



# Attendance Policy

Ratification Date: 5/09/23

Signed: Diane Robinson/Tracey Lecointe

Review Date: 5/09/25

## **Aims of the Policy**

This policy has been written to ensure that New Bridge Alternative Education is compliant with the guidelines established by the government relating to school attendance. This policy is intended to:

- foster a shared understanding of the importance of good attendance across the whole-school community;
- promote good attendance and punctuality.
- reduce unnecessary absences.
- address persistent absenteeism.
- establish protocols to ensure that attendance issues are addressed early and effectively.
- build effective working relationships with parents and carers to ensure that every child is accessing education.

**Related Legislation and Guidance** This policy meets the requirements of Working together to improve school attendance outlined by the Department for Education (DfE).

It is also based on the following legislation and guidance:

- Statutory guidance on school attendance parental responsibility measures
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (with subsequent amendments)
- The Education and Inspections Act 2006 (Part 7) · The Education Act 2002 (Part 3)
- The Education Act 1996 (Part 6) When applying this policy, our school is aware of its obligations under the Equality Act 2010.

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

Attendance is the responsibility of all members of the school community. However, we have allocated specific roles and responsibilities to named individuals to ensure that we are meeting statutory requirements.

### **Governors/Directors**

Those responsible for governance at the school will:

- ensure that the school fulfils statutory attendance requirements.
- work with leaders to establish policies, protocols and expectations relating to attendance.
- reinforce the importance of attendance in documentation and communications as appropriate.
- ensure that key staff receive relevant training relating to attendance.
- review and analyse attendance data and support leaders to address any issues that become apparent.
- offer appropriate challenge regarding attendance data
- keep up to date with changes in guidance and legislation and ensure that leaders are aware of any changes.
- Hold the headteacher to account for the effective implementation of this policy.

## The Directors

The headteacher will:

- take responsibility for the implementation of this policy;
- monitor school-level attendance and absence data and communicate key information and data to those responsible for governance;
- monitor the impact of any attendance strategies and systems that are in place, identifying new approaches where relevant;
- ensure that there are systems in place so that when a pupil has a social worker, they are informed about any unexplained absences;
- liaise with attendance staff to identify when it would be appropriate to issue fixed penalty notices;
- decide whether requests for leave should be granted in exceptional circumstances.

## Designated senior leader for attendance.

It is expected that schools will have a designated senior leader for attendance. At our school, this person is our **Director Diane Robinson**. The senior leader will:

- oversee attendance across the school.
- retain an oversight of attendance data across the school.
- foster a clear vision and expectations throughout the school community.
- identify and/or devise systems and interventions to improve attendance.
- arrange meetings with parents/carers to address attendance issues.

The contact details for our designated senior leader are: [diane@newbridgealtd.co.uk](mailto:diane@newbridgealtd.co.uk)

## Attendance staff:

Those responsible for the day-to-day oversight of attendance at the school will:

- monitor individual and group attendance on a day-to-day basis.
- gather information and produce reports relating to attendance (as required by leaders).
- work with education welfare officers and any other external partners to tackle attendance issues.
- deliver targeted interventions where a need has been identified.
- provide additional support for attendance in line with the school's policy on this
- carry out home visits where appropriate.

## Class teachers/form tutors will:

- complete attendance registers at the times specified by the school using the school's agreed systems; · use accurate attendance and absence codes as set out in Working together to improve school attendance.
- Office staff
- Office or school administration staff will:
- answer and record attendance-related phone calls from parents/carers;

- ensure that any safeguarding concerns are reported using the school's agreed safeguarding systems and protocols.

### **Parents and carers will:**

- ensure that their child is in school each day, except for when a statutory reason applies;
- notify the school of their child's absence as soon as possible using the school's agreed systems;
- ensure that leave of absence is only requested in exceptional circumstances and, where possible, advance notice is given;
- book any non-emergency medical and dental appointments outside of the school day, where possible;
- engage with any support offered to address any barriers to their child's attendance.

### **Students will:**

- attend school punctually every day;
- attend all lessons on time.
- engage with any support offered by the school to help them overcome any barriers to attendance.

## **Protocols and Procedures**

### **Recording attendance**

In line with statutory requirements, we will keep a register of school attendance and ensure that the name of every pupil is entered onto the register, irrespective of whether they are of statutory school age or not.

The school will add pupils to the admission register at the beginning of the first day on which it has agreed with (or been notified by) the parent that the pupil will attend the school. If a pupil fails to attend school on the agreed starting day, the school will follow this up and establish the reason for absence.

Once a pupil is added to the admissions register, their attendance or absence will be recorded for each session. The register will take place at the start of the school day and also once during the second session. Codes recorded in the register will be in line with the guidelines set out in Section 8 of Working together to improve school attendance.

### **The school will also record:**

- whether the absence is authorised or not (if the pupil is of compulsory school age).
- the nature of any off-site activity.
- any exceptional circumstances that have resulted in an absence.

