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# Nacton Church of England Primary School

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## Attendance Policy

Version 10

Chair of Governors: Mrs Melanie Munday

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Chair of working group: The Revd. Canon Ian Wilson

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date authorised: \_\_\_\_\_

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## 1 Introduction

The aim of this policy is to ensure that the school has robust registration and attendance monitoring system in place, such that attendance can be properly managed, and it will be possible to know with certainty, at any one time, which children are in school, able to learn and safe from harm.

This policy is written according to the information in the Suffolk County Council Education Department's '*Guidance for Schools on the Law Relating to School Attendance and Pupil Registration*', which is based on:

- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (amended 2010, 2011 and 2013)
- Education Act 1996, as amended
- DfEE Circulars 10/99 and 11/99 on Social Inclusion: Pupil Support
- DfES Guidance 2003: Advice on whole school behaviour and attendance policy
- Section 444A of the Education Act 1996 (as amended by the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003) and subsequent Regulations on Fixed Penalty Notices.

As such this policy is based on current legislation and reflects practice which the LA considers sound and effective in promoting and managing good school attendance. This policy will be reviewed and up-dated as a minimum every two years or as necessary to take account of any changes to the law.

## 2 The Partnership between parents/carers and school

It is the responsibility of parents and carers of children of compulsory school age (5–16) to make sure that their children attend and stay at school regularly.

It is the responsibility of the school to support attendance and to take seriously problems that may lead to non-attendance. Parents are reminded that *any* absence from school can affect a pupil's performance.

Parents/carers should consider themselves partners with the school in the education of their children. The Induction Pack, given to parents when their child starts in Reception reminds parents of their responsibilities with regard to attendance, how to notify the school when a pupil is absent, as well as any supporting information e.g. dress code guidelines.

### 3 Reporting absences

It is the parents'/carers' responsibility to inform the school of the reason for a child's absence on the first day of absence. This should be by telephone call to the school or note brought by brother or sister as appropriate. A "*record of message re pupil absence*" slip is completed and given to the class teacher for inclusion in the pupil's blue record folder. The cause of absence should be specified. This should be followed by a note on return to school. These notes are kept in the class register.

If a child is absent from registration and there is no note in the register then the class teacher has to inform the office, either verbally or on the appropriate form, so that the office can follow up this absence.

Some parents/carers may experience difficulty in providing notes, and in these cases alternative arrangements should be made. There is no legal requirement for schools to retain parents' notes, however the school will, in accordance with LA recommendations, keep absence notes, along with any other correspondence in the relevant pupil's school file. In cases of poor school attendance, or where a pupil suffers serious harm, such information could be required in court or assist a serious case review commissioned by Suffolk Safeguarding Children Board.

In accordance with the law, the school is required to report pupils who fail to attend regularly, except where such absences are covered by a medical certificate. The Education Welfare Officers (EWOS) are consulted when there is difficulty in determining whether absence is justified. The EWO may then visit the home.

### 4 Marking the register

The school is required by law to mark the Attendance Register at the start of the morning session and once during the afternoon session. Whilst regulations no longer stipulate a time for afternoon registration, in accordance with the LA recommendation the register should be marked at the beginning of the afternoon session. A register taken later in the afternoon will not identify at an early stage any pupils who have failed to return after the lunch break, and it potentially places pupils at risk of harm if their absence is not noticed until late in the day.

The attendance register is a legal document and, as such, one to be regarded seriously and marked accurately. Changes cannot be made to the document:

#### **It may have to be produced as evidence in court.**

The Attendance Register must record, for each session, whether pupils are present, absent, attending an approved educational activity, or unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

For absent pupils of compulsory school age, the register must record whether or not their absences are authorised. If no acceptable reason for the absence has been received at the time of registration, the absence is unauthorised unless or until a satisfactory reason is given. A note or explanation from a pupil's home does not mean an absence becomes authorised. The decision whether or not to authorise an absence rests with the school.

