The Newman Catholic Collegiate



"Growing Together for life"

Attendance and Punctuality Policy

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1. Aims

Policy Statement

"By faith only do we know our position in the world, our circumstances, our rights and privileges, our fortunes, our parents, our brothers and sisters, our age, our mortality" John Henry Newman

In accordance with our Collegiate Mission statement, we strive to secure a shared vision for all associated with our Collegiate community and we aim to provide a caring environment which seeks to promote the development of self-respect and respect for others.

Regular attendance and punctuality are essential if children are to make good progress at school and maximise their full spiritual, academic and social potential in a caring and supportive environment. Staff, governors and Directors are committed to working in partnership with parents and carers to ensure that it is effectively and appropriately implemented.

The academies aim to achieve excellent attendance and punctuality by operating an attendance policy within which staff, students, parents/carers, other agencies and when appropriate, the Education Welfare Service can work in partnership. The academies maintain attendance records and initiate quick and early intervention when a problem is identified. We feel it is crucial that children develop the habit of regular and punctual attendance and learn to be responsible and reliable from the very start of their school career, whether or not they are of statutory school age. Staff encourage and expect excellent attendance and punctuality and liaise with parents/carers and other agencies when appropriate. In addition, good attendance and punctuality are seen as achievements in their own right and are recognised and rewarded as such by the academies. We believe that that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is development of positive attitudes towards Collegiate life with a whole school approach. This policy is based on the premise of equal opportunities for all. It is the right of every child to receive an education. To do this, we must work with families to ensure that everybody understands their role and responsibilities in ensuring a child's excellent attendance.

2. Who is responsible for this policy?

- The collegiate has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy and for ensuring compliance with the relevant statutory or collegiate framework. The collegiate has delegated day-to-day responsibility for operating the policy to the local governing body and the principal of each collegiate school.
- The local governing body and senior leadership team at each collegiate school have a specific responsibility to ensure the fair application of this policy and all members of staff are responsible for supporting colleagues and ensuring its success.

3. Definitions

- 'Session' is a term related to the recording of absence data - every school day must have two 'sessions' (morning and afternoon), divided by a break, for which attendance must be recorded.
- 'Authorised absence' means that the school has either given approval in advance for a pupil of compulsory school age to be away or has accepted an explanation offered afterwards as justification for absence.
- 'Unauthorised absence' is where the school is not satisfied with the reasons given for an absence.

4. Legal duty

- Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 places a duty on parents/carers to ensure children of compulsory school age receive efficient full-time education suitable to the child's age, ability and aptitude and to any special needs the child may have. Parents/carers have a legal duty to ensure their child's regular attendance at the school where they are registered.

- A parent/carer who fails to ensure that their child attends school regularly is guilty of an offence under Section 444(1) of the Education Act 1996.

5. School commitment

- Everyone in school is committed to promoting excellent attendance and punctuality.
- All members of staff are made aware of how their role impacts on attendance and punctuality as well as the expectations of them in ensuring consistent application of the policy and the use of absence codes. Training will support this commitment. All staff, regardless of role, receive training in promoting good attendance as part of induction. The extent and regularity of the training will be proportionate to the role undertaken but the message will be clear that every member of staff can make a difference.
- The school will listen to and support pupils and parents/carers to achieve good attendance and punctuality, working closely with parents/carers where absence is a cause for concern.
- The school strives for 100% attendance for all pupils with a minimum expected target of 97%.

6. Key Information

- The school day starts 8.40 am and ends at 3.10 pm.
- The Senior Leader responsible for championing attendance is Mr P Johnson and they can be contacted via the school office.
- All absences should be reported by parents before 9am by ringing the school's dedicated attendance line 01782 883003 and speaking to the school's attendance officer/administrator or leaving a voicemail. School staff may follow up on the reason for absence with parents / carers if a voicemail or email has been left.
- Academy/collegiate staff may carry out a home visit at any point if a child is absent for any reason
- The school will always prioritise support over legal interventions. However, the school has a duty of care to inform parents that do not respond to the advice and support offered that a referral will be made to the Local Authority,

7. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the 'Working together to improve school attendance' August 2024 from the Department for Education (DfE), and refers to the DfE's statutory guidance on school attendance parental responsibility measures. These documents are drawn from the following legislation setting out the legal powers and duties that govern school attendance:

- Part 6 of The Education Act 1996
- Part 3 of The Education Act 2002
- Part 7 of The Education and Inspections Act 2006
- The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (and 2010, 2011, 2013, 2016 amendments)
- The Education (Penalty Notices) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013
- This policy also refers to the DfE's guidance on the school census, which explains the persistent absence threshold.

