

ATTENDANCE POLICY

September 2026

We consider equality implications before and at the time that we develop policy and take decisions, not as an afterthought, and we keep them under review on a continuing basis. All policies are approved by the governing board and reviewed annually.



But the plans of the Lord stand firm for ever, the purposes of his heart through all generations.

*Psalm 33:11
New International Version*

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1. Aims

Northaw CE Primary School is committed to securing excellent attendance for every pupil. Good attendance is essential for safeguarding, wellbeing, academic progress, and wider life chances.

We aim to:

- Promote a whole-school culture that values high attendance.
- Ensure every pupil accesses the full-time education to which they are legally entitled.
- Act early to identify and address patterns of absence.
- Work in partnership with families to remove barriers to attendance.
- Provide timely, proportionate, and escalating support where concerns arise.
- Use data intelligently to target support and evaluate impact.
- Ensure compliance with all statutory duties relating to attendance, registers, and legal intervention.
- Promote and support punctuality.

Legal expectation:

Pupils must attend school every day the school is open, unless a statutory reason applies. Only the headteacher can authorise absence.

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of:

- Working together to improve school attendance (DfE, July 2026)
- Summary Table of Responsibilities for School Attendance (DfE, August 2024)
- School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024
- Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2024
- Education Act 1996
- Education Act 2002
- Education and Inspections Act 2006

It should be read alongside statutory guidance on safeguarding, medical needs, exclusions, alternative provision, and children missing education.

3. Promoting regular attendance

We promote attendance by:

- Building strong relationships with families.
- Communicating attendance expectations clearly.
- Celebrating excellent and improving attendance.
- Reporting attendance to parents regularly.
- Submitting daily attendance returns to the DfE.
- Providing early support where concerns arise.
- Ensuring staff understand attendance procedures and expectations.

4. Roles and responsibilities

4.1 Governing board

The governing board will:

- Promote the importance of attendance across the school's ethos.
- Ensure leaders fulfil statutory duties.
- Review and challenge attendance data regularly.
- Ensure staff receive appropriate training.
- Hold the headteacher to account for attendance improvement.

4.2 Headteacher (senior attendance champion & attendance officer)

The headteacher will:

- Lead attendance strategically across the school.
- Set a clear vision for improving attendance.
- Ensure robust systems for monitoring and follow-up.
- Analyse data weekly, half-termly, termly, and annually.
- Oversee targeted support and multi-agency work.
- Hold formal meetings with parents where concerns escalate.
- Issue penalty notices in line with the National Framework.
- Ensure compliance with register regulations.

4.3 All staff

All staff must:

- Promote the benefits of good attendance.
- Model respectful relationships with pupils and families.
- Follow attendance procedures consistently.
- Record attendance accurately and on time.
- Escalate concerns promptly.

4.4 Parents/carers

Parents/carers must:

- Ensure their child attends school every day and on time.
- Notify the school of unexpected absence by 9.15am.
- Provide more than one emergency contact.
- Request term-time leave only in exceptional circumstances.
- Book medical appointments outside school hours where possible.

4.5 Pupils

Pupils must:

- Attend school every day and arrive on time.
- Engage with support where attendance concerns arise.

5. Attendance registers

5.1 Register Times

- Morning register: 8.45am–9.15am
- Afternoon register: 1.00pm–1.15pm

Registers are taken at the same time for all pupils.

5.2 Recording

Registers will record:

- Present
- Approved off-site activity
- Authorised absence
- Unauthorised absence
- Exceptional circumstances preventing attendance

All amendments will include the original entry, amended entry, reason, date, and name of the person making the amendment.

Registers are retained for 6 years.

6. Daily attendance processes

6.1 First-day response

If a pupil is absent without explanation:

- The school will call parents by 9.45am.
- If no response, emergency contacts will be called.
- If still no contact, a home visit may be conducted.
- Safeguarding concerns may be escalated to police or children's services.

