



Grammar School Lane, Northallerton, North Yorkshire DL6 1DD. Phone: 01609 773340 Fax: 01609 770265
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Head of School: Mrs V Rahn

Dear Parents/Carers,

Attendance Matters

Research shows that good school attendance impacts on childrens' success in learning. Good attendance helps children to achieve good results, helps them to fulfil their potential and gives them a chance of a better future.

We are writing to you so that you have a clear understanding about the absence procedures and the school's responses to poor pupil attendance.

Unbroken attendance at school is important for learning. However, there will be times when absence is unavoidable and acceptable. This letter explains the approach we are following to manage attendance.

Types of Absence

Each absence is classed as authorised or unauthorised. Absences are coded as authorised where reasons are considered valid, and are coded as unauthorised where no explanation or unacceptable reasons are given. Unacceptable reasons include:

- shopping visits;
- care for family members ;
- days out to theme parks or to attend concerts/shows ;
- parents' work commitments or business trips ;
- holidays taken in term time (including long weekends taken on Fridays and/or Mondays),
- parental illness.

Any child with attendance below 90% is considered a persistent absentee, regardless of whether school has authorised or unauthorised the absences. This equates to 38 half days (sessions) or 19 days of absence across the academic year. When a child's attendance is close to 90%, schools are required by the Government to take swift action. These actions may include meetings in school, home visits, or instigation of legal procedures against parents of pupils who are persistently absent. Minor ailments, such as a headache or a slight cold, are not acceptable reasons for failing to attend school. Repeated absences may require the school to request that you obtain medical evidence from your Doctor's surgery as recommended in Government guidelines.

Illness and First Day Call

If your child is unable to attend school through illness you should inform us by telephone on the day of absence before 8.30am. We request this is done for every day of absence that your child is missing from school. Alternatively you can email us at absences@northallertonschool.org.uk or call in in person at the visitors' reception. If you do not supply us with this information we have a safeguarding duty to contact you, so that we may be sure of the child's whereabouts.

Where the child is absent through illness or medical appointments, this will normally be counted as authorised. Where we have concerns over excessive absence patterns through illness, we will need to discuss this with parents in order to gain a better understanding of the problems and to offer support.

Medical/Dental Appointments

It is generally better if these can be arranged outside school hours, but we know this is not always possible. Where children need to attend such appointments during the school day it is important that parents come first to the visitors' reception before collecting children. Please bring your child to the visitors' reception on returning from the appointment. Medical and dental appointments count as authorised absences.

Emergency Occasions

There are some occasions e.g. bereavement, family problems, etc. where you may feel it is inappropriate for children to attend school; we will be sympathetic to such needs. Please contact your child's tutor in the first instance if you feel further support is necessary.

Lateness

Please ensure that your child arrives at school so that they are present for registration at 8.45 am each day. Meeting and exchanging news with friends before school is important for the childrens' social development. Lateness causes problems with register marking and missed instructions. Where a genuine reason for lateness exists, please ensure that your child has a note in their planner and this will be an authorised absence

Leave of Absence

It is not our policy to authorise holidays in term time. The only exception to this is where parents serve in the armed forces (this does not extend to the emergency services i.e. Police, Fire, Ambulance etc). Where authorisation is not granted, we are under a duty to report subsequent term time holiday absence to the Local Education Welfare Service. Unauthorised leave may result in a fixed penalty fine. This will apply to any parents who book holidays in term time.

Approved Public Performance

Where children are invited to perform in a licensed show or concert (e.g. orchestra, pantomime) you are asked to consult with your child's head of year about how much time away from school is required. Where possible, such requests will be granted provided that the child's education is unlikely to suffer. The school will also be sympathetic towards leave to participate in a recognised city, county or national sporting event. Where parents wish to take their child(ren) out of school during term time for purposes other than holidays, they should complete a leave of absence form, which is available on our website.

What is the aim?

We are aiming to achieve an average attendance of 95% for this academic year, with outstanding attendance above 96% in the future. Anything below 94% is poor attendance and under 90% is classified as persistent absenteeism and provides serious concerns. We have reviewed our monitoring systems and will provide regular updates on pupils' attendance.

Our duty of care in responding to unauthorised and persistent absence – possible consequences

We have a duty of care, shared with the Local Authority, to challenge poor attendance. Where attendance levels are low and where there are invalid reasons (as judged by the Education Welfare Service, not the parent) for a pupil's frequent absence or where parents condone absence (e.g. by taking children out of school on unauthorised holidays) then parents render themselves liable to a fine of £60 per pupil per parent. This could mean a fine of £360 for two parents of three children. This would be doubled to £720 if the fine is unpaid within 21 days and could ultimately lead to a criminal conviction. Of course, no one wants this to happen and as a school we always aim to work with parents to support them in ensuring their child attends school regularly.

Final note

Attendance does matter! Regular attendance at school is essential to ensure uninterrupted progress which will enable your child to fulfil their potential. The attached leaflet provides further information regarding attendance at school. If you need any support from school regarding your child's attendance, please do let us know as we are more than happy to help.

Many Thanks

James Brown
Lead Practitioner
Areté Learning Trust