



GREENWOOD ACADEMIES TRUST



Nethergate
Academy

Attendance policy

Approved by: Sharon Muddeman
Last reviewed on: July 2024
Next review due by: September 2025

Introduction

Nethergate 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 them the best chance to engage in the educational opportunities and experiences offered to them within school.

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

At Nethergate Academy we

- Provide a welcoming and caring environment where all members of the Academy feel safe, secure, and valued.
- We expect students to arrive on time every day.
- Will support parents in their legal responsibility to ensure their child attends school regularly and on time.
- We will work with families and other professionals and agencies to ensure that all students receive the appropriate support to attend school.
- We believe a leave of absence should not be taken during term-time. We will not authorize requests for leave of absence during term-time, except in exceptional/ unavoidable circumstances.

Why is regular attendance important?

Children who are persistently late or absent soon fall behind with their learning. Children absent from the academy develop large gaps in their learning which impact their progress and their ability to make good progress against age-related learning expectations. Lateness can also impact on students' ability to follow their morning schedule and feel settled and ready to learn.

95% attendance is 181 days (about 6 months) at school in an academic year, this allows a reasonable number of days off for genuine illness.

A child whose attendance drops to 90% each year will, over their time in primary education, have missed two whole terms of learning.

If good attendance habits are not developed and valued the student will find it extremely difficult to hold onto a job when they are ready to be employed.

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 school on each day of absence by:

Phone call or email- 01159152959 or admin@nethergateacademy.org

Please tell us of any planned absence in advance, including unavoidable medical appointments during the school day.

To inform us about a planned absence:

Phone call or email- 01159152959 or admin@nethergateacademy.org

1. Aim

Ensuring all pupils have high attendance is a key priority of Nethergate 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 attendance policy ensures that all staff and families in our academy are fully aware of, and clear about, the actions necessary to promote good attendance.

- Promote a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which students feel safe, secure, and valued, and encourage in students a sense of their own responsibility.
- Support parents/carers to reduce barriers and support students to increase school attendance.
- Improve students' achievement by ensuring high levels of attendance and punctuality.
- Achieve a minimum of 95% attendance for all children, apart from those with chronic health issues.
- Create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are recognized as the norm and seen to be valued by the academy.
- Raise awareness of parents, carers, and students of the importance of uninterrupted attendance and punctual
- Work in partnership with students, parents, staff, and the School Attendance Support Team so that all students realize their potential, unhindered by unnecessary absence.
- Establish an early pattern of early monitoring of attendance and ensure consistency in recognizing achievement and supporting to overcome barriers.
- Recognize the key role of all staff, but especially class teams, in promoting good attendance.

2. Legislation and guidance

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

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

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

Attendance has a high profile at Nethergate Academy and pupils are motivated and happy to attend school in the majority of cases. This motivation is supported by staff building meaningful and strong relationships with pupils and ensuring they are happy and safe in school. Pupils are motivated by enrichment opportunities in the curriculum and incentives such as walking the school dog. We recognize that transition into school can be a barrier to attendance for our children particularly those with a diagnosis of Autism and Attachment difficulties. To support this, we have processes in place such as meeting and greeting familiar adults, breakfast club, personal schedules and transitional support. We also ensure where pupils' interests are reflected in their learning, social stories and other specialist approaches mean that learning is relevant and motivational.

Staff work closely with families to ensure that any anxieties they may have around their child's experience in school are discussed and addressed where possible.

4. Our expectations of attendance and punctuality

Pupils must arrive at school by 9.00am on each school day. The register for the first session will be taken at 9.00am and kept open until 9.15am. Where parents 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 ill to attend or being given permission for an absence in advance from the academy.

Parents/carers are expected to:

- Make sure their child attends every day on time
- Contact the academy on 01159152959 to report their child's absence before 9.00am 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 1 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 on time
- Class teachers are responsible for recording attendance daily, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the office before 9.15am when registers close.

Admin staff will:

- Take calls from parents/ carers about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the academy system
- Transfer calls from parents to the senior leadership team to provide them with more detailed support on attendance

The safeguarding team (SH/SM) is responsible for:

- Monitoring and analyzing 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 to tackle persistent absence

The attendance officer is Sharon Muddeman and can be contacted via the school office.

The designated senior leader '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 and arranging calls and meetings with parents 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 attendance champion is Sharon Muddeman and can be contacted via the school office.