A register must never remain unmarked in anticipation of a reason for absence being given. There are serious health and safety risks if there is uncertainty about whether or not a child is in school. It is important that, in the event of a fire or other emergency, schools are able to account for all pupils. It is also important to know when, if a child is subsequently reported missing, he/she was last in school.

For school days where the whole school has to close due to severe weather conditions, fire, heating failure or other structural damage, the Attendance Register need not be marked.

## **5 Authorised and unauthorised absence**

Under section 444 of the 1996 Education Act, the parent/carer of a child of compulsory school age registered at a school and failing to attend regularly is guilty of an offence punishable in law.

### **5.1 Authorised absence**

An offence is not committed if it can be demonstrated that:

- the pupil was ill or prevented from attending by any unavoidable cause;
- the absence occurs on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's parent belongs;
- the child lives more than two miles from the school (if he/she is under eight years old) or three miles (if he/she is aged eight or over) and no suitable transport arrangements have been made by the LA and no place has been offered at a nearer school;
- the child is of no fixed abode, his/her parent is engaged in a trade which requires him/her to travel, the child has attended school as often as the nature of trade permits and, having reached the age of six, he/she has attended 200 sessions in the preceding 12 months;
- the pupil was absent with leave.

Leave *may* be granted in advance when:

- a pupil is to participate in an approved performance for which a licence has been granted by the LA;
- a pupil is involved in an exceptional special occasion – in authorising such absences the individual circumstances of the particular case and the pupil's overall pattern of attendance should be considered;

Absence cannot be authorised for children in Year 6 during the week of Statutory Tests (SATs.)

### **5.2 Unauthorised absence**

Only the school, within the context of the law, can approve absence, not parents.

Absences which cannot be accounted for (and those for which the Headteacher or Education Welfare Officer feels the reason given is unsatisfactory) will be recorded as “unauthorised”. The total number of “unauthorised” absences is published in each individual pupil’s Annual Report. The school is not obliged to accept parental notes where there is reason to doubt the validity of the explanation offered. Similarly, if no explanation for absence is offered, the absence should remain unauthorised.

Leave for medical or dental appointments may be given (i.e. authorised) on request by the parent in person, in writing or by telephone call. Parents/carers are encouraged where practicable to make appointments out of school hours.

Where continued absence is noted or where a pattern of absences occurs this is reported by the Headteacher to the Education Welfare Officer during one of his/her regular visits to school.

### **5.3 Persistent lateness**

Persistent lateness where the pupil arrives at school after the register has been taken, is marked as unauthorised.

Registers should open and close at regular set times that are familiar to all staff, pupils and parents. In very severe weather the school may lengthen the period during which the register remains open.

When a pupil arrives after the beginning of registration but before the register is closed, he/she should be marked late but counted as present.

When a pupil arrives after the register has been closed, he/she should be marked absent for that session. Where the parent provides a satisfactory explanation for the lateness (e.g. the child had a medical or dental appointment) the absence is authorised. Where there is no satisfactory reason for lateness after the register is closed the absence is unauthorised. For reasons of health and safety, there must be a ‘late book’ to indicate the pupil is on site. The pupil’s late arrival should subsequently be shown in the register. (As admitted entry is via the office, the register is subsequently completed by the Administrator.)

### **5.4 Approved educational activity**

A pupil who is engaged in off-site educational activities which are supervised by the school should have his/her absence recorded as approved educational activity. For statistical purposes such pupils may be counted as present even though they are physically absent. For reasons of health and safety it is important, however, that the attendance register clearly indicates they are not on site.

An approved educational activity is:

- dual registration arrangements with another school, such as a Pupil Referral Unit or special school (both institutions share responsibility for the pupil – failure to attend either institution as instructed, without good reason, is unauthorised absence);
- a supervised field trip or educational visit either in the UK or abroad;

- participation in or attendance at an approved and supervised sporting activity;
- registered pupils receiving part of their tuition off-site at another location whilst remaining under the overall supervision of the school (i.e. with an alternative provider but short of formal dual registration) – this can include sick children being taught at home and remaining on the school roll (such children must be in receipt of supervised tuition, not simply undertaking homework which is provided by the school);

### **5.5 Registering Part-Time Attendance**

Notwithstanding established LA induction arrangements, all pupils are entitled to a full-time education. Part-time arrangements should therefore be made only in exceptional circumstances (e.g. to re-integrate a child who has had long-term absence) and should be time-limited with the clear aim of making them full-time as soon as possible.

