



**Northern House
Academy**

Attendance Policy

Written	March 2021
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SLT Lead	R Willett
Signed: Head of School	_____
Chair of Trustees	_____

Aims

For a child to reach their full educational achievement, a high level of school attendance is essential. Northern House Academy aims to maintain attendance levels of 95% or more.

This policy has been developed in consultation with teachers, County Attendance Team, parents and carers. School attendance is subject to various Education laws and the school attendance policy is written to reflect these laws and the guidance produced by the Department for Education (DfE).

It seeks to ensure that all parties involved in the practicalities of school attendance are aware and informed of attendance matters in school and to outline the school's commitment to attendance matters. It outlines the responsibilities of individuals and groups involved and the procedures in place to promote and monitor pupil attendance.

Attendance

Northern House Academy expects good attendance from its students in order for them to make the most of the opportunities that the school has to offer. We rely on our partnership with parents to ensure that this is achieved.

We ask parents to help the school by notifying us of all absences on the first day if possible, but always to ensure that any absence is covered by a note on your child's return to school. Any absence which is known in advance, e.g. doctors appointment, should be notified to the school in writing beforehand. If absence from school is unavoidable, due to special family circumstances, it may be appropriate for the school to provide a Remote Learning pack, with support from the Therapeutic Support Team.

Our school day starts at 8.50am. Registers are marked shortly after this in line with safeguarding procedures.

Absence

All schools must show the difference between authorised and unauthorised absence. This is a government requirement.

Authorised absence can be:

- Sickness
- Medical or dental appointments - which cannot be arranged outside school hours. It would not be expected that this would take a whole day, but part of a morning or afternoon session
- Days of religious observance

Should an explanation be deemed unsatisfactory then the absence will be recorded as unauthorised.

Unauthorised absence can be:

- Truancy
- Staying at home to look after younger students or sick relatives
- Any absence, which the school has not been informed about, either by letter or telephone
- Any family holiday which is taken in term time
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Children who arrive at school too late to get a mark
- Shopping or birthdays
- Day trips
- Excessive illness without medical evidence

Whilst any child may be off school because they are ill, sometimes they can be reluctant to attend school. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents and the child. If your child is reluctant to attend, never cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This gives the impression that attendance does not matter and can make the situation worse.

You can support your child by:

- Ensuring regular and early bed times
- Helping with homework
- Having uniform and equipment prepared the night before
- Providing a healthy breakfast
- Reporting any academic or social concerns promptly
- Retaining open & honest communication with your child's school
- Being positive about school (even if your own experience was less than positive)
- Encouraging your child to invite friends home for play dates

Celebrating good attendance

Students are praised for good attendance and we have a number of rewards in place for positive attendance. There are also prizes at the end of every school term for students whose attendance is consistently high or has significantly improved.

Monitoring attendance

Attendance is monitored on a daily basis and class groups and percentage figures are monitored on a weekly basis. The Student Wellbeing and Therapeutic Support Manager is responsible for this monitoring.

Teachers will note both authorised and unauthorised absences in the registers and this is followed up by the Student Wellbeing and Therapeutic Support Manager.

Any concerns that the school believes needs additional support to ensure students maintain excellent attendance will be brought to the attention of the school's County Attendance Officer who has the authority to issue penalty notices or fines.

Improving attendance

The school has targets to improve attendance and your child has an important part to play in meeting these targets. The minimum level of attendance for this school is 95% attendance and we will keep you updated regularly about progress to this level and how your child's attendance compares. Our target is to achieve better than this however because we know that good attendance is the key to successful schooling. Through the school year we monitor absences and punctuality to show us where improvements need to be made. Information on any projects or initiatives that will focus on these areas will be shared with you regularly.

Persistent Absence

A pupil becomes a 'persistent absentee' (PA) when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for **whatever reason**. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any child's educational prospects and we need parents' fullest support and co-operation to tackle this.

The school monitors all absence thoroughly. Any case that is seen to have reached the PA mark **or** is at risk of moving towards that mark is given priority and parents will be informed of this immediately.

PA students are tracked and monitored carefully by the school and a parenting contract meeting will be offered between parent, pupil and school to try and help resolve any issues.

