



Springwood  
High School

# **ATTENDANCE POLICY**

**Approved by: Full Governing Body**

**Approval Date: October 2020**

**Review Date: October 2021**

## Contents

Aims	1
Roles and Responsibilities	1-2
Procedures	2-4
Promoting Attendance	4-5
Leave of absence/ Holidays in Term time	5-6
National attendance codes	6-9
Support documents	9
The Law	9-10
Categorisation of absence	10-11
The Law – Frequently asked questions	11-12
Norfolk County Council Fixed Penalty Information	13
Norfolk County Council Fixed Penalty -Frequently asked questions	13-14
Norfolk County Council Fast Track to Attendance Panel information	15-16
Leave of absence request form	17
Example Leave of absence response letter	18
Addendum to the policy	19-20

## 1. Aims

- 1.1** 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. It enables children to maximise the educational opportunities available to them and encourages them to be responsible, organised and motivated adults. 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.
  - We will work with families and identify the reasons for issues within attendance and try to help resolve any difficulties.
  - Staff will form positive relationships with pupils and parents. All staff will contribute to a whole school approach to attendance which reinforces good school attendance, with good teaching and learning experiences that encourage all pupils to attend and achieve.
  - 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. Our Attendance Policy should not be viewed in isolation; it is a strand that runs through all aspects of school improvement, supported by our policies on safeguarding, prevention of bullying, behaviour and inclusive learning.

## 2. Roles and Responsibilities

At Springwood High School, we believe that improved school attendance is a responsibility shared by governors, school staff, parents, pupils and the wider school community. At Springwood High School we have an attendance officer who will work to further develop relationships with families to bring about improved attendance. This may involve seeking multi-agency support and holding meetings with parents and engaging with an Individual Action Plan for the child.

### **Staff at Springwood High School will:**

- Actively promote the importance and value of good attendance to pupils and their parents
- Form positive relationships with pupils and parents
- Contribute to a whole school approach which reinforces good school attendance; with good teaching and learning experiences that encourage all pupils to attend and to achieve
- Comply with the Regulations and other relevant legislation
- Be aware of the Attendance Policy and be adequately trained to address attendance issues
- Implement systems to report, record and monitor the attendance of all pupils, including those who are educated off-site.
- Ensure that registers are recorded accurately and in a timely manner.
- Contribute to the evaluation of school strategies and interventions

- Help implement strategies for promoting good whole school attendance and help to tackle unsatisfactory attendance
- Ensure first day calling procedures are adhered to, if a child is absent from school without contact from parents
- Work with other agencies to improve attendance and support pupils and their families

**Pupils will:**

- Be aware of the school's attendance policy and when and what they are required to attend. This will be communicated to them through the school staff, parents, and the school timetable
- Speak to their form tutor or another member of staff if they are experiencing difficulties at school or at home which may impact on their attendance
- Attend all lessons ready to learn, with the appropriate learning tools requested and on time for the class
- Bring a note of explanation from their parents or guardians to explain an absence that has happened or is foreseen
- Follow the correct set school procedure if they arrive late. This will help the school to monitor attendance and keep accurate records for the child's individual attendance. This is also vital for health and safety in the event of a school evacuation

**Parents-**

**Springwood High School requests that parents will:**

- Take a positive interest in their child's work and educational progress
- Ensure their child has regular attendance at school
- Instil the value of education and regular school attendance within the home environment
- Contact the school if their child is absent to let them know the reason why and the expected date of return, following this with a note wherever possible
- Avoid unnecessary absences; for example, by making medical and dental appointments for outside of school hours
- Ask the school for help if their child is experiencing difficulties with any aspect of their school work or home and family life
- Inform the school of any change in circumstances that may impact on their child's attendance
- Support the school by becoming involved in their child's education, forming a positive relationship with school and acknowledging the importance of children receiving the same messages from both school and home
- Maintain effective routines at home to support good attendance
- Attend all meetings requested to discuss attendance issues

### 3. Procedures

**3.1** 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.

**3.2 Punctuality**

- At Springwood High School all pupils are expected to arrive on time for every day of the school year. The school day begins at 8.50am with a warning bell at 8:45am. We advise all parents to ensure their child is on site prior to this. The register will be called promptly at 8.50am. All pupils arriving after this time are required to report to the

Attendance office within the Learning Resource Centre (LRC) and will be expected to sign the late book and provide a reason for their absence. If their arrival is before 9.50am it will be recorded as late - L code (Late before the close of register).

