



Attendance Policy

Article 3 – The best interests of the child must be a top priority in all actions concerning children

Article 29 – Education must develop every child’s personality, talents and abilities to the full. It must encourage the child’s respect for human rights, as well as respect for their parents, their own and other cultures and the environment.

Nova Primary School Governor Information	
Model Policy	No
Local Changes	
Customisation*	
Originally Adopted	Summer 2015
Last Review Date	Autumn 2022
Next Review Date	Autumn 2023
* additions made to policy (eg local detail) but not a change to any policy structure	

History of most recent Policy changes – Must be completed

Date	Page	Change	Origin of Change e.g. TU request, change in legislation
July 2019	2	Introduction changed to aims	Policy review
July 2019	2	Section 2 added 'The Law'	Up to date legislation
July 2019	2 - 3	Types of absence detailed further	Policy review
July 2019	3	Procedures for reporting absence updated	Policy review
July 2019	4	Section 5 & 6 replaced with section 6 & 7	Policy review
July 2019	4	'Rewards for Good Attendance' replaced with 'Promoting Regular Attendance'	Policy review
July 2019	5	'Monitoring & Review' updated	Current practice

November 2021	5 (3.7)	Further detail included about response to persistent absenteeism	Current practice
November 2021	6 (4)	Slight alteration to register and late times. (register can be now started at 8:35 and shuts ay 8:50 as opposed to 8:45).	
November 2021	6 (6)	Added 'This is a legal responsibility'	To strengthen key message
July 2022		Re-written in line with BCC model	

Part 1 Policy:

Introduction

It is the aim of Nova Primary School that pupils should enjoy learning, experience success and realise their full potential. Our Attendance Policy reflects this and recognises that regular attendance has a positive effect on the motivation and attainment of pupils.

Any absence affects the pattern of a child's schooling and regular absence may seriously affect their learning. The Department for Education (DfE) defines a pupil as 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year, for whatever reason.

Aims

Our school aims to meet its obligations with regard to school attendance by promoting good attendance; ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled; and acting early to address patterns of absence.

This policy sets out our school's position on attendance and details the procedures that all parents must follow to report their child absent from school.

It is vital that children develop regular attendance habits at an early age. Therefore, the school will encourage parents of Reception children who are not yet compulsory school age, to send their children to every session that is available to them. If the child is unable to attend the school for any reason, the parent should inform the school of the reason on the first day of absence. If the school is concerned about a pupil's attendance for any reason, we will contact the parent to discuss the matter, in the first instance.

We will also support parents to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend regularly and will promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

We want our pupils to attend school every day, unless they are really not well enough to. We believe that children who attend school regularly are more likely to feel settled in school, maintain friendships, keep up with their learning and gain the greatest benefit from their education. We want all our pupils to enjoy school, grow up to become emotionally resilient, confident and competent adults who are able to realise their full potential. Regular attendance and punctuality is essential in the workplace and children who are used to attending school on time, and on every occasion unless they are too unwell to attend, will be better prepared for the attendance expectations in the workplace.

In April 2017 the Supreme Court clarified the definition of regular attendance to be attendance "in accordance with the rules prescribed by the school", therefore if an absence is not authorised by the school, the pupil's attendance is deemed to be irregular.

We believe that one of the most important factors in promoting good attendance is the development of positive attitudes towards school and a sense of belonging. To this end, we strive to make our school a happy and rewarding experience for all children, and to foster positive and mutually respectful relationships with parents.

By promoting good attendance and punctuality we aim to:

- Make good attendance and punctuality a priority for all those involved in the school community
- Raise our pupils' awareness of the importance of good attendance and punctuality
- Provide support, advice and guidelines to parents, pupils and staff
- Work in partnership with parents
- Celebrate and reward good attendance and punctuality

Safeguarding and Attendance

Our school will monitor trends and patterns of absence for all pupils as a part of our standard procedures. However, we are aware that sudden or gradual changes in a pupil's attendance may indicate additional or more extreme safeguarding issues. In line with government guidance [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#) (2022 version, or as updated by the DfE) we will investigate and report any suspected safeguarding cases on to the relevant authorities. As part of our safeguarding duty and our standard procedures, we will inform the Local Authority and/or the Police of the details of any pupil who is absent from school when the school cannot establish their whereabouts and is concerned for the pupil's welfare. (Please see our school's Safeguarding Policy for more information.)

