



Northern Lights
LEARNING TRUST

Northern Lights Learning Trust

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Review Date:	Autumn 2022
Next Review Date:	Autumn 2023
Person in Charge:	CEO
Governance:	Chair of Board

The quality of relationships between all members of school staff and pupils, and the relationship with parents and carers is the area that is most commonly associated with the ethos of the schools in our Trust. It is expressed in the terms of sharing and caring.

In the Church schools in our Trust, we follow the teachings of

Matthew 22:39 'Love your neighbour as yourself'

John 15:17 'This is my commandment: love each other'.

In the none Church schools in our Trust we follow the spiritual ethos of treating others as we would ask to be treated and to care for others with kindness.

In our schools we believe every pupil is an individual who is valued for who they are. We have a series of overlapping networks of relationships, which includes governors, staff, children, parents, church members, and members of the community which the school seeks to serve. Our pastoral work will strive to meet the significant challenge to create and maintain such networks, including in our Church schools in ways which reflect the Gospel. Those who are in leadership roles, which includes all who have a particular responsibility, ensure that by their personal example they set the highest standards expected.

It is from this premise that both Christian and spiritual love will pervade all aspects of life at Northern Lights Learning Trust. It will influence how we reward and teach discipline. It will affect how we value work and the achievements of pupils and staff. It will be seen in the way in which the school environments are created and cared for, in the way in which the needs of pupils, parents, and community are met, and in the way in which teaching and non-teaching staff work together effectively as a team.

Pastoral care pervades all aspects of school life and therefore will be reflected in the way the schools are organised and the policies are written and implemented.

Attendance Policy

Northern Lights and all academies that are part of the Trust are committed to meeting our obligation with regards to school attendance through our whole-school culture and ethos. We fully believe that good attendance is central to raising standards in education and ensuring all pupils can fulfil their potential. Pupils need to attend school regularly to benefit from their education. Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind. Children with poor attendance tend to achieve less in both Primary and Secondary school. For these reasons, the Trust will proactively work in partnership with all parents/carers to promote and secure good attendance and overcome any barriers through proactive, strong partnership working.

AIMS

As a Trust, we aim to:

- Promote good attendance
- Reduce absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensure every pupil has access to full-time education, which they are entitled to
- Act early to address patterns of absence
- Ensure all pupils are punctual to lessons
- Build strong relationships with families and ensure support is given if needed

Attendance is categorised below

BLUE	98-100%	You have missed 0 – 4 days of learning	Excellent. Keep it up!
GREEN	96 - 97%	You have missed 5 - 7 days of learning	Having good attendance will help your child progress in all areas of school life and fulfil their potential and ability.
YELLOW	91-95%	You have missed 9 – 17 days of learning	Weak attendance – learning will be impacted We will work in partnership to support the improvement needed. How can we help?
AMBER	Below 90%	You have missed 19+ days of learning	Persistent Absence You must improve We will work directly with you to improve attendance alongside our attendance procedures
RED	Below 80%	You have missed 38+ days of learning	Severe Persistent Absence Absence is a serious, significant concern and is disrupting your child's learning and long-term education outcomes. Direct work will take place with you to improve attendance.
Number of days/weeks are based on the percentage across the year.			

LEGISLATION AND GUIDANCE

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

Part 6 of [The Education Act 1996](#)

Part 3 of [The Education Act 2002](#)

Part 7 of [The Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)

[The Education \(Pupil Registration\) \(England\) Regulations 2006 \(and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments\)](#)

[The Education \(Penalty Notices\) \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)

This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.

The Education Act 1996 places a legal obligation on the Local Authority to provide education suitable to a child's age, aptitude and ability and to any special educational needs they may have. Section 444 states that:

"The parent/carer of a child of compulsory school age registered at school and failing to attend regularly is guilty of an offence punishable by law".

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Trust delegates responsibility for managing school attendance to the Local Governing Body. The Trust board will monitor attendance and provide challenge and support as required.

- Promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school and across the Trust
- Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance
- Holding the Headteacher/Head of School to account for the implementation of this policy

Northern Lights supports their responsibility by having an identified person to oversee attendance on a strategic level across the Trust schools - (C. Bradley). Each school also has an identified Governor that supports the monitoring of attendance across the individual school.

