

## Attendance Policy 2023 – 2024

<b>Senior Leaders with responsibility for attendance</b>	Gary Risdale (Head Teacher)
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### Step 1. Rationale

At Neston Primary School we understand that regular school attendance is the key to enabling children and young people to maximise the educational opportunities available to them and become emotionally resilient, confident adults who are able to realise their full potential and make a positive contribution to their community. School is the foundation for preparing children and young people for life as adults.

We are committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all our pupils/students and endeavour to provide an environment where all pupils feel valued and welcome.

For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education it is vital that they attend school regularly and punctually. Parents and the school community share the responsibility for supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and punctuality for all.

This policy represents our commitment to support pupils to achieve 100% attendance. It sets out the principles, procedures and practice the school will undertake. Strategies to improve attendance and rewards and benefits of good attendance. The sanctions and possible legal consequences of poor attendance and punctuality are also detailed.—This policy will be reviewed, amended as necessary and published annually in accordance with current legislation and guidance.

### Step 2. Aims of the Attendance Policy

- Ensure that children and young people make the best use of their educational opportunities by attending regularly, punctually and in a state of readiness for learning
- Emphasise a commitment to promoting excellent attendance and punctuality
- Establish a consistent framework to improve attendance for all pupils
- Ensure that everyone within the school community understand the issues and procedures for attendance
- Fulfil the statutory duties in relation to school attendance
- To encourage, recognise and reward good attendance



We believe that the foundation for good attendance is based on a strong partnership between school, parents and the child. This includes clear communication with parents and pupils regarding our expectations of what is required to secure excellent attendance for pupils at our school.

### **At Neston Primary School we will:**

- Provide regular information about attendance through regular communications through newsletters/website
- Include attendance information in reports about your child's performance in school and how any absence may be affecting their attainment
- Reward good attendance
- Work with you and your child to achieve maximum attendance

### **At Neston School we expect:**

- Pupils to arrive at school every day on time
- Parents to work with the school to ensure that their child attends regularly

### **Step 3. Attendance: The Legal Framework – roles and responsibilities**

- Under section 7 of the Education Act 1996, parents must ensure their children are educated. For most parents/carers this means registering their child at a school and ensuring their regular attendance. Failure to do so can result in the issue of a Penalty Notice or being prosecuted.

#### **By law schools are required:**

- To take an attendance register twice a day: at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon.
- To report to the LA pupils who fail to attend regularly or who are absent for ten consecutive school days or more without known reason
- By law the attendance register must show for every session, whether a pupil is present, absent, attending approved educational activity or unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

- DfE Guidance says that schools must 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.
- Authorised absence is where the school has given approval in advance for a pupil of compulsory school age to be away or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as a satisfactory justification for the absence. All other absences are unauthorised.
- Reference to the guidance contained in the Wiltshire LA Attendance Policy and the responsibility of the Education Welfare Service in discharging the statutory duties of the Local Authority in respect of non-attendance at school.

The law says that ensuring a child receives education is a parent/carer's legal responsibility (Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act). For most parents this means registering their child at a school. Permitting absence from school that is not authorised by the school creates an offence in law and parents/carers who do not secure their child's regular attendance at school may be issued with a Penalty Notice or referred to the Wiltshire Education Welfare Service for prosecution in the magistrates' court.

To avoid this happening we will work with parents and carers to address irregular or poor attendance to ensure full-time attendance. Authorised absences are those that have been agreed by the headteacher. Unauthorised absences are those where no valid reason has been provided for absence or those absence which the headteacher has not agreed.

#### **Step 4. Partnership Working – roles and responsibilities**

##### **Do you know these facts about absence and attendance?**

Research suggests that a pupil who misses 17 days of school a year will drop 1 GCSE grade in attainment. (DfE)

- 95% equates to half a day off every two weeks in a school year
- 90% equates to a day off every two weeks in a school year
- 85% equates to one and a half days off every two weeks in a school year
- 80% equates to one whole day off every week in a school year

A secondary age pupil whose attendance is 80% will have missed ONE WHOLE YEAR of education by the time they leave school

***“Better attendance at school by pupils improves their educational achievements and, in turn, their lives and prospects. Even a small reduction in absence would result in many pupils receiving greater benefit from their education.” The National Audit Office.***

At Neston Primary school attendance is the business of everyone in our school community. The governors and all staff are committed to supporting all pupils to achieve excellent attendance and regularly review school procedures and strategies to support this.