Legislation and Guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the 2020 [school attendance guidance](#), from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's 2015 statutory guidance on [school attendance parental responsibility measures](#). These documents are drawn from legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance including:

- The Education Act 1996 (as amended)
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (as amended in 2010, 2011, 2013 and 2016)
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007 (as amended in 2012 and 2013)

The DfE's guidance on the [school census](#) explains the persistent absence threshold.

Part 2 What the Law says and Our School Procedures:

Contents of Attendance Register

The law makes it clear that schools must take the attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. On each occasion the school must record whether each pupil is:

- Present;
- Absent;
- Attending an approved educational activity; or,
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

Pupils are marked present if they are in school when the register is taken. If a pupil leaves the school premises after registration they are still counted as present for statistical purposes.

It is the duty of parents to ensure that children attend school on time. This encourages habits of good timekeeping and lessens any possible classroom disruption. Registers are taken in the classroom between 8:40 and 8:50. Children arriving after this time will be recorded as late and must report to the School Office. Any child arriving after 9:30 will be marked in the register as having an unauthorised absence for the whole session.

The Attendance Team will meet with parents of those children who are frequently late arriving at school to investigate reasons and suggest solutions to enable more punctual attendance.

Effects of non-attendance

The table below indicates how what might seem like just a few days absence can result in children missing a significant number of lessons.

Attendance during school year	Days lost in a year	Which is approximately	Approximate number of lessons missed
95%	9.5 Days	2 Weeks	50 Lessons
90%	19 Days	4 Weeks	100 Lessons

Types of Absence

'Authorised absence' means that the school has either given approval in advance for a pupil of compulsory school age to be away from the school, or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as justification for absence.

The following information outlines the main circumstances where absence may be authorised by the school:

Illness

The reporting of absence due to illness remains the responsibility of the parent.

This must be done by 9.00am and can be via the Schoolcomms app, emailing the school, leaving a message on the absence line or calling and speaking to a member of the office staff on 0117 903 0446.

Absences due to illness which have not been reported to the school by the parent on the first day of absence may not be authorised. If a child is absent for more than one day, the parent should contact the school each day to provide an update on the child's condition, unless otherwise agreed by the school.

Where no contact has been made with the school, we will contact parents by text, email and telephone to try and establish the reason for a child's absence. When we establish the reason for the absence, we will mark it as authorised or unauthorised depending on the reason for the absence.

If we are concerned about a pupil's absence and are unable to contact the parent/s, we may contact the pupil's emergency contacts and/or other professionals or contacts of the family who we reasonably expect may be able to advise us of the pupil's whereabouts. If no contact has been made with the school for a third day, a welfare visit will be made by a member of staff or the school's appointed Educational Welfare Officer.

In most cases, absences for illness which are reported by following the school's absence reporting procedures will be authorised. That is unless the school has genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

Public Health England guidance recommends that where a child has been sent home from school or is absent due to vomiting or diarrhoea, they should not return to school until 48 hours after the last episode to reduce the risk of infection to other children and adults at the school.

The school follows the 2020 DfE School Attendance Guidance which states that if the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask the parent to provide medical evidence, such as a prescription, appointment card, or other appropriate form of evidence.

We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily. In some instances the school may ask the parent to obtain a letter from a GP, or the school may seek parental permission to contact the pupil's GP directly.

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

Where a pupil has a high level and/or frequency of absence, the school may require medical evidence of some description in order to authorise any future medical absences. If this is the case, the school will make the parent/s aware of this expectation in advance.

Mental Health and Wellbeing

Parents who have concerns about their child's mental wellbeing can contact a member of our school's Safeguarding Team for further information on the support available.

Pupils taken ill during the school day

If a pupil needs to be sent home due to illness, they must be collected from the school office by a parent or another authorised adult. No pupil will be allowed to leave the school site without parental confirmation.

Medical/Dental appointments

Parents/Carers should try to make appointments outside of school hours wherever possible. Where appointments during school time are unavoidable, the pupil should only be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary for the appointment. It is not acceptable for a child to miss a whole day's schooling for an appointment, unless absolutely necessary, in which case the school will need an explanation as to why this is.