- The school register will officially close at 9.50am. All pupils arriving on or after this time will be marked as having an unauthorised absence for the morning session - U code (Late after the close of register). This is categorised as an unauthorised absence for the session. Parents will be contacted to discuss any patterns of late arrival. Repeated arrival after the close of registration will result in appropriate interventions being instigated and may also result in a penalty notice being issued or prosecution.
- 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 Attendance Office where they must sign in and record the reason for lateness.
- Please note: L or U codes will be used if a pupil arrives after the close of the afternoon register for the PM session.

### **3.3 Attendance Protocols: First Day of Absence**

Expected absence procedure for parents:

- A parent has a legal responsibility to ensure that their child attends school regularly. If a child is unavoidably absent from school parents are expected to contact school by telephone call on the first day of absence and each subsequent day, identifying the reason for absence and the expected date of return. You can do so by emailing [office@springwoodhighschool.co.uk](mailto:office@springwoodhighschool.co.uk) or by telephoning on 01553 773393 (EXT 159) or the relevant Year Manager. If no contact is received, the Attendance protocols will be instigated. The Attendance Officer and 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.
- By the end of the morning of absence, school will phone, email or text parents with the automated messaging service using SIMS In Touch. We will continue to make daily contact until a response is received. We will also make general enquires during this time and try other emergency 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.

### **3.4 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.

### **3.5 Persistent Absence**

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

- A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' (PA) when their attendance drops to 90% and below for any reason. Over a full academic year this would be 38 sessions (19 days). Absence at this level is causing considerable damage to a child's educational prospects. The attendance of all pupils at our school is monitored regularly to identify children who are PA, or are on track to becoming PA.
- 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. Where emerging concerns are identified we will instigate appropriate and timely interventions. 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 an 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.
- If parents fail to engage with support and their child continues to have unsatisfactory attendance/ punctuality, a request may be made to the Local Authority to pursue legal proceedings either through a penalty notice or full prosecution in the Magistrates' Court.
- Parents found guilty in a Magistrates' Court of failing to secure their child's regular attendance at school under the provisions of the Education Act 1996, will receive a criminal record and a maximum penalty of a £1000 fine under a Section 444 (1) offence or a £2500 fine or up to a 3 month prison sentence, under a Section 444 (1a) offence.

### **3.6 A Welcome Back**

- It is important that on return from an absence, all pupils are made to feel welcome. Staff at Springwood High School will do this by ensuring that the pupil receives help to catch up on missed work and they be updated on any information which has been passed to other pupils.

### **3.7 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 (e.g. doctor's note, prescription, medicine label). Headteacher's retain the right to unauthorise absence without medical evidence.

## **4. 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. If we have concerns

over the amount of absence a child has had, we will hold a support meeting with the child, with or without their parents and the pastoral team, in order to try and prevent attendance falling further.

- Meetings are held on a regular basis with regard to punctuality in order to ascertain any issues there may be with arriving to school on time.
- Letters are sent home termly to inform parents of their child's current attendance or if there is a concern with their attendance falling below 95%.

#### **4.1 Support Systems**

School recognises that poor attendance can be an indication of difficulties in a family's life. This may be related to problems at home and or in school. Parents are encouraged to inform school of any difficulties or changes in circumstances that may affect their child's attendance and or behaviour in school, for example, bereavement, divorce/separation, incidents of domestic abuse. This will help the school identify any additional support that may be required.

We also recognise that some pupils are more likely to require additional support to attain good attendance.

The school will implement a range of strategies to support improved attendance. Strategies used may include:

- Discussion with parents and pupils
- Parent Support advisor
- Pupil Voice Activities
- Friendship groups
- 1 to 1 mentoring
- Reward systems
- Additional learning support
- Behaviour support
- Reintegration support packages
- Attendance panels
- Parenting contracts
- Engaging the support of other agencies

Support offered to families will be child centred and planned in discussion and agreement with both parents and pupils. Where parents fail or refuse to engage with the support offered and further unauthorised absence occurs, the Head teacher will consider the use of legal sanctions following consultation with the Local Authority.