6.2 Daily follow-up

The school will:

- Call parents every day until the reason is established.
- Record the correct code within 5 working days.
- Escalate persistent unexplained absence to the LA School Attendance Support Team.

7. Lateness and punctuality

- Pupils arriving after 8.45am enter via the main entrance and are marked late (L).
- Pupils arriving after 9.15am are marked absent for the session (U).
- These timings comply with the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) Regulations 2024.
- Patterns of lateness trigger intervention from the headteacher.

8. Authorised and unauthorised absence

8.1 Illness

- Authorised unless authenticity is in doubt.
- Medical evidence may be requested where appropriate.

8.2 Medical appointments

- Authorised if notified in advance.
- Parents should minimise time away from school.

8.3 Exceptional circumstances

- Leave may only be granted where circumstances are rare, significant, unavoidable, and short.
- Requests must be made at least 6 weeks in advance.
- Blanket policies are prohibited.

8.4 Traveller pupils

- Absence for occupational purposes is authorised.

8.5 Unauthorised absence includes:

- Holidays not approved
- Absence without explanation

- Arriving after register closes
- Absence where evidence is insufficient

9.Support pathway for attendance concerns

Northaw CE Primary School follows the DfE's support-first model.

Stage 1: Early Identification

Weekly data analysis identifies pupils:

- At risk of persistent absence (<90%)
- At risk of severe absence (<50%)
- With emerging patterns
- In vulnerable cohorts (SEND, medical needs, young carers, pupils with a social worker)

Stage 2: Listening and Understanding

The school meets with parents to:

- Understand barriers
- Agree actions
- Provide reasonable adjustments
- Offer pastoral support

Stage 3: Targeted Support

May include:

- Mentoring
- Pastoral support
- Individual healthcare plans
- SEND adjustments
- Reduced timetable (time-limited, reviewed fortnightly)
- Early Help referral
- Multi-agency meetings

Stage 4: Formal Support

Where absence persists:

- Attendance Action Plan
- Attendance Contract
- Education Supervision Order (LA)
- Notice to Improve (LA)

Stage 5: Legal Intervention

Where support is not effective or not engaged with:

- Penalty notice
- Prosecution (last resort)

- Parenting Order (court)
- Social care involvement where safeguarding concerns exist

10. Penalty notices (national framework 2024)

Northaw CE Primary School follows the national rules:

- £80 if paid within 21 days
- £160 if paid within 28 days
- A second notice may be issued within 3 years
- No third notice within 3 years
- National threshold: 10 sessions unauthorised within 10 school weeks
- A Notice to Improve may be issued before a penalty notice

11. Vulnerable pupils

Additional support is provided for:

SEND / Medical Needs

- Reasonable adjustments
- Healthcare plans
- Timely referrals
- Alternative provision where medically necessary
- Sickness returns submitted to the LA for pupils missing 15+ days

Young Carers

- Pastoral support
- Flexible arrangements
- Multi-agency involvement

Pupils with a Social Worker

- Daily monitoring
- Immediate notification of unexplained absence
- Collaboration with social care and Virtual School

Looked-After Children

- High expectations
- Personal Education Plans
- Virtual School oversight

12. Attendance monitoring

The school will:

- Analyse attendance weekly, half-termly, termly, and annually.
- Benchmark against national, regional, and local data.
- Identify vulnerable cohorts.

- Submit daily attendance returns to the DfE.
- Report to governors termly.
- Evaluate the impact of interventions.

13. Working with external partners

We work collaboratively with:

- Hertfordshire LA School Attendance Support Team
- Early Help
- Children's Social Care
- Virtual School
- Health services
- Mental health services
- Other local schools (including siblings' schools)

14. Children Missing Education (CME)

Statutory Safeguarding Duty

CME is treated as a safeguarding emergency.

