



New Direction School



Attendance Policy

Reviewed Date:	Reviewed By:	List of changes	Next Review
August 2021	Luke Collins	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Updated roles and responsibilities 	August 2022
16th February 2022	Luke Collins	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reviewed By Luke Collins. Minor changes to wording and grammar (Removed review date at end, added words appendix 1 for leave of absence form, Change some capital letters) made but no significant change. 	January 2023
20th February 2023	Luke Collins	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reviewed by Luke Collins with no changes made 	February 2024
August 2024	Adrian Anderson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reviewed and edit to be in line with the statutory (from 19 August 2024) working together to improve school attendance 	August 2025
August 2025	Luke Collins	Reviewed and edited to update contacts and contact method	August 2026

1. Statement of intent

New Direction Independent Special School is committed to promoting excellent attendance, punctuality and engagement for every pupil. We recognise that good attendance is fundamental to safeguarding, wellbeing, progress, positive relationships and successful preparation for adulthood.

We also recognise that pupils and families may face genuine barriers to attendance. For that reason, our approach is rooted in high expectations, strong relationships, early identification, reasonable adjustment and practical support. Where support is not engaged with, is not appropriate, or has not been successful, the school will work with the local authority and other agencies to consider formal action in line with the law and local procedures.

This policy applies to all pupils on roll and should be read alongside the school's safeguarding policy, behaviour policy, SEND policy, supporting pupils with medical conditions policy, exclusions policy and children missing education procedures.

2. Aims

- promote a whole-school culture where excellent attendance is valued, expected and supported
- ensure attendance systems are clear, fair, consistent and lawful
- identify barriers to attendance at the earliest stage and provide timely support
- ensure attendance registers are completed accurately and in accordance with legal requirements
- reduce persistent absence, severe absence and lateness
- strengthen communication and partnership working with parents, carers, the local authority and other professionals
- support pupils, including those with SEND, medical needs, social care involvement or emotional-based barriers to attendance, to access full-time education wherever possible

3. Legal and regulatory framework

This policy is informed by current Department for Education guidance and relevant legislation including the Education Act 1996, the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024, statutory attendance guidance, children missing education guidance, and the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

Parents have a legal duty under section 7 of the Education Act 1996 to ensure that their child receives an efficient full-time education suitable to age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.

The proprietor and school leaders are expected to ensure that the school meets its duties relating to attendance, admission and attendance registers, safeguarding and welfare.

4. Roles and responsibilities

4.1 Proprietor

- ensures the school has an up-to-date attendance policy which is published and implemented
- holds leaders to account for attendance, punctuality, safeguarding and children missing education arrangements
- ensures sufficient staffing, training and oversight are in place to discharge attendance duties effectively

4.2 Head of Education

- has overall responsibility for implementation of this policy
- ensures attendance is given high priority across the school
- oversees analysis of attendance patterns and quality assures support and escalation
- ensures staff understand their attendance, safeguarding and registration duties

4.3 Senior Attendance Champion

The school will identify a named senior leader as Senior Attendance Champion. The name, role title, direct email address and telephone number will be published with this policy and shared with parents.

- champions attendance across the school and leads strategic improvement
- monitors attendance data, groups and trends
- coordinates support plans and multi-agency working for pupils with emerging or entrenched attendance concerns
- acts as the key point of contact for attendance matters

4.4 Attendance and administrative staff

- complete and maintain attendance registers accurately
- record reasons for absence, follow up unexplained absence promptly and escalate concerns
- maintain attendance records, letters, logs and chronology
- liaise with leaders regarding patterns of absence, punctuality and safeguarding concerns

4.5 Class teachers and wider staff

- promote strong attendance and punctuality through positive relationships and clear routines
- notice and report concerns promptly, including changes in presentation, pattern or engagement
- work with families and leaders to support reintegration and attendance improvement

4.6 Parents and carers

- ensure their child attends regularly and arrives on time every day the school is open, unless absence is unavoidable

- contact the school on the first day of absence and each subsequent day unless another arrangement has been agreed
- provide a clear reason for absence and supporting evidence where requested
- work in partnership with the school and other agencies where attendance concerns arise
- avoid arranging holidays in term time and, wherever possible, avoid routine appointments during the school day

5. Promoting good attendance

Attendance is everyone's business. The school promotes attendance through a welcoming environment, consistent routines, positive relationships, pastoral support, close home-school communication, celebration of improvement, and timely intervention where concerns emerge.