## **Amendments to the attendance register**

Clear and accurate records of amendments made to the attendance register will be kept. These will note:

- the original entry;
- the amendment that is being made;
- the reason for this amendment;
- the date that the amendment is being made;
- the name and position of the individual making the amendment.
- Monitoring and analysing attendance.

We monitor the attendance of our pupils so that we can identify any issues, concerns and patterns of absence. We use a range of systems to monitor absence on a daily, weekly, termly, half-termly and annual basis. We monitor the attendance of individuals, groups and cohorts, as well as looking at attendance patterns across the whole school.

The systems we use for monitoring attendance are as follows:

- First day phone calls
- Reporting of absence to home school
- Assign each student an average weekly attendance percentage and track

We will use our monitoring data to identify any individuals, groups or patterns that are a cause for concern and then take measures to address these. This data will be used in discussions with families and when evaluating the impact of any attendance strategies that we implement.

## **Reporting to parents and carers**

We understand the importance of keeping parents and carers informed about their child's attendance, as well as reminding them of the implications of poor attendance. Our systems for reporting attendance and absence to parents and carers are as follows:

1<sup>st</sup> Attendance letter

2<sup>nd</sup> Attendance letter

3<sup>rd</sup> Attendance letter

## **Strategies for promoting good attendance.**

We recognise the importance of promoting good attendance and making sure that pupils and their families understand the effect of poor attendance on their life chances.

The systems we use at New Bridge Alternative Education for promoting attendance are:

- public recognition
- displays
- certificates
- rewards, class prizes

## **Authorised and unauthorised absences**

We recognise that every absence is unique so the school will consider whether to authorise an absence on a case-by-case basis.

The following will give a guide as to whether the absence is likely to be authorised.

Typical scenarios for authorised absences include:

- illness;
- emergency medical and dental appointments;
- religious observance for recognised religious holidays/festivals;
- a pupil taking part in a performance if the local authority has granted a licence for this;
- a pupil on maternity leave;
- a pupil being suspended or excluded;
- a traveller absence where this is for occupational reasons;
- pupils on a temporary, part-time timetable, where this has been arranged by the school;
- bereavement (close friend or family member);
- study leave (where this has been approved by the school);

Unauthorised absence is where a pupil's absence is for a reason that is deemed to be unacceptable by the school or where the reason for a pupil's absence has not been provided and cannot be established.

In the case of illness, the absence will usually be authorised unless there are grounds for concern that the illness may not be authentic. In these instances, the school may ask for supplementary evidence, such as a doctor's note, appointment card, medical report, etc. The school will not ask for this additional evidence unnecessarily.

If, after requesting evidence, the school is still not satisfied that the reason given is genuine, it will be recorded as unauthorised. Parents or carers will be informed of this.

## **Non-emergency appointments**

We request that non-emergency medical and dental appointments are booked outside of the school day to minimise lost learning time. Where this is not possible, permission for absence should be sought in advance.

## **Punctuality**

Pupils must arrive at school on time each day.

The morning register will open at 9.15am and will be kept open until 9.45am

The register for the second session will open at 12.30pm until 1.00pm.

Pupils arriving after the register opened but before the register is closed will be marked as late using the appropriate code. Pupils arriving after the register has closed will be marked as absent using the appropriate code; however, the arrival time will be noted to ensure that there is a clear record that the pupil is on site.

The school day ends at 2.15pm

### **Reporting absences**

If a parent or carer needs to report an absence to the school, they should follow the agreed procedures as set out below:

1. Call school between 7.00am and 9.00am on **07368480539**
2. Leave the child's name and reason for absence.
3. Repeat the call for every day of expected absence

Parents or carers are requested to report all absences before 9.00am each day (or as soon as reasonably possible.)

These systems should be used to report day-to-day absence and attendance issues. For more detailed support with attendance, parents should contact: **Mrs Diane Robinson**

### **Requesting term-time absence**

Requests for advanced approval of term-time absence will not be granted unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Parents or carers should plan their holidays around school holidays and avoid seeking permission to take their children out of school during term time unless it is absolutely unavoidable.

If there are exceptional circumstances, then a request can be made in writing to the school and sent to the school's email address – **info@newbridgealtd.co.uk**

Requests for term-time absences should be made as soon as possible and at least **14 days** before the absence is due to take place. However, we recognise that in some rare instances, this will not always be possible.

Requests for term-time absences will be considered on a case-by-case basis taking the facts, circumstances, and any supporting evidence into consideration. Leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances is at the discretion of the headteacher. This includes the length of time that the leave will be granted for.

### **Managing persistent and severe absence**

We will identify and address instances of persistent and severe absence.

Persistent absence is defined as a pupil who is absent for 10% or more of scheduled sessions i.e., has attendance of 90%

Severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of scheduled sessions.

We will identify persistent and severe absence using the systems for monitoring and analysis as outlined above.

