



## Pupil Attendance Policy

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“Learning together; to be the best we can be”

# 1. Scope

- 1.1. This policy relates to all schools and settings across Nexus MAT. It may be augmented by local policies in each school that reflect their specific approach and processes in managing attendance.

# 2. Aim

- 2.1. Nexus Multi Academy Trust aims for all of its academies to have an environment which enables and encourages all members of school communities to fulfil the Trust vision of “learning together; to be the best we can be”.
- 2.2. For children and young people to reach their full potential it is vital that they attend and be on time every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable. Any absence affects the pattern of a child or young person’s schooling and regular absence will seriously affect their learning.
- 2.3. We recognise that for some of our children and young people with significant medical needs, it can be very challenging to secure attendance rates above 90%. However, our target is to achieve better than this because we know that good attendance is the key to successful learning.
- 2.4. Through the year, school leaders and governors monitor absences and punctuality to show us where improvements need and can be made. We work very closely with families whose child has complex medical needs to ensure that learning continues, as appropriate. Children with complex medical needs will be reported by exception in order to acknowledge their attempts to comply with regular attendance.

# 3. Legal

- 3.1. Section 7 of the 1996 Education Act states that parents/carers must ensure that children and young people of compulsory school age receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude to any special needs they may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.
- 3.2. For pupils registered at a school, this means that pupils must attend regularly and punctually; failure to do so may result in their parents/carers committing a criminal offence.
- 3.3. A child is of compulsory school age at the beginning of the term following their 5th birthday. A child or young person is no longer compulsory school age on the last Friday in June of the school year in which they reach the age of 16.

Although children and young people in Early Years Foundation Stage and Sixth Form are not compulsory school age, Nexus MAT places a high value on the need for good attendance throughout school so will therefore treat absences in these phases the same as compulsory age pupils in terms of register marks and follow up procedures.

- 3.4. Under the Education Act 1996 the Local Authority has a statutory responsibility to ensure that parents/carers secure education for children and young people of compulsory school age and where necessary, use legal enforcement.
- 3.5. The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, 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.
- 3.6. The register must record whether the pupil was:
  - present;
  - absent;
  - present at approved educational activity; or
  - unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

## 4. Types of Absence

- 4.1. Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school as either 'Authorised' or 'Unauthorised'. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.
- 4.2. Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies or other unavoidable cause. Absence can only be authorised by the school **not** by parents/carers.
- 4.3. Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Local Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. This includes:
  - Parents/carers keeping their child off school unnecessarily;
  - truancy before or during the school day;
  - absences which have never properly been explained;
  - pupils who arrive at school too late to get a mark;
  - shopping, looking after other children or birthdays;
  - day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed;
  - holidays that exceed the amount agreed by the Headteacher.
- 4.4. For those children and young people who are struggling to attend school full time due to their complex medical needs, school and the parents/carers may

discuss flexible hours. When a parent/carer seeks a reduction in hours or days, the school and health professionals will look at the individual child or young person and their needs and work with the parents/carers to provide appropriate education for their child. Local school procedures will be outlined in the school-level policy.

## 5. Registration

- 5.1. The school day will be published by each academy and include details of when the morning and afternoon sessions start and end and when registers will be taken. . Registers are taken by class and monitored by the senior leadership team.

## 6. Absence Procedures:

- 6.1. Parents/carers should advise school that their child will be absent by contacting the school office no later than the scheduled start of the school day. It is the responsibility of the parents/carers to inform school directly. Messages via transport staff, other parents/carers or social media will not be accepted and will be followed up by a phone call. Office staff will then inform class teams that the pupil is absent.
- 6.2. Nexus academies use a first day response policy therefore if a pupil does not attend school and no adequate reason has been provided then a telephone call will be made to the parent/carer by office staff. The member of staff making the first day response call will update the school register as necessary.
- 6.3. Parents/carers are expected to keep in contact with school when a pupil is absent for a long period to keep school informed of the situation and any expected return date.
- 6.4. Parents/carers are requested to make medical and dental appointments outside of the school day wherever possible. Where this is not possible, pupils should attend for part of the day. Parents/carers should contact the office to inform school of such appointments as early as possible. Pupils may only leave school premises if they are accompanied by a parent/carer. Proof of the appointment may be requested, this could be an appointment card or a letter from hospital.

## 7. Holiday in term time

- 7.1. As of 1 September 2013 The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 removed the option for Headteachers to grant leave of

absence during the term time in 'special circumstances' of up to ten days in a year. Leave of absence in term time is strongly discouraged. Parents are not automatically allowed to take their child out of school on holiday. Headteachers are now only allowed to authorise any leave of absence when an application has been made in advance and it is felt to be for an exceptional circumstance; the annual family holiday would not be deemed an "exceptional circumstance".