#### **4.2 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.
- Each week we hold awards where we praise individuals, tutor groups and year groups for their good attendance. These awards are celebrated within the weekly assemblies.

## **5. Leave of absences**

- 5.1** Latest Government guidelines state that Headteacher's 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 be recorded as unauthorised. 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. Any parents known to have removed their child from school for the sole purpose of a holiday may be referred to the Local Authority and be issued with a penalty notice fine or referred to the Local Authority to consider prosecution.

## 5.2 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. A penalty notice request or a referral for prosecution may be submitted to the Local Authority should:-
  - The parent fail to submit a leave of absence request in advance of taking the leave
  - An application for a leave of absence is not agreed by the Head teacher but is still taken.
  - A longer period of time is taken in excess of the agreed number of days.
- Requests for authorised absence should be made using a Leave of Absence form at least a month before the planned leave. This can be found towards the back of this policy. If a written request for leave of absence is not completed and the leave is taken without a request being submitted, the leave will not be considered by the Head teacher and it will be marked as unauthorised. Springwood High School will treat each application individually and discuss with you the circumstances of the application before a decision is made. Retrospective requests will not be considered and therefore will result in the absence being categorised as unauthorised. In such cases the school may make a referral to the Local Authority to request that a penalty notice fine is issued or consider prosecution.
- 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.
- When absence is granted by the Head teacher, the parents will need to agree a date of return. If a pupil fails to return on the expected date and contact is not received from, or made with the parents, school will seek advice from the Local Authority. This could result in possible children missing from education procedures being instigated.

## 6. The Registration System- the National attendance codes

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

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

Code	Description	Meaning
/	<b>Present (AM)</b>	Present
\	<b>Present (PM)</b>	Present
B	<b>Educated off site (NOT Dual registration)</b> <i>This code should be used when pupils are present at an off-site educational activity that has been approved by the school. Ultimately schools are responsible for the safeguarding and welfare of pupils educated off-site. Therefore by using code B, schools are certifying that the education is supervised and measures have been taken to safeguard pupils. This code should not be used for any unsupervised educational activity or where a pupil is at home doing school work. Schools should ensure that they have in place arrangements whereby the provider of the alternative activity notifies the school of any absences by individual pupils. The school should record the pupil's absence using the relevant absence code.</i>	Approved Education Activity
C	<b>Other Authorised circumstances</b> (not covered by another appropriate code / description)	Authorised Absence



	<i>Only exceptional circumstances warrant an authorised leave of absence. Schools should consider each application individually taking into account the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind the request.</i>	
D	<b>Dual registration</b> (i.e. pupil attending other establishment) <i>This code is not counted as a possible attendance in the school Census. The law allows for dual registration of pupils at more than one school. This code is used to indicate that the pupil was not expected to attend the session in question because they were scheduled to attend the other school at which they are registered. The main examples of dual registration are pupils who are attending a pupil referral unit, a hospital school or a special school on a temporary basis. It can also be used when the pupil is known to be registered at another school during the session in question. Each school should only record the pupil's attendance and absence for those sessions that the pupil is scheduled to attend their school. Schools should ensure that they have in place arrangements whereby all unexplained and unexpected absence is followed up in a timely manner.</i>	Approved Education Activity
E	<b>Excluded</b> (no alternative provision made) <i>If no alternative provision is made for a pupil to continue their education whilst they are excluded but still on the admission register, they should be marked absent in the attendance register using Code E. Alternative provision must be arranged for each excluded pupil from the sixth consecutive day of any fixed period or permanent exclusion. Where alternative provision is made they should be marked using the appropriate attendance code.</i>	Authorised absence
F	<b>Extended family holiday</b> (agreed)	Authorised absence
G	<b>Family holiday</b> (NOT agreed or days in excess of agreement) <i>If a school does not authorise a leave of absence for the purpose of a holiday but the parents still take the child out of school, or the child is kept away for longer than was agreed, the absence is unauthorised. The regulations do not allow schools to give retrospective approval. If the parents did not apply for leave of absence in advance, the absence must be recorded as unauthorised.</i>	Unauthorised Absence
H	<b>Family holiday</b> (agreed) <i>Head teachers should not grant leave of absence unless there are exceptional circumstances. The application must be made in advance and the head teacher must be satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances based on the individual facts and circumstances of the case which warrant the leave. Where a leave of absence is granted, the head teacher will determine the number of days a pupil can be away from school. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the head teacher's discretion.</i>	Authorised absence
I	<b>Illness</b> (NOT medical or dental etc. appointments) <i>Schools should advise parents to notify them on the first day the child is unable to attend due to illness. Schools should authorise absences due to illness unless they have genuine cause for concern about the veracity of an illness. If the authenticity of illness is in doubt, schools can request parents to provide medical evidence to support illness. Schools can record the absence as unauthorised if not satisfied of the authenticity of the illness but should advise parents of their intention.. Medical evidence can take the form of prescriptions, appointment cards, etc. rather than doctors' notes.</i>	Authorised Absence
J	<b>Interview</b> <i>At an interview with prospective employers, or another educational establishment. This code should be used to record time spent in interviews with prospective employers or another educational establishment. Schools should be satisfied that the interview is linked to employment prospects, further education or transfer to another educational establishment.</i>	Approved Education Activity