To respond to persistent and severe absence, the school will seek to identify and address root causes. As there are a wide range of reasons for this occurring, the response will be determined on a case-by-case basis. However, typical strategies will include:

- supporting the pupil and their family to understand the reasons that attendance is important and the possible implications of repeated absences.
- enhanced monitoring of individual pupils where attendance is (or could be) an issue.
- holding meetings with parents or carers to discuss concerns.
- offering specific pastoral support using the resources and staffing already available within the New Bridge.
- working with external partners and home school to address the underlying factors that are causing the absence.
- issuing warning letters.

### **Handling unexplained absences**

If a pupil is absent from school without an explanation, the school will take the following steps to determine the whereabouts of the child and the reason for their absence:

- First-day phone call to parents by 9.45am
- Notify home school by 10.00am on the day of absence.
- Issue Attendance Letter 1
- Invite parent/carer and home school into school.
- Issue Attendance Letter 2.
- Home visits with home school EWO.
- Parent Attendance Contract.
- Issue Attendance Letter 3.

If, after repeated efforts to establish the circumstances around the child's absence, the school is still not able to establish this, the following steps will be taken in line with our safeguarding protocols:

Discuss with home school and consider:

- Early Help Referral
- Refer to Walsall's Children Missing Education (CME) Team
- Liaise with colleagues in Youth Offending, Exploitation, School's Police Officer

### **Legal sanctions for addressing attendance issues**

Schools, the police and local authorities have legal powers to fine parents or carers for unauthorised absences. These powers only exist where the child is of statutory school age.

Decisions on whether to support a home school to issue a penalty are made after considering a number of factors, including:

- the number of unauthorised absences in the last half term
- one-off absences that have been taken without school permission, e.g. term-time holidays;
- whether an excluded or suspended pupil is found in a public place during school hours without good reason.



- whether there are exceptional circumstances that explain an absence that would usually be unauthorised.

Legal sanctions will only be pursued when the family concerned have been offered support and this has either been unsuccessful or the family have failed to engage.

If a parent or carer is issued with a fine or penalty notice, each parent must pay £60 within 21 days. If the fine is not paid promptly, this will rise to £120 within 28 days. This payment is made directly to the local authority. Instructions for payment will be given when the fine is issued. After 28 days, the local authority will decide whether to withdraw the notice or pursue a prosecution.

### **Monitoring and Review**

This policy will be reviewed every 12 months years. If there are any changes in legislation or government updates, the policy may need to be reviewed before the next scheduled update.

The policy will be reviewed by the Directors.

## APPENDIX

Date:

**Re: First Attendance Warning Letter**

Dear [parent/carer's name],

I am writing to you because [pupil's name]'s attendance has become a cause for concern. It currently stands at [add percent].

Regular attendance is an important factor in a child's academic success. When pupils are frequently absent, it is difficult for them to keep up with their school work and this could affect their life chances. For this reason, we take school attendance very seriously.

If your child is going to be absent from school, it is important that you contact the school on the first day of the absence to inform us of the reasons. If this continues for more than one day, you should make contact with the school on a daily basis to keep us updated.

We are keen to work with you to address any barriers to your child's attendance. If you require any advice or support on this matter, please get in touch with [add name and contact details] to discuss this and we will do our best to help.

Yours sincerely,

[Name of staff member

School position]

Date:

**Re: Second Attendance Warning Letter**

Dear [parent/carer's name],

Following our previous letter dated [date of first letter] regarding [child's name]'s attendance, there continues to be a cause for concern. Our records show that [insert name of child]'s attendance is currently at [add percent].

School attendance is an important issue and something we take very seriously. I am therefore requesting that you come into school to discuss the current situation.

I have arranged for this meeting to take place in school on [add date] at [add time]. Please could you confirm that you are able to attend this meeting. If you are unable to attend, please contact the school office to make an alternative arrangement.

Regular school attendance is the responsibility of parents/carers. If your child's attendance remains at the current level, a referral will be made to the local authority who may need to start legal proceedings.

We look forward to your support in resolving this matter.

Yours sincerely,

[Name of staff member

School position]

Date:

**Re: Final attendance warning letter (Potential Legal Action)**

Dear [parent/carer's name],

Following two previous letters, we are now writing to formally express our ongoing concerns about the irregular attendance of your child, [add name and date of birth].

If a pupil fails to attend school regularly, the parent could be guilty of an offence under section 444 of the Education Act 1996. I am therefore warning you that, if further unauthorised absences are recorded, or your child fails to attend school regularly, we will need to refer this matter to the local authority.

Following this notification, if your child's attendance and/or punctuality does not improve, the local authority may start legal proceedings against you. If it is determined that an offence has been committed, this could eventually result in a fine of up to £2,500, a community order or imprisonment.

We will not issue further notification should we need to escalate this matter to the local authority.

We have attached a record of your child's attendance with this letter.

Yours sincerely,

[Name of staff member

School position]

## Attendance Matters

