



Neville's Cross Primary School & Nursery

Attendance Policy

Date of policy: September 2022

Review date: September 2023

'Neville's Cross is an inclusive family where all are nurtured to become creative, confident and resilient learners supported to reach their unique potential. Our children develop skills to become active and respectful members of our school, community and society and during their time at Neville's Cross, make memories to cherish.'

Attendance Policy

Document History Log:

Author of document:	Rachel Brannan	Job role:	Head Teacher
Date document created:	December 2021	Approval by Governing Body:	

Annual Review History:

Task	Date Reviewed	Reviewed by	Signatories
First document review	September 2022	R Brannan	
2 nd Review			
3 rd Review			
4 th Review			

Revisions Log:

Revision	Date of revision	Reason for revision	Resulting version number	Signatories
Policy updated to reflect 'Working together to Improve Attendance'	September 2022	DfE non-statutory guidance released to support schools improving attendance	2	

Attendance key contact List

Who to report any attendance issues to in school and who can help if you are experiencing difficulty / require help and support:

Name	Role	Contact details
Mrs J Przyborski	School Secretary	nevillescros@durhamlearning.net 01913842249
Mrs R Brannan	Head Teacher and Designated senior leader with responsibility for attendance	nevillescros@durhamlearning.net 01913842249
Class teachers	Lead classroom teaching & learning and provide day to day pastoral care and support	Via Seesaw – contacts shared with parents Via class email inbox – contacts shared with parents
Mrs N Oxnard SENCO	Provide additional support for children with SEND in school	nevillescros@durhamlearning.net 01913842249
Elaine Hopkins	LA Attendance Team	ait@durham.gov.uk 03000 265650

Neville's Cross Primary School & Nursery - Attendance Policy

Introduction to our school attendance vision and ethos

Neville's Cross Primary School & Nursery seeks to ensure that all children receive an education which maximises opportunities for each child to realise his/her true potential. The school will strive to provide a calm, orderly, safe, and supportive environment where all children want to be and are keen and ready to learn within a culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance.

Regular school attendance plays a vital role in children's wellbeing and their education, ensuring that their current learning needs are being met but also building their future ability to learn.

As attendance is the essential foundation to positive outcomes for all pupils', improving attendance is everyone's business, a concerted effort across all teaching and nonteaching staff in school, the governing body, the local authority, and other local partners.

Some pupils find it harder than others to attend school and therefore at all stages of improving attendance, the school and partners will work with pupils and parents to remove any barriers to attendance by building strong and trusting relationships and working together to put the right support in place.

Why is regular attendance so important?

Being in school every day that it is open, is important to your child's achievement, wellbeing, and their wider development. There is a renewed national focus on maximising time in the classroom, as evidence shows that children with the highest attendance throughout their time in school gain

the best GCSE and A Level results. Children who miss a substantial amount of school often fall behind their peers and struggle to catch up. Poor attendance habits generally start in primary school and children who fall into this pattern are more likely to underachieve at secondary school too. Friendships can also be negatively impacted by persistent or severe absence; it can be really hard for a child who misses a lot of school time to form relationships with their classmates.

Here's what the data shows:

Children with higher attainment at KS2 and KS4 had lower levels of absence over the key stage compared to those with lower attainment.

Children who did not achieve the expected standard in reading, writing and maths in 2019 had an overall absence rate of 4.7% over the key stage, compared with 3.5% among children who achieved the expected standard and 2.7% among those who achieved the higher standard.

Children who did not achieve grade 9 to 4 in English and maths GCSEs in 2019 had an overall absence rate of 8.8% over the key stage, compared with 5.2% among children who achieved a grade 4 and 3.7% among children who achieved grade 9 to 5 in both English and maths.

Generally, the higher the percentage of sessions missed across the key stage at KS2 and KS4, the lower the level of attainment at the end of the key stage.

Among children with no missed sessions over KS2, 83.9% achieved the expected standard compared to 40.2% of children who were persistently absent.

Among children with no missed sessions over KS4, 83.7% achieved grades 9 to 4 in English and maths compared to 35.6% of children who were persistently absent.

