



Attendance Policy

2024-2025

Date of Ratification:	<i>September 2023</i>	Signed: Miss Rebecca Jackson (Associate Head of Academy) Mrs Joanna Marsden (CHAIR OF GOVERNORS)
Review date:	<i>September 2024</i>	Signed: Miss Rebecca Jackson (Head of Academy) Mr Lee Malyan (CHAIR OF GOVERNORS)
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Safeguarding Statement

At Norbridge Academy we respect and value all children and are committed to providing a caring, friendly, and safe environment for all our pupils so they can learn, in a relaxed and secure atmosphere. We believe every pupil should be able to participate in all school activities in an enjoyable and safe environment and be protected from harm. This is the responsibility of every adult employed by or invited to deliver services at Norbridge Academy. We recognise our responsibility to safeguard all who access school and promote the welfare of all our pupils by protecting them from physical, sexual, and emotional abuse, neglect, and bullying.



Attendance Policy

Norbridge Academy is committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all its pupils and recognises this can only be achieved by supporting and promoting excellent school attendance for all. This is based on the belief that only by attending school regularly and punctually will children be able to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. High attainment depends on good attendance.

The attendance of pupils will be monitored by race, gender and disability and we will use this data to support pupils, raise standards and ensure inclusive teaching. We will tackle discrimination by the positive promotion of equality, challenging bullying and stereotypes and creating an environment which champions respect for all. At Norbridge Academy, we believe that diversity is a strength, which should be respected and celebrated by all those who learn, teach and visit here.

Values

The law entitles every child of compulsory school age to an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, and any special educational need they may have. It is the legal responsibility of every parent to make sure their child receives that education either by attendance at a school or by education otherwise than at a school.

Good attendance begins with school being somewhere pupils want to be and therefore the foundation of securing good attendance is that school is a calm, orderly, safe, and supportive environment where all pupils are keen and ready to learn.

Working together to improve school attendance – Statutory guidance 19th August 2024

Norbridge Academy expects the highest attendance and punctuality from all pupils, at all times. We support pupils and their families to ensure that excellent attendance is achieved.

- At Norbridge Academy our target for attendance is 96%.
- We are continuously working towards the goal of achieving 100% attendance for all pupils.

Overall Aims

The whole school community – pupils, parents and carers, teaching and support staff and school governors – have a responsibility for ensuring good school attendance and have important roles to play. The aim of the policy is to clarify everyone's part in this.

The aims are:

- To ensure that every child is safeguarded and their right to education is protected.
- To ensure the school attendance target is achieved, through rewards and incentives for good attendance and punctuality.
- To raise standards and ensure every child reaches their full potential through a high level of school attendance and punctuality.
- To ensure all the stakeholders, governors, parents, pupils and staff receive regular communication, about the importance of good attendance and punctuality.
- To keep accurate, up to date records and have a robust and rigorous system for analysing attendance.
- To identify causes of low attendance/punctuality with individuals, classes and groups of pupils and address them.
- To work with external agencies, in order to address barriers to attendance and overcome them.

Rights and Responsibilities

The Legal Framework

There are legal obligations on:

- **The Parent(s)** to secure education for their children, whether at school or otherwise, to send them to school regularly once they are on the school register.
- **The School** to register attendance, enforce attendance and notify the local authority of persistent absentees.
- **The Local Authority** to provide education.

Head Teacher:

- To be responsible for the overall management and implementation of the policy.
- To work in partnership with parents/carers to provide support.
- To consider the use of penalty notices, in line with the Local Authority's policies and procedures.

Attendance Officer:

- To lead on/take responsibility for attendance/punctuality, on a day-to-day basis, including liaising with/responding to parental enquiries.
- To oversee the analysis of/analyse weekly/termly/yearly data and respond to findings.
- To liaise with external agencies and make referrals if necessary.
- To ensure rewards and incentives for attendance are being used.
- Work with teachers to plan for the reintegration of pupils after a long-term absence.
- To revise and amend the policy, as required.
- To deal with parental requests for leave of absence during term time.
- To contact parents by letter following an absence, if telephone contact cannot be made.
- To ensure all staff are following the registration systems and structures in this policy.
- Carry out register audits.
- Inform parents of school procedures when parents have failed to inform school of an absence.
- Ensure attendance display board is up to date.
- Inform parents of their children's attendance.
- Encourage parents/carers to use the MCAS app to stay up to date with attendance.
- Liaise with parents at parent consultation evenings to discuss attendance, if required.
- Carry out home visits for persistent absentees and other vulnerable families.
- Carry out home visits for families who had had no contact with school for 2 working days.
- Communication with children's emergency contacts.
- Lead attendance assemblies.
- Lead on Attendance Celebrations throughout the year.
- Lead on Attendance Panel Meetings.
- Create Attendance Contracts with parents/carers.

