



# NHESC POLICY ON SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

Date:	<b>Autumn 2017</b>
Reviewed by:	<b>J Vernon-Hamilton</b>
Ratified by:	<b>School Improvement Advisory Committee</b>
Date:	<b>Chair :</b>
Frequency of review:	<b>Annual</b>
Date for next review:	<b>Autumn 2018</b>

## **1. Introduction**

Staff at NHESC and the Management Committee are committed to achieving excellent levels of attendance for individual students and the Centre as a whole. Underpinning this commitment is the belief that if students attend our Centre regularly and punctually they will be best able to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them and preparing them for further education and the world of work.

NHESC is committed to openness and equality of opportunity in every activity, from the way we employ staff to the way we deliver services. It is a central responsibility of staff and Management Committee members, to ensure that every individual that we come into contact with is treated with dignity and respect.

### **The SLT members responsible for attendance are;**

Julie Vernon-Hamilton – head teacher

Monica Mcleod – deputy head teacher Briar Patch site

Ian Gamble – deputy head teacher Bancroft site

**Link member for Attendance is Tim Litchfield** – Head teacher at The Knights Templar.

## **2. Statement of Intent**

NHESC works closely together in partnership with parents and carers in order to achieve excellent levels of school attendance and punctuality for all students.

## **3. Responsibilities – Parents and Carers**

Parents and carers are responsible in law for ensuring that their children of compulsory school age receive an efficient education suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs that they may have.

Parents and carers are responsible for ensuring that their child attends and stays at school.

Parents and carers should:-

- ensure that their child arrives at the Centre on time, appropriately dressed and ready to learn
- instil in their child an appreciation of the importance of attending their educational programme regularly
- ensure that they are aware of NHESC's attendance policy
- impress upon their child the need to observe NHESC's code of conduct
- take an active interest in their child's school career, praising and encouraging good work and behaviour and attending parent/carer consultation events and other relevant meetings
- work in partnership with their NHESC to resolve issues which may lead to non-attendance
- notify NHESC if they are absent. This should be done on the first day of absence. They should also provide an explanation for the absence. This explanation should be confirmed - preferably in writing - when the children return to the Centre
- avoid arranging medical/dental appointments during school hours

- should not book holidays during term time
- provide medical confirmation for absence if necessary
- ensure that the Centre is informed of any changes of contact details

**Young People are:**

- Expected to attend the Centre regularly and punctually in accordance with their programme
- Are expected to be committed to actively improving their attendance/punctuality.

#### **4. Responsibilities - NHESC**

NHESC provides a safe and caring learning environment.

NHESC is responsible for supporting the attendance of our students and for dealing with problems that may lead to non-attendance.

NHESC is required to call attendance registers –

Attendance registers are legal documents that may be required as evidence in court cases.

Registers are taken at the beginning of each morning and once during the afternoon session.

NHESC ensures that adequate arrangements are in place so that students do not leave between registrations. They ensure that students can be accounted for in an emergency and that a student removed from the Centre at break time does not go unnoticed.

Registers record whether each student is present; attending an approved educational activity; absent; or unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances. The register also indicates whether the absence has been authorised by the school.

Registers at NHESC are opened at the start of each session and closed 30 minutes after when absence calls are made to parents/carers. This is made clear to parents at admissions and publicised via letters and newsletters.

When calling the register the appropriate mark and/or symbol is placed against each student's name - gaps are not left so that entries can be made later. In marking registers, NHESC uses the national set of symbols as advised by the Department for Education (see Appendix 2)

When the reason for a student's absence cannot be established at the beginning of a session, the absence is recorded as unauthorised and any subsequent correction to the register made as soon as practicable after the reason for the absence has been established.