8. Roles and responsibilities

(a) The Newman Catholic Collegiate is responsible for:

- Devising and reviewing the Attendance Punctuality Policy
- Reviewing and setting targets as part of the strategic plan
- Advising schools on matters relating to school attendance and support as required including support from the Collegiate Education Welfare Officer

(b) The Governing Body is responsible for:

- Promoting the importance of school attendance across the school's policies and ethos
- Making sure school leaders fulfil expectations and statutory duties
- Regularly reviewing and challenging attendance data
- Monitoring attendance figures for the whole school
- Making sure staff receive adequate training on attendance
- Holding the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy

(c) The Principal is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to Governors and the Senior Leadership team who will, in turn, report it to the Board of Directors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary

(d) The designated senior leader (Attendance Champion) is responsible for:

- Leading attendance across the school including promoting the profile throughout the school and a package of rewards
- Offering a clear vision for attendance improvement
- Evaluating and monitoring expectations and processes
- Having an oversight of data analysis
- Devising specific strategies to address areas of poor attendance identified through data
- Arranging calls and meetings with parents to discuss attendance issues

- Delivering targeted intervention and support to pupils and families
- Quality Assurance to ensure that systems are followed by all staff
- Regularly monitor and evaluate school strategies progress and performance

(e) The Attendance Officers are responsible for:

- Attendance monitoring and management (see section 11). This includes checking for missing marks and absent pupils by checking class registers during each session.
- Benchmarking attendance data to identify areas of focus for improvement
- Providing regular attendance reports to school staff and reporting concerns about attendance to the designated senior leader/Collegiate Education Welfare Officer responsible for attendance and the Principal
- Work with the Collegiate Education Welfare Officer to tackle persistent absence
- Advising the Principal/Asst Principal (authorised by the Principal) when to issue fixed-penalty notices

(f) Teachers are responsible for:

- Recording attendance on a daily basis, using the correct codes, and submitting this information to the Attendance Officer using the SIMS lesson monitoring software.
- Encouraging students to achieve excellent attendance
- Notice any attendance patterns causing concerns and discuss with the pupil or alert the relevant member of staff

(g) School admin/office staff are responsible for:

- taking calls from parents about absence and record it on the school system or forward to the Attendance Officer.
- Transfer calls from parents and pupils to the Attendance Officer/SLT/Safeguarding/ Collegiate EWO in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance

(h) Parents/carers are responsible for:

- Making sure their child attends school every day and on time.
- Contacting the school to report their child's absence before a time set by the school on the day of the absence and each subsequent day of absence, and advise when they are expected to return
- Provide the school 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
- Being aware that it is offence for their child to be absent from school without a valid reason
- Being aware that it is only school who can determine that an absence from school is 'authorised'
- Avoiding holidays/leave of absence during term time except in exceptional circumstances by completing the 'leave of absence' form

(i) Pupils are responsible for:

- Aiming to achieve 100% attendance by arriving to school every day and on time
- Arriving to lessons on time
- Speak to member of staff if there are any problems that may affect attendance, punctuality and learning

(j) Collegiate Education Welfare Officer is responsible for:

- Working with parents/carers and students to remove barriers to school attendance
- Support the academy processes to raise attendance levels across the collegiate
- Refer to the Education Welfare Service where appropriate

9. Recording attendance

(a) Attendance register

We will keep an attendance register, and place all pupils onto this register. Registers will be marked using the Department for Education's Attendance and Absence codes and data is shared through the Education (Information about individual Pupils) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2024.

We will take our attendance register at the start of the first session of each school day and once during the second session. In additional in the secondary setting, teaching staff will check that the pupils timetabled to be in their lesson are present for each session. On each occasion, it will mark whether every pupil is:

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

Any amendment to the attendance register will include:

- The original entry
- The amended entry
- The reason for the amendment
- The date on which the amendment was made
- The name and position of the person who made the amendment
- See appendix 1 for the DfE attendance codes.