The school recognises that attendance difficulties may be linked to anxiety, unmet need, transport difficulties, family circumstances, health needs, social care involvement, bullying, bereavement, unmet SEND provision or other barriers. Support will therefore be tailored to individual circumstances rather than relying on a one-size-fits-all response.

6. School day, registration and punctuality

The school day starts at 8:45. Morning registration opens at 9am and closes at 9:30am. Afternoon registration opens at 1:30pm and closes at 2pm. The register will not remain open for more than 30 minutes after the start of each session.

Registers are taken at the start of the morning session and at the start of the afternoon session. Attendance codes will be used in line with legal requirements and national guidance.

Pupils who arrive after the start of the session but before the register closes will be recorded as late. Pupils who arrive after the register has closed will be recorded in line with the legal attendance code for unauthorised late arrival.

Persistent lateness is disruptive, may amount to lost learning time, and will be followed up in the same supportive and graduated way as other attendance concerns.

7. Reporting absence

Parents and carers must notify the school as soon as possible on the first day of absence, and by no later than 9:30, by either ringing the school or reporting through Arbor.

The reason for absence should be specific. The school may ask for additional information or evidence where absence is frequent, prolonged, follows a pattern, occurs immediately before or after a weekend or holiday, or otherwise gives cause for concern.

Where a pupil is absent and no reason has been received, the school will contact parents or carers on the first day and will continue to make reasonable enquiries. If the school

cannot establish a pupil's whereabouts, safeguarding procedures will be followed without delay.

8. Authorised and unauthorised absence

The Head of Education, or a person authorised by the Head of Education, will determine whether an absence should be authorised in accordance with the law and relevant guidance.

Examples of absence that may be authorised, depending on the circumstances and evidence available, include genuine illness, unavoidable medical or dental appointments, recognised religious observance, approved educational activity, or other exceptional circumstances.

Absence will be unauthorised where no satisfactory reason has been provided, where the explanation is not accepted, where term-time leave has not been authorised, or where the pupil is absent without the school's permission.

The school will consider each case individually and fairly. We expect pupils to attend whenever they are well enough to do so. We will avoid overly rigid decision-making and will take account of the pupil's age, SEND, health, vulnerabilities and wider context.

9. Medical needs and support for pupils with additional barriers

The school is committed to securing suitable full-time education for pupils with medical conditions, SEND and other vulnerabilities. Attendance support will be adapted where required to reflect pupils' individual needs and legal entitlements.

- reasonable adjustments, pastoral support and phased reintegration where appropriate
- liaison with health professionals, social workers, therapists and other agencies
- short-term flexibility where clinically or professionally justified
- individual attendance plans or support plans with clear actions, timescales and review points

Where a pupil cannot attend school because of health needs, the school will consider its duties in relation to medical conditions, alternative arrangements and liaison with the local authority where appropriate. Part-time timetables will only be used in exceptional circumstances, for the shortest possible time, with parent agreement, a clear plan, regular review and oversight by senior leaders.

10. Attendance monitoring and support

Attendance is monitored daily, weekly and termly. The school will review individual attendance, punctuality, patterns, protected groups and cohorts, and will use this information to decide whether early support or further action is needed.

