

## **The Unity of Titchmarsh, Warmington and Nassington Schools Attendance Policy**

### **1. Introduction**

**Improving attendance is everyone's business. The barriers to accessing education are wide and complex, both within and beyond the school gates, and are often specific to individual pupils and families. The foundation of securing good attendance is that school is a calm, orderly, safe, and supportive environment where all pupils want to be and are keen and ready to learn. (Working Together To Improve School Attendance, 2022)**

- 1.1 Good attendance is essential if students are to take full advantage of school and gain the appropriate skills which will equip them for life.
- 1.2 The Unity of Schools aim to achieve good attendance by operating an attendance policy within which pupils, staff and parents can work in partnership.
- 1.3 The schools will monitor attendance and ensure quick and early intervention if a problem is identified.
- 1.4 All staff will encourage punctuality and good attendance and pastoral staff will liaise with home and other agencies about a child's attendance when this is appropriate.

### **2. Principles**

- 2.1 A child should come to school every day and be in school from 8.50am to 3.15pm.
- 2.2 A child should only be absent if the reason is "unavoidable."
- 2.3 Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by parents), as either authorised or unauthorised. This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required.
- 2.4 Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason such as illness or other unavoidable causes.
- 2.5 Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no permission has been given. This includes:
  - going shopping
  - minding the house
  - truancy
  - absences which have never been properly explained
  - children who arrive at school too late to get a mark
- 2.6 Providing a note may not be sufficient if the reason given is not "unavoidable."
- 2.7 Some children need encouragement to attend regularly. Any problems are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. It is never better to cover up their absence or to give into pressure to excuse them from school. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and may make things worse. Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving problems together.

- 2.8 If problems cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the child to the County Education and Inclusion Partnership (see section 8)

### 3. Procedures

- 3.1 If a child is unfit for school, parents should contact the school on the first day, in person or by telephone. If a child has not reported for school by the time the registers close, then First Day Calling must operate, either by the class teacher, TA or School Bursar; (see Section 9 and Appendix 1 for Children Absent From Education guidance).

**Titchmarsh – (01832) 732874  
Warmington – (01832) 280420  
Nassington – (01780) 782743**

**All schools have answerphone facilities so voicemails can be left.**

- 3.2 When the child returns, he or she must bring a written note, signed by a parent, for each period of absence.
- 3.3 Absences will not be authorised without this procedure.
- 3.4 Other reasons for absence must be discussed with the school each time. A Leave of Absence Form must be completed and returned to the Executive Headteacher for consideration. These forms are available in hard copy from the school office or electronically from the school website.
- 3.5 Leave may be granted in an emergency (e.g. bereavement) or for medical appointments which are unavoidably in school time, provided a written explanation is received.
- 3.6 Heads of School should regularly reward pupils for good attendance – this can be 100% attendance across a year or within an individual term. Awards can also be given for improved attendance to recognise where parents and pupils have worked with the schools to make a difference. In some cases, this may include an email or letter from the Executive Headteacher to thank parents for their engagement and the improvement in attendance.

### 4 Holidays

- 4.1 Headteachers will only be allowed to grant leave of absence for any reason if they are satisfied exceptional circumstances exist.
- 4.2 Newsletters will contain regular updates regarding attendance so that parents and carers are aware of their responsibilities and the latest government guidance.
- 4.3 Unauthorised holiday absences of over 10 sessions may be reported to the local authority – this is clearly outlined on the leave of absence form.

### 5 Lateness

**Punctuality to school is a key expectation and parents are expected to support the school in ensuring pupils arrive on time.**

- 5.1 Children must attend on time to be given a mark for a session.
- 5.2 Parents are expected to ensure that children are present at registration.
- 5.3 Registers are closed **thirty minutes** after the start of registration. The school day is detailed on our website and in pupil planners. Parents should ensure that they are familiar with these times. Arriving more than thirty minutes after the start of the session without good reason is counted as unauthorised absence.
- 5.4 Parents will be notified if there is a recurring pattern of lateness and this may lead to a meeting and discussion with the Head of School/Executive Headteacher.

