



ATTENDANCE POLICY

Nugent House School

Updated: October 2019

Review: September 2020

AIMS - our policy aims to:

- Emphasise the importance to all pupils of how good attendance is an essential prerequisite for making full use of all educational opportunities and to maximising individual achievement
- Make explicit to all relevant parties (teachers, parents/carers and pupils) Nugent House School expectations for attendance
- Promote a consistent approach across Nugent House School towards all matters relating to attendance
- Clarify the roles and responsibilities of all parties with respect to attendance
- Communicate to all relevant parties the legal position with respect to attendance and the categories of absence which are deemed 'authorised'
- Stress the need for home and school to work in close partnership to achieve high attendance.

Regular attendance at school is vital. Put simply, *absence* means *missed learning*; without it the learning process becomes fragmented and unsatisfactory. It is a legal requirement that pupils of compulsory school age receive full-time education and this, with the exception of those educated at home or elsewhere, means regular attendance at school. Poor attendance leads to pupils missing important lessons and therefore not fulfilling their true potential. It also places children at risk and may result in their being drawn into patterns of anti-social or criminal behaviour.

What is an acceptable attendance rate?

Attendance is a national priority. All pupils should aim for a minimum of 95%.

Authorised Absences

The school cannot legally authorise **any** leave of absence unless there are **exceptional circumstances**. The Department for Education (DFE) has issued guidelines to all schools detailing valid reasons for **authorised** or **justified** absences:

- a child is ill or receiving medical attention;
- days of religious observance, notified in advance;
- absence due to family circumstances (e.g. bereavement, serious illness).

There are other absences, such as **approved sporting activities** that can be authorised and there will be events affecting families, some unforeseen, which will necessitate absence from school; professional discretion will need to be used in these cases as to whether the absence can be authorised.

We expect absences to be kept to a minimum. If a pupil needs to be absent from school for a particular reason, then the parent/carer can request a leave of absence in advance. A note will suffice. The Head Teacher will then make a decision whether or not that leave of absence can be granted and how it will be coded.

Routine medical and dental appointments should be arranged out of school hours wherever possible.

Unauthorised Absences

These are absences where:

- No letter or acceptable explanation is provided by parent(s)/carers;
- The reason for the absence does not fall into one of the categories of **authorised** absence above.

DFE guidelines state that the following activities would be classified as **unauthorised**:

- Minding the house
- Caring for relatives
- Awaiting repair people
- Shopping
- A birthday or family celebration

There are clearly some grey areas. The DFE guidelines look at the area of **Special Occasions** and make clear that only **truly exceptional** occasions should be classified as authorised; for example, absence resulting from a pupil attending the graduation of an older brother or sister could be counted as authorised; a birthday treat to a theme park would **not**.

Holidays

Holidays taken in term time disrupt learning and the lost time is detrimental to the educational progress of the pupil. In common with the other schools in the country, we ask parents/carers who feel it is absolutely unavoidable that they take their annual holiday (or any other proposed special occasions) during term time to notify us in writing, **at least four weeks in advance of the proposed date**, explaining the circumstances.

The DFE guidelines make it plain that, in the final analysis, it is the **school** that judges whether an absence is authorised or not. Amendments to the 2006 regulations remove references to family holidays and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of 10 school days. These amendments make it clear that **Head Teachers** should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted. **A note from home therefore does NOT automatically make an absence valid, justified or authorised**.

The school will **not** authorise holidays retrospectively.

Home/School Partnership

Securing a high level of attendance requires the school and home to work closely together. To this end, we ask parents/carers to:

- To ensure their child arrives **on time** for school sessions; morning registration begins at 08.50 and afternoon registration is at 13.00
- If their student is ill, the parent/care must notify the school **on the first day** with an estimation of the likely length of absence
- We also ask parents/carers to confirm the date they have returned their child to school
- We encourage keeping in touch at an early stage about any concerns they have about their child's attitude towards school.

In return the School will:

- Contact home on day 1 of absence if no message has been received from home
- Contact home over any unexplained absences
- Follow up promptly any concerns parents/carers pass on to us that may be affecting their child's attitude to, or feelings of wellbeing in school
- Involve the Form Tutor and Learning Mentor Teams to help pupils re-integrate into school after illness or other individual circumstances
- Regularly and consistently remind students of the importance of good attendance and punctuality
- Reward excellent or improving attendance and action any concerns promptly.

Rewards for Good Attendance

To promote good attendance and to emphasise its importance the school offers the following rewards:

- Termly, pupils with 100% attendance, punctuality and correct uniform to receive a group reward and a letter of congratulation. This achievement is also recognised in school assemblies;
- Pupils with over 95% attendance and those who have reached their targets will receive a letter of congratulations and bonus in the points system.

Attendances and absences are included in termly reports, which are also sent home.

Roles and Responsibilities

High attendance levels are achieved as a result of staff working closely together and knowing where their responsibilities lie.

