



## Attendance Policy

Date last reviewed: June 2022

Reviewed by: *L. B. Clarke*

Date for next review: June 2023



# Saint Nathaniel's Academy



## Rationale

To ensure that all pupils at Saint Nathaniel's Academy reach their full potential and get the best from their education, every pupil needs to attend school regularly.

Regular school attendance is also a legal requirement. At Saint Nathaniel's Academy, we work closely with parents/carers to achieve good or excellent attendance for their child or children.

## Policy and Procedures

The school and the Local Authority work together closely to ensure that parent/carers meet their responsibility. Attendance issues are dealt with initially by the school. If this does not lead to an improvement in attendance, it is followed by a referral to the Education Welfare Officer (EWO), who can provide an important link between school and families, but who can also invoke statutory action to ensure regular attendance if necessary.

### To further support the Attendance Policy, we:-

- Have clear registration procedures to encourage positive attitudes toward attendance and punctuality and to identify pupils at risk of not meeting attendance targets.
- Work with parents/carers to support any of our families with their well-being and any difficulties that may impact upon their child's attendance by enlisting partner agency support where appropriate, for example EWO, Social Worker, School Nurse, Health Visitor, Inclusion Team.
- Support learning and positive attitudes to behaviour by investigating the barriers to good attendance through attendance clinics with the EWO and Senior Leaders in school.
- Have developed attendance procedures and supportive systems.
- Undertake analysis of patterns of absence via regular register checks and termly attendance reports, which are reported to our board of Governors.
- Ask the parent/carer to ensure that up-to-date contact telephone numbers and any change of address is forwarded to the school office.

## School Attendance

Parents/carers are legally responsible for ensuring that children of compulsory school age attend school regularly, which is vital for children to make good progress and to benefit from the opportunities that the school offers. Absence from school can affect attainment, wellbeing and wider outcomes for pupils.

If a child is ill, parents should contact the school office as soon as possible (this may not automatically authorise your child's absence, if their attendance has already dropped below



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96% - please see below). Members of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and/or the Inclusion Team may conduct a home visit if pupils have been absent from school and we have not received a message or been able to make contact with a parent/carer.

In line with government targets, we aim for our whole school attendance and for the attendance of individual children to be above 96%. If a child's attendance drops below 96%, the following steps will be taken:

- 1) A school attendance letter will be sent to the parent/carer(s).
- 2) From this point onwards, medical evidence (appointment letters etc.) will be required for any absences.
- 3) If the child's attendance continues to fall, parent/carer(s) will be invited to an 'attendance clinic' in school to meet with a member of the Senior Leadership Team and the EWO, to further discuss how we can work together to ensure good attendance is now achieved from this point onwards.
- 4) Following the attendance clinic if any further unauthorised absences occur, this could result in a penalty notice warning letter being issued by the school in conjunction with the Local Authority.
- 5) If attendance still fails to improve once the penalty notice warning letter has been sent, a statutory referral will be made by the school for a fixed penalty notice (fine) to be issued by the EWO (the Local Authority) and legal action may be taken.

## **Leave of absence during term-time**

As a school we aim to raise attainment, wellbeing and wider outcomes, therefore any absence during term-time is **strongly discouraged**.

Saint Nathaniel's Academy has made the decision to not issue penalties (fines) for up to three days consecutive leave of absence in term time per academic year, if taken either side of and added onto a school holiday. This will remain unauthorised but no fixed penalty notice will be issued. This is solely at the discretion of the Principal and the Governing Body and the decision will be made based on a number of individual factors, including the child's current attendance.

Therefore, under exceptional circumstances parents/carers are invited to apply for a leave of absence during term time and must follow these steps:

- 1) An 'Application for leave of absence form during term time' must be completed at least four weeks before the potential absence, which is available from the school office.
- 2) A meeting will be arranged to see the EWO or a member of SLT to discuss the potential leave of absence.

During the meeting, a number of factors will be discussed, including:



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- The impact on achievement the absence could have.
- Pupils will be taken off roll after 20 school days of absence and would then need to re-apply for a place at this school, should a place still be available.
- That the EWO (in accordance with the Local Authority) can issue a Penalty Notice if enough sessions of absence are taken.

3) The decision to authorise or not authorise a potential absence will then be made by the Principal on the 'Application for leave of absence form'.

4) If the planned absence is not authorised and/or exceeds the 3 days at the Principal's discretion, then a referral form will be completed for a fixed penalty notice (fine) to be issued at £60 per pupil per parent.

If a child's attendance is below 90% when an application is made for a leave of absence during term time, this will not be authorised. Parents are welcome to arrange a meeting with a member of the Senior Leadership Team to discuss their child/children's attendance.

## Religious observance

As a school we recognise our diverse community and in accordance with guidance provided from the Local Authority, we will authorise 1 day per religious observance (with an 'R' code) i.e. Eid. Any further days of absence directly before or after the designated religious observance day will automatically be unauthorised by the school. Both authorised and unauthorised absences affect a child's attendance percentage, however, unauthorised absences can potentially result in further action being taken by the Education Welfare Service.

## Class Registers

1. Class teachers are responsible for maintaining an accurate class attendance register (other adults such as Teaching Assistants may complete the register under the teacher's direction).
2. Registers must be completed using the electronic 'Arbor' system and any amendments (i.e. a 'late' mark) will be completed by the school office.
3. The attendance register is marked twice a day at the start of the morning and the beginning of the afternoon. For each pupil, the register must be marked either as present or absent. Absences will only be authorised by the school when an explanation has been given by parent/carer(s) (e.g. illness). Explanation must be in person or by telephone message on the first day of absence.
4. Correct codes for recording attendance/absence are set out in each register.
5. Pupil attendance at school is 2 sessions per day. Morning (am) is counted as one session and afternoon (pm) is counted as another session. Registers are taken for all pupils at 8.45am and then at 1.00pm.

