

NEWBRIDGE SCHOOL

ATTENDANCE POLICY

2017-2018

OTHER POLICY LINKS

Admission Arrangements
Special Educational Needs Policy
Looked After Children Policy

Review Date: September 2018

PRINCIPLES

Newbridge School seeks to ensure that all its students receive a full-time education which maximises opportunities for each student to realise their true potential. It is the legal responsibility of parents/carers to ensure their child attends school. There is a clear link between students' achievement and their level of attendance at school. We want all our students to achieve their full potential and for this they need to be attending school regularly.

Every half-day absence from school legally has to be recorded by staff at the school as either **AUTHORISED** or **UNAUTHORISED**. This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required, preferably in writing.

Authorised absence means that school has either given approval in advance for a student to be absent, or school have accepted the explanation given by the parent/carer as justification for a students' absence i.e. illness or exceptional/unavoidable circumstances

It is important to understand even though these absences will be authorised they will still have a negative effect on a students' attendance record.

Unauthorised absence means school is not satisfied with the explanation given by the parents/carers for a students' absence.

Examples of unauthorised absence are:

- Truancy
- Absence that has never been given a satisfactory explanation
- Holidays that have not been approved in advance or exceeds the approved period of time
- A student arriving after registration has closed.

Medical and dental appointments

Wherever possible, parents are asked to make routine medical and dental appointments outside school time. Where such appointments in school time are unavoidable, staff should be informed in advance if at all possible and students should only be absent from school for the minimum amount of time necessary for the appointment. It is always better to attend for some of the time, rather than missing the whole day.

Newbridge School Expects:

All students to:

- Arrive no later than 9.15 am, appropriately prepared for the day.
- Attend school on each day that school is open and for the whole day, until 2.00pm.
- Inform a member of staff of any problem or reason that affects their attendance at school.

All students parents/carers to:

- Ensure their child attend school regularly
- Ensure their child arrives on time, prepared and equipped for the day.
- Inform school on 01905 763580 by 9.00am on the day, if their child is going to be absent.
- Communicate with school about their child's progress and attend meetings such as Annual Reviews and reintegration meetings.

Newbridge School will:

- Provide students with appropriate education.
- Respond to concerns raised by both students and parents/carers in a prompt, fair and appropriate manner.
- Follow procedures in dealing with attendance issues.

Attendance Target:

- Newbridge School aims to achieve attendance of 85%.

The people responsible for attendance matters in Newbridge School are:

- Attendance Officer
- Assistant Head and Designated Safeguarding Lead
- Headteacher.

Some students and their parents/carers may need to be supported at times in meeting their attendance obligations and responsibilities. The school strives to provide a welcoming, caring environment, whereby each member of the school community feels wanted and secure. All school staff work with students and their families in aiming to ensure each student attends school regularly and punctually.

At Newbridge School we have established an effective system of incentives and rewards which acknowledges the efforts of students to improve their attendance and timekeeping. We also challenge and educate those students and parents who give low priority to attendance and punctuality. Newbridge School has an effective and efficient system of communication with students, parents and appropriate agencies to provide mutual information, advice and support.

PROCEDURES

The school has a responsibility to reduce the number of students whose attendance is below 90% over the school year. This level of absence adds up to missing almost 19 days out of the whole school year. Students who miss this much school are called 'persistent absentees' by the government, whatever the reason for their absence. Special procedures may be applied to students who are at risk of falling into this category.

Clarity about who does what and when is important as this avoids confusion. Monitoring attendance performance throughout the school will be monitored in a number of ways and the school applies the following procedures in deciding how to deal with individual absences:

- Registration at the start of each morning and afternoon session.
- Review of attendance in regular meetings with the Senior Leadership Team
- Individual students' attendance will be included in reports to parents.
- Termly attendance figures are reported to the Trust Board and Local Authority

Registration:

The register provides the daily record of attendance of all students. It contributes to student's reports, record of achievement and references. It is a legal document that may be required in a court of law as evidence, for example in prosecutions for non-attendance. Newbridge School uses SIMS electronic registration system. The main codes used are those laid down by the DfE. The full list of codes is available upon request.

The school day begins at 9.15am for students. The registration time in the morning is at 9.15am. Registration will take place during the morning tutor period. When a student arrives after the start of registration, he/she will be marked as late. The morning register will close at 11:00am and students arriving after this time will be coded as U which constitutes legally as an unauthorised absence.

Registration in the afternoon is taken at 12.45 pm at the end of Period 4. An afternoon register is also taken at 1.30pm for afternoon only students on a Behaviour Support programme and closes at 2pm.

Newbridge School reserves the right to send students home to change who are not appropriately dressed, in line with our dress code. In this instance the absence will be marked as an authorised absence but if students do not return promptly to school the registration mark will be changed to unauthorised.

Follow up on absent students:

Only the Headteacher or designated member of the Senior Leadership Team can authorise absence, on the basis of information provided by parents/carers. Where explanations are not felt to be acceptable, the absence will remain unauthorised and the parents/carers informed.

If students are absent without their parents/carers' knowledge, this is a cause for concern as they may be putting themselves at risk in a number of ways. Communication between home and school is vital in helping to protect them. For this reason we ask that in all cases of absence, parents/carers must contact school by 9.00am on the day to allow school staff to record the absence and if appropriate authorise it. Parents/carers should give an indication of the probable length of absence if likely to be longer than one day. If the explanation for absence is not accepted as justifiable, the absence will be marked as unauthorised and the parents/carers informed.

