

# NORTH GOSFORTH ACADEMY

## ATTENDANCE POLICY

### NORTH GOSFORTH ACADEMY ATTENDANCE REPORT AND ACTION PLAN 2022/23 - 2023/24

Key priorities:

- To have high expectations for individual student attendance and the attendance level of the whole school. Our expectation is that students achieve a minimum of 96%.
- Ensure that all students attend school regularly so that they can achieve their full potential.
- To have clear attendance procedures that are effective, concise and link in with our safeguarding policy.
- Identify students between 91% - 95% and provide support and interventions to prevent them becoming Persistent Absentees.
- To work closely with parents/carers to overcome any barriers that are preventing their child from attending school regularly.
- Identify barriers to learning and provide appropriate support utilising the skills of all departments and using a whole school approach.
- Work closely with agencies to support students and ensure that referrals are timely and relevant.
- Refer to the Local Authority for support in Persistent Absence cases where appropriate.
- To celebrate excellent and improved attendance individually, within Registration and Year Groups and as a Whole School.

#### Attendance Data

Comparative Attendance Data		
2017/2018	90.53%	
2018/2019	89.81%	
2019/2020	90.18%	Impacted by Covid
2020/2021	90.94%	Impacted by Covid
2021/2022	90%	
2022/2023	88%	



Actions and Strategies to improve attendance:

- First Day Contact for all students who are absent without a reason with priority given to the students identified as vulnerable
- Home visits where contact is not made to establish the reasons for absence and to identify any barriers to attending school and providing support to overcome these
- Follow the PRAISE Code Attendance Pyramid for all students who are falling below the expected attendance level of 96%, sending out letters to the parents of identified students and arranging meetings with parents when necessary
- Keep punctuality to school at the forefront of our expectations for all students. Those that are late sign in at Student Reception and sanctions will be applied through the PRAISE Code.
- Liaison with multi agencies where needs are identified so that students and parents / carers are supported appropriately
- Use Data Analysis to identify developing patterns of irregular attendance and lateness, those at risk of becoming PA and implement action plans to address these issues
- Work with employment agencies, Connexions etc. to hold assemblies for Year 10's and 11's around the importance of attendance at school and subsequently in the world of work, training and further education
- Continue to support students and parents around issues affecting attendance.
- Identifying barriers to learning at an early stage and implement strategies and support to help students overcome those.
- Continue to have high expectations of all our students and reward good attendance through our PRAISE Code
- To have a consistent and fair approach regarding attendance expectations. We continually review our strategies and interventions to ensure that they are relevant, effective and reflect good practice at all times.
- Pastoral Team providing Welfare Calls in place of First Day Contact
- Home visits where concerns are identified



## **Attendance Policy**

North Gosforth Academy expects all students to aim for 100% attendance. We know there is a strong correlation between good attendance and attainment across the school. Our aim is to encourage and maintain high levels of attendance. By achieving this we believe students are given access to high quality teaching and learning opportunities. This allows students to leave school with better qualifications and access to greater employment opportunities. The school strives to provide a welcoming, caring environment, whereby each member of the school community feels safe, valued, happy, accepted, and included. Our goal is that all students reach their full potential.

### **Introduction**

The school will regularly review its systems for improving attendance to ensure that it is achieving set goals. As a school, we will promote good attendance and ensure that our teaching and learning encourages regular attendance. Pupils will be taught the value of high attendance for their own personal progression and achievement. We will use incentives and rewards that acknowledge the efforts of students to improve their attendance and punctuality. The school will maintain effective and efficient communication with students, parents/carers and appropriate agencies to provide information, advice, guidance and support in regards to school attendance. Likewise the school will challenge the behaviour of those students and parents/carers who give low priority to attendance and punctuality.

### **Aims**

- To maintain high standards of attendance of students registered at the school;
- To make attendance and punctuality a priority for all those associated with the school including students, parents/carers, staff and governors;
- To develop a framework which defines agreed roles and responsibilities and promotes consistency in carrying out designated tasks;
- To provide support, advice and guidance to parents/carers and students;
- To develop a systematic approach to gathering and analysing attendance related data;
- To further develop positive and consistent communication between home and school;
- To promote effective partnerships with the Local Authority's Attendance Team and with other services and agencies;
- To recognise the needs of the individual student when planning reintegration following significant periods of absence;



- To reduce the number of students who have more than 4% overall absence and reduce the number of persistent absentees, that is those whose attendance falls below 90%.