L	<p><b>Late</b> (before registers closed)  <i>Late arrival before the register has closed. Schools should have a policy on how long registers should be kept open; this should be for a reasonable length of time but not that registers are to be kept open for the whole session. A pupil arriving after the register has closed should be marked absent with code U, or with another absence code if that is more appropriate.</i></p>	Present
M	<p><b>Medical/Dental appointments</b>  <i>Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is counted as an authorised absence. Schools should, however, encourage parents to make appointments out of school hours. Where this is not possible, the pupil should only be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary for the appointment.</i></p>	Authorised absence
N	<p><b>No reason yet provided for absence</b>  <i>Schools should follow up all unexplained and unexpected absences in a timely manner. Every effort should be made to establish the reason for a pupil's absence. When the reason for the pupil's absence has been established the register should be amended. This code should not be left on a pupil's attendance record indefinitely; if no reason for absence is provided after a reasonable amount of time it should be replaced with code O (absent from school without authorisation).</i></p>	Unauthorised absence
O	<p><b>Unauthorised absence</b> (not covered by any other code/description)  <i>If the school is not satisfied with the reason given for absence they should record it as unauthorised.</i></p>	Unauthorised absence
P	<p><b>Approved sporting activity</b>  <i>Participating in a supervised sporting activity. This code should be used to record the sessions when a pupil is taking part in a sporting activity that has been approved by the school and supervised by someone authorised by the school.</i></p>	Approved Education Activity
R	<p><b>Religious observance</b>  <i>Schools must treat absence as authorised when it is due to religious observance. The day must be exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parents belong. Where necessary, schools should seek advice from the parents' religious body about whether it has set the day apart for religious observance.</i></p>	Authorised absence
S	<p><b>Study leave</b>  <i>Schools must record study leave as authorised absence. Study leave should be used sparingly and only granted to Year 11 pupils during public examinations. Provision should still be made available for those pupils who want to continue to come into school to revise.</i></p>	Authorised absence
T	<p><b>Traveller absence</b>  <i>This code should be used when Traveller families are known to be travelling for occupational purposes and have agreed this with the school but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision. It should not be used for any other types of absence by these groups.  To help ensure continuity of education for Traveller children it is expected that the child should attend school elsewhere when their family is travelling and be dual registered at that school and the main school. Children from these groups whose families do not travel are expected to register at a school and attend as normal. They are subject to the same rules as other children in terms of the requirement to attend school regularly once registered at a school.</i></p>	Authorised absence
U	<p><b>Late (after registers closed)</b></p>	Unauthorised absence