## 6 Special Circumstances

- 6.1 It is recognised that there may be circumstances when a child may arrive late for a period of time because of transport difficulties or because of prolonged illness.
- 6.2 The school would adopt a flexible approach in these instances and work with the pupils and parents to help in any way possible.

## 7 Attendance Registers

- 7.1 The schools will follow the guidance on completion of attendance registers outlined by the DfE. Staff will be reminded of correct codes on a regular basis. The SIMS information management system used for register entry also has the codes on display for staff reference.
- 7.2 The schools' admission and attendance registers will be kept in line with the statutory guidance as outlined in 'Working Together To Improve Attendance' (2022)

## 8 Persistence Absence Procedures

Persistence Absence is defined as attendance that is less than 90% in any given period of time, measured from the start of the academic year. As good attendance is essential to strong and effective lifelong learning, it is school policy that persistence absence is monitored and tackled.

- 8.1 Absence will be reviewed by the Executive Headteacher and Head of School each half-term as part of the attendance review which is updated and presented to Governors. Any child whose absence is below 90% will initially receive an informative letter from the school, highlighting concerns and, where applicable, parents/carers will be invited for a meeting with the Executive Headteacher and Head of School.
- 8.2 In cases of family difficulty, the Family Support Worker will be engaged to mediate with the family and inform the school of any issues and support that may be used to help improve the situation and assist in improved attendance.
- 8.3 Where, after a review, there has been no improvement, a letter will be sent to the family giving a clear target for improved attendance with FSW back-up offered if necessary. If, for any reason, this target is not met or satisfactory reasons for absence are not provided, the school will refer the case to the Education Entitlement Team (part of North

Northamptonshire Education Inclusion and Partnerships) via an online referral form. In liaison with the EIP, the Executive Headteacher and Head of School will decide whether to pursue attendance contracts, attendance fines, parenting orders or other actions as deemed appropriate, once all other options have been tried. All three schools have assigned EIP Link Officers and these are contacted in case of issue or advice being needed.

**However, where there are concerns about absence and potential links with safeguarding issues, this will be referred to the Designated Safeguarding Lead immediately and dealt with as a safeguarding concern or as a Child Missing From Education (see section 9)**

- 8.4 In addition, regular updates and information regarding attendance will be sent out to parents using the school newsletter to ensure that parents and carers are aware of the latest guidance regarding attendance.
- 8.5 Where families are finding that attendance is a problem due to transport or financial issues, the schools will take all reasonable steps to support the families and remove barriers wherever possible. However, the schools have limited financial resources and will liaise with the EIP Link Officer to ascertain what support can be given.
- 8.6 For further details, please see Section 6 of Working Together To Improve School Attendance 2022.
- 8.7 Responsibilities for dealing with persistent absence are as follows:

**Parents are expected to:**

Work with the school and local authority to help them understand their child's barriers to attendance.

Proactively engage with the formal support offered – including any parenting contract or voluntary early help plan to prevent the need for legal intervention.

**The schools are expected to:**

Continue support as for pupils at risk of becoming persistently absent and:

Where absence becomes persistent, put additional targeted support in place to remove any barriers. Where necessary this includes working with partners.

Where there is a lack of engagement, hold more formal conversations with parents and be clear about the potential need for legal intervention in future.

Where support is not working, being engaged with or appropriate, work with the local authority on legal intervention.

Where there are safeguarding concerns, intensify support through statutory children's social care.

Work with other schools in the local area, such as schools previously attended and the schools of any siblings.

## **Governors are expected to:**

Regularly review attendance data and help school leaders focus support on the pupils who need it.

## **The local authority is expected to:**

Continued support as for pupils at risk of becoming persistently absent and: Work jointly with the school to provide formal support options including parenting contracts and education supervision orders.

