



ATTENDANCE POLICY

October 2017

Springwood High School under the West Norfolk Academies Trust is committed to providing a full and efficient education to all pupils and embraces the concept of equal opportunities for all. We have developed this Policy in order to give a consistent response to all students and families in our care.

We want to do our best for all our children and believe that regular attendance at school is vital for children as it promotes good learning, positive attitudes and maintains continuity in their education and in their friendships. Children should be at school, on time, every day the school is open unless the reason is unavoidable. Permitting absence from school without a good reason is an offence by a parent.

We will endeavour to provide an environment where all pupils feel valued and welcome.

For a child to reach their full educational achievement, a high level of school attendance is essential. We will consistently work towards a goal of 100% attendance for all children. Every opportunity will be used to convey to pupils and their parents or carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance.

School attendance is subject to various Education laws and this policy is written to reflect these laws and the guidance produced by the Department for Education.

This policy will contain within it the procedures that the school will use to meet its attendance targets.

Procedures

Any child who is absent from school at the morning or afternoon registration period must have their absence recorded as being authorised, unauthorised or as an approved educational activity [attendance out of school]. Only the Headteacher or a member of staff acting on their behalf can authorise absence. If there is no known reason for the absence at registration, then the absence must be recorded in the first instance as unauthorised.

Lateness

The register will be called promptly at 8.50am. The registers will remain open for 30 minutes. Any pupil arriving after 30 minutes will be marked as having an unauthorised absence unless there is an acceptable explanation such as delayed school transport. In cases for example, where the absence at registration was for attending an early morning medical appointment, the appropriate authorised absence code will be entered. Medical evidence may be requested to support the absence. Pupils arriving after the start of school but before the end of the registration period will be treated for statistical purposes, as present, but will be coded as late before registers close. Students who arrive after registration should report to the Admin Office where they must sign in and record the reason for lateness.

First Day of Absence

On the first day of an absence and any subsequent days, parents and carers should contact their child's school before the registration period closes (9.20am). You can do so by emailing office@springwoodhighschool.co.uk or by telephoning on 01553 773393 or the relevant Year Manager. If no contact has been made, the Year Managers will endeavour to contact parents or carers

as quickly as possible during the school day and will transfer information to the registers, alerting the Headteacher or other key staff to any wellbeing issues.

If no contact is received from parents by the end of the morning of absence, we will phone or text them with the automated messaging service called Truancy Call. We will continue to make daily contact until a response is received. We will also make general enquires during this time and try other contact numbers. If we have any concerns we may use staff or the Police to visit the home address.

Medical evidence will need to be provided to support absences for more than 10 sessions (5 days). This can be a Doctor's appointment slip, prescription or medication box, hospital admission/discharge letter.

Ten Days' Absence

Any pupil who is absent without an explanation for ten consecutive days will be notified to the Local Authority as a 'Child Missing Education', by submitting a referral to the Children's Services Children in Need Team. This is a legal requirement. The school will include details of the action they have taken.

Frequent Absence

It is the responsibility of all staff to be aware of and bring attention to, any emerging attendance concerns.

We monitor attendance periodically. When a pupil's attendance falls lower than 90%, or is causing concern, their parents will be contacted by the school, usually following a meeting with the student. We will look for patterns and reasons for absence, making parents aware of the number of absences and the importance of attendance etc. Additional support may be available from outside agencies. In other cases the school will seek advice from the school's Attendance Support and Enforcement Officer (ASEO), or require the parents and pupil to attend a Governor's Attendance Panel Meeting. Action may also include the use of the Fixed Penalty Notices and/or Fast Track system. Monitoring will continue and a family support process meeting could be considered.

A Welcome Back

It is important that on return from an absence, all pupils are made to feel welcome. This should include ensuring that the pupil received help to catch up on missed work and updated on any information which has been passed to other pupils.

Absence notes

Notes of telephone calls received and written notes from parents explaining absence should be kept for the remainder of the time which the pupil attends a particular school. If there are attendance concerns about the pupil, then further medical evidence may be required (eg doctor's note, prescription, medicine label). Headteachers retain the right to unauthorise absence without medical evidence.

Promoting attendance

Springwood High school work actively together to improve attendance and give consistent messages about the importance of good attendance. The school will use opportunities as they arise to remind parents and carers of their responsibility to ensure that their children receive education and will make clear the links between attendance and attainment.

