



GREENWOOD ACADEMIES TRUST

Attendance policy



Newark Hill Academy

Approved by:	Sonia Kendal (Principal)	Date: September 2024
Last reviewed on:	September 2024	
Next review due by:	September 2025	

Introduction

Newark Hill Academy is committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all pupils. We believe it is extremely important for pupils to attend regularly and on time. This will give pupils the best opportunity to progress and succeed at school.

Ensuring a child's regular attendance at school is the family member legal responsibility and permitting absence from school without a good reason may result in prosecution.

At Newark Hill Academy we

- provide a welcoming and caring environment where all members of the Academy feel secure and valued
- expect students to arrive on time every day
- will support family members in their legal responsibility to ensure their child attends school regularly and on time
- believe a leave of absence should not be taken during term-time. We will not authorise requests for leave of absence during term-time, except in exceptional/ unavoidable circumstances

How to notify the Academy of an absence

If your child is unable to attend school due to illness or unavoidable circumstances, please contact the academy on each day of absence by:

- Telephone
- Send an email to admin@newarkhillacademy.org
- Using our Xpressions app

Any absence not covered by a reason will be considered 'Unauthorised' in Government legislation.

To inform us about a planned absence:

If your child should need to leave during school hours, please let us know in advance, this includes unavoidable medical appointments. Please bring in a copy of an appointment letter or card to assist with our attendance procedures.

1. Aim

Ensuring all pupils have high attendance is a key priority of the academy.

Pupils are entitled to a full-time education and we know that pupils with high attendance do better at school than those with high absence rates. We also know that absence can be a sign of other risks in a young person's life.

This policy aims to show our commitment to meeting our obligations with regards to school attendance, including those laid out in the Department for Education's (DfE's) statutory guidance on [Working together to improve school attendance](#) (applies from 19 August 2024)

The aim of this document is to set out how we create and maintain a positive culture that supports and values good attendance.

It includes how we aim to:

- Promote good attendance and punctuality.
- Set high expectations for the attendance and punctuality of all pupils.
- Reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence
- Ensuring every pupil has access to the full-time education to which they are entitled.
- Acting early to address patterns of absence.
- Building strong relationships with families to make sure pupils have the support in place to attend school.

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of GAT's Attendance Policy. The Trust policy details the relevant legislation and guidance documents. In particular, this policy carefully follows DfE guidance in this area.

Our work on attendance is linked closely to our approaches to safeguarding and behaviour.

3. How we promote a culture of high expectations in attendance and punctuality

At Newark Hill Academy;

- We believe in building clear partnerships with families, listening to them and understanding barriers to attendance
- Have an Academy ethos that pupils want to be part of
- Give a high priority to punctuality and attendance
- Readiness for learning agenda is high profile for all
- Develop procedures that enable the school to identify, follow up and record unauthorised absence, patterns of absence and parent condoned absence with effective monitoring and intervention
- Develop a range of effective strategies to follow up intermittent and long-term absenteeism and promote good attendance
- Early identification and support are essential in supporting our families
- Work with other external agencies to put joint support in place for those that require it
- Encourage open communication channels between home and school

4. Our expectations of attendance and punctuality

Pupils must arrive at school between 08:45am and 08:55am on each school day.

The register for the first session will be taken at 8:55am and will remain open for 10 minutes. The register for the second session will be taken at the end of each class's lunchtimes.

Where family members decide to have their child registered at a school, they have a legal duty to ensure their child attends that school regularly, this means their child must attend every day the school is open, except in a small number of allowable circumstances, such as being too ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the academy.

Family members are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day on time
- Contact the academy on 01733 566053 or admin@newarkhillacademy.org to report their child's absence before 08:45am on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence, and advise when they are expected to return
- Provide the academy with more than one emergency contact number for their child
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day

Pupils are expected to:

- Attend school every day and on time
- Be prepared for the day of learning ahead by wearing the correct uniform for the day

Class teachers are responsible for

- Recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the office by 09:05am.

Office staff will:

- Take calls from family members about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the academy system
- For persistent absent pupils, transfer calls from family members to the attendance lead (Jackie Vonhof) or Inclusion Lead (Mrs Farooq) in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance
- Admin staff will check the registers are taken correctly and make first day calling to absent pupils with no absence notification by 10am
- Weekly late monitoring, to prevent persistent lateness. Open communication with family members to see if there are any problems or any further support that can be offered
- Late gate letters are issued weekly and discussions had with family members to overcome any identified barriers on that day
- On a weekly basis, monitor 100% attendance, reward class weekly, to enable pupil termly with certificates and other incentives

The attendance officer is responsible for:

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data
- Providing regular attendance reports to staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader responsible for attendance and the principal
- Working with education welfare officers and external agencies to tackle persistent absence
- Issue Fixed Penalty Notices in line with local codes of conduct where absences have been unauthorised
- Take forward prosecution as a last resort where all other routes have been exhausted or deemed inappropriate
- Promoting and monitoring good attendance with termly certificates and other incentives for 100% attendance

- Maintain good relationships with family members to prevent any barriers between home and school
- Work closely with senior leaders and SENDCo to overcome any barriers that could affect the attendance
- Ensure all CME children are reported correctly (Children Missing from Education)

The attendance officer is Jackie Vonhof and can be contacted via telephone on 01733 566053, email jvonhof@newarkhillacademy.org or admin@newarkhillacademy.org

The designated senior leader (also known as the ‘senior attendance champion’) is responsible for:

- Leading attendance across the academy
- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
- Having an oversight of data analysis
- Evaluating and monitoring processes
- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data
- Arranging calls and meetings with Family members to discuss attendance issues
- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families
- Working with local partners to implement bespoke strategies to improve attendance for those children with persistent absence or severe absence

The designated senior leader responsible for attendance is Rizwana Farooq and can be contacted via telephone on 01733 566053 or email rfarooq@newarkhillacademy.org

The Principal is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the academy
- Monitoring academy-level absence data and reporting it to the trust
- Monitoring the impact of processes and attendance strategies
- Monitoring the impact of work with local partners to improve attendance in identified cases
- Working with local partners when formal procedures such as parental contracts, supervision orders and penalty notices are required

The Principal can be contacted via telephone on 01733 566053 or email skendal@newarkhillacademy.org

5. Recording attendance

We will keep an attendance register and place all pupils onto this register.