Across all schools, a 'First Day Response' procedure will be implemented. This will follow the outlined procedure below:

1. If any child is not registered as present after the beginning of the school day (8:55am) a list will be made.
2. Staff will listen to any voice recording messages linked to the designated absence line.
3. A visual check in school will be carried out in case register codes have been submitted in error.
4. Phone call made to parents/carers to confirm reason of absence and to discuss procedures and provide support for families if needed.
5. If no contact is made following the phone call, a message should be recorded on Scholar pack around no contact.
6. The school will decide if other emergency contacts are to be contacted in order to ascertain reason for absence and safeguarding of child/children.
7. If there is still no contact or reason given then the individual school in most cases will carry out a home visit and liaise with other stakeholders if involved.
8. If at any point an individual school has any concerns around the absence then they should follow their safeguarding procedures.

The Headteacher/Head of School is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at school level
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary and appropriate
- Working in partnership with external agencies to improve attendance

The designated attendance lead within each school is responsible for:

- Leading attendance across the school
- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having an oversight of data analysis
- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data
- Arranging calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families

The designated attendance lead at Benedict Biscop CE Academy is Mrs G Clark and can be contacted via 0191 5947033 / bbinfo@nllt.co.uk

The class teacher is responsible for:

- Recording attendance on a daily basis
- Using the correct codes, and submitting this information on the school system – Scholar pack every morning and afternoon after registration

School admin/office/inclusion staff is responsible for:

- Taking calls from parents/carers about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it accurately on the school system
- Recording absence messages left on the school automated service every day
- Transferring calls from parents/carers to relevant personnel in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance

Parents/carers are expected to:

- Ensure their child/children attend school regularly and punctually fulfilling their legal responsibility.
- Ensure that they contact the school by telephoning 0191 5947033 by 8:55am on the day of absence and each subsequent day of absence, advising when they are expected to return.
- Provide the school with more than 1 emergency contact number for their child.
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day.
- Contact school with any problems or concerns, which may affect their child's attendance. Thus, allowing school to support and work in partnership.
- To attend any meetings arranged in school to support and improve attendance/punctuality.
- To update contact details i.e. change in telephone numbers, address, contacts.

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school every day on time
- Be ready for learning
- Inform a member of staff of any problem or reason that may prevent them from attending school

RECORDING ATTENDANCE

Attendance register

Each school will keep an attendance register, and place all pupils onto this register. Attendance registers will be taken at the start of each school day (8:55am) and the start of the afternoon session.

An electronic registration system is used, Scholar Pack, in each class. Pupils are marked as being present using the following code: / (am) \ (pm).

Should a pupil arrive late, but before the register closes, the following code is used, 'L'. It is important that pupils arrive in school on time, ready to start the school day, minimising disruption in class, when lessons have started and also alleviating stress/embarrassment to the pupil.

If a pupil arrives in school after the close of registration, the relevant absence code is marked. Registration closes across all Northern Lights Academy schools 30 minutes after the start of the school day. For Benedict Biscop CE Academy this will be 9:25am. Any pupil arriving after the close of registration will be marked as a U code – (unauthorised).

(DfE Attendance Codes can be detailed in Appendix 1)

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

The amended entry

The reason for the amendment

The date on which the amendment was made
The name and position of the person who made the amendment

See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

We will also record for pupils of compulsory school age whether the absence is authorised or not. The nature of the activity if a pupil is attending an approved educational activity and the nature of circumstances where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances. We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

UNPLANNED ABSENCE

Each school will mark absence due to illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness. If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask the pupil's parent/carer to provide medical evidence, such as a doctor's note, prescription, appointment card or other appropriate form of evidence. *We will not ask for medical evidence unnecessarily.*

If the school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/carers will be notified of this in advance. The school will also not authorise the absence if the pupil is subject to an attendance plan and medical evidence is required as part of the plan. (Parents/carers will already be aware of this when a plan is put in place).

Following up unexplained absence

Where any pupil we expect to attend school does not attend, or stops attending, without reason, the school will:

As explained above the school will first follow – 'First Day Response' procedures. However, if the school cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts, the school may make a home visit, involve an external Local Authority attendance officer or involve other agencies such as social care/police

The school will also:

- Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- Identify the correct attendance code to use and input it as soon as the reason for absence is ascertained – this will be no later than 5 working days after the absence
- Call the parent/carer on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary.

PLANNED ABSENCE

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment.

We ask parents/carers to notify school in advance of the appointment by telephone or informing the main school office in person. Parents/carers must bring copies of appointment cards where possible.