Meetings are held on a weekly basis with students who fall below 90%. We listen to any students concerns and reasons for the absence and offer any additional support that may be required. A letter is then sent home the next day to parents/guardians explaining that we had the meeting and that the school requires contact in the future for any absences and also medical evidence to support the absence.

Attendance Awards

Springwood will reward pupils who have good or improving attendance, in particular through praising the individual child and, for example, by awarding certificates for 100% attendance on a termly basis.

Holidays in Term Time

Latest Government guidelines state that Headteachers have the discretion to grant leave but only in exceptional circumstances. Leave will not be granted for the purposes of a family holiday, which will not be recorded as authorised. We recognise that it is more expensive to take a holiday during school breaks and that is why many parents request term-time Leave of Absence for their child, however this will not be authorised absence.

Government guidelines also state that:

'Parents can be fined for taking their child on holiday during term time without consent from the school' Department for Education July 2013.

Requests for authorised absence should be made using a Leave of Absence form. This can be found towards the back of this policy.

In certain year groups, due to teacher and statutory assessments and controlled assignments, no holiday will be authorised during certain periods. No holiday will be authorised during Year 10 and Year 11.

The Registration System

The School will use a computerised system for maintaining attendance records.

The following national codes will be used to record attendance information.

CODE	DESCRIPTION	MEANING
/	Present (AM)	Present
\	Present (PM)	Present
B	Educated off site (NOT Dual registration)	Approved Education Activity
C	Other Authorised Circumstances (not covered by another appropriate	Authorised Absence

	code/description)	
D	Dual registration (i.e. pupil attending other establishment)	Approved Education Activity
E	Excluded (no alternative provision made)	Authorised absence
F	Extended family holiday (agreed)	Authorised absence
G	Family holiday (NOT agreed or days In excess of agreement)	Unauthorised Absence
H	Family holiday (agreed)	Authorised absence
I	Illness (NOT medical or dental etc. appointments)	Authorised Absence
J	Interview	Approved Education Activity
L	Late (before registers closed)	Present
M	Medical/Dental appointments	Authorised absence
N	No reason yet provided for absence	Unauthorised absence
O	Unauthorised absence (not covered by any other code/description)	Unauthorised absence
P	Approved sporting activity	Approved Education Activity
R	Religious observance	Authorised absence
S	Study leave	Authorised absence
T	Traveller absence	Authorised absence
U	Late (after registers closed)	Unauthorised absence
V	Educational visit or trip	Approved Education Activity
W	Work experience	Approved Education Activity
X	Untimetabled sessions for noncompulsory school-age pupils	Not counted in possible attendances
Y	Enforced closure	Not counted in possible attendances
Z	Pupil not yet on roll	Not counted in possible attendances
#	School closed to pupils	Not counted in possible attendances

Registers by law must be kept for at least 3 years. Computer registers must be printed out at least once a month and bound into annual volumes. Alternatively electronic back-ups or micro-fiche copies can be made. These should also be retained for at least three years.

Documents used to support this policy:

Request for leave of absence form

Fixed Penalty Notices – Information for Parents Leaflet produced by Norfolk County Council

Fast Track to Attendance Panels – Information for Parents Leaflet produced by Norfolk County Council

Appendices

The Law

The Education Act 1996 Part 1, Section 7 states:

The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient fulltime education suitable

[a] To his age, ability and aptitude and

[b] To any special needs he may have

either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

For educational purposes the term parent is used to include those with parental responsibility and/or those who have the day to day care of the child.

The legislation which appertains to children who are of compulsory school age and are registered at school is contained within this Act.

Part V1 Section 444 contains the details of when an offence is committed if a child fails to attend school.

Register and Admission Roll keeping

The legal requirements are found in:
The Education [Pupil Registration] (England) Regulations 2006

Categorisation of Absence

Any pupil who is on roll but not present in the school must be recorded within one of the following categories:

1. Unauthorised Absence
2. Authorised Absence
3. Approved Educational Activity

1. Unauthorised Absence

This is for pupils where no reason has been provided, or whose absence is deemed to be without valid reason. The school will not authorise absence for day trips, visiting relatives, shopping, family holidays, birthdays or looking after brother or sister etc.

2. Authorised Absence

This is for pupils who are away from school for a reason which is deemed to be valid under the Education Act 1996.