Advance notice is required for medical or dental appointments, unless it's an emergency appointment, and must be supported by providing the school with sight of, or a copy of, the appointment card or letter – only then will the absence be authorised.

Traveller Absence

The school will authorise the absence of a Traveller pupil of no fixed abode who is unable to attend school because they are travelling with their parent who is engaged in a trade or business of such a nature as to require him to travel from place to place. This is subject to certain limits, depending on the child's age and number of sessions absent. The school will discuss cases individually with Traveller parents as necessary. Parents should let the school know of their plans as far in advance as possible. Authorised Traveller absence will be recorded appropriately in the register.

To help ensure continuity of education for Traveller children, wherever possible, the child should attend school elsewhere when their family is travelling for occupational purposes. In which case the child will be dual registered at that school and this school, which is their 'main' school.

Children from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities whose families do not travel for occupational purposes are expected to register at school and attend as normal. They are subject to the same rules as other children in terms of the requirement to attend school regularly.

Excluded

If the school decides to send a pupil home due to their behaviour, this will be recorded as an Exclusion. The school will follow the current [DfE's statutory guidance on exclusions](#).

Any exclusion **must** be agreed by the headteacher.

The school will notify the parent of the exclusion. If the pupil is a Child in Care, the school will notify the pupil's carer, social worker and the HOPE Virtual School. In other instances, where a pupil is open to Children's Social Care for any reason, the school will also inform their allocated social worker.

Religious observance

Our school acknowledges the multi-faith nature of the school community and recognises that on some occasions, religious festivals may fall outside of school holidays or weekends. In accordance with the law, the school will authorise one day's absence for a day exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the parent belongs. Should any additional days be taken, these will be recorded in the register as unauthorised absence. If necessary, the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body, to confirm whether the day is set apart.

Leave of Absence Requests – 'Exceptional Circumstances'

The law does not grant parents the automatic right to take their child out of school during term time. Absences from school for holidays are no longer authorised.

Only exceptional circumstances warrant an authorised leave of absence. The school will consider each application individually, taking into account the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind the request. The request must be made by the parent with whom the child normally lives, and permission must be sought in advance. The school will not grant leave of absence unless there are exceptional circumstances. The school must be satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances, based on the individual facts and circumstances of the case; following consultation with other staff as required, including the Designated Safeguarding Lead. Where a leave of absence is granted, the school will determine the number of days the pupil can be away from school. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the school's discretion.

Circumstances which could be authorised include significant family emergencies or funerals. However, parents will also be aware that, wherever possible, it can be better for children to continue to attend school normally during difficult family times.

Parents should complete a Leave of Absence Request form which is available from the school. The request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated; and wherever possible, at least four weeks before the absence. Although such absence may be unauthorised, it is better that we know your child is safe, rather than missing. Please be aware that you may

be required to provide us with additional evidence in order to support your request. If we have any concerns about possible safeguarding risks we will follow the necessary protocols. (Please see our school's Safeguarding Policy for more information.)

Any absence not authorised may result in a Penalty Notice and Legal Sanctions, usually Penalty Notices or Prosecutions.

All term time absence for children in care should be discussed at the child's Personal Education Planning (PEP) meeting in advance where possible and agreed with the Social Care and The HOPE Virtual School. This permission should be gained before school is approached for approval. The school will contact the HOPE Virtual School in relation to any requests for term time absence for a child in care.

Unauthorised Absence

Absence will be unauthorised if a pupil is absent from school without the permission of the school. Whilst parents can provide explanations for absences, it is the school's decision whether to authorise the absence or not.

Unauthorised absence includes:

- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Pupils who arrive at school too late to get a mark
- Shopping
- Birthdays
- Day trips
- Waking up late
- Difficulty with transport

Unauthorised absences may result in Legal Sanctions, usually Penalty Notices or Prosecutions.

Approved Educational Activity (AEA)

When pupils are attending educational activities off the school site that have been approved by the school, the register will be marked to show this is the case. (See DfE 2020 School Attendance guidance.)

If a pupil is attending an alternative education provider such as another school, or Pupil Referral Unit, for part or all of their education, our school will make arrangements for the pupil to be dual registered at the other setting and mark our registers accordingly.