A child is considered missing education if they:

- are of compulsory school age, and
- are not registered at any school, and
- are not receiving suitable education otherwise, and
- their whereabouts cannot be established through reasonable enquiries.

CME can indicate serious safeguarding risks including neglect, sexual abuse, criminal exploitation, trafficking, forced marriage, or domestic abuse.

Immediate Action

Where a pupil is at risk of CME, the school will:

- Attempt contact with parents/carers using all available numbers.
- Attempt contact with all emergency contacts.
- Conduct a home visit where appropriate.
- Check with known agencies (social care, health, Virtual School).
- Escalate safeguarding concerns immediately to children's social care or police.
- Record all actions.

Deletion from Roll

The school will not delete a pupil from roll until:

- statutory grounds for deletion are met,
- the local authority has been notified,
- the LA confirms CME checks are complete,
- safeguarding concerns have been assessed and addressed.

Local Authority Notification

The school will notify Hertfordshire County Council immediately when:

- a pupil is to be removed from roll under any statutory ground,
- a pupil fails to attend on their expected first day,
- a pupil's whereabouts become unknown,
- a pupil stops attending and cannot be contacted,
- a pupil moves without a forwarding school.

Safeguarding

The DSL will:

- oversee all CME cases,
- ensure multi-agency communication,
- record all actions on the safeguarding system,
- escalate concerns to statutory services.

15. Admission register compliance

The school complies with statutory requirements for:

- Expected first day of attendance
- Pupils with new addresses
- Deletion from roll
- Children missing education
- Dual registration
- No fixed abode
- Access arrangements

16. Remote education

Remote education is used only as a last resort and only as part of a time-limited reintegration plan, in line with DfE guidance.

17. Equality duty

We analyse attendance data for protected groups and provide reasonable adjustments where needed.

18. Monitoring and review

This policy will be reviewed annually or sooner if DfE guidance changes.

It will be approved by the full governing board.

19. Links with other policies

- Behaviour Policy

- Child Protection Policy
- SEND Policy
- Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy

20. Attendance codes

Attending the school

Code / \: Present at the school / = morning session \ = afternoon session

Code L: Late arrival before the register is closed

Attending a place other than the school

Code K: Attending education provision arranged by the local authority

Code V: Attending an educational visit or trip

Code P: Participating in a sporting activity

Code W: Attending work experience

Code B: Attending any other approved educational activity

Code D: Dual registered at another school

Absent - leave of absence

Code C1: Leave of absence for the purpose of participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad

Code M: Leave of absence for the purpose of attending a medical or dental

Appointment

Code J1: Leave of absence for the purpose of attending an interview for employment or for admission to another educational institution

Code S: Leave of absence for the purpose of studying for a public examination

Code X: Non-compulsory school age pupil not required to attend school

Code C2: Leave of absence for a compulsory school age pupil subject to a part-time timetable

Code C: Leave of absence for exceptional circumstance

Absent - other authorised reasons

Code T: Parent travelling for occupational purposes

Code R: Religious observance

Code I: Illness (not medical or dental appointment)

Code E: Suspended or permanently excluded and no alternative provision made

Absent - unable to attend school because of unavoidable cause

Code Q: Unable to attend the school because of a lack of access arrangements

Code Y1: Unable to attend due to transport normally provided not being available

Code Y2: Unable to attend due to widespread disruption to travel

Code Y3: Unable to attend due to part of the school premises being closed

Code Y4: Unable to attend due to the whole school site being unexpectedly closed

Code Y5: Unable to attend as pupil is in criminal justice detention

Code Y6: Unable to attend in accordance with public health guidance or law

Code Y7: Unable to attend because of any other unavoidable cause

Absent - unauthorised absence

Code G: Holiday not granted by the school

Code N: Reason for absence not yet established

Code O: Absent in other or unknown circumstances

Code U: Arrived in school after registration closed

Administrative codes

Code Z: Prospective pupil not on admission register

Code #: Planned whole school closure