

Attendance Policy

September 2026

Nothing is beyond our reach!

Approved by	Governing Board
Senior Attendance Champion	Headteacher
Day-to-day attendance contact	Dawn Joy
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This policy has been updated to reflect the Department for Education statutory guidance Working together to improve school attendance (July 2026), the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024 and the National Framework for Penalty Notices.

1. Aims and principles

Norton Community Primary School is committed to securing high attendance for every pupil so that children can benefit fully from their education, relationships, routines and wider school life. We will provide a welcoming, caring and safe environment in which every child feels that they belong.

Improving attendance is a shared responsibility. We will build strong, respectful relationships with pupils and families, listen carefully to barriers to attendance, remove in-school barriers wherever possible and work with families, the local authority and other partners to provide support. We recognise that absence is often a symptom of wider circumstances and that support should intensify as absence increases.

High expectations apply to all pupils, but our response will be fair, individual and sensitive to circumstances including disability, special educational needs, physical or mental ill health, caring responsibilities, safeguarding concerns and other significant barriers.

2. Statutory framework

This policy has regard to the Department for Education statutory guidance Working together to improve school attendance, July 2026. It should be read alongside current statutory safeguarding guidance and the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024. Parents of children of compulsory school age have a legal duty to ensure that their child receives an efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs they may have.

The school maintains electronic admission and attendance registers and uses the national attendance and absence codes. Attendance registers are taken at the beginning of each morning session and once during each afternoon session.

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 Governing board

- Promote the importance of attendance across the school's ethos and policies.
- Ensure school leaders fulfil their statutory attendance duties and that appropriate resources and training are in place.

- Regularly review attendance information, including persistent and severe absence, and challenge and support leaders to improve attendance for individual pupils and cohorts.
- Ensure this policy is applied fairly and takes account of equality and SEND duties.

3.2 Senior Attendance Champion

The Headteacher is the school's Senior Attendance Champion and has overall responsibility for championing and improving attendance. The Senior Attendance Champion will set a clear vision, maintain effective systems, analyse attendance and punctuality data, coordinate support, evaluate strategies and liaise with pupils, parents, the governing board, the local authority School Attendance Support Team and other agencies where required.

3.3 Staff

- Teachers complete registers accurately and promptly and promote a positive culture of attendance and punctuality.
- Office and attendance staff follow up unexplained absence, amend registers when reasons become known, communicate with families and maintain accurate records.
- All staff remain alert to the safeguarding implications of absence, patterns of absence and unexplained absence and follow the school's safeguarding procedures.

3.4 Parents and carers

- Ensure their child attends school every day the school is open, on time and ready to learn unless the child is genuinely unable to attend.
- Contact school before 9.00am on the first day of absence and on each subsequent day, explaining the reason and expected return date.
- Keep the school informed of changes to contact details and provide more than one emergency contact wherever reasonably possible.
- Work with school and partner agencies where support is offered to overcome barriers to attendance.
- Request any leave of absence in advance and provide supporting evidence where relevant.

3.5 Pupils

Pupils are encouraged to attend every day, arrive on time, talk to a trusted adult if something is making attendance difficult and participate in agreed support. The school will listen to pupil voice when identifying barriers and agreeing appropriate action.

4. School times, registration and punctuality

For Reception to Year 4, pupils may arrive from 8.35am. The school day begins and the morning register is taken at 8.45am. For Years 5 and 6, doors open at 8.30am and the school day begins and the morning register is taken at 8.35am. The afternoon register is taken during the afternoon session.

Pupils arriving after the register has started but before it closes will be recorded as late using code L. In line with statutory guidance, the register will remain open for no longer than 30 minutes from the published start of the relevant session. A pupil arriving after the register has closed will normally be recorded using code U, unauthorised absence for that session, unless another national attendance code is more appropriate to the circumstances.

All pupils arriving after their normal entrance has closed must report through the main entrance so that their arrival can be recorded and safeguarding arrangements maintained. The school will monitor late arrival and

contact parents where patterns emerge. Communication will explain the amount of learning time lost rather than relying only on percentages.