Office Staff:

- To carry out and record the outcome for first day calls, when a child doesn't arrive at school, when no reason has been received.
- To check the school answer phone and take messages from parents/carers about pupil absence.
- To promptly inform the Attendance Officer if there are any concerns regarding attendance and punctuality.
- To record reasons for absence and update class registers when they arrive at the office each morning and afternoon.
- To maintain attendance records in line with this policy.
- Inform parents of school procedures when parents have failed to inform school of an absence.
- To take evidence relating to absence (photocopies of letters/medication/appointments etc.).

Staff:

- To ensure quality teaching every day; with lessons that are well planned and resourced so that they challenge, inspire and meet their learners needs.
- To complete the daily class register twice a day.
- Regularly remind children and parents of the importance of good attendance.
- Inform parents of class attendance on the school website and via attendance poster on class windows.
- Provide a safe and welcoming environment, which encourages attendance and promotes the best performance from children.
- Establish good communication links with parents/carers and work collaboratively in meeting children's needs.
- If required, to work collaboratively with other agencies to assist them in fulfilling their statutory duties, regarding for example, child protection.
- Work with pupils and their families where attendance is a concern, identifying barriers to good attendance and working to overcome these.
- To promptly inform the Attendance Officer, of pupils who persist with poor attendance.
- To feed back to parents about pupil attendance and punctuality regularly and at parent's evenings.

Parents:

Norbridge Academy expects parents/carers will:

- Ensure children attend school regularly.
- Support their children's attendance by keeping requests for absence to a minimum.
- Not expect the academy to automatically agree to requests for absence and not condone unjustified absence from school.

Parents/carers are also expected to:

- Ensure their child attends school and arrives on time every day.

- Promote a good attitude to learning by ensuring their children attend school in the correct uniform and with the basic equipment required for lessons.
- Not arrange medical and dental appointments in school time, whenever possible.
- Telephone to inform the school on the first day of absence for their child.
- Provide evidence of illness if the absence has been identified as a concern e.g. proof from medical practitioner, prescription, medical appointment card.
- Work in partnership with the school and other agencies in the best interests of their child; this includes informing the school about significant influences and changes in the child's life, which may impact on learning.
- Provide evidence of all appointments taken during the school day.
- Not arrange holidays during term time.

A simplified version of this policy is available for parents and is available from the school office.

Categorising Absence

A mark will be given in respect of each child during registration. Any child not present will be marked as absent, unless leave of absence has already been granted in advance by the school or the reason for absence is already known and has been accepted by the school as legitimate. Where the reason for absence is given at a later date and is legitimate the register will be amended. This decision rests with the head teacher.

Norbridge Academy recognises a clear link between attendance and attainment and attendance and safeguarding children. It recognises the inappropriate authorisation of absence can be damaging to a child's education as authorised absence will potentially send out a message to parents that any reason for non-school attendance is acceptable and can render children vulnerable to harm. If absence is frequent or continuous, except for when a child is clearly unwell, staff will challenge reasons for absence and encourage parents to keep absences to a minimum. A note/explanation from a pupil's home does not mean the absence becomes authorised.

Absence may be granted by the head teacher in the following circumstances:

- A pupil is to participate in an approved/paid performance by which a licence has been granted by the Local Authority. Evidence required. (children in entertainment).
- Where the school is satisfied that the pupil is too ill to attend (evidence may be required if attendance has been noted of concern).
- Where the pupil has a medical/dental appointment. Evidence required (below for more details).
- If an absence occurs on a day set aside for religious observance. A parent/carer is expected to place a leave of absence request.
- A temporary, time limited part-time timetable - where the pupil is of compulsory school age, both the parent who the pupil normally lives with, and school agree the pupil should temporarily be educated on a part-time basis for exceptional reasons and have agreed the times and dates when the pupil will be expected to attend school as part of that timetable.
- In other exceptional circumstances – Norbridge Academy may consider granting a leave of absence for other exceptional circumstances at the head teachers' discretion. This should be requested in advance by a parent who the pupil normally lives with. The head teacher will consider each application individually considering the

specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind the request. If a leave of absence is granted, it is for the head teacher to determine the length of the time the pupil can be away from school.

