



THE MINSTER SCHOOL

ATTENDANCE POLICY

School Lead: Assistant Head (Pastoral)

Governor Lead: Chair of SD&P Committee

Last approved: Spring 2021

Date of next review Spring 2023

Signed by Chair of Governors or Chair of Committee:

Handwritten signature of D. Shannon.

Date: 23/02/2021

This policy has been written with due regard to the school internal equality policy

Attendance Policy

Aims

The intention of the Minster School attendance policy is to encourage full attendance at school. This policy recognises that there is a clear link between attendance, motivation and achievement. Students with an excellent rate of attendance are likely to do better and enjoy school more than those with poorer attendance.

This policy fits with our school motto of 'succeeding together'. We recognise that good attendance is achieved in partnership between: school, students, parents/carers and, where necessary, other professionals. We all work together to remove barriers negatively impacting a child's school attendance.

How the school records attendance

- A child's attendance figure is judged by their session attendance, split into an AM and a PM mark.
- AM registration is from 8.50 – 9:00am, PM registration is managed through p4 lesson registration, taken no later than 1:30pm. Students arriving after 9:30am will be given a 'U' mark on the register which marks them as arriving late after the registers have closed.
- Class teachers are responsible for marking pupils late

Authorised and Unauthorised Absences

When a child does not attend school for a session their absence will be categorised as authorised or unauthorised. This decision may impact whether a further referral or a fine is issued (see appendices A).

Authorised absence is where the school accepts there is good reason for an absence in line with the guidance given by the Department for Education (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-attendance>).

Unauthorised absence is any absence which does not fall into the following categories:

- a) Education is provided off-site, arranged by the school
- b) An interview with a prospective employer, other school or college
- c) Participation in a supervised sporting activity
- d) Medical appointments
- e) Special authorised circumstances agreed by the school

In some cases, additional evidence may be requested when making the decision to authorise an absence. We are grateful for parent support in providing this information promptly.

Reporting absences

The reason for absences would normally be given by a note handed in to student services, a phone call to our absence line on 01636 817366 or an e-mail from parents/carers to attendance@minster.notts.sch.uk. **Parents must account for each day of an absence by contact with the school.**

Supporting Attendance

Good attendance benefits a student. In line with our motto *Succeeding Together* this section outlines the role of different stakeholders in supporting the best attendance possible.

School:

To support good attendance, the school will deliver a curriculum which is relevant, motivating and differentiated to the needs of learners, maintaining high expectations (communicated by staff in a variety of ways including punctuality, homework, marking, and extra-curricular activities), We will employ the school's systems of reward for achievement, personal as well as academic. We will use sympathetic re-integration strategies for long-term absentees.

The school will have appropriate systems and structures in place to support excellent attendance, including those outlined in the following section.

Student:

Students should strive to be the best they can be by striving for the best possible attendance and by being on time to school and to all lessons.

Parents:

We ask that parents/carers recognise the importance of regular attendance at school and seek their support in:

- Ensuring that, with the exception of illness, their child attends school every session
- Ensuring that their child arrives on time to every session
- Keeping school informed of a student's absence
- Responding to any absence enquiry letters, which are sent out by the school
- Attending Parents' Evenings

Teachers:

Students are registered for every lesson of the day using Lesson Monitor. Staff use SIMS to call up a register and having completed it, save it. This should be done in the first 10 minutes of the lesson.

Staff must not overwrite marks which have already been put into the register and must use one of only 3 codes:

- / Present
- N Absent
- L Late (the number of minutes late must also be recorded)

The Present code is used when students arrive late for a lesson with a note from another member of staff (e.g. Music Teacher or Nurse) explaining their lateness. A present code is also used when a bus arrives late, causing a student to be late for a lesson.

Teachers must inform the Attendance Officer in advance of alterations to normal student timetables, e.g. lists for trips, in-school events and provide suitable registers of students attending such events.

Attendance Officer:

The Attendance officer oversees the attendance systems in the school by:

- Monitoring absence on a daily and lesson by lesson basis and contacting parents/carers
- Processing manual registers for exams, trips and other activities
- Conducting a daily register audit (missing registers)
- Liaising with parents/carers re absence (receiving letters, phone calls, voicemail, e-mail or face to face)
- Generating daily messages to the parents/carers of students who have unexplained absence on the previous day when appropriate
- Writing to parents/carers on a weekly basis regarding any unauthorised absences which are between 1 and 2 weeks old
- Ensuring that absence information is correctly recorded including unauthorised absence for absences 3 weeks old or older
- Providing weekly Attendance Reports on a weekly basis for the pastoral team and Tutors and also for parents/carers and staff as required/requested
- Providing lists of students with poor attendance to Progress & Achievement Leaders on a regular basis
- Discussing with Progress & Achievement Leaders those students who need referring to other agencies, such as the Early Help Unit, and making referrals
- Sending termly communication to the parents/carers of students with particularly good attendance
- Ensuring that traditional registers are maintained and supporting the school census process

Tutors:

On a weekly basis, tutors can access the attendance data for their tutor group.