- Illness
- Emergency dental/medical appointment
- Day of religious observation
- Family bereavement
- Attending an interview, school, university
- Extended family visits abroad (only when approval has been given).

Except in cases of illness, absence permission must be sought well in advance of the intended date(s). In the case of absence owing to chronic/recurring illness, you will be asked to provide a medical certificate/ letter from GP or consultant. This is the responsibility of parents to request not the school and a fee may be charged by the Doctors surgery.

3. Approved Educational Activity

This covers types of supervised educational activity undertaken off site, but with the approval of the school.

Note: Pupils recorded in this category are deemed to be present for attendance returns purposes.

This would include:

- ☑ Work experience placements
- ☑ Field trips and educational visits
- ☑ Sporting activities
- ☑ Link courses or approved education off site
- ☑ Most types of dual registration

It is important to remember that the accepted level of attendance is above 95%, and that a 10 day holiday would lead to a maximum of only 94.8% attendance during the year (40 lessons would be missed). This percentage could fall lower still as a result of absence through illness.

Frequently Asked Questions

How do I report my child's absence?

You must contact us by 9.20am every day that you child is absent. You can do so by emailing office@springwoodhighschool.co.uk or telephoning 01553 773393 or your child's Year Manager and speaking to a member of staff or leaving a voice message.

Will the school contact me if my child is absent?

Year Managers will try to make first point of contact but if they cannot an automatic 'Truancy Call' system may be sent. This means that parents will be contacted by email or text when a student is absent if no explanation for the absence has been received. (It is important that parents/carers inform the school of any changes to contact details).

If we are concerned about aspects of your child's attendance or punctuality we will contact you to discuss the best way forward. Students falling below 90% are monitored weekly by our Attendance Officer. It may then be discussed with our Attendance Support & Enforcement Officer from Norfolk County Council Children's Services if the attendance continues to fall.

What can I do to encourage my child to attend school?

Make sure your child gets enough sleep and is up in plenty of time in the morning. Ensure he/she leaves home in full school uniform and properly equipped. Show you value his/her education by showing interest. Your child will bring home a school planner each evening. Look at this with your child and sign it weekly. Keep an eye on your child's attendance by logging onto Parents Gateway. Discuss it with them and encourage them to attend school even on days when they may feel under the weather. Contact your child's Year Manager or Form Tutor to discuss the support that can be offered if you have any concerns.

My child is trying to avoid school?

Contact your child's Year Manager to discuss your worries. Your child could be avoiding school for a number of reasons – difficulties with school work, bullying, friendship problems or family difficulties. It is important that we identify the reason for your child's reluctance to attend school and work together to tackle the problem. We have a number of staff on the pastoral team who would be able to help and advise.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE IN TERM TIME

Parents no longer have a legal right to take their child out of school for a family holiday and the Headteacher can only permit holiday leave during term time in exceptional circumstances. (Circumstances that might be considered exceptional enough to remove a child from school during term time would include: overseas service of a parent/carer or essential and unavoidable commitments that make taking a holiday during school holidays impossible.)

Before completing this application we would advise that you consider very seriously how the absences will affect your child's education. National statistics show 5 days absence in any academic year does have a negative effect on attainment. Schools are not obliged to provide work for students taking leave of absence; however some schools may choose to do this.

The Government advises that any refusal of leave of absence must be recorded as unauthorised by the school on the student's records. As you may be aware unauthorised absences may result in legal proceedings against you either through a Fixed Penalty Notice or the Magistrates' Court. If students are absent for 10 consecutive sessions (one week) of unauthorised absence where some or all of the absence may be attributed to an unauthorised holiday in term-time it may result in a Fixed Penalty Notice.

If a Fixed Penalty Notice is issued it is a fine of £60 per parent per child which must be paid in one payment in 21 days. If unpaid a further notice for £60 per parent per child is issued, both individual invoices would then have to be paid making a total payment of £120 in 28 days. You should be aware that failure to pay the total amount within the timescale will result in legal action being taken.

I wish to ask for leave of absence for (Pupil Name).....

in Form.....forschool days.

From (first day of absence).....to (last day of absence).....

Details of the exceptional circumstances which have led us to make this request for leave are detailed below:

.....
.....

I understand that if this holiday meets the criteria, it will count as Authorised Absence. Under no circumstances will absences for family holidays in term-time be authorised after they have happened.