Generally, the DfE does not consider a need or desire for a holiday or other absence for the purpose of leisure and recreation to be an exceptional circumstance. Leave of absence should not be granted for a pupil to take part in protest activity during school hours.

Medical Appointments

Parents should, where possible, arrange dental, clinic, doctors or hospital appointments out of school hours. In circumstance where this is not possible children should return to school immediately afterwards – or beforehand to ensure they receive their registration mark. Proof of the appointment will be required. Failure to provide adequate evidence will result in the child receiving an unauthorised mark in the register.

Please note - the authorisation of all absences is at the discretion of the head teacher. Unauthorised absences of more than 5 days or 10 sessions may lead to the Local Authority issuing a fixed penalty notice or a referral to the Local Authority for enforcement action.

Illness

Proof of illness is required in absences which have been noted as a concern or for extended leave for serious illness. Parents/carers will be notified if this is the case. Failure to provide evidence, if requested, could lead to further action.

Please note – evidence must relate to the days in which the child was absent.

Suitable evidence would be:

- Proof of appointment (appointment card, text message)
- Appointment letter
- Proof of medication
- Prescription
- Bottle of medication – with label fixed and appropriate date applicable to the illness
- Evidence from a medical practitioner that the child is too ill to attend school.

Children who become ill during the school day will be promptly sent home. It is essential, for this reason, that parents/carers keep their contact details up to date with the school office and provide at least one emergency contact. Further guidance from the NHS can be found on the school website.

Children should not be kept off school for the following reasons:

- Family holiday
- Birthday
- Visiting relatives
- Minding the house/Looking after siblings
- Shopping

Strategies for rewarding/promoting excellent attendance:

Aims:

- To ensure good attendance and punctuality is regularly promoted and supported and remains high profile across the school.
- To achieve high levels of attendance and punctuality through rewarding good attendance and punctuality.

Weekly Class Trophy Award

Each week the attendance officer will analyse school attendance and award the best class with a trophy and certificate. The trophy will stay in the classroom all week for parents/carers to view. This promotes healthy competition between classes in the school and keeps the profile of attendance high.

NORBRIDGE Award

NORBRIDGE award – this reward applies to all classes and will be awarded each day a class achieves 100%. For this achievement the class will earn a letter from NORBRIDGE. When the whole name is spelt out the (each day the class achieves 100%) class earns £5 which can be spent straight away or can be saved and spent together with any other achievements of £5.

Awards will also be communicated via the school website and class Twitter accounts.

School Newsletter

Details of attendance data, celebrations, rewards and incentives will be consistent and continuous in the newsletter throughout the school year.

School Attendance Display Board

The board includes attendance information and information about the best class weekly attenders and half termly attenders. It will also include details of pupils throughout the school who have achieved 100% attendance, improved attendance and weekly bingo awards.

The School Learning Environment

A welcoming, organised learning environment that supports and celebrates its learners is a key factor in ensuring children enjoy school and attend regularly. All staff ensure that their learning environments are of high quality. Regular, rigorous environmental audits are carried out by the SLT, to ensure this.

Staff Promoting Good Attendance

It is important that teachers are regularly promoting good attendance with their classes. Good class attendance is attributed to good teaching, and this is celebrated.

Attendance Bingo - Foundation Stage & KS1 Children

All children in the above key stages will have a bingo ball. All balls stay in a bag until an absence occurs, only then will they be removed. The attendance officer will then do a weekly draw of

one ball from the bag. Children gaining a weekly 100% and have their ball drawn will win a prize and certificate.

Attendance Disco's/Movie Nights

All children achieving 100% attendance each term will be invited to either a disco or movie night. Children will also receive a certificate.