### **Why regular attendance is so important**

For our students to gain the greatest benefit from their education a high level of school attendance is vital. We will work with students and their parents/carers towards achieving the goal of attending school each day it is open and arriving on time. Every opportunity will be used to convey to students and their parents/carers the importance of regular and punctual attendance. Ensuring their child's regular attendance at school is a parents/carers legal responsibility. Our schools' attendance policy is written to reflect the various laws to which school attendance is subject to.

### **Promoting regular attendance**

To ensure that parents/carers are aware of school attendance procedures and their parental responsibility for their child's attendance and punctuality the school will:

- Give information on attendance and punctuality in the Principal's newsletter and on the school website;
- Ensure school attendance is visible around the school, ensuring data is relevant and accurate;
- Each tutor group competes against other tutor groups within the year for the best attendance on a weekly basis. League tables are displayed in the main corridor area of the school;
- Competitions amongst students, tutor groups and year groups are used to promote good attendance. Rewards are attached to these competitions;
- Involve parents from the earliest stage of poor attendance;
- Encourage all parents to visit school via appointment;
- Provide information in a user-friendly way (which may include languages other than English, Braille and non-written);
- Make contact by telephone or text, using designated school staff, on the first day of absence if contact has not been made by parents/carers;
- Include parents/carers in reintegration plans;
- Make full use of computer generated letters regarding attendance and punctuality;
- Promote expectation of absence letters/phone calls from parents;
- Implement the Traffic Light system for attendance.



To ensure that students are aware of the importance of good attendance and punctuality the school will:

- Establish and maintain a high profile for attendance and punctuality;
- Relate attendance issues directly to the school's values, ethos and curriculum;
- Hold an induction evening for parents/students;
- Display materials at focal points – the school link etc;
- Reward students termly for 100% attendance via PRAISE Code;
- Record 'lates' to school and 'lates' to lessons;
- Include students in reintegration plans;
- Highlight attendance in registration, PHSCE and assemblies;
- Record attendance in the planner of each student each week using a RAG rated system;

To raise the profile of attendance and punctuality to school staff/members of the Advisory Group we will:

- Relate attendance issues directly to the school's values, ethos and curriculum;
- Provide information regarding attendance in the staff handbook and on the school website;
- Provide appropriate training and guidance for appointed/promoted staff/new tutors;
- Produce annual reports to the advisory board;
- Discuss attendance issues in attendance/pastoral staff meetings as well as any other relevant staff meetings (for example attendance review meetings, pastoral management meetings, multi-agency meetings).

### **How we define 'attendance'**

Every absence from school has to be classified by the school as either 'authorised' or 'unauthorised'. It is important for parents and carers to advise the school for each absence so this can be done accurately.

- **Authorised absences** are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason, such as illness or medical appointments which unavoidably fall in school time.
- **Unauthorised absences** are those, which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been approved. This type of absence can lead to the local authority using sanctions and/or legal proceedings. Unauthorised absences include, but are not limited to :



- Parents keeping children off school unnecessarily
  - Truancy before or during the school day
  - Absences which have not been clearly explained
- **Late Arrivals:** Poor punctuality is not acceptable. If students are late at the start of the day they can miss work and do not spend time with their class teacher/tutor receiving vital information and news for the day. Late arriving students also disrupt lessons, this can be embarrassing for the student and can also encourage absence:
- The school day starts at 8.40am and we expect students to be in registration at that time. Any student who arrives after 8.40am is considered late;
  - Afternoon registration is at the start of period 4;
  - Morning registers are marked by 8.45am;
  - Lateness to school will result in a formal written warning (planner comment) and a thirty minute after school detention held the same day. This time may increase for persistent lateness;
  - Should it be deemed necessary students may be placed on a punctuality report to monitor their punctuality;
  - If a student is late into school they must report to main reception to sign in. They should also report to the attendance officer to highlight they have arrived late to school. Failure to do so will result in a further sanction;
  - Registers will be closed at 9.30am. In accordance with regulations, if students arrive after that time they will receive a mark that shows them to be on site, but this will not count as a present mark and it will mean they have an unauthorised absence. This may mean that parents of compulsory school age students could face the possibility of a referral to the Local Authority and face legal sanctions if the problem persists;
  - If a student has a persistent late record parents/carers will be asked to meet with their child's relevant Head of Year and/or Attendance Officer to resolve the problem. Parents/carers can approach the school at any time if they are having problems in ensuring their child arrives to school on time.
  - Students as well as parents/carers should be aware that persistent lateness will be dealt with using the same procedure as unauthorised absences.



