced to £60 per parent per child if paid within 21 days of the date the Notice was issued.

8.3.2 Failure to pay the Penalty Notice may result in a prosecution under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

8.3.3 Penalty Notices will be used in accordance with Manchester City Council's Penalty Notice Protocol.