Where there are safeguarding concerns, ensure joint working between the school, children's social care services and other statutory safeguarding partners.

Where support is not working, being engaged with or appropriate, enforce attendance through legal intervention (including prosecution as a last resort).

## **9. Children Absent From Education Procedure**

### **What are a school's responsibilities when a child is absent?**

You should always assess the child's safeguarding risk at their own address using thresholds and pathways. For example, is there a risk of forced marriage, child sexual exploitation, domestic abuse, radicalisation, honour based violence? If the judgement is the child is at risk of harm, contact the police or social care immediately.

If a pupil is absent, all schools have a responsibility to contact the parent or carer **on the first day of absence** and continue to make every effort to locate the pupil. When you have identified the child is not in school, please follow the procedure below.

### **Day 1 - Phone call**

A staff member trained to do so, telephones the child's home to seek reasons for the absence and reassurance from a parent or carer that the child is safe at home.

#### **Response from parent**

There is no answer at the home or on mobile numbers

The parent/carer answered the call, the child is safe with them

The person answering is not the parent/carer and the school is not reassured that the child is at home or safe

The parent/carer answered

#### **Next step from school**

Call back. Risk assess after 2 hours

Ask for reason for absence and record on your school's attendance management system

The school's designated lead for child protection should be consulted on a risk assessment and the degree of vulnerability of the child

 Risk assessment and CME checklist attached in appendices

School to advise the parent to:

the call, the child is not with them or safe and the parent is concerned

Contact the local police station to inform them that the child is missing

Contact all people and places the child is known to talk to and visit to tell them that the child is missing and ask if they can help to find the child, by providing information which may shed light on the child's whereabouts or actively searching for the child

Contact the family GP and Accident and Emergency Centres near where the child lives and goes to school, in case he/she has sustained an injury and been taken in for medical treatment

Report back to school if the child is found or remains missing.

## **Day 2 - Follow up phone call**

A subsequent telephone call must be made either from the school landline or preferably mobile phone.

## **Day 3 – Write/email parents**

Write or email to the parent in plain English, asking for contact to be made with the school immediately. Please give the parents/carers 3 working days to make contact and if you are aware that English may not be the parent's first language, copy the letter into a language that may be more accessible.

## **Day 5/6 - Home visit**

Arrange a visit to the home address ensuring that risk assessments are in place

## **Once you have completed these checks (or within 10 days, whichever is earlier)**

If the child has not been seen and the parents/carers have not made contact with either, schools must report the child as missing from education. Link is below.

<https://www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/councilservices/children-families-education/schools-and-education/information-for-school-staff/pupil-support-and-inclusion/attendance-and-behaviour/Pages/children.aspx>

## **10. Overall Responsibilities**

### **Parents are expected to:**

Ensure their child attends every day the school is open except when a statutory reason applies.

Notify the school as soon as possible when their child has to be unexpectedly absent (e.g. sickness).

Only request leave of absence in exceptional circumstances and do so in advance. Book any medical appointments around the school day where possible.

**The schools are expected to:**

Have a clear school attendance policy on the school website which all staff, pupils and parents understand.

Develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of good attendance. Accurately complete admission and attendance registers.

Have robust daily processes to follow up absence.

Have a dedicated senior leader with overall responsibility for championing and improving attendance – the Executive Headteacher and Heads of School will oversee this role.

**The Governors are expected to:**

Take an active role in attendance improvement, support their school(s) to prioritise attendance, and work together with leaders to set whole school cultures.

Ensure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties.

Ensure school staff receive training on attendance.

Review this policy at least every three years.

**The Local Authority is expected to:**

Have a strategic approach to improving attendance for the whole area and make it a key focus of all frontline council services.

Have a School Attendance Support Team that works with all schools in their area to remove area-wide barriers to attendance.

Provide each school with a named point of contact in the School Attendance Support Team who can support with queries and advice.

Offer opportunities for all schools in the area to share effective practice.