The attendance officer is responsible for: -

- Monitoring and analyzing attendance data
- Providing regular attendance reports to staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader and the principal
- Working with outside professionals to tackle persistent absence

The attendance officer is Sarah Heery and can be contacted via the school office

Class teachers/form tutors are responsible for recording attendance daily, using the correct codes, and submitting

this information to the school office at morning and afternoon registers.

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

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.
- 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 parent/carer must notify the academy of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 9.15am or as soon as possible by [emailing / calling the school [admin staff]

We will mark absence due to illness as authorized 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 parent/carer 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 authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorized, and parents/carers will be notified of this in advance.

Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorized if the pupil's parent/carer notifies the academy before the appointment.

However, we encourage parents/carers 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 parent/carer must also apply for other types of term-time absence as far in advance as possible of the requested absence by contacting the school office.

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

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 of pupils who are persistently late will be contacted by Sarah Heery / Sharon Muddeman to identify the reasons for lateness and offer support where appropriate.

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 parent/carer on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the academy cannot reach any of the pupils' emergency contacts, the academy may visit the pupil's home and do a safe and well check.
- Identify whether the absence is approved or not
- 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 parent/carer on each day that the absence continues without explanation to ensure proper safeguarding action is taken where necessary. If absence continues, the academy will consider involving an education welfare officer or similar

Reporting to parents/carers

Adapt the following to explain when and how you report to parents on their child's attendance record.

The academy will regularly inform parents about their child's attendance and absence levels via half term letters or a phone call. In many cases there is regular communication to ensure families are consistently supported to overcome attendance barriers.

6. Authorized and unauthorized 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 authorized 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, considering the specific facts, circumstances, and relevant context behind the request.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated, and evidence may be required to support any request for leave of absence.

Valid reasons for **authorized 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 parents belong. If necessary, the academy will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart

Legal sanctions and addressing attendance concerns

We rely upon parents to ensure their child attends the academy regularly and punctually and therefore where there are concerns regarding attendance parents are always informed of our concerns and requested to work voluntarily with support to address the concerns.

Initially concerns about attendance are raised with parents and carers via letters, telephone calls or face-to-face conversations to understand the barriers and enable support to be implemented. Where a child's attendance does not improve over a specified period then the academy may request support from external agencies to seek support on a voluntary basis e.g.: - medical professionals.

If this support has not increased attendance, a more formal plan may be implemented. This may also mean that it be necessary to involve statutory Children's social care. This could then lead to prosecution if attendance does not improve.

The Nottingham City council school Attendance and Support team can seek to issue penalty notices to parents where there has been support implemented and attendance at school has not increased.

The academy responsibilities are outlined below: -

- Proactively use data to identify pupils at risk of poor attendance.
- Work with each identified student and their parents to understand and address the reasons for absence, including any barriers to attendance in school.
- Where out of school barriers are identified, signpost and support access to any required services in the first instance. If the issue persists, take an active part in the multi-agency effort with the local authority and other partners. Act as lead professional where all partners agree that school is the best lead service. Where the lead practitioner is outside of school, continue to work with the local authority and partners.
- Where there is a lack of engagement, hold more formal conversations with parents and be clear about the potential need for legal interventions in the future.
- Where support is not working or being engaged with work with the local authority on legal intervention
- Where there are safeguarding concerns, intensively support through statutory children's social care.
- If social workers are involved inform the students social worker if there are any unexplained absences.

7. Supporting pupils who are absent or returning to school

Many of our children have complex profiles and to respond to this and support families best we approach each case individually. This support will be based around children's EHCP's, their previous educational history and other identified needs such as health and mental health. In some cases, children's needs may not be well met within the setting and the academy would work closely with the local authority and other professionals to ensure the correct provision is in place.

After a long period of absence, a transition plan would be drawn up with the family and pupil (if appropriate) to support them back into the setting. This would consider factors such as physical health, mental health, and regulation. The transition may include approaches such as, meet and greet visits, accessing school for a favored part of the timetable, a part time timetable, less academic demand, or increased ELSA support.

8. How we monitor attendance

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 there are 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.

Analyzing 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 school leaders, to facilitate discussions with pupils and families
- Use data to monitor and evaluate the impact of any interventions put in place to modify them and inform future strategies

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 school (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 medical needs.

To support families of children who are persistently absent from school will, send letters to keep families aware of next steps and their child's attendance percentage. Conduct face to face meetings, liase with outside professionals to remove any barriers to attendance and identify strategies moving forwards.

9. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the trustor DfE is updated, and at least annually by the principal. At every review, the policy will be approved by the academy's Education Director.