The aim of our attendance policy is to provide a consistent practice that encourages and facilitates the regular attendance of all children. All school staff will work with children and will support parents/carers in helping them to meet their legal duty; to ensure that their children attend school regularly and on time.

Good Attendance at Neville's Cross - What does your child's percentage attendance mean?

Parents/carers often become confused about what good attendance is. For the academic year 2022-23, we have an attendance target for all children of 97%. The following table illustrates attendance percentages:

Attendance Percentage	Days missed	Sessions missed	School Weeks missed
100%	0 Days	0 sessions	0 weeks
95%	9.5 Days	19 sessions	2 weeks
90%	19 Days	38 sessions	4 weeks
85%	28.5 Days	57 sessions	5.5 weeks
80%	38 Days	76 sessions	7.5 weeks ($\frac{1}{2}$ a term!)

Children who miss 15% of school are defined by the Government as 'persistent absentees' and any children missing 50% of school fall under the new government category of 'severe absence'. This policy is supported by our policies on safeguarding, anti-bullying, behaviour and inclusion.

The school and all partners will work together to:

EXPECT

Aspire to high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents and build a culture where all can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across the school.



MONITOR

Rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.



LISTEN AND UNDERSTAND

When a pattern is spotted, discuss with pupils and parents to listen to understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.



FACILITATE SUPPORT

Remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. This might include an early help or whole family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues.



FORMALISE SUPPORT

Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners should work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances this may include formalising support through a parenting contract or education supervision order.



ENFORCE

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, enforce attendance through statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.

1. Expectations

We recognise that the relationship between attendance and achievement of our children is inextricably linked.

Regular school attendance is crucial to maximise pupil progress and enjoyment of learning, and for this reason the school is dedicated to ensuring its attendance policy is adhered to.

We will ensure that:

- All children have an equal right, and access to, an education in accordance with the national curriculum, or agreed alternative.
- Attendance is a priority across the school.
- We aspire to high standards on attendance.
- Children will not be deprived of their education opportunities by, either their own absence or lateness, or that of other children.
- Action is taken where necessary to secure an improvement in attendance.

2. Attendance data

We use SIMS within school to record a child's school attendance. We maintain these records in accordance with our statutory duties. We regularly analyse our attendance data to enable us to target attendance improvement efforts to the children or cohorts who need it most. As a result of this, some families will receive letters to inform them if their child's attendance is a cause for concern, families may be requested to provide medical evidence for illnesses or may also be invited in to discuss their child's attendance. We use our school attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) at the earliest opportunity so all parties can work together to resolve any issues.

3. Listening to and understanding barriers to attendance

We will always try to communicate with you regarding your child's attendance if it declines. We recognise that some children find it harder than others to attend school and therefore at all stages of improving attendance, we will work with children and parents alongside other partners, including the LA Attendance Improvement Team, to remove any barriers to attendance, build strong relationships and work together to put the right support in place.

4. Facilitate support

At Neville's Cross we aim to remove any attendance barriers in school and help children and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. The causes of absence are highly individual and can very quickly become entrenched. We will focus on preventing patterns of absence developing by promoting good attendance and positive attendance habits.

Early intervention will focus on ensuring patterns of absence do not become persistent. We will work with families to help remove any attendance barriers. We will listen to and understand the barriers to attendance when children are absent and aim to address any in-school or out of school barriers identified with the support of our partners in education and health. Support may be sought through an early help conversation, drawing upon the expertise of a wide range of

professionals and partners within the VCS (Voluntary and Community Sector) or may include support via TAF (Team around the Family) where an early help or whole family plan can be drafted to help address wider issues affecting attendance.

We will provide more targeted support for persistent and severe absentees, working in partnership as above and will also draw upon the expertise of our colleagues within the Attendance Team at the Local Authority.

4. Formalise support

Support will intensify where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with. School and partners will work together to explain the consequences clearly to parents and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances for continued poor attendance, this may include formalising support through a parenting contract, drawn up in conjunction with the LA Attendance team, with clear expectations for future attendance or education supervision order. We are committed to supporting children and parents, to ensure children at Neville's Cross get the very best education possible and therefore have the best life chances. All challenges made concerning absences, will be handled sensitively and in confidence.