Where there has been no contact from parents/carers and the child remains absent without explanation, school staff will make every effort to contact parents/carers of the student, to obtain the reason for absence. In the first instance contact will be via phone and/or text; where parents/carers cannot be contacted this will be followed up by a home visit from a member of the Senior Leadership Team. For this reason parents/carers must inform school immediately if their contact details change.

If a student is missing from school for some days and parents/carers cannot be contacted, or no satisfactory contact has been received, then school will refer them to the Early Intervention Service (EIS) who will visit the home address and carry out the Worcestershire County Council Missing Students Procedure.

STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT IMPROVED ATTENDANCE

Incentives:

- All students completing a week with 100% attendance will receive reward points.
- Students with 85% attendance for the term will be invited to attend a rewards trip (*subject to satisfactory behaviour and academic achievement*).
- Prizes are presented to the student with the best attendance each term.

Support in school:

Newbridge School believes firmly in working in partnership with parents to resolve issues. Parents/carers and students must contact school if they are experiencing problems with attendance and school staff will make every effort to help resolve the matter.

Links to other policies:

In all cases where attendance is a problem, consideration will be given to whether any aspect of one of our other policies, such as Anti-bullying, Behaviour or Special Needs, should be implemented to help support improved attendance.

Reintegration:

We realise that returning to school following a period of absence can be very difficult for some students, whatever the reason for their absence. In these situations school staff will plan carefully with parents/carers and students, together with any relevant agencies, on how best to support the students return to school. In some cases, for a short period, it may be appropriate to start the reintegration gradually, building up to a full-time timetable. Newbridge School will make the decision as to whether a 'phased return' is appropriate. Other support will also be considered, from mentors through to appropriate rewards for improvement and achievement.

Punctuality:

Newbridge School operates a late register. When a student is late they will be registered and signed in on the late register. Students arriving persistently late will be required to attend a session after school one day a week. This session will provide students with the time to completed school work that has been missed as a result of them being persistently late.

PROCESS OF DEALING WITH POOR ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY

Tutors discuss attendance during registrations and through mentoring seek reasons for absence and lateness.

If matters do not improve, the school Attendance Officer will contact the parents/carers, so that they can take steps to deal with the absence/lateness and ensure that they carry out their legal responsibility to ensure their child's regular attendance.

Where there is cause for concern, a letter explaining the importance of attendance and warning parents/carers of the implications of poor attendance will be sent. This letter will encourage parents/carers to contact school to discuss any issues relating to attendance and punctuality.

Continuing concerns will lead to parents/carers being invited to attend a meeting consisting of the Attendance Officer and the students tutor or a member of Senior Leadership Team, to discuss any problems relating to attendance which are affecting the student's ability to benefit from the education offered. At the meeting an agreement will be made which sets out the improvement needed and how this is going to be achieved, with actions allocated to specific people and with time limits. A review date will be set and a further meeting held if appropriate.

Where parents/carers fail to attend the meeting, or when the agreement is not adhered to and/or attendance fails to improve, the school will refer the case to the Education Investigation Service (EIS). In these cases EIS (the legal enforcement arm of the Local Authority) will issue a Penalty Notice to the parents/carers, seeking a Parenting Order, moving straight to prosecution for failure to ensure the student attends school or seeking an Education Supervision Order.

REQUEST FOR LEAVE OF ABSENCE IN TERM TIME

Absence during term-time for holidays or other events interrupts teaching and learning for the students and disrupts the routine for others in the school. It can have a serious impact on progress and attainment.

On 1 September 2013, the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013 came into force. This changed the law about how and when schools may grant leave of absence during term-time. The new regulations state that headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term-time for holidays and other special occasions unless they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'.

Parents should note that there is no right to such leave; if granted, it is at the sole discretion of the headteacher.

Any request for leave must be made in advance; schools cannot grant such leave retrospectively. Any leave taken without prior agreement will be recorded as unauthorised absence. This will result in a referral to EIS and a subsequent issue of a penalty notice or prosecution under section 444 of the Education Act 1996.

The school will consider any request for leave on its individual merits, but leave will be granted only in truly exceptional circumstances.

Leave would not normally be granted where:

- A students' attendance is less than 95%.
- There are concerns about the students' progress or attainment.
- The leave is close to or clashes with any tests, exams or other events in school.

Exceptional circumstances:

Situations that might be considered exceptional could include major family events, such as the wedding of a close family member, or visits to close relatives who may be seriously ill.

Birthdays and shopping trips are not exceptional circumstances and neither is the lower cost of holidays during term-time.

If a parent wishes to request leave of absence, they must complete a 'Request for leave of absence during term time form' (this is available upon request from the school main office) well in advance of the proposed leave commencing. Parents will need to demonstrate that their circumstances and/or the nature of the leave requested are truly exceptional. If the reason for leave is not deemed by the Headteacher to be 'exceptional' then the application will be declined. Parents will be informed in writing of the outcome of their application for leave within 1 week of the application being received.

Persons Responsible:
Chair of Governors
Headteacher
Attendance Officer