- 7.2. In-line with Government guidelines, Nexus MAT academies will not authorise absences for holidays in term-time unless there are exceptional reasons. All requests will be considered individually by the Headteacher.
- 7.3. Parents/carers will be required to submit any request for absence in term-time at least 4 weeks before the proposed absence using the 'Request for Leave of Absence' form included in the school's supplementary attendance policy.
- 7.4. Parents/carers will be expected to give a full explanation of why the holiday request is exceptional. A child or young person's previous absence will be considered before a decision is made. School will respond to all requests in writing, however, parents/carers should not automatically expect the request to be authorised. All Nexus academies will usually comply with their local authority procedures for enabling good attendance unless this is stated to be otherwise on the school website.
- 7.5. All requests for holidays and the responses will be kept on the pupil's record. If permission to take leave is not granted and a pupil still goes on holiday then the absence will be unauthorised. The school may make a request to the Local Authority to apply a fixed penalty notice which could incur a fine of £60 per parent/carer per child rising to £120 per parent/carer per child if unpaid after 28 days.
- 7.6. Nexus MAT acknowledges the multi-faith nature of the community and recognises that on some occasions religious festivals may fall outside of school holiday periods or weekends and this necessitates a consideration of authorised absence or special leave for religious observance.
- 7.7. If a pupil arrives after the registers close with no prior explanation, then they will receive a late mark. If a pupil has a persistent late record, parents/carers will be asked to meet with the Headteacher and/or a member of the Senior Leadership Team to resolve the problem, but can approach school at any time if there are problems getting pupils to school.
- 7.8. If a child goes on holiday in term time or takes leave of absence for other reasons without permission from the school or without good cause or reason the absences will be marked in the school register as unauthorised absences. **This may result in referral to the Local Authority for them to consider issuing a Fixed Penalty Notice of £60 (rising to £120) per parent per child.** In some cases, parents may be prosecuted for the offence of failure to ensure regular attendance at school. Each Local Authority must set the criteria for

issuing a Fixed Penalty Notice. No academy receives any form of financial payment or benefit as a result of a Fixed Penalty Notice being incurred.

7.9. The Local Authority can only issue a Penalty Notice in cases of unauthorised absence or where a child - who has been excluded from school - is seen in a public place in the first five days of exclusion.

7.10. There will be no limit on the times a Penalty Notice for unauthorised absence can be used in an academic year.

## 8. Persistently Absent Pupils

8.1. Local Authorities publish their own local procedures for dealing with persistently absent pupils, as well as their local definition of “persistent absence” and when/how to refer for a Fixed Penalty Notice (FPN). Some Local Authorities continue to have an Education Welfare Service whereas other Local Authorities have integrated this function into a wider Early Help offer.

8.2. Headteachers will work within the parameters of the local procedures for responding to persistent absence and will keep local governing bodies informed of any barriers to effective multi agency working to address these issues.

8.3. When a child or young person stops attending school for 10 days and no contact can be made to establish the child or young person’s whereabouts school will complete a (CME) ‘Child Missing Education’ and submit this to the Local Authority. Prior to this point, the school will take the necessary actions to assure themselves that a child is safe and secure if they have not attended school, and this may involve referring to children’s social care.

## 9. Roles and responsibilities

9.1. Parents/carers should:

- Ensure their child attends school regularly and punctually;
- Contact the school office on 1st day of absence to give a full reason for their child not attending;
- Contact school regularly during a pupils absence to keep staff updated;
- Do not pass on messages to school via transport staff;
- Avoid holidays in term time wherever possible and apply in advance by completing the relevant form;
- Avoid medical and dental appointments in school hours wherever possible;
- Attend meetings in school;
- Ensure their child goes to bed at a reasonable time;
- Ensure their child is ready for transport in a morning;
- Ensure their child comes in to school ready to learn;

- Discuss any issues affecting absence or lateness with school via Senior Leadership Team or keyworkers.

#### 9.2. Pupils should:

- Acknowledge behaviour needed out of school e.g. early bedtime;
- Attend school punctually;
- Speak to parents/carers/teacher if issues arise that may have an effect on their school attendance.
- Co-operate and participate in interventions and support offered by the school or other agencies.

#### 9.3. Headteachers should:

- Take the lead in ensuring attendance has a high profile within the school;
- Ensure there are designated staff with day-to-day responsibility for attendance matters;
- Ensure adequate protected time is allocated to discharge these responsibilities;
- Take overall responsibility for ensuring the school conforms to all statutory requirements in respect of attendance;
- Ensure there are designated staff to oversee educational provision for children and young people who are too poorly to attend school (class teacher and Senior Leadership Team).

#### 9.4. Designated Staff should:

- First day response: Contact parents/carers if an adequate reason for absence has not been provided;
- Input and update the attendance registers;
- Regularly identify and monitor school attendance and punctuality levels;
- Work with children and young people and parents/carers to remove barriers to regular and punctual attendance;
- Ensure, if appropriate, children and young people who are unable to attend school due to medical reasons have opportunities to access educational activities.

#### 9.5. All staff should:

- Provide a welcoming atmosphere for children and young people and provide a safe learning environment;
- Ensure an appropriate and responsive curriculum;
- Provide a sympathetic response to any pupils' concerns;
- Be aware of factors that can contribute to non-attendance;
- See pupil' attendance as the responsibility of all school staff;
- Participate in training regarding school systems and procedures;
- Be pro-active in providing learning opportunities for children and young people who cannot attend school due to significant medical needs.