



Newtown Primary School

Attendance Policy 2023 - 2024

Created By	S. Chesney-Ly
Authorised By	
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Why attendance is important:

Our vision and values are at the core of Newtown Primary School's Attendance Policy.

At Newtown we strive to enable every child to become successful learners, responsible citizens and resilient individuals. Our curriculum and provision is designed to allow for all children to develop and embed these attributes. Each child's starting point will differ to the next but it is our mission to ensure each child embodies these characteristics in order to belong, believe and achieve at Newtown and throughout their lifetime.

Research shows that good attendance is linked to academic success. If children have good attendance (96% - 100%), we believe that they have every opportunity to succeed at Newtown. We expect children to attend school every day that they possibly can. At Newtown, we support families to be able to achieve this.

Ensuring a pupil's regular attendance at school is the legal responsibility of all parents/carers. Staff at Newtown Primary School will work with and support our families to encourage and ensure regular attendance.

What attendance percentages mean:

Achieved Attendance Target	100%	Excellent attendance	Full attendance and no days missed from school – the best chance of success
	96%	Good attendance	8 days missed from school
Worrying Attendance Monitored	95%	Below the expected level of attendance	9 days missed – less chance of success and makes it harder for your child to make progress
	91%	Below the expected level of attendance and needs to improve	18 days missed
Cause for Concern (below 90%)	90%	Worrying and attendance needs to improve	18 days missed (persistent absence threshold). Your child will find it very hard to make progress.
	85%	Poor attendance and must improve	28 days missed
Below 50% Attendance	Severely Absent and at risk of Educational Neglect		

- If a pupil has 90% attendance through their primary and secondary education; it means that they have missed the equivalent of a whole year off school.

What types of absence there are:

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required, preferably in writing.

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.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no agreement has been given. (This type of absence can lead to the Local Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings.) Unauthorised absences include:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily.
- Absences which are not agreed by the Head Teacher
- Truancy before or during the school day.
- Absences which have never been properly explained or when school do not receive a message for the absence.
- Children who arrive at school too late to get a mark (after the close of register).
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays.
- Leave of absence that has not been agreed by the school (including term time holidays).
- Absences for which medical evidence has not been provided but has been requested by the school.

This list is not exhaustive, and the authorisation of absence is judged on circumstances at the time. We will always try to contact parents to inform you if your child's absence has not been authorised or if additional information is required regarding the absences.

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best resolved between the school, the parents, and the child. If your child is reluctant to attend, it is never a good idea to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and usually make things worse. Help and support is always available at school should parents require this. If support is required, please contact the school reception and one of the Attendance Team will be happy to help.

What Persistent Absenteeism (PA) is:

A pupil is on track to becoming a 'persistent absentee' (PA) when they miss 10% or more schooling (i.e. has attendance below 90%) at any given time during the school year for whatever reason. Any pupil who has attendance of 90% or below for the whole school year, whatever the reason for absence, will be recorded as a persistent absentee by the Department for Education. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parents' fullest support and co-operation to tackle this. PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system and we also combine this with academic mentoring where necessary.

We monitor all absence thoroughly and closely track any student with 5+ sessions of absence. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark (90%) or is at risk of moving towards that mark, is given priority and parents will be informed of this.

All pupils with a total of 5+ sessions of absence are monitored weekly; the school will make contact with parents where required and will support these students and their families to improve attendance.

What Newtown's attendance routines are:

- At Newtown we take a register twice a day – once at the start of the morning and once at the start of the afternoon session.
- Children are welcomed into school at 8.30am by their class teacher.
- The register is opened at 8.35am and closed at 8.45am.
- In exceptional circumstances such as bad weather or public transport difficulties, we may keep the register open for a longer period (discretion of the headteacher).
- Children who arrive after 8:45 are marked as late.
- **Learning and interventions start at 8:35 so punctuality (being on time) is essential.**

How the register works:

- It is the responsibility of the register marker to record the pupil as present (/) or absent (N).
- We keep our register electronically using the MIS system 'SIMS'.
- The data is captured by calling out names from class the register.
- The information is then entered onto the system as the class teacher, or their cover calls out names.
- The office staff will enter a pupil onto the system, using the appropriate code, should they arrive late to school after the register has closed.

Why punctuality is important (being on time):

Poor punctuality is not acceptable. It is seriously detrimental to a child's learning and positive start to the school day. Children's learning begins at 8.35am. If your child arrives after this time they will start to miss key learning. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons for teachers and other pupils. It can also be embarrassing or cause worry for children walking in late.