All our PA pupils and their parents are subject to an Action Plan and the plan may include: allocation of additional support through a Mentor or a Pastoral Support Worker, use of circle time, individual incentive programmes and participation in group activities around raising attendance. All PA cases are also automatically made known to the County Attendance team. If your child becomes a PA pupil, we will seek your consent to complete an Early Help Assessment with you and consider convening a Team Around the Family.

First Day Response

If a student is absent from school and we have not been informed, either by telephone or letter, a phone call home will be made to establish the reasons for the absence. This will happen on the **first day of your child's absence from school**.

For students living in the Oxford area, if they have a medical/ dental appointment, we do not expect them to take a full day off school. If they have a slight illness e.g.:

headache, stomach ache etc, a date for a likely return to school will be asked for. If the reason given does not warrant an authorised absence, you will be advised on how to avoid unauthorised absence in the future.

It will also be explained that a major factor in making these calls is to ensure that the student concerned is safe. All phone calls are made with the utmost consideration of the needs and feelings of the recipient and politeness is a primary factor.

If we are unable to make contact by telephone, a letter will be sent home requesting an explanation for the absence. Any pattern of regular absentees will be identified and support will be offered by the school, in finding solutions for raising attendance. Many problems such as bullying or family difficulties can therefore be detected early and support given to students and parents to address these issues swiftly.

Telephone numbers

There are times when we need to contact parents about lots of things, including absence, so we need to have your current contact numbers at all times. So, help us to help you and your child by making sure we always have an up-to-date number – if we don't have the correct phone number, then something important may be missed. There will be regular checks on telephone numbers throughout the year.

The County Attendance Team

Parents are expected to contact school at an early stage and to work with the staff in resolving any problems together. This is nearly always successful. If difficulties cannot be sorted out in this way, the school may refer the child to the County Attendance Team at the Local Authority. At the school's request, they may issue a Penalty Notice per parent/carer, per child (currently £60 rising to £120 if unpaid after 21 days. If unpaid after 28 days a summons to Court will be issued for each unpaid Penalty Notice for prosecutions in the Magistrates Court. This can result in a criminal record and a fine of up to £2,500, a Community Order, Parenting Order or 4/6 (ultimately a custodial sentence). The legislation is the Education Act 1996 sec. 444(1) and 444(1A).

Parents that have previously been issued with Penalty Notices for their children's unauthorised absences, in the event of further unauthorised absences, may receive summonses to Court.

“If any child of compulsory school age who is a registered pupil at a school fails to attend regularly at the school, his/her parent is guilty of an offence.”

Alternatively, parents or children may wish to contact the County Attendance Team themselves to ask for help or information. They are independent of the school and will give impartial advice. Their telephone number is 01865 323513
attendance@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Exceptional Leave

Taking holidays in term time will affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking children away in school time. Remember that any savings you think you may make by taking a holiday in school time are offset by the cost to your child's education.

There is **no** automatic entitlement in law to time off in school time to go on holiday.

1. It is widely known that the link between a student's attendance and attainment is undeniable.
2. Early poor attendance habits follow through into secondary school, further education and employment.
3. All schools in Oxfordshire are encouraged to adopt a policy of not authorising Exceptional Leave.
4. A senior member of staff will meet personally with every family applying for Exceptional Leave to stress the importance of good school attendance habits and links between attendance & attainment.
5. Exceptional Leave is most unlikely to be authorised in Years 2 and 6
6. Exceptional leave is most unlikely to be authorised when a student's attendance is less than 95%.
7. Exceptional leave should always be refused when school is aware of any truancy.
8. Exceptional leave should always be refused when requests are regular (annual) or when patterns become identifiable.
9. Reasons for Exceptional Leave should be logged on the pupil's record and shared as part of the transfer/transition process.

The County Attendance Team can issue Penalty Notices for any unauthorised 'Exceptional Leave'. Penalty Notices can be issued to each parent/carer concerned. Please note that it will be per parent per child. Payment within 21 days of receipt of notice is £60 and £120 if paid after this period but within 28 days. If the Penalty Notice remains unpaid after 28 days you will each receive a summons to Oxford Magistrates Court. If unauthorised leave is repeated the County Attendance Team may summons each parent to Court without a Penalty Notice being issued.

Please remember

1. Email office@northernhouseacademy.co.uk or ring the school, if at all possible, on the first day of absence on 01865 557004.
2. Or send a written message when your child returns to school.