If a pupil is attending an alternative education provider, which is not a school or Pupil Referral Unit, for part or all of their education, we will mark the sessions which the pupil attends the alternative setting as code B (off-site educational activity). The school expects the alternative provider (AP) to notify us of any absences by individual pupils, to ensure we become aware of any attendance concerns as soon as possible and take follow up action as

necessary. Attendance updates will be provided on a weekly basis, or more frequently if agreed with the alternative setting.

Any attendance concerns will be followed up by us, in conjunction with the AP.

Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances (as set out in the law and DfE guidance)

In accordance with DfE school attendance guidance, our school will record pupils as 'Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances' in the following circumstances (such circumstances are not recorded as absences):

- Our school site, or part of it, is closed due to an unavoidable cause
- The transport provided by our school or the Local Authority is not available and the pupil's home is not within statutory walking distance. (See the DfE's '[Home to school travel and transport](#)' guidance document, or ask the school for a printed copy.)
- A local or national emergency has resulted in widespread disruption to travel which has prevented the pupil from attending school.
- The pupil is in custody, but still on the school roll. (If the school has evidence that the pupil is attending educational activities we can record those sessions as 'present at approved educational activity'.)

Support for Poor School Attendance/Persistent Absence (other than unauthorised term time leave)

Sometimes pupils can be reluctant to attend school. We encourage parents and pupils to be open and honest with us about the reason for the pupil's absence. If a child is reluctant to attend, it is never better to cover up their absence or for a parent to give in to pressure to let the child stay at home. This can give the impression to the child that attendance does not matter and can make things worse. As a school, we need to understand the reasons why a pupil is reluctant to attend in order to be able to support pupils and parents in the best way.

School has a graduated response to persistent absence which can be seen in appendix A. This includes a meeting with the family where an Attendance Contract will be written and signed. Targets are reviewed regularly where an improvement is hoped to be evidenced. However, if parents do not engage with school and make use of the support offered to improve their child's attendance to an acceptable level, this may result in legal sanctions. The school governors, supported by the Educational Welfare Service reserve the right to consider taking legal action against any parents or guardians who repeatedly fail to accept their responsibility for sending their children to school on a regular basis.

If our school refers a case of poor school attendance to the Local Authority for legal

sanctions, we will show that we have warned the parent/s that they are at risk of receiving a Penalty Notice or other legal sanction. This will at least be evidenced via the sending of a warning letter.

We will not usually request legal sanctions from the Local Authority in cases where poor attendance is symptomatic of complex family circumstances. In such circumstances our school will take a holistic approach to the issue, and involve other agencies as necessary. The exception to this will be where parents fail to accept or engage with support offered by the school and/or other agencies, or fail to implement the suggested changes. Again, when referring for legal sanctions, we will show that we have warned the parent/s that they are at risk of receiving a Penalty Notice or other legal sanction.

If our school has safeguarding concerns about a pupil who is absent we will share information with other agencies as we deem necessary.

Pupils on Reduced (Part-time) Timetables

Pupils are entitled to a full-time education, suitable to their age, ability and aptitude, and any special educational needs or disabilities that they may have. Timings for the school day are 8.45am – 3.15pm

If, for any reason, our school is unable to provide a pupil with a full-time education due to the pupil's needs, we will work with the pupil, parent and other agencies where appropriate, to come to a mutually convenient arrangement. Any reduced timetables will be for the shortest amount of time possible, whilst arrangements are made to support the pupil's return to full-time provision as soon as possible.

Children Missing Education (CME)

Our school will add and delete pupils from roll in line with the law. The school will follow [Bristol City Council's Children Missing Education guidance](#), and make CME and Pupil Tracking referrals as appropriate. The school will seek advice from the Children Missing Education Officer if unsure about any individual cases: childrenmissingeducation@bristol.gov.uk

Late Arrival at School

When a child arrives late to school, they miss important events like assembly, teacher instructions and introductions. Children often also feel embarrassed at having to enter the classroom late.

The table below indicates how frequent lateness can add up to a considerable amount of learning being lost. This can seriously disadvantage children and disrupt the learning of others.

