

**NEW RIVER COLLEGE**  
**ATTENDANCE POLICY**



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## Statement of Intent

New River College aims to encourage and support all pupils to achieve excellent standards of attendance and punctuality.

For many pupils, irregular patterns of attendance in the past have only served to compound their educational problems and increase their level of disaffection.

The PRU therefore places great emphasis on the need to encourage and support full attendance amongst its pupils. This is achieved through:

- Fostering positive teacher-pupil relationships;
- Developing and maintaining close home-school links to promote a joint commitment to learning;
- Providing access to a needs' focused curriculum;
- Developing good relationships with other pupils and adults within the school community, thus developing their social skills and enhancing their emotional wellbeing;
- Rewarding regular attendance;
- Ensuring prompt follow-up in cases of non-attendance, to develop personalised strategies;
- Collaborative working with other external professional and voluntary agencies involved in a pupil's care;
- Working in partnership with the Education Welfare Service (EWS).

## Context:

New River College pupil referral unit provides full time education to pupils from KS1 to KS4 on four different sites.

## Emotionally Based School Refusers (EBSR)

Stress, anxiety and other significant mental health issues are a common feature of the challenges facing these pupils. Supporting these learners to achieve regular attendance is one of the core aspects of the PRU's work. Staff are committed to providing a balance of support and challenge in order to ensure that every pupil is able to achieve his/her potential.

## Expectations

- New River College has a very high level of expectation with regards to attendance, and provides a single clear message to pupils and parents/carers regarding the link between attendance and achievement through a clear reporting system. (See Appendix 1)  
Attendance below 94% is considered unacceptable.
- **Red: Less than 85%, significant concern**
- **Amber: 85% - <90%, some effort required to achieve acceptable level of attendance**
- **Green: 94% +, acceptable level of attendance**
- Persistent lateness will also provide cause for concern, and will be addressed through personalised strategies. The morning register closes at XXXXam and the afternoon register closes at XXXXpm. Pupils arriving after the register has closed will be marked as absent, unless the PRU has been notified in advance. The PRU will consider issuing Fixed Note Penalties where there is persistent lateness.

**If a child is persistently absent, or persistently late after the registers have closed, the adult with parental responsibility can be prosecuted under Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act. If this were to happen, the attendance register would be required in court as the main source of evidence.**

## **Rights, Roles and Responsibilities**

The whole New River College community – pupils, parents/carers, teaching and support staff and members of the Management Committee – have a responsibility to ensure good school attendance and they all have important roles to play.

### **Parents**

#### *Rights*

- Parents have the right to be kept fully informed of their child's attendance/ punctuality record
- Parents can expect support from the school if they are finding it difficult to get their child to attend regularly or be on time.

#### *Responsibilities*

- Parents have a legal responsibility to ensure that their children attend school regularly and on time.
- Parents are also responsible for contacting the school, by telephone, letter or in person, to report their child's absence and the reason for it. This should be done on the first day of absence.
- Parents must ensure that all holidays are taken during school holiday periods and not in term time.
- Parents must ensure that all contact details are kept up to date.

### **Pupils' responsibilities:**

- All pupils should be aware of the importance of regular attendance. If they are having difficulties that might prevent them from attending regularly, they should speak to their form tutor.

Pupils should attend all their lessons on time, ready to learn. If they have been absent they should give their Form Tutor a note from a parent/care to explain the absence. Pupils have a responsibility for following the New River College's procedures if they arrive late.

### **New River College**

#### *The school has a responsibility to:-*

- Maintain clear records of attendance and punctuality and investigate any unexplained absenteeism.
- Encourage, support and reward high standards of attendance and punctuality throughout the school.
- Work closely with parents to support them with any difficulties they may have relating to attendance or punctuality.
- Refer any issues relating to attendance and punctuality that give cause for concern to the Education Welfare Service.

- Refer any unauthorised term time holidays to the Education Welfare Service, with a view to issuing a fixed penalty notice.

## Key Staff

- The Head Teacher has overall responsibility for school attendance.
- The school has an Attendance Lead who maintains all records and is the first point of contact for parents in relation to attendance and punctuality.
- The school has a designated Education Welfare Officer who is not based at the school but who visits regularly. The EWO may also conduct home visits.

## Attendance Lead

- Day to day monitoring including first day calling.
- Analysing attendance information to identify patterns of non- attendance in line with New River College attendance guidelines. (see appendix 1)
- Liaison with other staff in school, parents, EWO and other external support agencies.
- Promoting attendance e.g. through projects, displays campaigns, reward schemes, (prospectus, website, etc.)
- Meetings with parent and carers, linking to achievement for all

## First Day Calling

- In order to safeguard all children, the Attendance Lead will contact the parents/guardians of all pupils who are absent each day and for whom no message has been received.
- This practice enables us to ensure that all children are safe and that the register can be coded correctly.
- This safeguarding practice can only be effective if the school has up-to-date contact details for those with parental responsibility for each child. Therefore it is essential that parents/guardians ensure the school has the information it needs to carry out its role effectively.
- **In cases of repeated unexplained absences or lack of communication from parents/carers, a referral will be made to the Education Welfare Service. Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) may also be imposed, in accordance with current guidance.**

## Authorised and Unauthorised Absence

In every instance when a child is absent from school, the school makes a decision as to whether the absence is **authorised** or **unauthorised**.

A letter from home explaining an absence does not necessarily mean that it is authorised by the school.

### Examples of absences that the school will authorise include:-

- Sickness

- **Unavoidable** medical appointments
- Days of religious observance - up to a maximum of 3 days per academic year.
- Interviews or entrance exams for secondary schools
- Exceptional Circumstances – up to a maximum of 3 days – as authorised by the Head Teacher.