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Our Senior Leadership Team (SLT) has the responsibility for monitoring attendance and highlighting concerns through regular review meetings with the EWO (Education Welfare Officer).

## **Punctuality**

Our Breakfast Club is open from 7:30am for Foundation Stage, Key Stage 1 & Key Stage 2, and the classroom doors are then opened at 8.35am.

Registration is at 8.45am for all pupils.

The school doors are locked at 8:45am; any child arriving after this time must enter the school via the school office. Any child arriving after 8.45am will be marked as 'late'. Any child arriving late must be signed in by the parent/carer/adult bringing the child to school at the school office.

The late arrivals register information is entered into the 'Arbor' system (used for registrations, data and record keeping). Late arrivals are monitored weekly.

Persistent lateness can affect a pupil's attendance and can result in further action being taken by the Education Welfare Service, i.e. fixed penalty warning letters and/or fines.

## **Recording Absence and Punctuality**

Saint Nathaniel's Academy clearly differentiates between authorised and non-authorised attendance. An absence is only authorised when the reason (illness, bereavement, and religious observation) can be seen as a genuine explanation of the absence.

Every half term the school is required to submit details of Persistent Absence to the EWO. We are required to inform how many half days were missed due to authorised and unauthorised absence. Children are classed as Persistent Absentees if their attendance is below 90%. This is recorded as a percentage attendance and is used as an overall guide to the school's success in promoting good attendance and punctuality.

## **Appointments**

All medical, dental and other appointments must be made out of school time. We strongly advise that you do not take your child or children out of school for appointments if this can be avoided.

Please note that if this happens it may affect your child's attendance figure and in some cases may be noted as unauthorised if evidence is not provided (i.e. hospital letter).

## **The following forms part of this agreement:**

- Parents/carers will ensure that their child will attend every session unless of course there is a genuine illness.
- Parents/carers also agree to contact school with a reason for their child's absence on the day of absence (and each day thereafter). If no reason provided, the absence will be

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noted on the register as unauthorised. Home visits will be carried out if we have not received a message and we are unable to make contact with parents.

- If a pupil's attendance falls below an acceptable level, parents/carers will be contacted by the Senior Leadership Team to discuss the reasons for absence and any support that is required and deemed necessary. Where a child's attendance falls below 96%, parents/carers will be asked to provide medical evidence in order for these absences to be authorised.

Saint Nathaniel's Academy will support parents/carers and pupils wherever possible to ensure that pupils attend school regularly. Parents/carers are welcome to make an appointment to speak with a member of SLT or our EWO, if they have any attendance concerns.



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## APPENDIX

### Attendance During the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic

Addendum: recording attendance in relation to coronavirus (COVID-19) during the 2021 to 2022 academic year

Updated 6 January 2022

This appendix has been developed in line with the latest government guidance to set out the additional measures that have been put in place to support pupils' attendance at school.

#### **Attendance expectations**

Attendance is mandatory. The usual rules on attendance continue to apply, including:

- parents' duty to ensure that their child of compulsory school age attends regularly at the school where the child is a registered pupil
- schools' responsibilities to record attendance and follow up absence
- the ability to issue sanctions, including fixed penalty notices, in line with local authorities' codes of conduct
- the duty on local authorities to put in place arrangements for identifying, and to follow up with, children missing education

#### **Examples in which 'not attending in circumstances relating to COVID-19' could apply**

In line with current legislation and guidance from the UKHSA and DHSC, examples are as follows.

#### **Pupils who are required to self-isolate as they have symptoms of COVID-19**

After a pupil tests positive for COVID-19 (LFD or PCR), they should be recorded as code I (illness) until they are able to return to school. They should continue to self-isolate in line with public health guidance.

#### **Pupils who are a close contact of someone who has symptoms or confirmed COVID-19**

From 14 December 2021, adults who are fully vaccinated and all children and young people aged between 5 and 18 years and 6 months (pupils) identified as a contact of someone with COVID-19 are strongly advised to take a LFD test every day for 7 days and continue to attend their setting as normal, unless they have a positive test result.

Children under 5 years are exempt from self-isolation and do not need to take part in daily testing of close contacts.

Pupils with SEND identified as close contacts should be supported by their school and their families to agree the most appropriate route for testing including, where appropriate, additional support to assist swabbing.

#### **Pupils who are required by legislation to self-isolate as part of a period of quarantine**

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As usual, parents should plan their holidays within school breaks and avoid seeking permission to take their children out of school during term time. Families should also consider that their child may need to self-isolate following trips overseas that require a period of quarantine. If a pupil is required to be in quarantine on arrival in, or return to, the UK, the school should use code X in the register.

## **Pupils who are self-isolating but who have not had a test**

In line with public health advice, pupils with symptoms must self-isolate and schools should strongly encourage pupils to take a PCR test. Where the pupil is unable to take a PCR test, the school should record the pupil as code X in the register.

Schools should follow up with families if they are not satisfied with the reason as to why the pupil is not in school. Schools can request supporting evidence from the family. Where the school is not satisfied with the reason given for absence, they may record this using one of the unauthorised absence codes, in line with the school attendance guidance for schools.

## **Remote education**

If a pupil is not attending school because their attendance would be contrary to government guidance or legislation around COVID-19, we expect schools to offer them access to remote education. Schools should keep a record of, and monitor engagement with, this activity, but this does not need to be tracked in the attendance register.