Minutes late per day	Learning time lost in a year
5 minutes	3½ days
10 minutes	7 days
15 minutes	10 ½ days
20 minutes	14 days
30 minutes	21 days

How we manage punctuality:

- Registers are marked at 8.45am. The registers are immediately sent electronically to the school office.
- Your child will receive a late mark if they arrive after 8.45am.
- At 9.15am the registers will be officially closed. In accordance with regulations, if your child arrives after that time, they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will not count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence.
- You are encouraged at any time to call or approach school if you are having problems getting your child to school on time. We will do whatever we can to support you and help overcome the barriers.
- Persistent late arrival is not acceptable and could mean parents/carers face the possibility of a legal sanction if the problem persists.
- The registers are returned electronically to the school office where absences are reviewed, and late arriving pupils are added to the register.
- The office staff will enter a pupil onto the system, using the appropriate code in relation to the reason for absence.
- Where pupils arrive late to school, the appropriate code is entered on to the register identifying where a pupil has arrived after the register has closed. Contact is then made with parents and carers regarding any unexplained absences.

What the different types of absence are:

Every half-day absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required on a daily basis.

- Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness, medical/dental appointments which unavoidably fall in school time, or other unavoidable causes which have been agreed by the Head Teacher.
- We ask that routine dental, optical and medical appointments are made after school, at weekends or in school holidays, to avoid missed learning.
- Where a religious festival is being celebrated and falls within the school term, one day of leave will be authorised by the Head Teacher. If religious festivals fall during school holidays or weekends, pupils are expected to attend school both before and after the celebration and absence will be recorded as unauthorised.
- Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no agreement has been given. This type of absence can lead to the Local Authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings.

Unauthorised absences include:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily.
- Absences which are not agreed by the Head Teacher
- Absences which have never been properly explained or when school do not receive a message for the absence.
- Children who arrive at school too late to get a mark (after the close of register). - Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays.
- Leave of absence that has not been agreed by the school (including term time holidays).
- Absences for which medical evidence has not been provided but has been requested by the school.

This list is not exhaustive, and the authorisation of absence is judged on circumstances at the time. We will always try to contact parents to inform you if your child's absence has not been authorised or if additional information is required regarding the absences.

What to do if your child is absent:

- Contact us as soon as possible on the first day of absence. This may be done via a telephone call to our number 0121 557 8504. A message can be left on the school's answerphone if a parent needs to make an early morning call before the start of the day.

What we do if your child is absent (First Day Calling):

- Record your child's absence on their class register.
- Telephone you on the first day of absence if we have not heard from you. This should not be necessary as it is the parent's responsibility to inform school regarding a pupil absence. If we cannot make contact, we will text and call again if no answer.
- Enquire about the reason for absence and provide advice and suggestions.
- Make contact to discuss your child's attendance if we are concerned about a child's absence. It is important to keep the school updated of any changes to contact details and provide the school with a telephone number on which they can be contacted in case of emergency.
- Please note we monitor whole school attendance below 95% on a weekly basis, with a particular focus on pupils with less than 90% attendance.

- If we have not been notified of a reason for absence and have been unable to contact a parent, we will telephone alternative contacts listed for the child and ask if they are able to help and support in contacting parents.
- Home visits may be carried out at any point during a pupil's absence as an additional method of contacting families.
- For safeguarding purposes, where required, contact may be made with other educational providers where siblings are attending, to assist in contacting families.
- If a child's absence is a concern and all attempts of making contact have failed, the school may contact the Police to discuss the matter, and request that a 'safe and well' visit be carried out if we are worried about a family.
- Parents must be aware that if the school is not informed of where a child is in school time, the child may be referred to relevant agencies for safeguarding purposes. If a child is absent for 20 school days or more and cannot be located after diligent enquiries have been made, they will be removed from the school's roll and recorded as a 'missing child.' The child will then lose their school place at Newtown Primary School.

Incentives for attendance for 2023 / 2024

- **Attendance Traffic Lights** – increase awareness of whole school target and daily attendance in classes.
- **Whole class attendance awards** - these are alternated between most improved attendance, overall attendance boys vs girls. Children are rewarded with extra play time for being the winning class/group.
- At the end of term, pupils are awarded with a **100% attendance certificate**.
- At the end of a week, pupils are rewarded with a **100% attendance sticker**.
- A special award is given to pupils who have a **yearly attendance of 100%**.
- Varying, **family incentives** e.g. vouchers, day out coupons etc.
- Varying **whole school month or half term incentives** e.g. ice-cream, water-fight, pinata etc.
- **Attendance League** – points are given to the class with the highest percentage of attendance each week. Each week, the winning class in each Key Stage gets to have the **attendance bear** for that week.

How we track and report the attendance of children and measure impact:

- We monitor all absence thoroughly and closely track any student with attendance of 95% or below on a weekly basis. Any pupil that is on track to becoming a persistent absentee (90%) or is at risk of moving towards that mark, is given priority and parents will be informed of this.
- This data is discussed weekly with SLT and the Family Support Worker and actions are agreed for each pupil. We aim to work with families to tackle problems as soon as they become apparent. This may include telephone calls, letters home, invitations to attend school meetings, announced and unannounced home visits, group work and individual student mentoring.
- Impact of interventions is reviewed in meetings weekly and patterns of attendance are analysed each half term and are benchmarked with the learning community and national trends. Intervention and support is identified from this set of data.
- Attendance data is shared with parents and carers at every opportunity including Parents' Evenings, reports, text messages, letters and academic meetings. Attendance data is shared with staff and pupils on a weekly basis where leaders celebrate and promote attendance within their year group. We celebrate efforts

relating to individual and class attendance/punctuality at the end of each half term.

