



Attendance Policy

Applicable to:	✓	All individual schools within NEAT Academy Trust
	✗	Specified schools only within NEAT Academy Trust
	✓	Central Team within NEAT Academy Trust
Approval body:	NEAT Achievement and Climate for Learning Committee, which may be delegated	

Statutory policy	No
Publish on website	Yes – trust and schools

Review Date	
Frequency	Next Review Due
Annually	July 2024 (or earlier if new guidance or legislation issued and/or business need for earlier review identified)

Version Control:

Author	Date	Version	Status	Notes
CEO (DB)	19/07/23	1.0	Final	Approved by NEAT Board of Directors to replace individual school policies.
CEO (DB)	24/10/23	2.0	Final	New front cover only.

1 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to promote and maintain high levels of attendance among students, in order to maximise their learning opportunities and improve their academic outcomes.

This policy aims to create a culture of attendance across the trust, where regular attendance is expected and valued by all stakeholders. By implementing this policy, we aim to reduce the number of absences due to avoidable reasons, such as illness or family holidays, and to provide targeted support for students who are at risk of poor attendance.

Our goal is to sustain high levels of attendance over time, by regularly monitoring and evaluating our strategies, and by providing ongoing support and training for staff, students, and parents/carers.

2 Scope

The policy applies to all schools within the trust.

3 Roles and responsibilities

We believe that attendance is everyone's responsibility. Our schools have adopted a consistent approach to monitoring attendance to intervene and offer support to students and families at the earliest opportunity.

3.1 Parents/carers are responsible for:

- ensuring their child attends the school each day it is open, dressed in full uniform;
- contacting the school if their child is unable to attend;
- providing their most up to date contact details;
- only requesting leave of absence in exceptional circumstances and well in advance;
- booking any medical appointments around the school day where possible;
- proactively engaging with the school about any support that is offered to improve attendance.

3.2 The Headteacher is responsible for:

- establishing and promoting a culture where all students want to attend the school;
- helping everyone understand the benefits that good attendance brings;
- ensuring that the attendance policy is communicated to parents/carers and is published on the school website;
- establishing internal protocols and procedures that are consistent with this policy and ensuring these are applied and monitored robustly;
- identifying a dedicated senior leader with overall responsibility for championing and improving attendance, known as the Attendance Champion;
- ensuring everyone takes responsibility for attendance and ensuring it has a high profile within the school community;
- having robust daily processes to follow up absence;
- working with parents/carers at an early stage so they are fully aware of the attendance policy;
- supporting all students, particularly the most vulnerable, to attend regularly;
- helping to identify, overcome and remove barriers for good attendance and

- signpost support where needed;
 - where there is a lack of engagement and/or where support is not working, work with parents/carers more formally, involving the local authority on legal intervention;
 - where there are safeguarding concerns, intensify support through statutory children's social care.
- 3.3 Each school's Attendance Champion is a senior leader responsible for:
- ensuring that this policy and related procedures and protocols are implemented on a timely and consistent basis by school staff;
 - being a key point of contact for parents/carers.
- 3.3 The CEO, supported by the NEAT Central Team, is responsible for:
- ensuring school leaders and staff receive training on attendance;
 - holding school leaders to account to ensure expectations and statutory duties are fulfilled;
 - evaluating the impact of the policy and reviewing it at least annually;
 - taking an active role in attendance improvement by monitoring attendance across the trust, particularly for the most vulnerable students and intervening systematically where appropriate via the welfare support teams;
 - providing the Trust Board and its committees with timely information to enable oversight of and accountability for the policy and its impact.
- 3.4 Each school's Local Governing Committee is responsible for:
- supporting and challenging school leaders to ensure the school's vision and ethos promote a culture of attendance for all students;
 - carrying out scrutiny and evaluation to provide assurance to the Trust Board and its committees on the effectiveness of the implementation and impact of the attendance policy.
- 3.5 The Trust Board's Achievement and Climate for Learning Committee is responsible for:
- oversight of the trust-wide attendance policy to ensure that it enables strategic priorities to be achieved, is consistent with the trust's vision and values and ensures appropriate compliance; and
 - holding the CEO to account.
- 3.6 The Trust Board is responsible for:
- oversight of the trust's strategic priorities and the performance of the trust's schools including attendance.