We expect that parents and carers will work with us if school absence becomes a concern. Parents and carers can help to promote positive attendance by:

- Ensuring children arrive at school on time, before registers close, appropriately dressed and in a ‘condition to learn’ (i.e. not too tired or too hungry) and with the right equipment for the day
- Working in partnership with us to help their child(ren) gain an appreciation of the importance of attending school regularly
- Working in partnership with us to take an active interest in their child’s education
- Working in partnership with us and other agencies (as appropriate) to resolve problems relating to non-attendance or which may have a negative impact on their child’s attendance

## **Step Five - Procedures**

**Our school attendance target is: 97%.**

This means that we are expecting each pupil to have 100% attendance. Pupils who miss just 3 days of school in a school year will contribute to the school not achieving the attendance target set by the governing body.

Legally the school register must be taken twice a day.

At Neston Primary school the register is taken within a 10 minute window depending on each classes staggered start time and once during the afternoon session. The

registers will remain open for 10 minutes. Pupils arriving before registers close will be marked as late (L). Pupils arriving after the registers have closed will be coded U (Late after registers close) which counts as an unauthorised absence for the whole session.

Absence is recorded as unauthorised until a satisfactory reason is provided. If the reason given is not satisfactory and/or evidence of the reason cannot be provided, the absence will be coded as unauthorised absent. Ongoing and repeated lateness after the close of registration is considered as unauthorised absence and may be taken into account if any legal action is taken.

We will contact parents to address and improve attendance where:

- A pupil's attendance falls below 95%,
- A pupil has more than 3 weeks where they haven't achieved full attendance in a term (In Wiltshire there are 6 terms in an academic year)
- A pupil has more than 4 recorded lates in a term
- A pupil has a regular pattern of absence

**Parents are asked to:**

- Notify the school when their child is unable to attend, with a reason, on the first and subsequent days of absence. Parents should make contact with school before the start of the school day.
- Keep the school informed, in cases of ongoing absence. A note from a pupil's home does not mean an absence becomes authorised. The decision whether or not to authorise an absence will always remain with the school
- Arrange medical or dental appointments outside of school hours unless there is urgent need for an appointment.
- Tell the school if their child is going to be late, the reason why and expected time of arrival.
- Only request leave of absence/holiday in term time if it is for an exceptional circumstance.

The process for requesting leave of absence is explained further in this policy.

Examples of types of absence that are not considered reasonable and which will not be authorised under any circumstances are:



- Going shopping with parents
- Birthdays
- Minding other younger children in the family
- Staying at home because other members in the family are unwell unless not doing so will breach guidance and legislation relating to COVID-19 (Coronavirus)
- Day trips and holidays in term time unless there are exceptional circumstances that have been approved by the Head Teacher
- Arriving at school too late to get a present mark (After the close of registration)
- Truancy
- Death of a pet

We will contact the parent/carer if a child is absent and the parent/carer has not advised that the child will not be in school. Parents can expect contact on every occasion of an un-notified absence. The attendance manager will initially phone parents within 30 minutes of registers closing. If we cannot speak directly with parents/carers then we will make contact with nominated emergency contacts to establish the reason for absence; this is in line with school safeguarding procedures.

If after 3 days of absence, your child has not been seen and no contact has been made with the school, a home visit will be made by school staff, to ascertain the safety and well-being of your child and establish the reason for absence from school.

After 10 days of unexplained absence and no contact with the school, we are obliged to notify the local authority. The local authority will follow their procedures for Children Missing from Education (CME) and parents may expect contact and visits from an Education Welfare Officer to ascertain the well-being and safety of your child.

## **Collecting your child from school**

We ask that all parents/carers ensure that they are able to collect their children from school on time. School finishes at 3.15 pm.

If parents are unable to collect their child as usual then they will need to communicate the alternative arrangements they have made with the school.



We will not release children in these circumstances to anyone who we have not been advised of.

If children remain uncollected from school the protocol is to endeavour to contact parents or other contacts on your child's records. If this is still unsuccessful, school will contact social services.

## **Monitoring attendance**

Weekly monitoring of the registers will be made by the Attendance Manager and Head Teacher, to analyse overall absence for each pupil and identify pupils with identify pupils with low attendance, a pattern of absences that may lead to Persistent Absence (PA), patterns and levels of broken weeks, lateness, authorised absence and unauthorised absence and reasons for absence.

A pupil is classed as a persistent absentee when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year, for whatever reason, whether it be authorised or unauthorised, or a mixture of both. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to a child's educational prospects and we need parents' full support and encouragement to tackle it. PA pupils are tracked and monitored carefully through our pastoral system, and we combine this with tracking academic progress to assess the effect on the pupil's attainment. Absence for whatever reason disadvantages a pupil by creating gaps in his or her learning.

The Attendance Manager and Head Teacher will be responsible for putting in place actions for each pupil of concern. Initially we will try to resolve the problem with parents/carers and this may involve requesting medical evidence in order for the school to authorise any further absence due to ill health and/or an attendance meeting with the Attendance Manager and Head Teacher, however, if the pattern continues the school may make a referral to the Local Authority for interventions that may include penalty notices and court action.