In order to reduce the possibility of post registration truancy teachers at NHESC are encouraged to take class registers in each lesson however due to the nature of how NHESC works students are unlikely to walk out without staff knowing

### **NHESC will:-**

- work actively to maximise attendance rates - both in relation to individual students and for the student body as a whole
- will work with students with persistent absence, including our vulnerable students, by referring them to our wave 2 intervention programme where individual targets and support plans are used to promote progress with attendance
- support parents and carers in ensuring the regular and punctual attendance of students and promptly respond to any issue which may lead to non-attendance
- be sensitive to the needs of individual parents and this should be reflected in the way in which attendance issues are addressed. NHESC recognises that some parents have difficulty understanding written communications. They also recognise the reluctance of some parents to come into Centre
- provide attendance details on student's reports both to the mainstream school if the student is dual registered and to the parents and any outside agencies
- keep parent/carers up dated with attendance information through newsletters and the website
- staff teams will discuss and share good practice with promoting outstanding attendance and punctuality
- actively address all issues - such as bullying – which may lead to non-attendance
- establishing clear lines of communication with outside agencies particularly with students who have a history of poor attendance.
- inform alternative providers of known absence
- Report termly to the Management Committee attendance progress and achievement and meet the link member at least annually to discuss attendance practice and procedure.
- Work closely with our attached AIO and notify them of any students who fail to attend their educational programme regularly, have irregular attendance, or have 10 or more consecutive school days absence without the Centre's permission. NHESC has a safeguarding duty, under Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 to investigate any unexplained absences

### **Punctuality**

NHESC takes steps to actively encourage excellent levels of punctuality. Lateness is monitored and followed up.

NHESC makes it clear to parents and carers at what time each students individualised educational programme starts and ends via letters and the admissions process, including the time at which registers open and close. NHESC does not keep a register open for the whole session.

When a student arrives late and the register is still open he/she is marked as 'late' but counted as present for that session.

When a student arrives after the register has closed and parent provides a satisfactory explanation, he/she is marked as 'authorised absent' for that session using the correct code.

When a student arrives after the register has closed and parent fails to provide a satisfactory explanation, he/she is be marked as 'unauthorised absent' for that session. (Code U)

Students arriving late, are signed into the Late Book and Attendance Registers are updated (both paper and SIMS) accordingly.

Young people leaving the premises (on PE/ Trip) are signed in/out via a Monitor Grid. Students leaving the building - either on their own account or if send home, are signed out in the Late Book.

## **5. Absence**

- Parents must provide notification to the Centre for all absences
- It is the Head teacher's decision whether to authorise an absence or not. This responsibility may be delegated to other staff within the school.
- The Centre operates a '1st Day Response' policy. Should a parent/carer not contact the Centre by thirty minutes after the students official start time on the first day of absence with a reason for the absence, the Centre will contact the parents/carers for the reason.
- If we cannot contact the parent or carer we contact the mainstream school if they are dual registered and inform, as a non-emergency situation, the police.
- If a young person is ill parents are requested to inform the Centre on the first day of absence and then on a daily basis. It is important that communication is maintained.
- All young people are signed in and out at Reception.

### **Leave of Absence During Term Time:**

- There is no automatic entitlement in law to time off during term time for a holiday.
- Amendments to the 2006 Pupil Registration (England) Regulations which come into effect on 1st September 2013 make clear that head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. It is for the Head teacher to determine what constitutes exceptional circumstances and for them to determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted.
- Retrospective permission will not be granted for leave of absence already taken.
- Parents/carers are expected to contact the Centre if they are unable to return from leave of absence on the agreed date, providing a reason for the delay. They may be requested to provide confirmation of the reason for the delay.

## **6. Follow-Up Action**

### **Lateness:**

- Parents / carers are expected to provide a reason for lateness.
- Being punctual and arriving in Centre on time not only makes for a good start to the day but it shows consideration to others as it avoids repetition of instructions and teaching.
- Parents whose children arrive regularly late for school will be contacted by a member of NHESC staff.