4 Legal considerations

This policy meets the requirements of the school attendance guidance 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:

- The Education Act 1996
- The Education Act 2002
- The Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006
- The Equality Act 2010

- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2010
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2011
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2016
- Children missing education: Statutory guidance for local authorities 2016
- Working together to improve school attendance, DfE guidance 2022

Key provisions are:

- Education Act 1996: This is the main piece of legislation that governs education in England and Wales. Section 444 of the Act sets out the legal duty of parents to ensure that their child attends school regularly.
- Children Act 1989: This act places a duty on local authorities to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in their area. This includes ensuring that children attend school regularly.
- Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2006: These regulations set out the legal requirements for the registration of pupils at schools in England. They require schools to take a register of pupils twice a day, and to record absences and attendance codes accurately.
- Keeping Children Safe in Education: This is statutory guidance that is reviewed annually and sets out the legal duties of schools and colleges to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. The guidance includes specific requirements related to attendance, including the need for schools to have a clear and consistent attendance policy, monitor attendance data regularly and take action to address poor attendance.
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2021: These regulations provide for the issuing of penalty notices to parents who fail to ensure that their child attends school regularly. The regulations set out the criteria for issuing a penalty notice, the amount of the penalty, and the process for appealing a penalty notice.

5 Policy statement

We believe that every student has the right to a high-quality education, and that regular attendance is essential for achieving this goal. Our aim is to create a culture of attendance across all of our schools, where regular attendance is the norm and where all students are supported to achieve their full potential.

To achieve this aim, we will:

- develop a clear and consistent attendance policy that is communicated effectively to all stakeholders, including staff, students, and parents;
- regularly monitor attendance data to identify patterns and trends in attendance, and to target interventions where they are needed most;
- use positive reinforcement to encourage good attendance, such as rewards for good attendance, recognition of students who have improved their attendance and celebration of good attendance across the trust;
- provide support for students and families to help them overcome barriers to attendance, such as transport issues, financial difficulties, health problems and social and emotional difficulties;
- work in partnership with external agencies to provide additional support for students and families; and
- regularly review and evaluate our attendance strategies to ensure that they are effective, and to make changes where necessary.

Our goal is to achieve and sustain high levels of attendance across all of our schools, so that all students can achieve their full potential and succeed in the future.

We believe that by working together, we can create a culture of attendance that enables the success of all students. We aspire for every student to have 100% attendance.

6. Key principles

6.1 NEAT vision and values

Improving attendance is central to our vision of being 'One trust, working with partners to grow potential'.

Our values are the behaviours that will enable us to achieve our shared purpose and deliver our vision and strategic aims:

- Aspirational – We aim high for ourselves and others.
- Collaborative – We are best when we work together as one trust.
- Inclusive – We welcome and value every individual and foster a sense of belonging.
- Innovative – We are creative and forward thinking in our work.
- Responsible – We act professionally and ethically in the best interests of the trust community.

Creating a supportive and safe environment where pupils feel valued, engaged and motivated to learn supports good attendance. This help students to achieve their full potential.

We work with parents/carers, local authorities and other organisations to remove barriers to attendance and promote a culture of regular attendance across our schools. This will grow the potential of our pupils, schools, and wider community.

Improving attendance requires constant focus and effective whole-school approaches require regular ongoing support, guidance and challenge.

6.2 Strategies for promoting attendance

We recognise that all staff play a vital role in improving attendance. The high visibility of staff in our schools creates a safe and vibrant environment and allows all students to attend. We take a whole-trust approach to relational and restorative practice to foster positive relationships with and between students and the wider family.

Each school regularly reviews its curriculum to ensure that it meets the needs of all students, regardless of their ability. Our schools use a variety of strategies to support students academically, including the use of Individual Learning Plans (ILPs) for students with SEND, targeted interventions for students who are falling behind and the expertise of support staff and intervention tutors. We provide high-quality academic support to all students so they have the opportunity to achieve their full potential. We believe that good attendance, academic achievements and personal developments are closely linked.

Each school has strategies for promoting attendance, such as 'In It To Win It' and 'Attendance Heroes'. Celebrating good and improved attendance is part of our praise culture: for example, schools will regularly reward students with certificates in

assemblies. Praise strategies and positions of responsibility (for example, student council) encourage good attendance.

6.3 Support for families

We will support parents/carers to carry out their duty to ensure their children, including those of nursery age, attend regularly, and will promote and support outstanding punctuality to school and to lessons.

We will do this by:

- creating a calm, orderly, safe, and supportive environment where all students want to be and are keen and ready to learn;
- promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent absence;
- ensuring every student has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled;
- acting early to address patterns of absence;
- supporting students and families to overcome barriers to good attendance.