End of Year Celebration Assembly

Children receiving 100% attendance for the whole year are eligible to receive the prestigious 100% attendance award. Children will receive a certificate, a £5 Amazon voucher, a cinema trip and a trophy. Children will also be entered into a prize draw to win either a bike or a family day out.

The class with the best overall annual attendance will be awarded with a cinema trip, a trophy and a certificate.

Various other attendance awards will be presented at the assembly to celebrate improved attendance and punctuality.

Sharing Attendance Data

Attendance will also be shared on the child's end of year report and at parent consultation evenings. Up to date attendance data will also be available on the MCAS app.

Parent/teacher consultation evenings

This provides an opportunity for teachers to praise and recognise excellent attendance or share concerns and discuss barriers to good attendance. Where necessary a target for improving attendance is set. The teacher will consult with the attendance officer about this and refer future concerns promptly.

Attendance drop-in sessions will be available at these evenings with the Attendance Officer.

Monitoring and Recording Attendance & Punctuality

Class Registers

Class registers are the only way of recording pupil attendance and must be completed accurately. This is the responsibility of whichever member of staff has been directed to take the register for that session.

Morning Session – The register is taken at 8.45am. Only children responding to their name in the register at that time will be given a present (/) mark.

The register remains open until 9.15am. A child arriving after the register has been called but before 9.15am will be given a late (before register closes) mark (L).

The register closes at 9.15am.

Children arriving after the gates have been locked must enter the school via the main reception. Parents/carers must accompany children into reception where they will be asked to sign their child in on the Inventory pad, completing a valid reason for the lateness.

Children arriving independently will be asked to complete the same action.

Children will be given an unauthorised late mark (after register closes – 'U').

The unauthorised late mark affects overall attendance percentage.

Afternoon Session – The register is taken after the lunch time break for all children.

Register sessions may differ if staggered lunch times are in operation.

Punctuality

At 8.45am the school gates will be locked. Children arriving after this time must enter via the office (please see above).

Children should not be present in school before the register unless:

- Attending Breakfast Club (paid service)
- Attending a booster session (organised by the class teacher)

Children arriving unaccompanied in school before 8.30am will be placed in breakfast club for their own safety. This may incur a charge for parents.

The attendance officer will monitor punctuality regularly. This may involve speaking to teaching and office staff members. It may also involve speaking to parents via phone call or letter.

Letters can be sent to children with persistent late marks in the register. If punctuality does not improve parents will be invited into school to discuss the issue.

As a last resort the Local Authority can be contacted to pursue the family with a fixed penalty notice.

IMPORTANT

Child Protection and safeguarding concerns must be acted on immediately, in line with the school Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

Schools have a safeguarding duty under section 175 of The Education Act 2002 to investigate any unexplained absences.

Monitoring First Day Absence

If a child is absent from school and the school has not received a phone call, email or other message from the parent/carer, a first day absence call will be made. The office staff will follow this system:

- Phone parents contact number.
- Repeat this during the first morning of absence if no response.
- Phone emergency contact number(s) to get an up-to-date contact number for the parent/carer and update the school system accordingly.
- If no reason is given or contact is not made the absence is recorded and the attendance officer is informed.
- Home visits will be arranged if no contact is made with parents by day 2.

Children Absent from Education

Norbridge Academy will follow the above procedures until contact is made with the parent. If contact is not made the attendance officer will carry out a home visit, no later than day 2.

If this is unsuccessful and the parent's whereabouts are unknown a referral will be made to the Children Missing Officer, no later than day 10.

Working together to improve attendance

Successfully treating the root causes of absence and removing barriers to attendance, at home, in school or more broadly requires schools and local partners to work collaboratively in partnership with, not against families.

All partners should work together to:

Expect

Aspire to high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents and build a culture where all can, and want to, be in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across the school.

Monitor

Rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance (at individual and cohort level) as soon as possible so all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.

Listen and understand

When a pattern is spotted, discuss with pupils and parents to listen to and understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.

Facilitate support

Remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome the barriers outside of school. This might include an early help or whole family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues.

Formalise support

Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners should work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also, in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances this may include formalising support through an attendance contract or education supervision order.

Enforce

Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, enforce attendance through statutory intervention: a penalty notice in line with the National Framework or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education.