### **Absence:**

- The Centre operates a '1st Day Response' policy (see 'Absence' section).
- The Centre will provide support to assist all young people returning to school from a long term absence.
- Young people who are persistently absent or no contact from home will receive a home visit.
- Early contact will be made with parents when there is failure to attend without good reason and there is a pattern of absences or an excessive number of absences or lateness.
- Weekly contact with parents will be made by the young person's tutor when any issues will be discussed.
- Persistent absence may lead to referral to our wave 2 intervention programme for intensive work to improve poor attendance.

## **7. Authorised Absence**

Most absence will be authorised by the Head teacher. Authorised absence is a legitimate absence from the students' educational programme. Below is a list of possible authorised absences;

- the student is 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 student's parent belongs
- If the site at which the student attends is not within walking distance of their home; and no suitable arrangements have been made by the LA for any of the following: the students' transport to and from NHESC; enabling the child to become a registered student at a school nearer to his/her home
- the student is the child of Traveller parents who are known to be travelling for occupational purposes and have agreed this with the school but it is not known whether the student is attending alternative provision
- there is a close family bereavement
- a Year 11 student is granted study leave. Study leave should be used sparingly and only granted during public examinations. Provision should still be made available for those students who want to continue to come into school to revise
- leave of absence has been applied for in advance and has been granted because of exceptional circumstances relating to the application. (Parents should be reminded that they cannot expect, as of right, that the Centre will grant leave of absence)
- leave of absence should be granted to allow a student to take part in a performance within the meaning of s37 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1963 (c) for which a child performance licence has been issued
- Before granting a licence the local authority must be satisfied that the child's education will not suffer. A school letter is requested as part of the licence application as confirmation of this. If a school believes a child's education will suffer as a result of taking part in a performance they should provide reasons to the local authority in writing. The information must be specific to the child (saying for example that it is against school policy is not sufficient). If the school does not provide such information the local authority will issue the licence. The absence should be recorded as code C

## **8. Unauthorised Absence**

Absence will be unauthorised by the Head teacher if they consider the absence is not legitimate. Absence will be unauthorised when:

- No explanation has been provided by parents/carers following a request from Centre
- NHESC communicates to parents their policies with regard to the notification and categorisation of absence.
- NHESC keeps absence notes for at least a term and when a student's absence is a cause for concern retains the notes until there is no longer a concern.
- Persistent Absentees may be asked, whatever the reason for absence, for Medical confirmation or copies of appointment letters/cards
- The Head teacher is dissatisfied with the explanation provided.
- The reason for the absence is not directly related to the child e.g. parent is ill
- Absence is not considered to be an exceptional circumstance e.g. shopping during school hours, birthday trips
- Leave of absence is taken without the agreement of the Head teacher
- NHESC will notify the Local Authority of any students of compulsory school age who fail to attend school regularly, have irregular attendance, or have 10 or more consecutive school days absence without NHESC's permission. NHEC adheres to its safeguarding duty, under Section 175 of the Education Act 2002 to investigate any unexplained absences.

If the student is absence from NHESC for more than a week and we have been unable to contact the parents the Centre will notify the Attendance Improvement Officer (AIO) and a student will only be removed from roll should the school and local Authority (AIO) be unsuccessful in locating the family, at which time, the child will be referred to the Children Missing Education Officer (CME).

Should unauthorised leave of absence lead to cumulative absence exceeding 15 sessions across the current and/or previous term, the Centre can apply to the Local Authority for a Penalty Notice fine to be issued to the parents/carers.

## **9. Outcomes**

### **Penalty Notices**

NHESC operates Penalty Notices.

- If a student has at least 16 sessions (half day = 1 session) unauthorised absence in the current and/or previous term, including leave of absence where permission has been denied, the Head teacher can apply for a Penalty Notice fine to be issued to parents/carers by the Local Authority.
- A fine of £60 is issued if paid within 21 days or £120 if paid within 28 days. Fines can be issued to each parent/carer for each child. Parents can discharge potential liability for conviction by paying the penalty.
- Should the fine not be paid within 28 days the Local Authority must consider prosecution for the offence.