- **Persistent Absentees (PA)** are those pupils whose attendance falls below 90%. Student progress is carefully monitored by pastoral staff, with a view to preventing students from falling into this category. Absence at this level is doing considerable damage to any student's educational prospects and we need parents/carers fullest support and co-operation to ensure their child does not enter this category.

### **Absence Procedures – in all cases**

Parents/carers are required to contact school on the first day of their child's absence, this contact should be made by telephone on (0191) 236 1704. This telephone has a 24 hour answering service. They should advise of the reason for the absence and a likely day/date when they expect their child to return to school.

Parents/carers should report absences for every day their child does not attend school. If no contact is made, or reason given, the Attendance Officer will contact the home by means of a text message or phone call. If an acceptable response is not received, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised, and a letter sent home to confirm this. It should be noted that parents/carers can call into school to report an absence at reception, however it is preferable that contact is made via telephone

Upon the student returning to school a note is required to be provided to the Attendance Officer. This note should provide an explanation for the absences and the dates the student did not attend school. The student will initially meet and discuss their absence with their tutor. Should there be further concerns the student will meet with their Head of Year and/or Attendance Officer.

Whilst any student may be absent from school due to genuine illness, there are some occasions where they can be reluctant to attend. Any problems with regular attendance are best sorted out between the school, the parents/carers and the student. If a student is reluctant to attend, it is inappropriate to 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 exacerbate the situation.

If a student is absent, on the first day of absence we will:

- Mark the absence in line with statutory guidance with authorisation being at the discretion of the Principal. The Attendance Officer will gather the information regarding the absence and mark the register appropriately giving consistency and allowing for more effective data



interrogation. The reasons given for absence will be noted on the school system by the Attendance Officer;

- Mark the absence as unauthorised in the first instance if no reason for absence has been given;
- Telephone and/or text parents/carers on the first day of absence if we have not received a reason. A member of administration staff will make contact with the parents/carers of those students that are marked absent in registration and whose parents have not made contact with school. This begins no later than 09.30am.
- Any missing students' names are sent to their Head of Year and the Assistant Principal.
- If telephone contact is not made and there are absences with no reason given, then a letter will be sent out by the Attendance Officer requesting the information regarding the absence of a child within one week of the absence.

### **Frequent Absence**

If a student is frequently absent we will:

- Contact parents/carers and students to see if support can be given to deal with any issues causing absence;
- Invite parents/carers into school to discuss the situation with our Attendance Outreach Officer/Attendance Officer and Pastoral Team if absences persist;
- Refer the matter to the Attendance Officer if the attendance of a student moves below 90%, for consideration for pastoral support;
- Place a student whose attendance falls below 96% on the traffic light system;
- Invite parents/carers and students in for a reintegration meeting with their Head of Year and Attendance Officer if a significant amount of school has been missed;
- Ask for further medical information if illness is given as a reason for absence on a regular basis. Please note that we will not authorise absence for illness which means a student's attendance level falls below 90% unless supporting medical evidence is provided;

### **Traffic Light System**

North Gosforth Academy operates a 'traffic light system' to make parents/carers and students aware of the implications of poor attendance. We consider that students who have over 96% attendance to be attending well and in our green zone. Those who fall below 96% down to 91% have attendance that is a concern and are placed in the amber category. These parents will be contacted by letter. Those students with below 90% attendance are classed as persistently absent and can be referred to the Local Authority. These students are placed in the red category and will be closely monitored.