Examples of absences which the school **will not authorise** include:

- The pupil is staying at home to mind the house
- The pupil is shopping during school hours
- The pupil is absent for an unexceptional reason such as a birthday
- Holidays taken in term time
- The pupil has been stopped during a truancy sweep and is unable (or the parent/carer is unable) to give a satisfactory reason for the absence.

## **Taking Children off the School Roll**

Extended periods of absence could result in a child's name being taken off the school roll and the place filled by a child on the school's waiting list.

The school may remove names from the school roll at the direction of the school's designated Education Welfare Officer.

## **Leaving the Site during the School Day**

Parents must inform the school in advance if they need to take their child out of school to attend an appointment, interview or educational activity at another venue.

It is expected that appointments other than emergency ones are booked outside of school time where possible.

Other than in an emergency, a letter or an appointment card must be presented at the office or a phone call made in order for the school to be able to authorise the absence.

## **Penalty Notices**

The 2007 regulations set out the procedures for issuing penalty notices (fines) to each parent who fails to ensure their children's regular attendance at school or fails to ensure their excluded child is not in a public place during the first five days of exclusion. Parents must pay £60 if they pay within 28 days; or £120 if they pay within 42 days.

## **Monitoring Attendance and Punctuality**

The Attendance Lead analyses the attendance data weekly to identify pupils falling below 94% attendance, emerging patterns of absence or lateness.

Parents are kept regularly informed of any relevant attendance and punctuality concerns the school may have.

As a result of this monitoring, individual cases will be referred to the Education Welfare Officer.

The Head Teacher provides the Management Committee with a termly report on attendance and punctuality.

## **Promoting and Rewarding High Standards of Attendance and Punctuality**

New River College works hard to promote and reward good attendance and punctuality. Strategies include:

- Regularly reviewing the curriculum to ensure that it is exciting and stimulating making pupils eager to come to school.
- Group and individual rewards are awarded on a regular basis. These are most often agreed in consultation with pupils.
- Maintaining an attendance display which shows how each class is doing against the school's attendance target.
- Presenting individual awards to those pupils who achieve 100% attendance over each term and those who have greatly improved their attendance/punctuality.
- Including guidance, advice and information about attendance and punctuality on a regular basis in newsletters.
- Reporting on a pupil's attendance and punctuality on a regular basis
- Holding well structured meetings with parents / guardians and the Education Welfare Officer to support improved attendance and any returns to school following extended periods of absence.

## **Requests for Family Holidays during Term Time**

Requests for children to be taken out of school during term time for holidays should be made in writing to the Head teacher, who has full discretion as to whether or not requests will be granted. The regulations set out by the DfE state that the maximum holiday that can be authorised during term time is 10 days during a single academic year.

As the majority of pupils who attend the PRU will already be working below their expected levels due to time missed from school, the Head Teacher will rarely authorise holidays.

Financial penalties can also be imposed by the EWS if holidays are taken during term without the consent of the Head Teacher.

## Appendix 1

### Attendance Thresholds

#### Universal

- All pupils aim for 100% attendance
- Policy and procedures understood and known to whole school community
- Positive links made between attendance – behaviour – learning – progress – social and emotional well being and safeguarding
- Celebrate and reward good attendance with pupil and family.

#### Focused

- **94% - 90% Attendance**
- Early intervention and prevention by responding to pupil and family needs.
- **First letter** and text home to alert parents/carers of pupil attendance.
- Pupil and parents alerted to impact on progress links between attendance and outcomes.
- Form and build positive relationship with parents/carers
- Review attendance data on a 2 week cycle, if no improvement is seen then a **second letter** is sent out inviting parent/carer in for a holistic meeting to discuss the needs of the pupil.
- Ensure all support is documented to support monitoring and review cycle.
- Attendance action plan - Record what all parties agree to do: school, parents and pupil.

#### Targeted

- **90 -85% Attendance**
- **Third letter** and text sent home to invite parents/carers to a meeting to discuss pupil attendance, this time escalated to involve the EWO, possibly the Deputy Head.
- As pupil is at risk of persistent absence, the use of appropriate formal intervention needs to be considered – CAF, SAP, parenting contract, parenting support etc.

## Appendix 2

### Guidance to Staff on Attendance and Punctuality Matters

#### 1) The role of SEAL and PHSE in securing good attendance and punctuality.

To promote good attendance and punctuality, school staff should:

- Regularly review the curriculum offered in an attempt to make it as topical, exciting and fun as possible so that pupils want to come to school and join in.
- Work hard to create a welcoming and positive school ethos where children feel safe, settled and valued.

#### 2) The roles and responsibilities of Class teachers and Support staff

The member of staff in charge of the class at the beginning of each session should:

- Call the register promptly and any absence notes are returned to the office.

- Mark pupils present as long as they arrive before the calling of the register has been completed.
- Communicate any concerns or observations about emerging patterns of absence or lateness to the school's Attendance Lead.
- Apply this policy consistently and fairly to all members of the school community.
- Reflect high standards in their own attendance and punctuality practice.

### 3) Confidentiality

- Issues surrounding attendance and punctuality can sometimes be of a sensitive or distressing nature. All school staff should maintain the highest level of confidentiality when dealing with such issues.

### Remember.....

- A year has 365 days, 52 weeks and 12 months
- A school year has 195 days, 39 weeks and six terms
- Six days in each school year are training days for teachers (INSET days)
- Pupils attend school therefore for 190 days
- A school day is divided into two sessions. A pupil therefore should attend for 380 sessions

### Reminder.....

- 1 day off = 99.5% attendance
- 10 days off = 94.7% attendance
- 20 days off = 90% attendance (4 whole weeks off school)