### **Attendance Improvement Officer**

NHESC works in partnership with the allocated attendance Improvement Officer (AIO) who visits regularly to improve attendance for individual young people and the whole of NHESC. The AIO at NHESC is from the Attendance Team, part of Integrated Service for Learning and employed by Hertfordshire County Council.

NHESC works with their AIO to look at the quality of our registers and to analyse our attendance data and draw up plans to address any specific issues. Analysis may include:

- persistent absence
- absence profile
- use of register codes
- attendance of vulnerable groups
- types of absence e.g. a few students with significant absence or many students with occasional absence
- lateness after registers close
- attendance trends – is attendance increasing or decreasing?

NHESC uses a computerised registration system and saves each year's attendance records on the network.

### **AIO Casework**

At NHESC we use our AIO to help with individual students who require intensive monitoring and interventions alongside our parent partnership LSA. This may include:

- arranging meetings between the NHESC, parents and students
- making home visits to assess the situation and determine what action needs to be taken
- offering specific support to parents and individual students, either at school or elsewhere
- facilitating meetings
- enabling the student and parents to access appropriate support from other services and agencies

Attendance Improvement Officers will usually work with children whose absences have not been authorised. However, AIOs may work with children whose absences have been authorised, such as persistent absentee (PA) students.

NHESC may also make use of the AIO duty line to enquire about;

Types of enquiries may include –

- school issues e.g. register coding, holiday absence etc.
- enquiries relating to a pupil
- 10 day absence returns
- request for Early Intervention letters
- FPN enquiries
- Removal from Roll enquiries
- requests for referrals

The duty line is open from 9am to 4.30 and 3.30 on a Friday.

### **The Use of Legal Action**

If a student, who is registered at NHESC, fails to attend regularly without a legitimate reason and attempts by the Attendance Improvement Officer and NHESC fail to secure the student's return to regular attendance, the County Council will take legal action. A complaint may be laid against the parents in the Magistrates' Court under Section 444 of the Education Act 1996, or an Education Supervision Order relating to the student under Section 36 of the

Children Act 1989 will be applied for. Any exceptional mitigating circumstances relating to the student's absence will be taken into account, when considering legal action.

'Exceptional mitigating circumstances' will be determined by the Central Attendance and Employment Support Team Manager on behalf of the Local Authority. 'Exceptional mitigating circumstances' might include the death of a close relative, certain medically recognised conditions, awaiting SEN placement, specific child protection concerns, change of provision. Legal proceedings can be considered at any stage if no progress has been made and no exceptional circumstances are deemed to exist.

If, after legal action has been taken, the child still fails to attend school regularly the AIO will keep the case open and will, if appropriate, take further legal action at a subsequent date.

In cases where parents wilfully withhold a student from attending their provision at NHESC, or persistently refuse to co-operate with efforts aimed at affecting a return to satisfactory attendance record, the ISL Attendance Teams will begin legal proceedings promptly on the grounds that no other course of action is available.

The Central Attendance & Employment Support Team Manager on behalf of the Local Authority will give approval before legal proceedings are commenced.

The Attendance Teams will consider applying for an Education Supervision Order when a parent finds it difficult to exercise an effective influence over a child who has developed a pattern of poor attendance. Education Supervision Orders will not usually be applied for in relation to students in Years 10 or 11.

Before an application is made for an Education Supervision Order:

- other possible means of dealing with the student's poor attendance will be explored
- the attitudes of the parent and student towards the poor attendance, and their wishes as to how it should be dealt with, will be noted
- the Local Authority will be of the view that the Order will have a significant effect on the student's attendance at school

### **Education Related Penalty Notices for Parents of Truants**

Subsection (1) of section 23 of the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 added two sections (444A and 444B) to section 444 of the Education Act 1996. These sections introduced penalty notices as an alternative to prosecution and enable parents to discharge potential liability for conviction for that offence by paying a penalty.