Parents/carers of those main school students failing to achieve above 90% in this period will be invited into school to meet with a member of the pastoral team and/or the Attendance Officer. Should improvements not be forthcoming and attendance does not rise to at least 90%, then legal proceedings with the local authority are likely to commence.

### **Leave in term time**

Students should not take holidays or seek leave of absence in term time. Any requests need to be made at least two weeks in advance on the school absence request form (available from the main reception). Please note that only the school has the right to authorise absence and, in line with statutory guidelines, the school will only authorise such absence in exceptional circumstances. The Principal (or representatives) has the discretion to determine 'exceptional circumstances'. Under all normal circumstances the 'representatives' of the Principal will be the Vice Principal or Assistant Principal. The Principal will reply to all applications stating whether or not the absence has been agreed. If leave is not granted, the reason for not authorising a request must be clearly stated, as well as the possible consequences for disregarding the refusal. The following factors will be taken into account:

- How long the absence will be;
- The time of year the student will be absent and the likely disruption this may cause (for example, requests for leave at the start of the school year or when examinations are taking place are unlikely to be authorised.);
- Previous similar requests (except in exceptional circumstances, no second request will be granted in the same academic year.);
- Where the Principal (or representative) considers that the absence will prove to be otherwise detrimental to the child's education, for example, if the attendance record is already at a low level;

If a parent/carer removes their child from school without requesting a leave of absence, or without authorisation from the Principal, the parent will be informed in writing that a referral is being made to the Local Authority requesting a Penalty Notice to be issued if the student is removed from school for 10 or more sessions. Failure to pay a Penalty Notice could lead to prosecution at Magistrates Court. The request for a Penalty Notice will be made within 4 weeks of the student's return to school and will be issued per parent, per child.



Leave in term time will affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents/carers to help us by not arranging to take children away in school time. We remind parents/carers 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. Amendments to the 2006 regulations (as of September 2013) remove references to family holiday and extended leave as well as the statutory threshold of ten school days. The amendments make it clear that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are 'exceptional circumstances'.

In making a decision the school will consider the circumstances of each application individually. Any period of leave taken without the agreement of the school, or in excess of that agreed, will be classed as unauthorised and may attract the aforementioned sanctions. School term dates are as advertised by the school on the school website. Parents/carers are notified of any modifications by newsletter at various points in the academic year.

### **Notifying social care**

The school must notify social care:

- If there is any unexplained absence of a pupil with a Child Protection Plan of more than two days (consecutive) duration from school, or one day following a weekend; or as agreed as part of any child protection or core group plan.
- If there are any concerns relating to the absence of a student which the school feel needs intervention by social care.

### **Attendance procedures for staff**

All staff have a responsibility for monitoring the attendance of students. They may refer attendance concerns to Tutors, Heads of Year, Achievement Leaders and Curriculum Leaders where appropriate. Time may be wasted by following up non-attendance issues that other staff are already aware of. This can portray school in a bad light and may cause unnecessary stress to students and parents/carers. Staff must pass on all attendance information to the Attendance Officer. Staff should remember that some pupils are vulnerable and all students should be welcomed back from absence in a positive manner.



## **Registration**

Tutors and class teachers will mark a student as present, late or unauthorised absence (/ present am, \ present pm, L late or N absent). The accuracy of registers will be monitored by the Attendance Officer and Assistant Principal. All staff have a responsibility to complete a register accurately, and as early in the lesson as is practical, for every class they teach. Any issues with registers will be taken to senior management for further action. A school register is a legal document that must be completed with accuracy.

## **Communication with students**

Tutors and Heads of Year are responsible for the promotion of high standards of achievement. This is done through regularly monitoring indicators of student progress such as attendance. They complete regular 'informed conversations' with students where targets are set and reviewed and punctuality and attendance discussed (see staff handbook). All staff must maintain the PRAISE Code system - rewards are issued termly for 100% attendance and punctuality. 'Lates' to school and 'lates' to lessons are recorded in planners by staff.

Staff should be aware of issues that may impact on a student's attendance such as low self-esteem or other personal issues and refer/discuss appropriate actions with the most relevant member of the pastoral team.