5. Enforce

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, attendance may be enforced where necessary through statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.

Attendance Procedures and Absence Processes

Communication

The school requests that all parents please remember to report and explain the reasons for absence and to make sure your contact and emergency contact details are up to date.

It is vital, that school can contact parents if their child becomes unwell during the school day or in order to discuss the reasons for absence.

The school will analyse absence across the school. As a result of this, some families will receive letters to inform them if their child's absence is lower than it should be if no prior discussion has taken place (unless this is due to, for example medical needs). If we have concerns regarding your child's attendance then we may contact you by phone, letter, invite you to a meeting or make a visit to your home.

As a parent you may identify concerns about school attendance early on if you have seen a change in your child's attitude to school or in their willingness to attend. If this is the case, please share your concerns with us and we can work together to ensure that school attendance doesn't ever need to decline. The quicker that concerns are shared, the quicker they can be resolved.

The school will work with you to discuss ways that we can offer support in finding a way to improve attendance.

Attendance Procedures

On the first day and any further absence

If a child is ill or is absent for any reason, parents or carers are asked to phone the School Office, email or text giving a reason for the child's absence. If a child is absent from school and there is no message from home then school will phone home to inform parents that the child is not in school and enquire about a reason why.

Doctor and dentist appointments should be made outside of school time. If this is not possible, your child should miss the minimum amount of school time necessary. If they are well enough to come back to school following the appointment they need to.

Periods of extended absence

If a child's absence continues beyond 3 days then parents are requested to notify the school to update them. If a phone call, email or text is not received then the school will contact home to verify the absence.

If the school receives no reason for any absence then an unauthorised absence will be recorded. Continued absenteeism and unauthorised absences could result in more formal action.

Punctuality

Registration time is at **8.50am for all children** and **12:30pm** for Reception, **1:00pm** for Key Stage One and **1.15pm** for Key Stage Two. The pedestrian gates will be locked at 9:00am and following this time, all children must enter by the main entrance. It is so important for all children to be on time, as missing the first few minutes of any lesson can be disruptive and unsettling, both for children and for the rest of the class. If a child arrives in school up to 20 minutes after this time then a late mark will be recorded in the register (L). Registers will be closed at 9:10am and any children arriving after this time will be recorded as (U) which is a late after registers close mark and this is classed as an unauthorised absence (a number of these marks can also contribute to more formal action being considered).

If your child is late for school:

All children arriving late at school will be asked the reason for their lateness and this will be recorded on the school's attendance data base (SIMs).

- **If a child is late (after registers close) for school on a number of occasions;**
A letter will be sent home from school to parents to say their child's punctuality is causing some concern. An appointment with the Head will be offered to discuss ways that the school can offer support in finding a way improve this.
- **If lateness becomes persistent** with no identifiable reason –
A letter will be sent home from school with a specific appointment given to meet with Head Teacher or deputy head for a 'planning meeting'. This will aim to address any issues which may be behind this pattern of poor punctuality.
- **If the school continues to have concerns about a child's punctuality;**
Then a referral may be made to the Attendance Improvement Team to consider if more formal enforcement action is required.

Being late by 10 minutes every day for one year equates to approximately 33 hours or 6 school days!

Help & Support

If you need help with attendance, it is important that you contact school about the issues as soon as possible. The quicker we know what the problem is, the quicker that we can work together to solve it and put a plan together which will meet your child's needs and ensure your child can benefit from all that school has to offer. Where needed we can also involve other services to make sure that your child and your family gets the right support, at the right time from the right people.

Leave of Absence in Term Time

Head teachers are no longer able to grant leave of absence during term time **unless there are exceptional circumstances**. The school will consider each request of absence individually; taking into account the circumstances, such as; the nature of the event for which leave is sought, the child's prior attendance and any important events taking place in school at that time e.g. termly tests.

An application for leave of absence must be made well in advance via a form which is available from the school office or website. Where a leave of absence is granted, the head teacher will determine the number of days a child can be away from school. A leave of absence is granted entirely at the head teacher's discretion. As stated in the most recent DFE guidance on attendance, if an application for leave of absence is not made prior to the time of the required absence then the absence will be recorded as unauthorised regardless of circumstances.