We will also record:

- Whether the absence is authorised or not
- The nature of the activity if a pupil is attending an approved educational activity
- The nature of circumstances where a pupil is unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances

(b) Unplanned absence

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school on the first day of an unplanned absence by a time set by the school or as soon as practically possible by calling the school office/absence line on 01782 883033 or by email to studentabsence@smwca.or.uk (see also section 7).

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

If the authenticity of the illness is in doubt, the school may ask the pupil's parent/carers 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 school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parents/carers will be notified of this.

(c) Planned absence

Attending a medical or dental appointment will be counted as authorised as long as the pupil's parent/carer notifies the school in advance of the appointment.

Where possible we encourage parents/carers to make medical and dental appointments out of school hours. Where this is not possible, the pupil should be out of school for the minimum amount of time necessary and attend before and/or after the appointment.

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. Please see section 10 to find out more about leave of absence requests.

(d) Lateness and punctuality

A pupil who arrives late:

- Before the register has closed will be marked as late 'L', using the appropriate code. A pupil will be marked as 'L' if arriving after 8.40 am
- After the register has closed will be marked as absent 'U', using the appropriate code. A pupil will be marked as 'U' if arriving after 9.10 am. 'U' mark is classified as an unauthorised absence and can be counted towards potential legal action.

(e) Following up unexplained absence

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

- Text/email/telephone the pupil's parent/carer on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If the school cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts, the school may carry out a home visit.
- 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 school will consider involving the Collegiate Education Welfare Officer the Academy Safeguarding Manager, Local Authority Education Welfare and Children Missing Education.

(f) Reporting attendance to parents/carers

In line with DfE expectations, the school will regularly inform parents/carers about their child's attendance and absence levels via half-termly reports, attendance letters, attendance texts, telephone calls, meetings and at parents' evenings.

10. Authorised and unauthorised absence

(a) Approval for term-time absence

The Principal will only grant a leave of absence to pupils during term time if they consider there to be 'exceptional circumstances'. A leave of absence is granted at the Principal's discretion, including the length of time the pupil is authorised to be absent for. The school considers each application for term-time absence individually, taking into account the specific facts, circumstances and relevant context behind the request, and request that any documentary evidence is submitted with the leave of absence request.

Examples of exceptional circumstances where leave *may* be granted during term time include:

• Funeral of parent, grandparent or sibling

• Serious illness of a close relative – only if the Principal is satisfied that the circumstances are truly exceptional

• Religious observance – The Education Act 1996 S444(3) (c), states ''on any day exclusively set apart for religious observance by the religious body to which his/her parent belongs''. If necessary the school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart. (Only 1 day will be authorised)

Examples of circumstances **NOT** considered as exceptional:

• Holidays abroad for the purpose of visiting a sick relative, except where that person is seriously ill. Medical evidence may be requested.

• Holidays taken in term time due to lower cost/parental work commitment.

Any request should be submitted as soon as it is anticipated and, where possible, at least 2 weeks before the absence, and in accordance with any leave of absence request form, accessible via the school website or the school office. The Principal may require evidence to support any request for leave of absence.

(b) Legal sanctions for an unauthorised leave of absence

If a term time leave of absence for five or more school days is not agreed to, and is recorded as unauthorised absence in the register, this will automatically be referred to the Education Welfare Service at the Local Authority which will result in:

- a Penalty Notice (fine) Payment of Penalty Notices within 21 days is £80 per parent/carer, per child, and payment after this time, but within 28 days is £160 per parent/carer, per child.
- Non-payment of the Penalty Notice may result in legal action for non-school attendance which could result in prosecution under Section 444(1) Education Act and/or s444(1)(a) Education Act 1996 , where, if convicted a parent/carer may be fined up to £2500.
- The maximum number of Penalty Notices/fines which the Local Authority will issue in respect of an individual child in a twelve month period is two. If a parent is fined for a second offence within 3 years, the amount will be £160 per parent, per child payable

within 28 days. If there is a further offence within 3 years a penalty notice will not be considered and the case will be presented at the Magistrates Court were prosecution may be considered which can result in a criminal record and fines up to £2500.