**Additional Responsibilities can be found in ‘Summary Table of Responsibilities for School Attendance’ (2022)**

**11. Associated documentation to support this policy is attached:**

Unity Attendance Letter

Unity Target Letter

NNC Attendance Contract

Children Absent From Education Website Link -

<https://www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/councilservices/children-families-education/schools-and-education/information-for-school-staff/pupil-support-and-inclusion/attendance-and-behaviour/Pages/children.aspx>

NNC Penalty Notice Guidance – this would be done in conjunction with the EIP.

Safeguarding Policy

Working Together To Improve School Attendance (2022)



## Appendix 1 – CAFE Risk Assessment and Response Checklist

Day One: The school identifies that a child is not in school. A staff member trained to do so, telephones the child's home to seek reasons for the absence and reassurance from a parent/carer that the child is safe at home.

Result of Call	Action
There is no answer at the home or on mobile numbers	Call back. Risk assess after 2 hours
The parent/carer answered the call, the child is safe with them	Ask for reason for absence and record
The person answering is not the parent/carer and the school is not reassured that the child is at home or safe	The school's designated lead for child protection should be consulted on a risk assessment and the degree of vulnerability of the child
The parent/carer answered the call, the child is not with them or safe and the parent is concerned	<p>School to advise the parent to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contact the local police station to inform them that the child is missing</li> <li>• Contact all people and places the child is known to talk to and visit to tell them that the child is missing and ask if they can help to find the child, by providing information which may shed light on the child's whereabouts or actively searing for the child</li> <li>• Contact the family GP and Accident and Emergency Centres near where the child lives and goes to school, in case he/she has sustained an injury and been taken in for medical treatment</li> <li>• Report back to school if the child is found or remains missing</li> </ul>

If the judgement on Day One is that there is reason to believe that the child is at risk of harm the school will contact Police and/or children's social care immediately.

If the judgement on Day One is that there is no reason to believe that the child is at risk of harm school continues to make enquiries and informs Education Inclusion & Partnership on Day Ten that the child is missing education .



## Risk Assessment for Children Absent From Education

Assessing vulnerability requires a combination of professional knowledge and experience of child welfare issues and knowledge of local circumstances. Considering the following questions could assist the process. If in doubt always consult with managers or other services.

Criteria	Risk	Action
Is there good reason to believe that the child may be the victim of crime?		Inform Police and/or children's social care immediately
Does the child have a formal child protection plan?		
Is the child in care i.e. looked after by the local authority?		
Is the planned or current LA children's social care or LA adults' social care services involved? e.g. section 47 enquiry about to start		
Is there a person present in or visiting the family who poses an on-going risk to children, or who is suspected of previously harming a child?		
Is the child at risk of sexual exploitation?		
Is the child at risk of radicalisation?		
Has there been LA children's social care or LA adults/ social care or Criminal Justice System involvement in the past?		Give consideration to the vulnerability of the child and following risk assessment inform one or all of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Police</li> <li>• Safer School Officer</li> <li>• Children's Social Care</li> <li>• Local Authority Designated Officer</li> <li>• Education Welfare Service</li> <li>• School Nurse</li> </ul> Use other services to help with your risk assessment, including the above.
Are there religious or cultural reasons to believe that the child is at risk? e.g. FMG or forced marriage.		
Is there any known history of drug or alcohol dependency within the family?		
Is there any known history of domestic violence?		
Is there concern about the parent/carer's ability to protect the child from harm?		
Was there any significant incident prior to the child's unexplained absence?		
Has the child been a victim of bullying?		
Does the child need essential medical or health care?		
Was the child noted to be depressed prior to the child's unexplained absence?		
Has the child gone missing with their family?		
Have the parents been subject to proceedings in relation to attendance?		
Is there a history or poor attendance?		
Has there been any change in the child/family's financial circumstances?		
Age of the child		

## Appendix 2 – Expectations and Escalation Diagram