However, we encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

AUTHORISED AND UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE

Approval for term-time absence

The Headteacher/Head of School will only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. It is important to note that Changes have been made to the 2006 Attendance regulations in the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013. These changes make it clear that Headteachers/Head of School may not grant any leave of absence during term-time unless there are exceptional circumstances.

A leave of absence is granted at the Headteacher's/Head of School discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for.

Northern Lights Learning Trust define 'exceptional circumstances' as 'unusual' or 'rare' and each request will be considered individually, taking in to account the specific facts, circumstances and context behind the request.

Exceptional Circumstances could include:

1. Service personnel returning from a tour of duty abroad where it is evidenced the individual will not be in receipt of any leave in the near future that coincides with school holidays.

2. Where an absence from school is recommended by a health professional as part of a parent or child's rehabilitation from a medical or emotional issue
3. When a family needs to spend time together to support each other during a terminal illness or death of a family member (compassionate grounds).

Evidence would be required.

Circumstances that are NOT be considered exceptional include:

1. Parents' employment restrictions
2. Visiting family and friends who have different school holidays
3. Availability of cheap holidays and cheap travel arrangements
4. Celebrations of birthdays etc.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least two weeks before the absence, and in accordance with any leave of absence request form, accessible via our school website, www.benedictbiscopacademy.co.uk under the parents tab, select useful forms and click on Exceptional Circumstances Leave of Absence from school form). **PLEASE NOTE:** The Headteacher/Head of School may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

The absence request will then be processed and a decision letter will be sent out. Any absence, which has not been agreed in advance by the Headteacher/Head of School, is marked as unauthorised absence.

LEGAL SANCTIONS

The individual school or local authority can fine parents via a penalty notice for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

Penalty notices issued by the Local Authority are £60 per parent, per child, if paid within 21 days and double if paid between 22 and 28 days. As an example, a 2-parent family with 2 children receive 4 x £60 notices, as each parent would receive one notice per child. This family would need to pay £240 if paid within 21 days or £480 if paid between 22 and 28 days. If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

Penalty notices can be issued by a Headteacher/Head of School, local authority officer or the police.

Northern Lights Learning Trust will support the individual schools in their decisions if the following have been taken into account:

- Documented proactive, early support has been in place and no improvements have been made
- A pupil attendance is below the 90% threshold and attendance procedures are already in place such as an attendance plan, Fast Track etc.
- The number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year is concerning and impacting on the pupil's education
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission are re-occurring
- Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

STRATEGIES FOR PROMOTING ATTENDANCE

At Benedict Biscop CE Academy we understand the impact good attendance and punctuality has on our children's learning and we believe in rewarding this to engage and motivate our children. We have many initiatives to support and celebrate attendance and punctuality so that it remains a high profile in school and with our families;

- We encourage children to keep three attendance Promises:
I will try my best to come to school every day.
I will try my best to arrive on time every day.
I will try my best to be prepared for school every day.
- All Classrooms display an attendance poster with the class' attendance.
- Each term during whole school worship certificates are given to individual pupils with 100% attendance for the previous half term, and we also celebrate the class with the overall best attendance.
- Individual class attendance is shared on the school monthly newsletters.
- For those children who require support on an individual basis, a bespoke reward system is put in place.

ATTENDANCE MONITORING

At Benedict Biscop CE Academy we aim where possible to keep our Parents as informed as possible of their child's attendance throughout their journey at our school.

Monitoring attendance

Benedict Biscop CE Academy will:

- Monitor attendance and absence data half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil level
- Identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern

Pupil-level absence data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. The school will compare attendance data to the national average, and share this with the local governing body and the board of Trustees.

Analysing attendance

Benedict Biscop CE Academy will:

- Analyse attendance and absence data regularly to identify pupils or cohorts that need additional support with their attendance, and use this analysis to provide targeted support to these pupils and their families in line with procedures and the staged approach
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns.
- Class Teachers will be aware of their own class' attendance via Scholar Pack

Using data to improve attendance

Benedict Biscop CE Academy will:

- Provide regular attendance reports to school leaders, to facilitate discussions with pupils and families
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place in order to modify them and inform future strategies

Reducing persistent and severe absence

Persistent absence is where a pupil misses 10% or more of school, and severe absence is where a pupil misses 50% or more of school.