We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session.

It will mark whether every pupil is:

- Present
- Attending an approved off-site educational activity
- Absent
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

We will use the DfE codes to detail the attendance and absences.

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

Unplanned absence

The pupil's family members must notify the academy of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 8.55am or as soon as possible by emailing admin@newarkhillacademy.org, calling 01733 566053 by leaving a message on the absence line or by using the Groupcall Xpressions messaging app.

We will mark absence due to illness as authorised unless the academy has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness.

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the academy may ask the pupil's family members 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 academy is not satisfied with the illness's authenticity, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and family member will be notified in advance.

Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be seen as authorised if the pupil's family member notifies the academy before the appointment.

However, we encourage family members 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.

The pupil's family members must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence. Leave of absence forms are available on the academy website and should be completed at least four weeks before any leave is taken. Evidence will be required, this will include booking confirmation, return flight tickets and any other information proving the unavoidable absence.

Go to section 6 to find out which term-time absences the academy can authorise.

Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed will be marked as late, using the appropriate code
- After the register has closed will be marked as absent, using the appropriate code

Families who are persistently late will be contacted by the attendance officer or they will be invited to attendance meetings to identify any barriers and offer support where required.

A weekly late gate procedure is completed by the admin team to explain in person the importance of regular attendance and how lateness can impact a child's learning

Following up unexplained absence

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

- Call the pupil's family members on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the academy cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts, the academy could conduct a home visit to identify whether the absence is approved or not and if the child is safe. If there is cause for concern the Senior Leadership Team will contact external agencies to further safeguard pupils
- 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 session
- Call the family members on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If unexplained absence continues on day three the Senior Leadership Team will conduct a home visit and the academy will consider involving an Education Welfare officer or other relevant agency
- Families that are identified as having support from external agencies or persistent absentees, may have a door knock conducted on day 1 of the absence if there is no contact/reason identified. This is a precautionary safeguarding measure put in place to safeguard the pupil

Reporting to Family members

The academy will regularly inform family members about their child's attendance and absence levels through reports sent at least twice a year. Family members will also be informed on Family Consolation Evening. Family members can monitor live attendance levels through the Xpressions app.

6. Authorised and unauthorised absence

Approval for term-time absence

The principal can only grant a leave of absence to a pupil during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances' and if the request meets the specific circumstances set out in the [2024 school attendance regulations](#). A leave of absence is granted at the principal's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for.

Leave of absence will not be granted for a pupil to take part in protest activity during school hours. The academy considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least 4 weeks before the absence, and in accordance with the leave of absence request form, available from the academy office. Evidence may be required to support any request for leave of absence.

Family holidays should not be taken in term time as they damage progress and continuity of learning.

The academy will not authorise any holidays, unless in very exceptional circumstances.

The academy considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request.

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments
- Religious observance – where the day is exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's family members belong. If necessary, the academy will seek advice from the family members' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travellers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and new travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the academy, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision

Legal sanctions

Our Academy will make use of the full range of potential sanctions including, but not limited to, penalty notices, to tackle poor attendance.

Decisions will be made on an individual, case by-case basis and we will use the local authority arrangements for doing so. The local code of conduct can be found [HERE](#)

7. How we monitor attendance

Newark Hill Academy monitors and analyses attendance and absence data to identify pupils or cohorts that require support with their attendance. When a pupil does not attend, the academy responds by contacting home on the first day of absence if the absence has not already been reported. This measure is undertaken to ensure a child's safety. If this has not been possible then a letter home regarding the child's unexplained absence is sent asking for a parental response and a possible home visit by a senior member of staff may take place.

- The academy is particularly concerned about any pupil's attendance which consistently fails to meet 90%. This situation will be deemed to be persistent absenteeism.

- Pupils with poor punctuality will also be monitored by the Attendance Officer or other senior member of staff.

- If attendance or punctuality falls below 95% during the half term the family members will be contacted by the Attendance officer
- In continued non-attendance, the case will be discussed with the PCC Attendance Officer. This may, in appropriate cases, result in legal action.
- If there is no improvement, then the case will be referred for legal action, if one has not been made at an earlier stage.
- Rewards and consequences are in place and explanatory charts are displayed around the Academy. This information is also provided to family members.
- Family members of pupils whose attendance is a concern, or who have failed to improve their attendance following previous interventions, are invited to meet with the Inclusion Lead for a meeting and in some cases may be referred to the PCC Attendance Officer.

Monitoring attendance

The academy will:

- Monitor attendance and absence data weekly, half-termly, termly and yearly across the academy 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 by the trust and DfE and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The academy will compare attendance data to the trust and national average.

Analysing attendance

The 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
- Look at historic and emerging patterns of attendance and absence, and then develop strategies to address these patterns

Using data to improve attendance

The academy will:

- Provide regular attendance reports to class teachers and other academy 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
- Use attendance data to find patterns and trends of persistent and severe absence
- Hold regular meetings with the family members of pupils who the academy (and/or local authority) considers to be vulnerable, at risk of or persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance such

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 academy will:

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

8. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the trust or DfE is updated, and as a minimum annually by the Principal. At every review, the policy will be approved by the academy's Education Director.