Regular attendance is important in safeguarding children as it enables potential risks to be identified and support provided. Research shows that there is a relationship between regular absence from school and the risk of harm within the family, peers or the community. Regular absence, particularly unexplained absence, can be an indicator of safeguarding concerns. It is therefore vital that all students are in school regularly.

Each school has a weekly inclusion meeting to discuss the most vulnerable students and review interventions designed to overcome barriers to learning, including poor attendance. These barriers are wide and complex, both within and beyond the school gates, and are often specific to individual students and families.

Each school's procedures and processes document for attendance will name the Headteacher, as well as the senior leader appointed as the Attendance Champion who is a key point of contact for families.

The school's website contains more information for parents/carers including how and who to contact in the school about attendance, as well as our strategies and resources to promote excellent attendance.

6.4 Register closing time

By law, all schools are required to keep an attendance register, and all students must be placed on this register. The law requires the register to be taken twice a day: at the start of the morning session and then once in the afternoon session. Registers will close one hour after the start of the school day and one hour after the start of the afternoon session.

6.5 Planned medical or dental appointments

Any absence interrupts the continuity of a student's learning and should be avoided other than in exceptional circumstances. Information relating to whether the school can authorise such absences is in section 6.8.

Missing registration for a medical or dental appointment is usually counted as an authorised absence (where the appointment could not be scheduled outside of school

hours); advance notice is required for authorising these absences. Parents are encouraged to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours where possible. Where this is not possible, the student should be out of the school for the minimum amount of time necessary.

6.5 Lateness and punctuality

The L code for late should be used for students arriving within the first hour and the U code to state that the student arrived in school after registration closed. Schools will actively discourage late arrival, be alert to patterns of late arrival and seek an explanation from the parent. In secondary schools, it is at the discretion of the Headteacher whether or not to utilise detentions/call backs for lateness to school.

6.6 Following up absence

The school will follow up all absences and will ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. The school will always contact parents/carers as soon as possible to alert them that their child has not arrived at school if the absence is unexplained. This is usually a phone call to ensure the student is safe and to clarify arrangements that can be made to ensure the student returns to the school as quickly as possible. A member of staff may visit the student's home to discuss attendance.

6.7 Reporting to parents

Attendance is reviewed weekly by the attendance team and where there are concerns, parents/carers will be contacted to discuss what support the school can offer. In addition, secondary students will discuss their current attendance weekly during one of their tutor group sessions and this will be recorded in the students' planners. Parents are encouraged to look at their child's planner regularly.

6.8 Authorised and unauthorised absence

Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence to students during term time unless they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. If parents/carers wish to apply for term time leave for exceptional reasons then a Request for Absence Form must be completed and this must be done well in advance.

6.9 Legal sanctions

Parents/carers may be issued with a fixed penalty notice (fined) for the unauthorised absence of their child from the school, where the child is of compulsory school age. For children of non-compulsory age, Headteachers may revoke a child's place if attendance falls below an acceptable level, and offer this place to a child on the waiting list.

If issued with a penalty notice, parents/carers must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. Failure to pay within 28 days could result in prosecution in court for failure to ensure regular attendance to the school and failure to respond in full to the fixed penalty notice.

This policy recognises the Government's definition for both persistently and severely absent students and we reserve the right to start legal interventions to help improve attendance when at these thresholds. Students are considered:

- persistently absent when attendance drops below 90%;
- severely absent if attendance drops below 50%.

6.10 Children Missing Education (CME)

All schools must monitor students' attendance through their daily register. If a student leaves without the school being advised by the parent/carers which new school the student is to attend, that is should the student go missing, the school will take action to trace the student within 10 school days.

Schools work closely with local authorities and will escalate the concern to them via the relevant reporting procedures. The school will make reasonable enquiries to establish the whereabouts of a student jointly with the local authority before deleting the student's name from the register. The school will notify the local authority when it is about to remove a student's name from the admission register under any of the fifteen grounds listed in The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006. For students absent from the school for 20 continuous days and where all attempts from the local authority and the school have still not established where they are, the student will be removed from the school roll. If families move away from the area, or wish to transfer their child to another school, the Headteacher must be informed in writing. Students cannot be removed from roll until we have been notified by another school that a place has been offered and accepted.

7. Attendance procedure

7.1 We believe that everyone should be clear about what our schools will do if a student's attendance falls below the standards we expect.

We consider each student's previous year's attendance before deciding when to start the relevant stage of our attendance procedures, known as the 'NEAT activation tier'.