Minutes late per Day	Equates to Days of Teaching Lost in one Year	Which means this number of lessons missed
5 mins	3 Days	15 Lessons
10 mins	6 Days	30 Lessons
15 mins	9 Days	45 Lessons

Registers are taken in the classroom between 8:40 and 8:50. Children arriving after this time will be recorded as late and must report to the School Office. Registers close completely at 9.30am. Children arriving after these times will be marked in the register as having an unauthorised absence for the whole session.

The Head teacher may decide not to authorise lateness after 9am for pupils who are **persistently** late to school. This means that those children will be marked as unauthorised absence for the whole session. In such cases, the Head teacher will notify Parents/Carers of the decision and explain the possible consequences of continued unauthorised absence due to persistent lateness, including the possibility that a Penalty Notice may be requested from Bristol City Council.

Children who have at least 8 absences in the register due to unauthorised lateness within a 10-week period may be subject to a Penalty Notice being requested from Bristol City Council.

Penalty Notices and Prosecutions:

Parents have a legal responsibility to ensure that their child attends school on a regular basis.

It is a criminal offence under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 to fail to secure regular attendance of a registered pupil at the school. This applies to both resident and non-resident parents who may both be subject to legal sanctions if their child fails to attend school regularly. It also applies to others who may not be the parent, but may have day to day care of the child.

Unauthorised absence from school can result in a number of different outcomes for parents and children. Each case is considered individually.

Under section 444 of the Education Act 1996, if a child of compulsory school age, who is a registered pupil at a school, fails to attend regularly at the school his/her parent(s) are guilty of an offence. Parents with more than one school aged child need to be aware that each child's irregular attendance is dealt with as a separate matter.

The school will refer cases of unauthorised absence that meet the threshold for a Penalty Notice to the Local Authority for legal action, unless there are reasonable grounds for not

doing so. The outcome of a referral to the Local Authority may be a Penalty Notice or Prosecution.

Penalty Notices are intended as a sanction for low level offences and a tool to support improved school attendance. They are an alternative to prosecution, and may not be issued if prosecution is considered to be a more appropriate response to a pupil's irregular attendance.

A pupil's unauthorised absence from school could result in one of the following:

1. A Penalty Notice. The penalty is £60 payable within 21 days, rising to £120 if paid between 22 and 28 days. (Failure to pay will result in prosecution.)
2. Prosecution.

Prosecution could lead to fines up to £2500 and /or 3 months imprisonment. (See DfE's statutory guidance on [School attendance parental responsibility measures](#) for more information and Bristol City Council's Penalty Notice Code of Conduct, available here: <https://www.bristol.gov.uk/schools-learning-early-years/education-welfare> or ask the school for printed copies.)

Penalty Notices and prosecution proceedings are issued to each parent with responsibility for the child and are issued for each child with irregular attendance. For example, in the case of Penalty Notices, if two siblings had irregular school attendance, and there were two parents with responsibility for the children, four Penalty Notices would be issued. Penalty Notices cannot be paid in instalments.

Reporting to Parents

School will share with parents their child's attendance record on a termly basis and annually in the pupil's end of year school report. Where a child's attendance drops below 90%, for whatever reason, our school will write to the parents to highlight this, unless there is a good reason not to.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for ensuring this policy is implemented consistently across the school, and for monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors.

The headteacher also supports other staff in monitoring the attendance of individual pupils and requests fixed-penalty notices, where necessary.

Attendance Officer

The Attendance Officer:

- Monitors attendance data at the school and individual pupil level.
- Reports concerns about attendance to the headteacher and Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) as appropriate.
- Arranges calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues.
- Co-ordinates requests for Term-time Leave of Absence (this includes liaison with the DSL and Safeguarding Team) and advises the headteacher as requested.

The Governing Board

It is the responsibility of the Governing Body to monitor overall attendance, figures for the whole school on at least a termly basis and they will request an annual report from the Head teacher/Attendance officer. The governing body also has the responsibility for this policy, and for seeing that it is carried out. The governors will therefore examine closely the information provided to them, and seek to ensure that our attendance figures are as high as they should be.

The school will keep accurate attendance records on file for a minimum period of three years.

This policy will be reviewed by the governing body every two years, or earlier if considered necessary.

Links with other policies

This policy is linked to our Behaviour Policy, Safeguarding Policy and First Aid and Medicines Policy and our Exclusion Policy.