Any arrangements used to help pupils catch up missed learning will be reasonable, proportionate and consistent with the school's Behaviour Policy and the individual pupil's needs. Late pupils will not automatically lose break or lunchtime simply because they have arrived late.

5. Reporting and following up absence

Parents should contact the school before 9.00am on the first day of absence and each subsequent day. They may telephone the school, leave a message on the answerphone, speak to the school office or use the absence reporting facility on the school website.

Where a reason has not been provided, the school will make first-day contact with the parent or carer and use available emergency contacts where needed. Where absence remains unexplained, further contact will be made to establish the pupil's safety and expected return. The school may carry out a home visit where this is appropriate. If there is a safeguarding or immediate welfare concern, the school will follow its safeguarding procedures and may contact children's social care, the police or other relevant agencies. A police welfare check will not be an automatic response to every unexplained absence.

Where an absence is initially recorded as reason not yet established, the school will update the register as soon as the reason is known and within the statutory timescale. If no satisfactory reason is established, the absence will be recorded using the appropriate unauthorised absence code.

6. Supporting attendance and removing barriers

Norton CP will work with families early. Where attendance begins to cause concern, staff will meet or communicate with the pupil and family to understand the barriers and agree practical actions. Support may include reasonable adjustments in school, pastoral support, SEND review, support for physical or mental ill health, help with routines, Early Help, involvement of the local authority School Attendance Support Team or other appropriate services.

Where a pupil has a social worker, is a young carer, has SEND, a disability or significant physical or mental health needs, the school will be particularly mindful of the individual barriers to attendance and will work with relevant professionals. Attendance support will not prevent or delay reasonable adjustments or appropriate educational and safeguarding support.

Where voluntary support is not effective or is not engaged with, the school will work with the local authority to consider formal support, which may include an attendance contract, an Education Supervision Order, a Notice to Improve, a penalty notice or prosecution where the legal tests are met and such action is appropriate.

7. Attendance data, persistent absence and severe absence

Attendance is monitored continuously rather than only at the end of each half term. The school will review individual, year-group, cohort and whole-school attendance and punctuality patterns at least weekly, with more detailed analysis half-termly, termly and annually. Data will be used to identify emerging concerns early, target support and evaluate whether interventions are working.

Persistent absence means missing 10% or more of possible school sessions, regardless of whether the absences are authorised or unauthorised. In broad terms this is attendance of 90% or below. Pupils at risk of reaching this threshold will be identified and supported before the pattern becomes established.

Severe absence means missing 50% or more of possible school sessions. Pupils who are severely absent will be treated as a top priority for intensive, multi-agency support, with safeguarding considered throughout.

The school may use internal indicators, for example attendance below 93%, as an early-warning trigger for contact or support. Such indicators are not statutory definitions and will never replace consideration of the pupil's individual circumstances.

8. Graduated attendance response

The school will use a graduated, support-first approach rather than a rigid automatic sequence based only on percentages:

- Universal: clear expectations, welcoming routines, accurate registers, regular communication and promotion of the benefits of attendance.
- Early concern: timely contact, pupil and parent discussion, identification of barriers and agreed actions or reasonable adjustments.
- Increasing absence: a documented attendance action plan, regular review and additional school or external support.
- Persistent or severe absence: more intensive and targeted support with the local authority and relevant partners, including Early Help or other multi-agency support where appropriate.
- Where support is not appropriate, has not worked, or has not been engaged with: consideration of formal attendance support and/or legal intervention in accordance with statutory guidance and the local authority code of conduct.

Targets and review periods will be realistic and tailored to the individual case. The school will not impose an automatic expectation of 100% attendance for every 10- or 20-day monitoring period where illness, disability, agreed support or other circumstances make that unreasonable.

9. Illness, medical needs, SEND and part-time timetables

The school will authorise absence for genuine illness using the appropriate national code and will not routinely request medical evidence for every illness. Where there are repeated or prolonged absences and additional information is reasonably needed to understand barriers or agree support, the school may seek appropriate evidence in discussion with the family.