All students are expected to attend every session but where a student's attendance falls below our threshold of 97%, or if irregular patterns of attendance are discovered, schools will activate the attendance procedure at the relevant stage, as set out in the table below:

Attendance category	Description	NEAT Activation Tier	
		When will our attendance procedures be activated?	What stage will our attendance procedures be activated?
A – Good attenders (GA) Students who attended the school well	Those with above 97% cumulative attendance the previous year	After October half-term but only if student attendance drops below our threshold of 97% attendance	Stage 1 Attendance manager or primary equivalent
B – Regular attenders (RA) Students who attended the school regularly	Those with 90%-97% cumulative attendance the previous year	Immediately but only if student attendance drops below our threshold of 97% of attendance	Stage 1 Attendance manager or primary equivalent
C – Persistently absent (PA) Students who were persistently absent	Those with attendance below 90% cumulative attendance for the previous year	Immediately but only if student attendance drops below our threshold of 97% attendance	Stage 2 Assistant Head of Year or primary equivalent
D – Severely absent (SA) Students who were severely absent	Those with attendance below 50% cumulative attendance for the previous year	Immediately but only if student attendance drops below our threshold of 97% attendance	Stage 3 Trust central attendance team or primary equivalent

The attendance procedure may start at stage 1, 2 or 3 depending on the student's attendance category.

Once the procedure is activated at the relevant stage in the table above, a student will be placed on a four-week attendance monitoring plan.

Note about category A: For students with above 97% attendance in the previous school year the attendance procedure will not be used until after October half term, unless there are unusual patterns and/or repetitive absences.

Note about category B: For students who had less than 97% attendance in the previous school year, the attendance procedure is activated immediately if there is an absence in September or October.

7.2 The stages of the attendance procedure will usually be as follows:

Stage 1:

Students in attendance category A or B will be placed on a four-week attendance monitoring plan with the school's attendance manager (or primary equivalent). A letter will be sent home to parents/carers.

If the student attends every session within the Stage 1 monitoring period, a celebratory letter home will be sent and the attendance monitoring plan will stop. Schools will aim to telephone parents/carers to add relevant context, as well as sending a letter.

If the student does not attend every session within the Stage 1 monitoring period, the school will move to Stage 2 in the procedure.

Stage 2:

Students in attendance category C or students who do not attend every session under Stage 1 of the procedure will be placed on a four-week attendance support plan with the student's Assistant Head of Year (or primary equivalent.)

If the student attends every session within the Stage 2 monitoring period then their year to date attendance will normally be restored to above 97% and no further action will be taken. A celebratory letter will be sent home and the attendance support plan will stop. Schools will aim to telephone parents to add relevant context, as well as sending a letter. However, if the student's cumulative attendance subsequently drops back below 97% at any point in the near future then the student will return to a period of monitoring and begin another four-week support plan with their Assistant Head of Year (or primary equivalent) under Stage 2.

If the student does not attend every session within the Stage 2 monitoring period, the school will move to Stage 3 in the procedure.

Stage 3:

Students in attendance category D or students who do not attend every session during Stage 2 of the procedure will be placed on a final four-week attendance support plan. This will involve a formal attendance case conference with the Education Welfare Officer or primary equivalent such as the Attendance and Welfare Officer or Vulnerable Learner Lead.

This is the final opportunity for the student to complete four full weeks of attendance.

If the student attends every session within the Stage 3 monitoring period, a celebratory

letter home will be sent and the support plan will cease. However, if the student is subsequently absent again in the near future a further four-week support plan will commence and this stage will be repeated.

If the student does not attend every session within the Stage 3 monitoring period, the Education Welfare Officer or primary equivalent such as the Attendance and Welfare Officer or Vulnerable Learner Lead will make a referral to the local authority, particularly if the student's cumulative attendance is below 90%. The local authority could take action which includes, but is not limited to, issuing parenting contracts, issuing fixed penalty notices or pursuing prosecution towards potential educational supervision orders or other court sanctions.

7.3 Flowcharts for primary and secondary schools setting out the attendance procedure are provided in Appendix 1.

8. Where to find further information

Each school publishes information to support good attendance on its website.

You can also contact the school directly to speak to the Attendance Champion for further information.

General

- This policy is based on the work of Northern Education Trust as one of the DfE's national Attendance Hubs, which provides attendance support to NEAT. Further information about their work can be found at: <https://www.northerneducationtrust.org/about-us/attendance-support/>
- This policy is at the discretion of the trust and can be varied at any time. Decisions will be based on the version of the policy in force at the time an event takes place. In the event of any conflict with primary legislation or statutory regulations, the legal provisions will have precedence over this policy in all cases.

Appendix 1 – Flowchart of attendance procedure