When a concern is identified, the school will usually adopt a graduated response. This may include one or more of the following:

- a conversation with the pupil and parent or carer
- identifying barriers and agreeing practical support
- an attendance meeting in school or virtually
- pastoral, SEND or safeguarding support
- referral to or liaison with external agencies
- an attendance support plan with review dates and success measures
- home visits where appropriate and safe to do so

Persistent absence is attendance below 90%. Severe absence is attendance below 50%. These thresholds trigger increasingly targeted support and closer oversight.

11. Formal escalation

Where support is not appropriate, is not engaged with, or has not improved attendance, the school may request support from the local authority attendance team and consider formal escalation. This may include a Notice to Improve, penalty notice consideration or prosecution in line with the local authority code of conduct and national rules.

The school will not issue penalty notices directly. Decisions regarding legal intervention rest with the local authority.

From the 2024-25 school year, national rules apply to penalty notices for school absence. The school will have regard to current guidance and local authority processes when making referrals.

12. Leave of absence during term time

The school will not grant leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. Parents and carers must submit a written request in advance, setting out the reason, dates requested and any supporting information.

The Head of Education will consider each request individually, taking account of the pupil's attendance history, the timing, the nature of the circumstances and any safeguarding or educational implications.

Family holidays or travel arrangements generally do not constitute exceptional circumstances.

Where term-time leave is taken without authorisation, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and may be referred to the local authority for consideration of legal action in line with current rules.

13. Children missing education, unexplained absence and removal from roll

The school recognises that pupils who are absent from education may be at significant risk of harm. Attendance procedures therefore sit alongside safeguarding duties and the school's missing pupil and children missing education arrangements.

Where a pupil is absent and their whereabouts cannot be established, or a pattern of absence gives rise to safeguarding concerns, the school will make reasonable enquiries,

consider home visits, liaise with relevant professionals and make referrals where necessary.

The school will notify the local authority when required by law and will have regard to current children missing education guidance. A pupil will only be removed from roll in line with the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 and after all necessary checks, notifications and safeguarding actions have been completed.

The school will maintain accurate records of enquiries, decisions, referrals and correspondence in relation to pupils at risk of becoming children missing education.

14. Attendance data, recording and retention

Attendance records will be maintained accurately and securely. Registers and related attendance records will be retained in line with legal and data protection requirements.

Leaders will review attendance data regularly to identify patterns by pupil, class, year group and vulnerability. Analysis may include persistent absence, severe absence, punctuality, part-time timetables, exclusions, medical needs, transport issues and safeguarding factors.

Attendance information may be shared with the local authority and other agencies where lawful and necessary in order to safeguard children, secure education and improve attendance.

15. Reintegration after absence

Where pupils have been absent for a significant period, the school will plan reintegration carefully. This may include a welcome-back meeting, adjusted timetable for a short period where justified, pastoral check-ins, curriculum support, transport planning, risk assessment and coordinated work with the family and professionals.

The aim will always be a successful return to consistent, full-time education as quickly as is safely and appropriately possible.

16. Linked policies

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- SEND Policy
- Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy
- Exclusions Policy
- Missing Pupil / Children Missing Education Procedures
- Data Protection Policy

17. Monitoring, review and publication

This policy will be reviewed at least annually, and earlier if there is a change in legislation, statutory guidance or local procedures.

The policy will be published on the school website and made available to staff, parents, carers and relevant professionals.

The proprietor will receive assurance that the policy is being implemented consistently and that attendance arrangements remain compliant and effective.

Appendix 1 - Attendance contacts and local arrangements

Senior Attendance Champion	Megan Wise 01246 810456/ megan@new-direction.org.uk
Attendance contact	Megan Wise 01246 810456/ megan@new-direction.org.uk Nikki Morris 01246 810456/ nikki@new-direction.org.uk
Safeguarding lead	Luke Collins luke@new-direction.org.uk
Start of school day	8:45
Morning register closes	9:30am
Afternoon register closes	2pm
Absence reporting method	01246 810456, megan@new-direction.org.uk , Message through Arbor