	<i>Arrived in school after registration closed. Schools should actively discourage late arrival, be alert to patterns of late arrival and seek an explanation from the parent.</i>	
V	<b>Educational visit or trip</b> <i>This code should be used for attendance at an organised trip or visit, including residential trips organised by the school, or attendance at a supervised trip of a strictly educational nature arranged by an organisation approved by the school.</i>	Approved Education Activity
W	<b>Work experience</b> <i>Work experience is for pupils in the final two years of compulsory education. Schools should ensure that they have in place arrangements whereby the work experience placement provider notifies the school of any absences by individual pupils. Any absence should be recorded using the relevant code.</i>	Approved Education Activity
X	<b>Not required to be in school</b> <i>This code is used to record sessions that non-compulsory school age children are not expected to attend.</i>	Not counted in possible attendances
Y	<b>Enforced closure</b> <i>This code can be used where a pupil is unable to attend because:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The school site, or part of it, is closed due to an unavoidable cause; or</i></li> <li>• <i>The transport provided by the school or a local authority is not available and where the pupil's home is not within walking distance; or</i></li> <li>• <i>A local or national emergency has resulted in widespread disruption to travel which has prevented the pupil from attending school.</i></li> </ul> <i>This code can also be used where a pupil is unable to attend because:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The pupil is in custody; detained for a period of less than four months. If the school has evidence from the place of custody that the pupil is attending educational activities then they can record those sessions as code B (present at approved educational activity).</i></li> </ul> <i>This code is collected in the School Census for statistical purposes.</i>	Not counted in possible attendances
Z	<b>Pupil not yet on roll</b> <i>This code is available to enable schools to set up registers in advance of pupils joining the school to ease administration burdens. Schools must put pupils on the admission register from the first day that the school has agreed, or been notified, that the pupil will attend the school.</i>	Not counted in possible attendances
#	<b>School closed to pupils</b> <i>This code should be used for whole or partial school closures that are known or planned in advance such as: between terms; half terms; occasional days (for example, bank holidays); weekends (where it is required by the management information system); up to five non-educational days to be used for curriculum planning/training; and use of schools as polling stations.</i>	Not counted in possible attendances

**6.3** 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.

## 7. 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

## 8. The Law

**8.1** The Education Act 1996 Part 1, Section 7 states: The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause them to receive efficient fulltime education suitable

- [a] To their age, ability and aptitude and
- [b] To any special needs they 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.

### **8.2 Register and Admission Roll keeping**

- The legal requirements are found in: The Education [Pupil Registration] (England) Regulations 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006, as amended by 2016 regulations, require schools to take an attendance register twice a day, once at the start of the morning session and then again during the afternoon session. The register must record whether the pupil was:
  - Present;
  - Absent;
  - Present at approved educational activity; or
  - Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

## 9. Categorisation of Absence

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

- Unauthorised Absence
- Authorised Absence
- Approved Educational Activity

### **9.1 Unauthorised Absence**

- This is for pupils where no reason has been provided, or whose absence is deemed to be without valid reason. That decision is at the discretion of the Headteacher. The school will not authorise absence for day trips, visiting relatives, shopping, family holidays, birthdays or looking after brother or sister, closure of a sibling's school for INSET (or other) purposes, an unwillingness to attend school, or inability to attend owing to inadequate personal/ family organisation etc.

### **9.2 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).

**9.3** 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. Schools may also ask for parents/ guardians to complete a joint medical protocol form giving consent for school to contact the child's GP to see how the child's needs can be supported within school.

#### **9.4 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

#### **9.5 Pupil Absence for the purposes of Religious Observance**

Springwood High School acknowledges the multi-faith nature of British society and recognises that, on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside school holiday periods or weekends and is recognised as such by a relevant religious authority. Where this occurs, the school will consider either authorising the pupil absence or making special leave for religious observance. Parents are requested to give advance notice to the school.

**9.6** 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.

**9.7** Springwoods High School will follow Norfolk County Council's Children Missing Education procedures when a pupil's whereabouts is unknown and the school will carry out joint enquiries with Norfolk County Council to establish the whereabouts of the child.

## **10. Frequently Asked Questions**

### ***How do I report my child's absence?***

You must contact us by 9.20am every day that your child is absent. You can do so by emailing [office@springwoodhighschool.co.uk](mailto: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 *SIMS In Touch* message 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.

# 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**

##### ***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.

***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.

***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.

***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.

***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.

***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/carer 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**