External Agencies

As a school we have a responsibility to inform SEN Case Officers in local authorities, Education Welfare Officers and where appropriate Social Workers if a pupil's attendance falls below 90%. Attendance Meetings will be called in school in order for targets for improvement to be set. These meetings are also opportunities for the school to explore any underlying issues that may be affecting attendance.

If a student has been absent for more than five days without a satisfactory explanation the student's local authority, including the Social Worker of any Looked After Child will be informed.

A Final Word

We feel attendance levels are an indicator of how effective and caring a school is. Failure to attend can be an indication that all is not well at home so that there is a welfare aspect to attendance as well. Equally, it is clear that regular, consistent attendance is an essential prerequisite for effective learning.

We take attendance seriously in school and have put a lot of time and energy into getting our procedures as efficient and effective as possible. We urge you to give this matter the priority it deserves.

Absence Codes – Recorded on Registers

- A Present at registration
- B Educated Off Site (Not dual registered)
- C Other authorised circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code/description)
- D Dual registered (i.e. present at another school or at a PRU)
- E Excluded but no alternative provision made
- G Family holiday (not agreed or sessions in excess of agreement)
- H Agreed holiday

I	Illness
L	Late but arrived before the register closed
M	Medical or dental appointment
N	No reason for the absence provided yet
O	Other unauthorised (not covered by other codes or descriptions)
P	Approved sporting activity
R	Day set aside exclusively for religious observance
S	Study Leave
T	Traveller absence
V	Educational visit or trip
W	Work experience (not based working)
X	Un-timetabled sessions for non-compulsory school age pupils
-	All should attend/no mark recorded
#	School closed to pupils



Staff Guide to Registers and Associated Procedures

This section complements the Attendance Policy and should be read in conjunction with it. It deals with the practicalities of completing the registers and associated procedures to do with attendance. Registers are important legal documents and we rely on accurate input in order to follow up any concerns as well as for data analysis.

Marking the Register

Form Tutors will be responsible for taking the register on SIMS attendance module, the schools official register, in the morning and afternoon. Teachers must only mark pupils present or absent. Any pupil arriving 15 minutes after the start of the registration period will be marked as 'L', late. Although present on site this mark counts as absent. A session attendance list will be printed to enable nominated school staff to check the accuracy of the register and make the necessary enquiries if a pupil is not in school. The official school register, SIMS, must be updated daily. Any absences codes must be agreed with the Head Teacher before being entered.

Schools have a responsibility for safeguarding the children in their care and it is vital that the information we have is as accurate as possible.

Communication with/from parents/carers

We operate a policy of 1st day response regarding absence across the school. This applies to both day and residential pupils. The nominated Learning Mentor will phone parents/carers of any pupil not registered in Lesson 1 unless they have already been informed of the reason for the absence.

The DFE guidance strongly recommends a policy of same-day contact as this has been shown to be the single most effective strategy in improving rates of attendance; it is also important from a Child Protection perspective.

We require **ALL** absences to be covered by a letter, e-mail, phone call or note in logbook from parents/guardians in addition to the initial telephone contact (texts not accepted). Communication is required for every day of a period of absence. Every Friday Form Tutors will give a list of pupils whose absence has yet to be authorised with a communication from home. It is the form tutors' responsibility to chase these up and report back to the Senior Leader with responsibility for Attendance. All absence notes should be initialled and dated by the Form Tutor when received and should relate to precise periods of absence. Where the reason for absence is provided in another form eg Email, this must be printed and kept on a pupils file.

Recording Lates

- Statutory Registration starts at 08.50 and 13.00 and closes after 20 minutes. Thereafter pupils absence will be recorded as unauthorised (U) unless a valid reason is provided such as a medical or dental appointment. If a pupil gets their mark at the start of a session and then has to leave for a medical appointment they are marked present for that session but a record of them leaving site must be kept.
- Lates are counted as present when the data is collected. If a pupil arrives after the registers are closed, they will lose their mark for that session. In very special circumstances the Head Teacher may override this if the lateness was beyond the control of the pupil e.g. Extreme weather conditions or the failure of the local authority to provide transport.

Attendance Data Provided to Form Tutors

Form Tutors have access to any pupils attendance data via SIMS. In addition, summary data is provided weekly on attendance which is reported home termly.

Use of Form Time for Attendance Matters

Housekeeping procedures:

- Take accurate registers and making use of appropriate codes (present, absent, late only).
- Monitor attendance of individuals.
- Raise issues of attendance and punctuality with student, parents/carers and the Learning Mentor Manager

There are other absences, such as **approved sporting activities** that can be authorised and there will be events affecting families, some unforeseen, which will necessitate absence from school; professional discretion will need to be used in these cases as to whether the absence can be authorised.

Education view attendance and punctuality as important indicators of motivation/attitude and our records and references are very valuable evidence of reliability.

Attendances and absences are included in termly reports, which are also sent home.