If authorised I will ensure that she/he will complete all the work missed during this period and will attend any additional classes necessary to ensure that she/he has a clear understanding of the work.

Name.....

Signature..... Date.....

Please return this letter to Reception or the Admin Office for approval at least three weeks before the proposed leave. The form will not be authorised if it has not been signed by the parent/carer of the student.

Dear Parent/Guardian

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Thank you for your letter requesting leave of absence.

I am unable to agree leave of absence (see attached registration sheet) as your reasons do not meet the criteria of exceptional circumstances.

The Government advises that any refusal of leave of absence must be recorded as unauthorised by the school on the student's records. As you may be aware unauthorised absences may result in legal proceedings against you either through a Fixed Penalty Notice or the Magistrates' Court. If students are absent for 10 consecutive sessions (5 days) of unauthorised absence where some or all of the absence may be attributed to an unauthorised holiday in term-time it may result in a Fixed Penalty Notice.

If a Fixed Penalty Notice is issued it is a fine of £60 per parent per child which must be paid in one payment in 21 days. If unpaid a further notice for £60 per parent per child is issued, both individual invoices would then have to be paid making a total payment of £120 in 28 days. You should be aware that failure to pay the total amount within the timescale will result in legal action being taken.

When a student is absent it clearly affects their achievement and attendance record which goes to potential future employers.

If your plans change and you decide not to take the leave, please do let me know so I can amend the registration certificate.

Regards

Mrs Starling
Attendance Officer

NORFOLK COUNTY COUNCIL

Fixed Penalty Notices

Information for Parents

Regular and punctual attendance at school is a legal requirement under Section 7 of the Education Act 1996.

Norfolk County Council is committed to ensuring Norfolk pupils achieve full school attendance.

You have been issued with a Fixed Penalty Notice in relation to your child's unauthorised absence from school.

This guide is produced to answer any questions you may have.

The Legal Context

Under Section 444 of the Education Act, an offence occurs if a parent/carer fails to secure their child's regular attendance at the school where they are a registered pupil, and the absence is not authorised by the school. Only headteachers can authorise absence and the only legal reasons for absence are:

1. that the absences are with leave (i.e. that they have been agreed by the headteacher)
2. that the absences are because of sickness or unavoidable cause. Parents may be asked to provide evidence to support absences due to ill-health, this can be through a copy of an appointment card or prescription or information from a medical practitioner
3. that the absences fall on days of religious observance for the religion to which parents belong
4. that the child is entitled to free transport to school and the Local Authority have failed to provide this.

If absences do not fall into any of these four categories or the school have not been informed of reasons for absence, absences will be marked as unauthorised.

Section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 introduced powers for issuing Fixed Penalty Notices for unauthorised absence from school.

The Education (Penalty Notices)(England) Regulations came into force on 27th February 2004. This was updated with amendments in 2007, 2012 and 2013.

In Norfolk, Penalty Notices are issued in accordance with the Norfolk Local Protocol (May 2014). Your child's school will have provided you with information regarding the criteria in which they will refer cases of unauthorised absence to the Local Authority for issuing of a Fixed Penalty. The criteria are:

- 10 consecutive sessions (5 days) of unauthorised absence
- 15% unauthorised absence within a six week period.

Failure to pay a Fixed Penalty Notice reverts back to a Section 444 1 Education Act 1996 offence and you will face prosecution in the Magistrates Court.

Frequently asked questions

1. Can I dispute the Fixed Penalty Notice?

Only a headteacher can authorise absence from school. If there are other exceptional and compelling circumstances of which the school were not aware of, you can make a representation to the headteacher. If the school maintain the absence was unauthorised, the Penalty Notice will stand. There is no right to appeal against a Fixed Penalty Notice, but you may choose not to pay and make your representations in the Magistrate's Court. You should be aware that should the court find you guilty of the offence of irregular school attendance, they can impose a higher punishment upon conviction. The court may also charge you with court costs.

2. I do not live with the child or I am a step-parent, can I still be fined?

Yes, Section 576 Education Act 1996 defines 'parent' as:

- Any natural parent, whether married or not
- Any parent who, although not a natural parent, has parental responsibility as defined in the Children Act (1989) for a child or young person
- Any person who, although not a natural parent, has care of a child or young person.

3. Why do some schools authorise absence and another does not?

The headteacher is the only person who can authorise absence. Headteachers are only able to authorise absence requests for exceptional reasons and each circumstance will be individual and likely to receive a different response.