## **Attendance procedures for staff with pastoral responsibilities**

The Assistant Principal, Heads of Years and Tutors will, where relevant:

- Carry out initial enquiries/intervention prior to referral to other agencies or members of school staff;
- Be familiar with the Attendance Officer's referral and recording system;
- Gather and record relevant information to assist completion of Attendance Team referral forms;
- Have priority given to timetabled meetings with Attendance Officer;
- Respond to lateness by speaking to both students and parents/carers;
- Discuss attendance issues in Attendance/Pastoral staff meetings and in relevant staff meetings (for example, attendance review meetings, pastoral management meetings, multi-agency meetings);



- The relevant Head of Year will meet with the Attendance Officer once per week to discuss attendance related matters. Once per fortnight the Assistant Principal will attend this meeting;
- The Assistant Principal will meet with the Attendance Outreach Officer and Attendance Officer once per fortnight to identify developing patterns of irregular attendance and lateness, those at risk of becoming PA and action plans to address these issues;
- The Assistant Principal will keep a running total for all students who have < 90% cumulative attendance to monitor trends, and reasons given for absence. This will form the basis of a discussion between them and the Attendance Officer.

The Senior Leadership Team will:

- Be given protected time allocation to fulfil their responsibilities regarding attendance and punctuality;
- Be responsible for monitoring consistency in registration procedures;
- Be responsible for ensuring that all staff are trained to use the electronic registration system;
- Be responsible for disseminating attendance data to the Advisory Group;
- Work with the Attendance Officer to analyse data by vulnerability factors, absence categories, classes and year group and to relate attendance data with attainment data;
- Regularly review attendance data and procedural issues and have a written plan of action to improve attendance included in the school improvement plan;
- Ensure there is a governor with responsibility for attendance matters; and
- Work with the Attendance Officer to develop strategies to deal with issues that arise through consultations with staff or data analysis.

### **Attendance monitoring procedures**

Parents should be aware that legal action is likely to be taken if attendance or punctuality for students of compulsory school age falls below the threshold of 90%.

Parents/carers will be invited into school if their son or daughter's attendance falls below 90% or if there are concerns arising from regular poor attendance. If, following this meeting, a student's attendance does not improve the school may consider making a referral. A letter containing a four week monitoring period will be sent from the Local Authority. If the student has five or more half day sessions of unauthorised absence in the monitoring period then the local authority will make a decision either to take no further action, issue a Fixed Penalty Notice or referral for prosecution.



## **Attendance Outreach Officer and Attendance Officer**

An Attendance Outreach Officer is employed through Clennell Educational Solutions and an Attendance Officer is employed directly by the school. Their duties are to:

- Respond daily to registration printouts from the admin assistant (attendance) for students who are missing without reason or have an unsatisfactory reason for absence. Checks should be completed for both morning and afternoon registration. This supports the completion of 'first response'. This will be carried out by text and/or telephone;
- Provide lists of all students with attendance of 90% or under for the fortnightly meetings with the Assistant Principal;
- Provide lists of all students with attendance of 93% or under for the weekly meetings with the Heads of Year;
- Maintain records of students with poor attendance, highlighting concerns as well as support and intervention implemented;
- Provide list of all students' attendance to the relevant form tutor on a weekly basis. This should be RAG rated in accordance with the traffic light system.
- Check all individual registration certificates on a regular basis to check on levels of attendance and absence patterns;
- Where a pupil has not returned to school within a week, and no contact has been made, a home visit will be carried out by pastoral staff, to identify the reasons for the absence and determine the appropriate course of action.
- Produce half termly reports to Tutors and the Pastoral Team with class and year group attendance and targets;
- Ensure that information regarding students with attendance issues identified by feeder school Attendance Officers is passed on to relevant pastoral staff;
- Carry out regular post registration truancy checks by looking at lesson marks;
- Continue with the current system so that letters can be sent electronically on a termly basis;
- Work with Heads of Year to identify appropriate parents/carers to be invited to attendance intervention meetings;
- Request further medical information by letter from parents who regularly attribute their child's absence to illness;
- Refer cases for legal monitoring to the Local Authority;
- Give evidence in attendance meetings/court hearings in cases that have been referred for legal proceedings and contribute to the effective use of statutory measures where appropriate and to be involved in decisions regarding the use of such powers;



- Work with the Senior Leadership Team to analyse data by vulnerability factors, absence categories and class/year groups;
- Work with the Senior Leadership Team to develop strategies to deal with issues that arise through consultations with staff/data analysis;
- Work with school staff to identify appropriate students that require flexible learning opportunities.