## **Requesting leave of absence in exceptional circumstances**

In accordance with Department for Education guidance, leave of absence from school including for holidays in term-time, may only be authorised in exceptional circumstances.



Parents are required to complete a leave of absence request form which must outline the exceptional circumstances for which the leave has been requested.

Leave of absence request forms must be completed in advance of the dates requested. We require 3 weeks notice unless the absence is related to an emergency.

We do not give retrospective agreement for leave of absence so any absence not advised to the school in advance will be unauthorised.

Requests will be considered by the headteacher and parents and carers will be advised if their request is agreed.

Any pupil who has taken a term time holiday will be required to provide medical evidence if they are ill in the period directly before or after the dates advised to school.

Parents/carers will be asked to provide evidence if a pupil does not return to school on the agreed date following a holiday as a result of delayed or cancelled flights or other travel arrangements.

Where an unauthorised leave of absence is taken, parents may be issued with a penalty notice. This will be in the sum of £120 per parent/carer for each child, but is reduced to £60 per parent/carer for each child if paid within 21 days of issue.

## **Consequences of persistent absence**

At Neston Primary school we will always work with you to address any attendance concerns.

If we have been unable to resolve the issue, despite a number of interventions, then we may have to refer you to the local authority.

The Education Welfare Service has a range of actions available which include:

- 1.) The parents/carers may be issued with a penalty notice, which carries a fine of £120, per parent, per child. This is reduced to £60 if paid within 21 days of issue. If not paid at all, court action will be initiated.
- 2.) The local authority may initiate court action under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, which could lead to fines of up to £2,500, imposition of orders such as Parenting Orders or even imprisonment.





- 3.) In some cases, action may be taken under the Children Act 1989 to protect the welfare and development of the child.

## **Step 6. Strategies for improving and maintaining good attendance**

At this school we take every opportunity to promote excellent attendance for all pupils. We will celebrate excellent attendance by certificates, and house points.

We are a caring school community where the needs of all pupils are carefully considered.

Neston Primary school provides and promotes a welcoming and positive atmosphere so that pupils feel safe, and know that their presence is valued.

If there are specific issues which might impact on your child's attendance it is important that you talk to us so that we can support you and your child.

There may be times when we ask other agencies to become involved to help us understand and work with you to encourage regular school attendance. (eg Wiltshire Council, school health, Ethnic Minority and Traveller Advisory Service, Medical Needs Reintegration Service) If we feel that this would be helpful we will discuss with you first.

We are very keen to listen to the views of children and parents with regard to attendance matters and we welcome any feedback which helps us to shape how we work with families to address attendance issues and reward excellent attendance.

## **Step 7. Monitoring and Evaluation**

The attendance policy will be reviewed annually by governors and school staff to ensure that it continues to meet the needs of the school community.

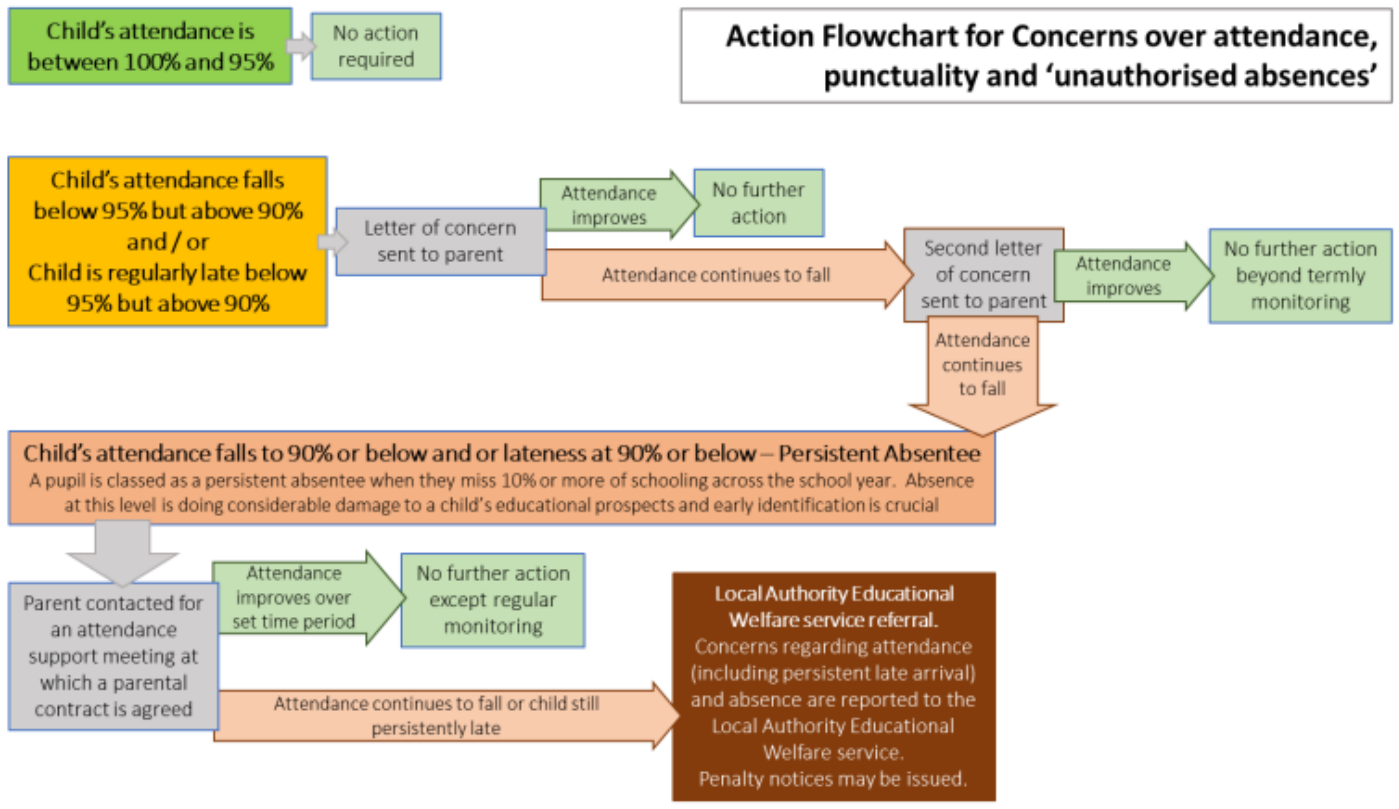
We will ensure that the policy reflects current DfE and Local Authority guidance so that parents may be assured of the standards that we strive to achieve.