Please note that absence will not be authorised under any circumstances during any period of public examinations or internal assessments.

Pupils with specific needs

In the development and implementation of this policy, our obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child have been considered. The specific needs of individual children and cohorts are carefully considered, our policy is applied fairly and consistently and consideration is taken to the individual needs of children and families who have specific and identified barriers to attendance

Children Missing from Education

If you move from the area and your whereabouts are unknown, the school can legally remove your child from the roll after 20 school days of unauthorised absence. It is **vital that if you keep school informed of any change of details** and regularly update them if details change. Your child may be at risk of losing their school place if your whereabouts are not known.

It is also important that emergency contact information is kept up to date and that if you are leaving the area, you provide details of where and how you can be contacted. If you do not do this and the school is unable to trace your child, this would be treated as a **safeguarding matter**.

Roles and Responsibilities

Governing Body:

As part of our school approach to maintaining high attendance, the governing body will:

- Ensure that the importance of attendance is made clear by promoting the relevant school policies and guidance directed to parents and staff.
- Annually review the school's attendance policy and ensure that all provisions are in place to allow school staff, parents, and students to implement the policy effectively.
- Ensure regular monitoring of attendance and coordinating provision and policies for attendance. Governor's meetings will review and discuss attendance issues that have arisen in order to be fully aware and supportive of expected attendance targets for the year.
- Ensure that the school is implementing effective means of recording attendance and organising that data, including for children who are educated off site.

School Leadership Team:

As part of our school approach to maintaining high attendance, the leadership team will:

- Be active in their approach to promoting good attendance with students and their parents.
- Ensure the school's teaching and learning experiences encourage regular attendance and that students are taught the value of high attendance for their own progression and achievement.
- Coordinate with the governing body to monitor the implementation of the policy and its effectiveness, with annual review of full policy.
- Ensure that all staff are up to date with the school's attendance policy and that staff are fully trained to recognise and deal with attendance issues.
- Ensure government legislation on attendance is complied with and that the leadership team are up to date with any legislation changes and how to implement them.
- Nominate or appoint a senior manager to take responsibility for overseeing and monitoring attendance provision and that this person has sufficient time and resources to give to the job.
- Report to the Governing Body each term on attendance records, data and provision.
- Ensure that systems to record and report attendance data are in place and working effectively.

Teachers and support staff:

As part of our school approach to maintaining high attendance, the teachers and support staff will:

- Be active in their approach to promoting good attendance with students and their parents.
- Ensure the school's teaching and learning experiences encourage regular attendance and that students are taught the value of high attendance for their own progression and achievement.
- Ensure the senior manager responsible for overseeing attendance and any other relevant personnel are kept fully aware of and up to date with any concerns relating to students that may impact on their attendance.
- Ensure compliance with regulation and guidance on attendance.

- Work professionally with parents, carers, students and relevant agencies to secure improvements in attendance via appropriate support or enforcement measures.
- Ensure understanding and are following the correct systems for recording attendance and that attendance is taken each lesson and session.

Parents / Carers:

As part of our school approach to maintaining high attendance, we expect that parents / carers will:

- Engage with their children's education – support their learning and take an interest in what they have been doing at school.
- Promote the value of good education and the importance of regular school attendance at home.
- Follow the procedures outlined in this policy regarding absences, ill health, medical or dental appointments, leave of absence in term time and punctuality.
- Do everything they can to prevent unnecessary school absences.
- Keep the school informed of any circumstances which may affect their child's attendance and work with staff in resolving any issues that may be having an impact on their child.
- Enforce a regular routine at home in terms of homework, bedtime etc so that the child is used to consistency and the school becomes part of that routine. It is vital that the child receives the same messages at home as they do at school about the importance of attendance.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What reasons will the school accept for absences?

- a. Illness
- b. Emergency dental / medical appointment (please make routine appointments after school or during the holidays)
- c. Day of religious observance
- d. Family bereavement

Except in the case of illness, you should ask for permission for your child to miss school well in advance, giving full details. In cases of recurring absences through illness you may be asked to produce a medical certificate.