Tutors will:

- Remind students of the need for notes for whole sessions missed
- Monitor attendance data for patterns of concern including where safeguarding issues may exist
- Refer students with ongoing attendance or punctuality issues to pastoral team

Pastoral Support Assistants:

Pastoral Support Assistants will actively monitor attendance and punctuality of the students they are responsible for and put in place appropriate intervention to improve attendance/punctuality as required.

The Pastoral Support Assistants may also involve the Assistant Head (Pastoral) or the Behaviour for Learning Mentor when this is appropriate.

Pastoral Support Assistants will work closely with their associated Assistant Head to address attendance concerns.

Pastoral Support Assistants will meet half termly with the Attendance officer to monitor persistently absent students, this will then feed into the line management meeting with Assistant Head Pastoral.

Pastoral Support Assistants will support all aspects of promoting good attendance and punctuality in their allocated year group.

Assistant Head (Pastoral):

The Assistant Head monitors the overall attendance of students in the school through line management meetings with Pastoral Support Assistants. The Assistant Head will provide a termly report to governors and a half termly update to the school's senior leadership team.

Assistant Head (Curriculum):

The Assistant Head will monitor and approve as necessary all alterations to student curriculum timetables where alternative provision is appropriate. The Assistant Head will report on this as necessary.

PROCEDURES AND STRATEGIES

First Day Calling:

We recognise that good attendance at school helps to support good progress for students. We also know that a student missing from school is a possible indicator of a variety of safeguarding concerns including abuse and the risks of Child Sexual Exploitation. Missing from school is also a risk indicator for the threat of radicalisation and the new Prevent duty for schools makes clear that we must be alert to this threat.

When students are absent from school, with no reason provided for this absence, the Attendance Officer will contact home to discover why that student is absent. A text message will be sent to the parent/carer, please ensure all contact details are kept up to date, please inform any changes to: office@minster.notts.sch.uk.

Requests for term time absence:

Holidays should not be taken during term time as these are very disruptive to students' education. The school will only allow time off during term time in exceptional circumstances. In practice, all term time requests for time away from learning will be declined unless there are genuine and unavoidable circumstances where refusal to authorise would be detrimental to a child's emotional or physical health or development.

If a parent/carer believes that there are exceptional circumstances they should ask for a term time absence form from the Attendance Officer. Once this has been completed and returned to the Attendance Officer, they will receive written advice as to whether this request will be authorised or not. Parents/carers should only book holidays once they have been informed as unauthorised holidays will be recorded as unauthorised absence. Any such exceptional request should be made with as much notice as possible.

Internal Truancy:

Internal truancy is followed up by the Pastoral Team, investigating the reasons for students who are not present in lessons and issuing an after-school detention. The Attendance Officer will be informed and will record the absence as unauthorised.

Punctuality:

Students should be encouraged to be punctual for all lessons. A student will be marked late if he/she arrives after the register has been completed. Individual teachers and departments should follow-up punctuality issues within individual subject areas, the Pastoral Team focusing on the broader picture of punctuality across school for an individual and AM lateness.

Prolonged Absence:

After a lengthy absence returning to school can be difficult. Staff need to be sensitive to these difficulties. Support and help should be given with catching up on missed work and with settling back in to the school routine where students have missed extended periods of school.

Examples of strategies used where absence is prolonged:

- re-integration on a gradual and planned basis
- review of the student's timetable, grouping and tutor group
- a safe place for the student to work in or go to if necessary
- a named person to act as support and counsellor
- referral and support from the Family Service
- referral to the Educational Psychologist
- referral to the Health Related Education Team (HRET) to support reintegration

Rewards:

Certificates are presented each year to students with good attendance (100% and 98%). Tutor group's attendance will also be recognised with the best group each week being awarded a certificate as well as the most improved tutor group.

Appendix A: penalty notices

Documents referenced:

- Nottinghamshire Improving Attendance Toolkit, 2017
- Nottinghamshire Code of Conduct for Penalty Notices Issued in Respect of Truancy and Excluded Pupils, 2017

Head teachers can request that the Local Authority, through its Family Service, issue Penalty Notices on their behalf. In Nottinghamshire head teachers (or school staff authorised by them) can issue penalty notices.

The penalty is set at £120 and should be paid within 28 days of the date on which the notice starts. If the penalty is paid within 21 days of the date on which the notice starts the sum is reduced to £60. In line with the national requirements the notice is always payable to the Local Authority.

