



# Attendance Policy 2023-24

## Introduction

Northleigh House School seeks to ensure that all its students receive an education which gives each student the best opportunity to realise their potential. We provide a caring, welcoming environment, so that each member of the school community feels valued and secure. The strong pastoral ethos of the school, and our good links with our parents/carers, means that all staff work with students and their families to ensure that each student attends school regularly and punctually.

We recognise that attendance monitoring is an important aspect of safeguarding. The school seeks to develop and maintain good relationships with parents/carers, and to communicate regularly and effectively with them over issues of attendance and punctuality.

## Aims

- To maintain and improve the overall percentage attendance of students at school.
- To maintain 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 maintain and develop positive and consistent communication between home and school.
- To work effectively with external agencies when necessary.
- To recognise the needs of the individual student when planning transition/reintegration following significant periods of absence.

### **1. To maintain and improve the overall percentage attendance of students at school**

- All members of staff should apply the attendance policy consistently, detailing absences on appropriate systems.
- The school and all members of staff should establish and maintain a high profile for attendance and punctuality.
- All attendance issues should be related directly to our ethos, our values and our curriculum.

## **2. To maintain a framework which defines roles and responsibilities, and promotes consistency in carrying out designated tasks**

- We have clear unambiguous procedures for statutory registration. If parents/carers do not telephone the school, they are requested to email: [absence@northleigh.co.uk](mailto:absence@northleigh.co.uk)
- Where possible telephone contact with parents/carers is made after 10.00 am on the first day of absence by a member of staff.
- Northleigh has procedures in place for tracking and responding to absence and lateness.
- The School Director refers students to external agencies when necessary.
- Attendance is reviewed regularly by the School Director and/or the senior management team.

## **3. To provide support, advice and guidance to parents and students**

- When parents/carers share concerns about a student's attendance, attitude to school or punctuality, we act promptly to support parents/carers.
- We share concerns about students' attendance or lateness with parents/carers at an early stage.
- We provide support for students who are apprehensive about coming to school, for example, by giving them a mentor to speak to, or by giving them strategies to follow if they are finding the pressures of a school day, or of academic work, too demanding.
- When parents/carers request absence for family holidays, the legal and academic guidelines are considered.

## **4. To develop positive and consistent communication between home and school**

- We make clear to parents/carers that we expect a phone call or an email to the [absence@northleigh.co.uk](mailto:absence@northleigh.co.uk) on the first morning of absence.
- Where possible if parents/carers do not phone on the first day of absence, a member of staff phones home after 10.00 am.

## **5. To promote effective partnerships with the Social Care Service, and other services and agencies**

- The School Director is responsible for liaising with the Social Care Service and other agencies.
- The School Director will carry out initial enquiries or intervention prior to referral and give priority to meetings arranged with external agencies.
- When necessary, the School Director will also organise multi-agency liaison meetings and develop an understanding of agency constraints and operating environments.
- The School Director is also responsible for checking that students who leave this school have been enrolled at another school or approved provision. When there is cause for doubt, the relevant Local Authority will be informed. Post 16, we liaise with educational institutions about special educational needs, access arrangements and sending students' files.
- If a student attending the school with an Education and Health, Care Plan is looked after or previously looked after/a child in need/on the Child Protection Register has an unexplained absence of more than five days, the School Director will inform the Local Authority.

## **6. To recognise the needs of the individual pupil when planning reintegration following significant periods of absence**

- We are sensitive to the individual needs and circumstances of students returning after prolonged absence.
- The School Director may be involved in discussing with the student and their parents/carers about a structured programme, with an agreed time scale, for the student's return. A timescale will also be agreed for implementation and reviewing the reintegration plan.
- The student is given a mentor, to whom they may turn for counselling, support, or feedback.
- The student's peers or friendship group are encouraged to provide support on a student's return.
- The student is given a "safe place" where they may go during the day if the pressure of being at school becomes too much to cope with.
- All teaching staff are kept informed through weekly staff briefings about the progress and needs of the student, including the possible need to go to their mentor, or their "safe place".

### **Understanding Types of Absence**

Any absence from school must be classified by the school (not by the parents/carers), as either AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. Therefore information about the cause of any absence is always required, preferably in writing. Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason, like illness, medical/dental appointments, which unavoidably fall in school time, emergencies, or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and/or for which no "leave" has been authorised. This include, but is not exhaustive to:

- parents/carers keeping students off school unnecessarily
- truancy before or during the school day
- absences which have never been properly explained
- shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- day trips and holidays in term time which have not been agreed.

### **Persistent Absenteeism (PA)**

Guidelines stipulate that a student becomes a 'persistent absentee' when they miss 10% or more schooling across the school year for whatever reason. Absence at this level can do considerable damage to any student's educational prospects and we need parents/carers fullest support and co-operation to tackle this. However, we do recognise our cohort may miss more than 10% due to their presenting diagnosis and difficulties.

We monitor all absence thoroughly. PA students are tracked and monitored carefully through our online system, and we also combine this with academic mentoring where absence affects attainment.

Occasionally, you may need to apply for permission for your child to be absent. Such permission can generally be sought in advance by parents/carers applying in writing to the School Director.

## Holidays

Guidelines stipulate that holidays are not permitted in term-time – and this includes odd days at the beginning or end of term. Amendments made to the 2006 regulations in the *Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013* make it clear that School Director may not grant students leave of absence during term-time unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Previously permission could be granted for students to have a leave of absence (of up to ten days) for the purpose of a family holiday in special circumstances.

The strengthening of these regulations means that such leave can only very rarely be authorised. Parents/carers should therefore avoid taking holidays in term-time altogether.

If permission is not granted and leave is taken anyway, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised, and parents/carer should note that in condoning unauthorised absence, they may be breaking the law and could be fined.

The school reserves the right to investigate the validity of any non-negotiated absence further with parents/carers.

**Review Date: September 2024**