Parents/carers 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 case to the Attendance Officer from the Local Authority. They will also try to resolve the situation by agreement but, if other ways of trying to improve the student's attendance have failed and unauthorised absences persist, this Officer can use sanctions such as Fixed Penalty Notices (per parent, per child), or prosecutions in the Magistrates Court. Full details of the options open to enforce attendance at school are available from the Local Authority. Alternatively, parents/carer or children may wish to contact the Attendance Officer themselves to ask for help or information. He or she is independent of the school and will give impartial advice.

### **Dealing with attendance in the wider community**

We work across our feeder schools to promote good attendance and punctuality. We encourage active involvement of other services and agencies in the life of the school. We have established and maintain a list of named contacts within the local community for example the neighbourhood Police beat manager. We arrange multi-agency liaison meetings as appropriate.

### **Children Missing from Education**

The term "missing from education" now applies if a student:

- Has left school without permission during the school day and their whereabouts is unknown;
- They have not attended school as expected by their parent / carer and their whereabouts is unknown.

In these cases the school will take steps to identify the reasons for the absence. This will include trying to contact parents/carers and making a home visit if necessary. Parents/carers may be invited into school to discuss the absence.

If staff consider the child to be at risk, the Missing Child Protocol will be completed and appropriate agencies informed.



Staff will make every attempt to clarify the situation before the end of that school day. If that cannot be achieved, the Missing Child Protocol will be completed and appropriate agencies informed.

**Parents'/carers' responsibilities:**

Parents have a duty to ensure that their children of compulsory school age are receiving efficient full-time education. Some parents may elect to educate their children at home and may withdraw them from school at any time to do so, unless they are subject to a School Attendance Order. Where a parent notifies the school in writing of their intention to home educate, the school must inform the Local Authority, before deleting the student from its admission register. If there are safeguarding concerns around the decision to home educate, these will be passed on to the Local Authority.

There are many reasons why a child stops attending a school. It could be because the parent chooses to home educate their child. However, where the reason for a child who has stopped attending a school is not known, the local authority must investigate the case and ensure the child is receiving suitable education.

'Suitable education' means efficient full-time education suitable to the child's age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs the child may have.

A child reaches compulsory school age on or after their fifth birthday. If they turn 5 between 1 January and 31 March they are of compulsory school age on 31 March; if they turn 5 between 1 April and 31 August they are of the compulsory school age on 31 August. If they turn 5 between 1 September and 31 December, then they are of compulsory school age on 31 December. A child continues to be of compulsory school age until the last Friday of June in the school year that they reach sixteen.

**School's responsibilities:**

Schools must also notify the Local Authority if a pupil is to be deleted from the admission register. It is also important that pupils' irregular attendance is referred to the authority.

Schools also have safeguarding duties under section 175 of the Education Act 2002 in respect of their pupils, and as part of this should investigate any unexplained absences.



Schools must also arrange full-time education for excluded pupils from the sixth school day of a suspension, or the first day if the child is a Looked After Child (LAC). This information can be found in the exclusion policy.

## **Targets**

The school has targets in place to improve attendance. Parents/carers and students have an important part to play in meeting these targets. Targets for the school are displayed around school and students should take time to study them.

The attendance target for North Gosforth Academy is 96% attendance. As a school we will keep parents/carers updated regularly about progress to this level and how each individual student'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 provided in our newsletter and we ask for your full support.

## **Summary**

The school has a legal duty to publish its absence figures to parents and to promote attendance. Equally, parents have a legal responsibility to make sure that their children attend school regularly. All school staff are committed to working with parents/carers and pupils to ensure the highest level of attendance possible.

**APPROVED by the Board of Trustees on 19 October 2023**