2. What is unacceptable?

The school will not authorise absence for day trips, visiting relatives, shopping, birthdays or looking after brothers or sisters or any other family members.

3. I would like my child to have leave of absence for a supervised educational activity. What should I do?

The Head Teacher can approve educational activities, such as a sporting or music event (and this approval is implicit where the school has been involved in making the arrangements). A

request must be made in writing explaining the circumstances of the request. In considering the request the school will consider:

- a) The nature of the activity
- b) The benefits to the child
- c) The effect on the child's general education
- d) The amount of time requested
- e) The timing of the activity

The child must be supervised in the activity by someone authorised to do so in order to make the activity a successful, worthwhile and safe experience for the pupil.

4. I would like to apply for leave of absence for a family holiday. What should I do?

In accordance with Government legislation the Head Teacher of the school may not grant leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. The Head Teacher will determine the number of days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted and the child's current attendance record will always be taken into account. Any application will be carefully considered.

Requests for holidays for the following reason will not be authorised:

- a. cheaper cost of holiday
- b. availability of the desired accommodation
- c. poor weather experienced in school holiday periods
- d. overlap with beginning or end of term

The Head Teacher will respond to all requests for a leave of absence in writing giving the reasons for the decision. Holidays will NOT be authorised during periods of national tests, ie SATs. Parents can be issued with a fixed penalty notice for periods of unauthorised holidays.

5. I would like to apply for Exceptional Extended Leave of Absence. What should I do?

With the exception of family holidays and employment, schools have a discretionary power to grant a pupil time off school if they believe there is extenuating or compassionate reasons that justify leave. All applications must be made in writing and in advance by the parents. The Head Teacher has the power to refuse the whole period requested by the parents, grant part of the period and refuse the remainder, or grant the whole of the period requested. Any leave of absence granted by the school is recorded as authorised.

At Neville's Cross School all requests are treated on a case by case basis and will take into account:

- a. The amount of time requested
- b. The age of the pupil
- c. The pupil's general absence / attendance record
- d. Proximity to SATs
- e. Length of the proposed leave
- f. Pupil's ability to catch up the work

- g. Pupil's educational needs
- h. General welfare of the pupil
- i. Circumstances of the request
- j. Purpose of the leave
- k. Frequency of the activity
- l. When the request was made

Where extended leave of absence is granted there will be an expectation that the pupil either attends an alternative school or undertakes school work set during this period. The Head Teacher will respond to all requests for extended leave of absence in writing and give reasons for the decision. If the application is granted the Head Teacher will state the expected date of return and what action will be taken if the pupil fails to return when expected. Similarly, a letter refusing a request will explain the reasons for the refusal and what actions will be taken if the parents ignore the refusal and keep their child away. (In both cases unless the child is unable to attend the school by reason of sickness or any unavoidable cause, after 10 school days they will be removed from the register and the local authority informed.)

6. What can I do to encourage my child to attend School?

Make sure your child gets enough sleep and gets up in plenty of time each morning. Ensure that he /she leaves home in the correct clothes and properly equipped. Show your child, by your interest, that you value his / her education.

7. My child is reluctant go to School. What should I do?

Contact your child's class teacher immediately and openly discuss your worries. Your child could be avoiding school for a number of reasons – difficulties with school work, friendship problems, 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. In some cases, you may find it helpful to discuss the circumstances of your child's difficulties with an Attendance Officer. The school may also refer you to an Attendance Officer who works with staff and families if difficulties with attendance arise.

8. My child has a medical condition or special educational need/disability (SEND) which may impact on attendance, what should I do?

Contact us to discuss your concerns. We recognise, for some children, a long-term medical condition or specific SEND may mean regular medical appointments which can not be avoided. We also recognise that some impact on attendance due to more frequent illness and longer recovery periods may be experienced. We have the same high expectations of attendance for our children with medical needs or SEND and will work with you to develop the specific support you require, establish strategies to remove in school barriers for children and ensure joined-up pastoral care is in place. It is vitally important that good attendance habits are promoted.