If two or more leave of absences under five days are taken during the academic year which add up to five days or over, this may be referred to the Education Welfare Service at the Local Authority which could result in the fines as above.

If a student is unexpectedly absent the day(s) before, or after any planned leave of absence which then means the absence reaches five school days or over, the school will consider this as one period of unauthorised absence relating to a holiday (or other reason) and refer to the Local Authority which may result in a fine unless medical evidence or proof of evidence which confirms the original holiday dates applied for can be provided.

If a leave of absence has been taken under five school days and there is other unauthorised absence recorded, this could result in a 'Notice to Improve' issued from the Education Welfare Service at the Local Authority which could then result in a Penalty Notice (fine) being issued if there is no improvement in attendance. Payment of Penalty Notices is the same as in section (b).

If a student fails to attend the academy and their whereabouts are unknown, or, does not return to school on the date expected following a leave of absence the academy will implement the Local Authority's 'Children Missing Education' process on day six of non-attendance. On the twenty first day of non-attendance, the academy has the right to remove the student from the academy roll. The student will need to re-apply for a place. This may not be guaranteed due to other students who may be on the waiting list and the academy being oversubscribed.

(c) Authorised absence

Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include but are not limited to:

- 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 school will seek advice from the parents' religious body to confirm whether the day is set apart.

11. Attendance monitoring and Management

We will monitor attendance and absence data on a weekly, half-termly, termly and yearly basis across the school and at an individual pupil level. We will identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern and require support.

Pupil-level absence data will be collected each term and published at national and local authority level through the DfE's school absence national statistics releases. The underlying school-level absence data is published alongside the national statistics. The school will compare attendance data to the national average, and share this with the governing board.

Where a student's attendance becomes a concern and they fall below the primary/secondary expected minimum level of 97%, the academy will implement their monitoring system. We will work proactively with parents and pupils to improve their attendance. Parents/carers will be informed about any attendance concerns via telephone calls, school communications, letters, meetings at the academy, home visits, open evenings and reports.

At the start of each term, and the end of the summer term, colour coded letters are sent out and monitoring attendance letters are sent as appropriate

(a) Analysing attendance

We 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
- Identify pupils at risk of persistent absence and proactively support these students

(b) Using data to improve attendance

We will:

- Provide regular attendance reports to [class teachers/form tutors], and other school 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

(c) 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. Parent/carers will receive attendance letters, emails, telephone calls, be invited in for an attendance support meeting once thresholds have been met.

If a student's absence is persistent, a letter will be sent home advising that no further absences will be authorised unless medical evidence is provided. This can be in the form of a GP letter, medical appointment card or the label from any prescribed medication in the pupil's name, covering the period of absence.

At any point, the Collegiate Education Welfare Officer may become involved and carry out home visits, attendance support clinics, late gates and offer support and advice around attendance and punctuality concerns.

The Academy will look at working with and meeting with parents and pupils to remove potential barriers to school attendance and offer support which may involve external support agencies, Early Help, Family Support etc.

If there is no improvement, and the recorded absence is unauthorised, the case will be referred to the Education Welfare Service at the Local Authority and a statutory 'Notice to improve' letter may be issued, a formal referral made and the statutory legal intervention process would be implemented. This could lead to a penalty notice fine, or prosecution in the Magistrates Court for non-school attendance.

12. Vulnerable Pupils

We recognise that some groups of pupils are more vulnerable to poor attendance than others. These groups should be carefully monitored, barriers identified, and intervention should be targeted where additional support is required.

Pupils with medical needs, special educational needs and/or disabilities, young carers, pupils with a social worker or in receipt of pupil premium may require more targeted support than pupils outside of these groups.

13. Legal sanctions for unauthorised absence

Where support is not working, being engaged with or appropriate, the school will refer to the Local authority can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

The Education Welfare Service may take the following legal proceedings against you for failure to comply with the Law:

- A Penalty Notice payable of **a £80 or £160 fine.**
- Prosecution under s444(1) Education Act 1996, where if convicted you may be fined up to **£1,000**.
- Prosecution under s444(1)(a) Education Act 1996 where if convicted you may be fined up to **£2,500 and/or 3 months imprisonment.**

14. Policy Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the Local Authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum every academic year by the Catholic Senior Executive Leader (CSEL). The policy will be presented at the full governing board (at school level) and full Board of Directors (at MAC level).

15. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Behaviour policy
- Working Together to Improve School Attendance
- Home School Agreement
- Children with health needs who cannot attend school (collegiate policy)
- Supporting Pupils with Medical Needs (collegiate policy)

Appendix 1: attendance codes

Attendance codes

Register Code	Description
/	Present AM
\	Present PM
L	Late (before registers closed) marked as present
K	Attending education provision arranged by the local authority
C	Authorised absence as pupil is absent due to other authorised circumstances
C1	Leave of absence for the purpose of participating in a regulated performance or undertaking regulated employment abroad.
C2	Leave of absence for a compulsory school age pupil subject to a part-time timetable
E	Authorised absence as pupil is excluded, with no alternative provision made
I	Illness (NOT appointments)
M	Authorised absence due to medical/dental appointments
R	Authorised absence due to religious observance
S	Authorised absence due to study leave
T	Authorised absence due to traveller absence
J1	Leave of absence for the purpose of attending an interview for employment or for admission to another educational institution
B	Approved education activity as pupil being educated off site (NOT dual registration)
P	Approved educational activity as pupil is attending an approved sporting activity
V	Approved education activity as pupil is away on an educational visit or trip
W	Approved educational activity as pupil is attending work experience
K	Attending education provision arranged by the local authority
G	Unauthorised absence as pupil is on a family holiday, NOT agreed, or is taking days in excess of an agreed family holiday
N	Unauthorised absence as pupil missed sessions for a reason that has not yet been provided

O	Unauthorised absence as pupil missed sessions for an unauthorised absence not covered by any other code/description
U	Unauthorised absence as pupil arrived after registers closed
D	Dual registered (at another establishment - NOT counted in possible attendance
X	Not required to be in school - for non-compulsory school age children
Y	Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances - not counted in possible attendances
Z	Pupil not yet on roll - not counted in possible attendances
#	Planned whole or partial school closure - NOT counted in possible attendances
Q	Unable to attend the school because of a lack of access arrangements
Y1	Unable to attend due to transport normally provided not being available
Y2	Unable to attend due to widespread disruption to travel
Y3	Unable to attend due to part of the school premises being closed
Y4	Unable to attend due to the whole school site being unexpectedly closed
Y5	Unable to attend as pupil is in criminal justice detention
Y6	Unable to attend in accordance with public health guidance or law
Y7	Unable to attend because of any other unavoidable cause

Template letters

At St Margaret Ward Catholic Academy we are committed to supporting our students in achieving their full potential and in doing so we expect excellent attendance from all of our students and appreciate parental support in achieving this. It is proven than children who are in school more regularly achieve better grades.

_____'s attendance is currently ____%. There are ____ late marks recorded to AM and PM registration since September. Please check which colour category your child's attendance falls into in the table below:

100% Outstanding achievement – Well done!

98% - 99% Excellent Attendance
Your child is absent for less than 4 days in the school year

96% - 97% Good attendance
Your child could be missing up to 7 days of learning in the school year

95% - Just Below Attendance Target
Your Child's attendance may be monitored by the Academy Attendance Officer, they could be missing up to 2 weeks of learning in the school year

90% - 94% Concern, improvement needed
Your Child's attendance will be monitored by the Academy Attendance Officer, they could be missing up to 4 weeks of learning in the school year.

Below 90% Serious Concern
Your child has been identified as a 'Persistently Absent Pupil' and their learning may be seriously affected by this. 90% equals 4 whole weeks of lessons missed. You may be contacted by the Education Welfare Officer and could face a Penalty Notice Warning or fine from the Education Welfare Service

Your child's attendance percentage could be due to a significant period of absence, for example illness, which we understand is sometimes unavoidable. If this is the case, and your child continues to attend the academy regularly, then obviously the percentage will rise. Each week your child's attendance is assessed formally by the Attendance Team and you may be contacted to discuss this further.

Holidays/Leave during term time

As you will be aware, the academy cannot authorise any holidays/leave taken during term time. If taken, this may lead to a penalty notice warning/fine.

Again, thank you for supporting your child in achieving good attendance or working towards improving their attendance percentage. Please do not hesitate to contact school if you wish to discuss this further.

Yours sincerely