- Attendance data is reported to the Trust on a weekly basis and to governors half termly.

What I need to know about thresholds and referrals:

- A pupil is classed as on track to being 'severely absent' (SA) when they have missed 50% or more of their time in school at any given time.
- A pupil is on track to becoming a 'persistent absentee' (PA) when they miss 10% or more schooling (i.e., has attendance below 90%) at any given time during the school year for whatever reason.
- Absence at these levels is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parents' fullest support and co-operation to tackle this. Whilst it is rare for our pupils to have attendance levels below 50%, both SA and PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our attendance and family support team, and we also combine this with attendance mentoring where necessary.
- Parents are encouraged to contact school at an early stage to resolve any problems relating to attendance and punctuality. This usually has a successful conclusion.
- Support from external agencies and the local authority will be sought where additional resources and expertise is required.
- Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, attendance through statutory intervention or prosecution may be necessary. If there are ongoing concerns regarding a pupil's attendance, the school may refer a child's irregular attendance to the Attendance and Prosecution Service within the Local Authority. A variety of legal interventions are possible ranging from parenting contracts, Education Supervision Orders, penalty notice fines and legal action being instituted against parents in Magistrates Court.

What to do if we need to request a Leave of Absence and Holidays in Term Time:

Leave of Absence Request

- All requests for leave of absence should be requested by completing the school's leave of absence form, which is available from the school office. Any requests for leave should be made in writing to the Head teacher 4 weeks before the leave is required. If however, the leave request is due to an emergency, contact should still be made with the Head Teacher to discuss the leave request. Please be aware, leave can only be authorised on the content of the request. A request for leave of absence form must be completed fully and must include details of all people who have care of the child. Incomplete requests will be declined and will not be considered, which will result in the absence being recorded as unauthorised. Parents will normally be informed of the decision in writing. All letters will be kept on file. If the child takes time off when leave has not been granted, this will be recorded as an unauthorised absence. All leave of absence needs to be requested and agreed before any firm bookings are made, this will allow time for the request to be considered and discussion to be held as required. Meetings with families are routinely held to discuss leave of absence requests to ensure the safeguarding of our children. Supporting information should also be provided with the request, to explain the circumstances and the need for leave to be taken in term time. Requests for leave of absence in term time for holidays, visiting relatives and weddings are not normally agreed by the Head Teacher.

- Where the school receives requests for extended leave of absence and where information has raised concerns that a child is at immediate risk of forced marriage or Female Genital Mutilation, a referral will be made to Sandwell Children's Social Care Trust and the Police.
- If the reason for leave is due to an emergency, parents should contact the school without delay to discuss this with a member of the Attendance team.

Term Time Holidays

- Term time holidays If a parent chooses to take their child out of school for a holiday in term time, a leave of absence form must still be completed. Taking holidays in term time will affect your child's academic progress as much as any other absence, and we expect parents to help us by not taking pupils away in school time. We do not permit holidays in term time and will not authorise requests for leave of absence for this reason. Remember that any savings you think you may make by taking a holiday in school time, are offset by the cost to your child's education. There is no automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday. Holidays should be taken in school holiday time of which we have plenty of weeks available.
- Unauthorised holidays taken in term time are referred to Sandwell's Attendance and Prosecution Service, who may then contact parents regarding the leave taken. Parents taking unauthorised leave in term time may be subject to a penalty notice fine being issued by the Local Authority. This is a £60 fine (per child, per parent), if paid within 21 days but rises to £120 (per child, per parent) if not paid within 21 days but paid within 28 days. If fines are not paid, the Attendance and Prosecution Service can refer the matter to Magistrates Court.

What the roles are within the attendance team:

Mr P Ramage	Chair of Governors	Regular attendance analysis and reporting	
Mrs S. Chesney-Ly	Headteacher		
Mrs A. Smith	Family Support & Attendance Mentor		
Mr G. Ludlam	Deputy Headteacher		
Mrs Gemma Merrix	SENDCo		-Preventative and responsive attendance mentoring -Referrals to external agencies for support and consideration of legal intervention
Mrs T Dovey	Office Manager		-First day absence calls
Mrs S. Green	Admin Assistant		-Attendance coding
Mrs A. Kaur	Admin Assistant		-Administration of attendance letters -100% attendance stickers and certificates
All staff			-All teaching and support staff are trained and refreshed frequently throughout the school year in their roles in promoting attendance, rewards and incentives.