The school will:

- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence.
- Hold regular meetings with the parents/carers of pupils who the school (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance

At Benedict Biscop CE Academy we promote a staged approach to how we monitor children's attendance; we fully believe that good attendance is central to raising standards in education and ensuring all pupils can fulfil their potential. We place all children at the heart of our work and we create welcoming environments to allow all children to gain a sense of belonging. We work in partnership with all stakeholders to remove barriers and secure success.

STAGE 1

If concerning levels of absence are identified we will monitor this in school. A Phone call /contact may be made to discuss the reasons for the absences and explore early support. The school will explore any barriers and implement approaches to address and remove these barriers. Possible early help support may be offered.

STAGE 2

At this stage your child is at high risk of Persistent Absence. A Letter will be sent to parents/carers to advise you of this. An attendance champion or identified person will meet with parents/carers to discuss the absences. Any previous support given will be evaluated and any additional support will be discussed which may include external services.

STAGE 3

At this stage your child is at serious risk of Persistent Absence. The school will offer continued internal and external support. We would also consider a parenting agreement at this stage. A formal meeting will be arranged with Parents/Carers with the Headteacher in attendance and the LA if applicable.

STAGE 4

At this stage your child is now considered a Persistently Absent (PA) child. PA is when a pupil enrolments overall absence equates to 10% or more of their possible sessions. Over an academic year this equates to 19 days. At this stage your child will be PA for the remainder of the school year. Child and family will continue to be supported. However, a safeguarding referral may be considered and more formal processes i.e. penalty notices.

Absent for 50% or more severe persistent absence - Your child may face bigger barriers to overcome this absence if this stage is reached. All agencies will need to work proactively to support your child. A concerted effort is needed across all agencies and stakeholders to prioritise attendance improvement. A family plan should be put in place and again any safeguarding issues will be considered.

Lateness after school

There may be occasions when children are not collected from school. If this situation were to arise, we will carry out the following:

- If parents/carers do not arrive at the expected time, a phone call will be made after 10 minutes to all available contact numbers
- If no contact is made the child/children will be taken to a member of the SLT (Senior Leadership) to wait for contact.
- If after 20 minutes we still have had no response from parents/carers then school would contact the Local Attendance Team. The team would then visit the child's home and school.
- The decision to contact Emergency Duty Social Care will be made if all other avenues of making contact with parents/carers has failed.

REPORTING TO PARENTS/CARERS

The school will regularly inform parents about their child's attendance and absence levels for example, half-termly via written reports/email.

MONITORING ARRANGEMENTS

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum annually.

Appendix 1 – DfE Attendance Codes

Code	Definition	Scenario
/	Present (am)	Pupil is present at morning registration
\	Present (pm)	Pupil is present at afternoon registration
L	Late arrival	Pupil arrives late before register has closed
B	Off-site educational activity	Pupil is at a supervised off-site educational activity approved by the school
D	Dual registered	Pupil is attending a session at another setting where they are also registered
P	Sporting activity	Pupil is participating in a supervised sporting activity approved by the school
V	Educational trip or visit	Pupil is on an educational visit/trip organised, or approved, by the school

Code	Definition	Scenario
Authorised absence		
C	Authorised leave of absence	Pupil has been granted a leave of absence due to exceptional circumstances
E	Excluded	Pupil has been excluded but no alternative provision has been made
H	Authorised holiday	Pupil has been allowed to go on holiday due to exceptional circumstances
I	Illness	School has been notified that a pupil will be absent due to illness
M	Medical/dental appointment	Pupil is at a medical or dental appointment
R	Religious observance	Pupil is taking part in a day of religious observance
T	Gypsy, Roma and traveller absence	Pupil from a traveller community is travelling, as agreed with the school
Unauthorised absence		
G	Unauthorised holiday	Pupil is on a holiday that was not approved by the school
N	Reason not provided	Pupil is absent for an unknown reason (this code should be amended when the reason emerges, or replaced with code O if no reason for absence has been provided after a reasonable amount of time)
O	Unauthorised absence	School is not satisfied with reason for pupil's absence
U	Arrival after registration	Pupil arrived at school after the register closed

Code	Definition	Scenario
X	Not required to be in school	Pupil of non-compulsory school age is not required to attend
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	School site is closed, there is disruption to travel as a result of a local/national emergency, or pupil is in custody
Z	Pupil not on admission register	Register set up but pupil has not yet joined the school
#	Planned school closure	Whole or partial school closure due to half-term/bank holiday/INSET day