## **Step 8 – Communicating the contents of the Attendance policy**

All new parents are introduced to the policy and information on attendance in the school prospectus. It is also accessible on the school website.

School attendance will feature attendance in the school newsletter and we will advise parents of any changes to policy and procedures.

## Appendix A



## Appendix B

### ATTENDANCE REGISTERS: NATIONAL ABSENCE AND ATTENDANCE

#### CODES PRESENT

**Code / \:** Present in school / = am \ = pm

Pupils must not be recorded as present if they are not in school during registration. If a pupil were to leave the school premises after registration, they will still be counted as present for statistical purposes.

**Code L:** Late arrival before the register is closed. Schools should actively discourage late arrival and be alert to patterns of late arrival. All schools are expected to set out in their attendance policy the length of time the register will be open, after which a pupil will be marked as absent. This should be the same for every session and depending on the structure of the school day not longer than either 30 minutes after the session begins, or the length of the form time or first lesson in which registration takes place. A pupil arriving after the register has closed should be recorded as absent using code U, or another absence code that it is more appropriate

Registration will take place at 9am and close at 9.30am

Students who arrive after 9am but before 9.30am will be recorded as Late (L)

Students who arrive after 9.30am will be recorded as unauthorised (U)

#### AUTHORISED ABSENCE

The national absence codes must be used. Schools cannot add to the list of codes or use their own local codes. In order to be useful to schools in helping them identify patterns of absence, it is essential that there is consistency of use by staff within each school.

- C Leave of absence granted by the school in exceptional circumstances (not holiday) (*eg bereavement, performances, temporary part-time timetable, maternity leave*)
- E Excluded but no alternative provision made (usually for short periods of suspension)
- H Family holiday (agreed)
- I Illness (NOT medical or dental etc appointments)
- M Medical / Dental appointments
- R Religious observance
- T Traveller absence (*where the family is known to be travelling or has informed of travelling for the purposes of work*)

#### APPROVED EDUCATION ACTIVITY

- B Educated off site (*NOT dual registration and not for a pupil at home doing school work.*)
- D Dual registration (*ie pupil attending other establishment*)
- J Interview (with a prospective employer or another educational establishment)
- P Approved sporting activity (*arranged by school*)
- V Educational visit or trip (*arranged by school*)
- W Work experience (Yr 10 and Yr 11)



## UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE

- G Family holiday (*NOT agreed or days in excess of agreement*)
- N No reason yet provided for absence.
- Unauthorised absence
- U Late (*after registers closed*)

## UNABLE TO ATTEND DUE TO EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES

Y School site is closed or partially closed due to unavoidable cause **or** the transport provided by the school or local authority is not available and the pupil does not live within a safe walking distance **or** a local or national emergency has resulted in widespread travel disruption which prevents the pupil from attending school.

Pupil is in custody for less than 4 months and returning to school at the end of their custodial period.

## ADMINISTRATIVE CODES

X Pupil not of compulsory school age not required to be in school

Z Prospective pupil not on the admission register (to set up registers in advance of pupils joining school)

# Planned or partial school closure (eg school holidays, teacher training, school used as polling station, staggered starts for different year groups)