The Minster School issues penalty notices through the local authority. Requesting the penalty notice by letter to the Family Service. The school may issue penalty notices for the following reasons:

Persistent Absence

If the unauthorised absence is in excess of 3 days (6 sessions) over a 6 week rolling period then the school can issue or ask the Local Authority to issue Penalty Notices to each parent for each child to whom persistent absence applies.

In these cases the Local Authority may also consider what services or measures may be provided to prevent or reduce further unauthorised absence including support and interventions through the Family Service.

Holidays During School Term Time

If the school has evidence that a parent has removed a child from school for the purposes of a holiday during term time without authorisation and the level of absence is in excess of 3 days (6 sessions) in total over a 6 week rolling period, then the school can request the Local Authority to issue Penalty Notices to each parent for each child to whom unauthorised absence applies.

Persistent Lateness

A sanction be issued where a pupil is persistently late for 10 separate instances over a period of six school weeks and where these are signified as a "U" in the attendance register.

Schools should make it clear to parents/carers and pupils in their attendance policy what they categorise as being late ("L") and the time after which arrival will be marked as unauthorised absence ("U") in the attendance register.

The issuing of Penalty notices will be only in cases where the persistent lateness is marked as unauthorised absence.

Being in a public place during school hours within the first five days of a fixed term exclusion

A parent has to ensure that their child is not present in a public place during school hours without reasonable justification during the first five days of each and every fixed period or permanent exclusion.

Before requesting or issuing a Penalty Notice the school will need to evidence that they have checked that there was no reasonable justification for the child or young person being in a public place and that the parent had been told verbally or by letter that an excluded child cannot be seen in a public place.

Local Authority policy:

<https://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/media/127161/code-of-conduct-for-penalty-notices.pdf>

Appendix B: Leave of absence form

APPLICATION FOR LEAVE OF ABSENCE WHICH WILL RESULT IN MISSING LEARNING DURING TERM TIME

EVERY DAY COUNTS

Attached is an application form for you to request permission for your child to be absent from school. Before completing the application form, please read these notes carefully:

- The law states that you *do not have the right* to take your child out of school during term time. The Local Authority works with schools to reduce the numbers of children missing school because of holidays taken in term time and schools can refuse your request to take your child out of school.
- If you wish to take your child on holiday during term time, you must apply for permission in advance in writing using the attached form. Permission for authorised leave of absence may only be granted for holidays in exceptional circumstances.
- Guidance from the government state that absence for holidays in term time due to the following reasons will not be authorised:
 - availability of cheap holidays
 - availability of desired accommodation
 - poor weather experienced in the school holiday period
 - overlap with beginning or end of term
 - holidays booked before checking with the school
 - day trips
- There are certain times of the year when a child may experience extra problems because of missing school. These include examination periods, at the time of starting a new school and at the start of a new school term. In deciding whether to authorise your child's absence and give permission for a holiday in term time, the school will take these and other factors into account.
- If the school refuse your application and you still take your child out of school the absences will be treated as unauthorised. Unauthorised absences may lead to a Penalty Notice or a Summons being issued against you for irregular school attendance

In the light of the recent change by the Government to make it more difficult for schools to authorise time off school, The Local Authority have made clear that in determining whether circumstances are exceptional, consideration should be given to the following points:

- The likelihood that particular circumstance would recur
- That the circumstances mean that the holiday would significantly improve a child's health or wellbeing
- That the circumstances mean that the holiday would prevent a deterioration of a child's health or wellbeing
- That the circumstances mean that a child's educational development is unlikely to be impaired

Having read these notes, if you still wish to apply for a leave of absence for your child to accompany you on holiday during term time then please complete the application attached.

This form should be returned to your child's school as far in advance of the proposed holiday as possible.

APPLICATION BY PARENT/CARER FOR CHILD'S LEAVE OF ABSENCE FROM SCHOOL DURING TERM TIME WHICH WILL RESULT IN MISSING LEARNING

Pupil's Name Tutor Group/Class

Home Address

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I wish to apply for my child to be absent from school during the following dates:

Date of Last day at School Date of Return to School

Total number of school days missed

Could you please explain the circumstances that make it necessary to be away from school during term time? Please continue overleaf if necessary including how this time off will affect the health or wellbeing of your child.

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I make application for my child named above to have authorised absence from school for the reasons stated. I understand that if this is not agreed then any absence will be treated as unauthorised and may lead to the issue of a Penalty Notice or a Summons for irregular school attendance.

Name of Parent/Carer making application

Signed

Date

PLEASE RETURN COMPLETED APPLICATION FORM TO YOUR CHILD'S SCHOOL GIVING AT LEAST 4 WEEKS' NOTICE OF INTENDED ABSENCE

Please do not book your holiday until you know that the school will authorise your child's absence