Expectations of school

Norbridge Academy will consistently promote the benefits of good attendance at and make school a place pupils want to be, set high expectations for every pupil, communicate those expectations clearly and consistently to pupils and parents, systematically analyse their data to identify patterns to target their improvement efforts, and work effectively with the local authority and other local partners to overcome barriers to attendance. We also recognise that attendance cannot be seen in isolation and that the foundation to good attendance is a calm, orderly, safe and supportive

environment in which all pupils can learn and thrive.

To manage and improve attendance effectively, the staff at Norbridge Academy will:

- Build strong relationships and work jointly with families, listening to and understanding barriers to attendance and working in partnership with families to remove them.
- Develop and maintain a whole school culture that promotes the benefits of high attendance.
- Accurately complete admission and attendance registers and have effective day to day processes in place to follow-up absence.
- Regularly monitor and analyse attendance and absence data to identify pupils or cohorts that require support with their attendance and put effective strategies in place.
- Share information and work collaboratively with other schools in the area, local authorities, and other partners where a pupil's absence is at risk of becoming persistent or severe.
- Be particularly mindful of pupils absent from school due to mental or physical ill health or their special educational needs and/or disabilities, and provide them with additional support.

Attendance Panel Meetings/Attendance Contracts

The attendance officer will lead on meeting with parents and, if necessary, other agencies to discuss attendance concerns. Letters are sent out to all parents with children whose attendance is below 90%. These families will be invited in to discuss the issues and work in partnership with the school to improve attendance. Where absence persists and support is not engaged with, more formalised support, such as an attendance contract or education supervision order may be put in place. This will highlight ways in which school and families and work together to improve barriers to attendance.

Families failing to engage, support and work with school will be referred to the Local Authority and could face further action.

Holidays

In line with Working Together to Improve School Attendance 2024, leave for pupils taking holidays during term time is not authorised under any circumstances.

The academy recognises that taking children out of school may constitute a safeguarding risk and will make necessary enquiries, to be satisfied that the child is not at risk.

All requests for absence in term time must be made in writing via a 'Leave of Absence' form.

Parents wishing to take their children out of school for a holiday are permitted to fill in a form which they can obtain from the office or from the school website. This however may lead to further action being taken and the Local Authority being informed recommending the family is issued with a fixed penalty notice.

Where families are suspected of taking children out of school for a holiday without prior permission, informing the academy or falsifying reasons of absence, the school will take action to establish the genuine reason for absence.

This may include:

- Home visits
- Discussions with parents/carers

- Contacting emergency contacts
- Requesting medical evidence if the child is reported ill
- Social media checks
- Referrals to other agencies, including police if safeguarding concerns are raised.

Penalty Notices

If a child is taken out of school for a holiday or without prior permission, it will be recorded as unauthorised absence. This may lead to the issuing of a fixed penalty notice and legal action being taken.

Unauthorised absences are clarified as the following:

- A family holiday of 5 days/10 sessions in a rolling 10-week period
- Unauthorised absences of 5 days/10 sessions in a rolling 10-week period

Section 23(1) Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2007

Penalty notices may be issued to the parent(s) or carers of pupils who have unauthorised absence from school. The amount of the penalty is £160.

- The amount is reduced if paid within 21 days to £80
- If unpaid the Local Authority will prosecute under section 444(1).
- In some circumstances the local authority may decide a prosecution via Magistrates court is more suitable, for instance in cases of lengthy or repeated leave of absence periods. This would include circumstances where a parent/carer has already received two fines for a child/ren over a 3-year rolling period.

Parents/carers will receive separate correspondence from the Local Authority in relation to penalty notices and/or prosecution.

Section 444(1) Education Act 1996

“If you are a parent of a child of compulsory school age who fails to attend school regularly you are guilty of an offence.”

Please note that:

- Penalty notices and prosecutions are in respect of each parent/carer for each child.
- Parent includes any person who is not a parent of the child but who has parental responsibility for the child (and applies whether that person lives with the child) or who has day to day care of him/her.
- Norbridge Academy gains no financial profit from the referral and ultimate issuing of a fixed penalty notice.

Norbridge Academy recognises its continuing responsibility to proactively manage and improve attendance across the school community. Attendance is the essential foundation to positive outcomes for all pupils including their safeguarding and welfare and should therefore be seen as everyone’s responsibility.

Policy prepared by: Sally Townsend

Date: 1st September 2024