Pupils on part-time timetables should have agreed periods of absence marked as authorised absence.

## **6 Penalty Notice Protocol under Section 444A of the Education Act (as amended)**

To ensure consistency, Penalty Notices will be issued by the Education Attendance Service to whom the school refers any child whose parent(s)/carer(s) they believe meet the first criterion for a Penalty Notice.

The criteria for issuing Penalty Notices will be:

- i) where there have been at least 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in the current term **and** all or part of this absence is the result of a holiday taken in term-time without prior permission from the school.
- ii) where there have been at least 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in the current term **and** a parent/carers has been stopped during a truancy sweep, has failed to give a satisfactory explanation for the child's absence and it has been confirmed with the school that the absence is unauthorised.

A Penalty Notice will only be issued in a case of **unauthorised absence**.

At present the Governors and school agree not to refer to the Education Attendance Service. This will be continuously monitored and reviewed as appropriate.

## **7 Children unable to attend school because of medical reasons**

Where a child is unable to attend school because of medical reasons, the school will follow the guidance in Suffolk County Council's Education Other Than at School Policy (EOTAS) (2014) on the County website.

The school will:

- Follow the County EOTAS Policy referred to above
- The SENco and/or Class teacher will be responsible for dealing with pupils who are unable to attend school because of medical needs.
- Notify the LA/EWO if a pupil is, or is likely to be, away from school due to medical needs for more than 15 working days.
- Supply the appropriate education provider with information about a pupil's capabilities, educational progress and programmes of work.
- Be active in the monitoring of progress and in the reintegration into school, liaising with other agencies as necessary.
- Ensure that pupils who are unable to attend school because of medical needs are kept informed about school social events, are able to participate, for example, in homework clubs, study support and other activities.
- Encourage and facilitate liaison with peers, for example, through visits and videos.

## 8 Family Bereavements

The death of a family member can be very distressing for a young child. The school may authorise absence as appropriate.

## 9 Excluded pupils

Where a pupil has been excluded for a fixed period their name remains on the school roll. This absence is treated as authorised. Where the pupil has been excluded permanently the pupil's name is removed from the school roll.

## 10 Document History

Version	Date	Comments
Issue 1	2000	
Draft 1A	30/03/03	Converted to new format with minor editorial changes. No substantive changes.
Version 2	02/03/05	Updated to include Penalty Notice Protocol and Section on Children unable to attend school because of medical reasons.
Version 3	30/03/05	Updated to reflect LEA Guidance for Schools on the Law Relating to School Attendance and Pupil Registration
Version 4	17/10/07	Reviewed. No substantive changes.
Version 5	May 2009	Updated. Change of name to Suffolk Safeguarding Children Board and inclusion of 'carer'
Version 6	18/11/09	Further clarifications on authorised and unauthorised absence including holidays. Moved some text on attendance from Behaviour and Discipline policy and removed duplication.

<b>Version</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Version 7	16/11/11	Updated references to legislation; noted that approved educational activities must be supervised. Change of name from Education Welfare Service to Education Attendance Service.
Version 8	21/11/13	Removed reference to 10 days' holiday, aligning with changes to the regulations made by S.I. 2013/756. Updated references to various Acts. Updated reference to EOTAS Policy.
Version 9	26/11/15	Updated reference to EOTA policy.
Version 10	28/09/17	Updated Nacton CEVC Primary School to Nacton Church of England Primary School. Change school prospectus and Home School Agreement to Reception Induction booklet. Include teachers' duty to tell office if a child is absent at registration. Include school's decision not to make referrals to EAS.

Period of review: every two years.