A penalty notice is a suitable intervention in circumstances of parentally condoned truancy, where the parent is judged capable of securing their child's regular attendance but is not willing to take responsibility for doing so. For example it could be used where a parent has failed to engage in any supportive measures

### **School Attendance Orders**

If a parent fails to register a child of compulsory school age at a school (and he/she does not intend to educate the child otherwise than at school). The LA will serve a School Attendance Order under Sections 437 - 439 of the Education Act 1996. This requires the parent to register their child at a school named by the Local Authority.

## **Removal from Roll**

NHESC follows the strict criteria as to when a student may be removed from their admissions register. These are outlined in **Regulation 8** of the Education (Student Registration) Regulations 2006. Regulation 12(6) states that when a school has decided to delete a student's name from their admission roll they must notify their Local Authority as soon as the ground for removal is met and no later than the time at which the student's name is removed from the register. This responsibility applies to all Maintained Schools, Academies, Free Schools, Studio Schools, University Technical Colleges, Education Support Centres and Independent Schools.

**If the student has left NHESC without explanation and there are concerns about the student's welfare we will contact the local Attendance Team immediately.**

**If there are concerns that a student may be at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation or radicalisation we will contact the local Attendance Team immediately.**

If NHESC is told that a student is leaving to attend another school, NHESC will establish the student's new address, the name and address of the new school and the date the student will start there. Confirmation will then be sought from the receiving school. When this information has been obtained, NHESC will complete a Removal from Roll form and return it to the local Attendance Team office and a school a Common Transfer File (CTF) will be completed.

If NHESC is concerned about any aspect of a transfer or if a student has "disappeared" the matter will be drawn without delay to the attention of the Local Attendance Team.

**Appendix****ATTENDANCE CODES, DESCRIPTIONS AND MEANINGS**

<b>CODE</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>MEANING</b>
/	Present (AM)	Present
\	Present (PM)	Present
<b>B</b>	Present at off site educational activity	Approved Education Activity
<b>C</b>	Leave of absence authorised by the school	Authorised absence
<b>D</b>	Dual registered at another educational establishment	Not expected to attend this session
<b>E</b>	Excluded (no alternative provision made)	Authorised absence
<b>G</b>	Holiday (NOT agreed <u>or</u> days in excess of agreement)	Unauthorised absence
<b>H</b>	Holiday authorised by the school	Authorised absence
<b>I</b>	Illness (NOT medical or dental etc. appointments)	Authorised absence
<b>J</b>	Interview	Approved Education Activity
<b>L</b>	Late (before registers closed)	Present
<b>M</b>	Medical/Dental appointments	Authorised absence
<b>N</b>	No reason yet provided for absence	Unauthorised absence
<b>O</b>	Other unauthorised absence	Unauthorised absence
<b>P</b>	Supervised sporting activity	Approved Education Activity
<b>R</b>	Day set aside exclusively for religious observance	Authorised absence
<b>S</b>	Study leave	Authorised absence
<b>T</b>	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller absence for occupational reasons	Authorised absence
<b>U</b>	Late and arrived after the registers closed	Unauthorised absence
<b>V</b>	Educational visit or trip	Approved Education Activity
<b>W</b>	Work experience	Approved Education Activity
<b>X</b>	Not required to be in school (non-compulsory school age pupils)	Not counted in possible attendances
<b>Y</b>	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances	Not counted in possible attendances
<b>Z</b>	Pupil not on admission register	Not counted in possible attendances
<b>#</b>	School closed to all pupils (Planned)	Not counted in possible attendances

Detailed advice on the use of these registration codes can be found at [www.education.gov.uk/aboutdfe/advice/f00221879/advice-on-school-attendance](http://www.education.gov.uk/aboutdfe/advice/f00221879/advice-on-school-attendance)