4. My child has never had unauthorised absence before?

The notice has been issued based on the referral criteria; which meets the threshold for irregular attendance at school. School attendance is crucial to children and any absence will have an impact upon your child's education. Your child's headteacher will have based their decision on whether the absence request was exceptional rather than based on your child's attendance level.

5. I cannot afford to pay the fine - can I pay in instalments?

The Local Authority has issued the Fixed Penalty Notice in accordance within the timeframe as laid out in law. The Local Authority is unable to assist with instalment payments. If you cannot afford to pay the only place where this can be resolved is in the magistrate's court following non-payment. The magistrate's court can make collection orders (paying by instalments) and will take your financial circumstances into account.

7. Can the Local Authority withdraw the Penalty Notice?

The only grounds in which a Penalty Notice can be withdrawn are:

- It ought not to have been issued i.e. where it has been issued outside of the terms of the Local Protocol or where no offence has been committed.
- It has been issued to the wrong person
- It contains material errors
- The Fixed Penalty Notice remains unpaid and the Local Authority opt not to proceed with a prosecution under Education Act 1996 Section 444 (1).

If your question has not been answered here, please contact:

**Norfolk County Council Customer Services on:
0344 800 8020 or via Norfolk County Council website**

Details on how to pay your Fixed Penalty Notice are listed on your invoice.

NORFOLK COUNTY COUNCIL

Fast Track to Attendance Panels

Information for families

Helping to improve attendance, achievement, and enjoyment at school

We are committed to ensuring that all children and young people receive a good education and we know that full school attendance is vital to ensure that they are able to achieve their full potential. This is underpinned by our vision for all children and young people of Norfolk:

‘We believe that all children and young people have the right to be healthy, happy, and safe; to be loved, valued and respected; and have high aspirations for their future’.

What does the law say?

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 places a duty on all parents to ensure that their children receive an efficient, full-time education. Parents who are seen to fail in their duty can be brought before the Magistrates Court.

In Education law, a parent is defined as an individual:

- (a) who is not a parent of his/hers but who has parental responsibility for him/her or
- (b) who has care of him/her

This can include parents therefore with whom the child is not normally resident and/or carers or wider family members who share day to day care of the child.

Types of Absence

Absence can be **authorised** or **unauthorised**. Absence can be authorised by the school if one of the following four circumstances apply:

1. Sickness or unavoidable cause (an unavoidable cause relating to the child, not the parent)
2. Leave of absence (granted by the Headteacher)
3. Days of religious observance (for the religion followed by the parents)
4. The child is entitled to Local Education Authority provided transport to school and this is not being provided
- 5.

For long or frequent periods of sickness absence, it is likely that your child's school will require you to provide medical evidence to authorise the absence.

A school may also agree to authorise an absence in exceptional circumstances. This will be the decision of the Head Teacher or Principal.

An **unauthorised absence** is any absence for which the school has not given permission or where the parent/carers has been unable to provide a reason for the absence which is acceptable to the school. This includes un-agreed holidays during term time.

What is the purpose of the Fast Track to Attendance Panel Meeting?

The purpose of the Fast Track to Attendance Panel meeting is for you and your child to meet with teachers, school governors and Attendance Improvement Officers to identify the reasons for absence and to work together to improve attendance.

What will happen at the Fast Track to Attendance Panel Meeting?

- The reasons for absence will be identified and different strategies to improve attendance will be considered.
- A supportive action plan will be agreed
- An attendance target will be set
-

Whilst the intention of the Fast Track to Attendance Panel meeting is that attendance will improve, consideration will be made to legal action if attendance targets are not met. This could include prosecution in the magistrates' court, education supervision orders or parenting orders.

What happens next?

A Review Fast Track to Attendance Panel meeting will be arranged and at this meeting the action plan and attendance will be reviewed. A new action plan will be agreed.

If the attendance target is met, the Review Panel can recommend that no further action is required. However, the school will continue to monitor the attendance of your child and will notify the Local Education Authority if attendance deteriorates. This could still result in legal action being taken.

If the attendance target is not met, the Review Panel will recommend to the Local Education Authority that legal action is taken as specified above: i.e. prosecution in the magistrate's court, an Education Supervision Order or Parenting Order.

If you are having difficulties with your child's attendance, please speak to their school.

If you have any queries regarding this leaflet please contact your child's school in the first instance