Pupils with physical or mental ill health, SEND or disabilities may require additional support or reasonable adjustments. The school will work with families, health professionals, the SENCO and the local authority as appropriate so that attendance expectations remain ambitious but are applied fairly.

A part-time timetable will only be used in exceptional circumstances, for the shortest time necessary, as part of a plan to return to full-time education. It will be agreed with the parent, regularly reviewed and recorded using the appropriate attendance codes. It will not be used to manage behaviour.

10. Leave of absence and holidays in term time

Parents do not have an automatic right to take children out of school during term time. The Headteacher may grant a leave of absence only where the request meets one of the circumstances permitted by the School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024. For discretionary requests, leave may be granted only in exceptional circumstances and the number of days authorised is determined by the Headteacher.

Family holidays will not normally be authorised. Requests should be made in advance using the school's leave of absence form and should include relevant supporting information. The school asks families to submit

requests as early as reasonably possible; an internal request to submit six weeks in advance is helpful where practicable but does not create a legal entitlement or prevent the school considering a later request.

Where leave is taken without authorisation, or a pupil remains away beyond an authorised period without an agreed reason, the absence will be recorded using the appropriate unauthorised absence code and may contribute to the national penalty notice threshold.

11. National Framework for Penalty Notices

All state-funded schools must consider whether a penalty notice is appropriate in each individual case when the national threshold is met. The threshold is 10 sessions of unauthorised absence within a rolling period of 10 school weeks. The sessions may be consecutive or non-consecutive, can arise from different types of unauthorised absence, and the 10-school-week period can span terms or school years.

Reaching the threshold does not mean that a penalty notice will be issued automatically. The school and local authority will consider the individual circumstances, whether support is appropriate, whether support has been provided or engaged with, and the relevant local authority code of conduct. For some unauthorised term-time leave, support may not be appropriate and a penalty notice may be considered without a Notice to Improve.

For absence offences under the National Framework:

- The first penalty notice issued to a parent for a particular child within a rolling 3-year period is £160 if paid within 28 days, reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days.
- A second penalty notice to the same parent for the same child within 3 years is £160, payable within 28 days, with no reduced rate.
- A third penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent for the same child within that 3-year period. Where the threshold is met again, alternative legal intervention will be considered, which may include prosecution.

Penalty notices are issued to each parent liable for the attendance offence in respect of each child. The school will follow North Yorkshire Council's local code of conduct and referral arrangements.

12. Notices to Improve and other legal intervention

Where the national threshold is met and support is appropriate but has not been successful or engaged with, a Notice to Improve may be used as a final opportunity for a parent to engage in support and improve attendance before a penalty notice is issued. The precise action will depend on the circumstances and the local authority code of conduct.

Where voluntary support is unsuccessful or inappropriate, other legal interventions may include an attendance contract, Education Supervision Order or prosecution under the Education Act 1996. Legal intervention will not replace appropriate safeguarding, SEND, health or family support.

13. Promoting attendance and recognition

The school will promote the benefits of attendance through positive relationships, curriculum messages, assemblies, communication with families and recognition of positive engagement. We will celebrate improvement, resilience and engagement as well as high attendance.

Recognition arrangements will be inclusive and will not disadvantage or shame pupils whose absence relates to illness, disability, SEND, medical appointments, religious observance or other circumstances outside their control. The school will therefore keep its previous attendance reward arrangements under review and will avoid high-value rewards that depend solely on 100% attendance. Class or individual recognition may instead

acknowledge improved attendance, punctuality, positive routines or sustained engagement where this is fair and appropriate.

14. Communication with parents

Parents will receive clear information about their child's attendance and punctuality, including where appropriate the number of sessions or days missed and the impact on learning. The school will avoid presenting headline percentages without context. Families can contact the school office or Headteacher for day-to-day attendance queries or more detailed attendance support.

15. Safeguarding

Attendance is closely linked to safeguarding. Staff will be alert to sudden or unexplained changes, repeated absence, severe absence, patterns associated with particular days or family circumstances, and absence that may indicate neglect, exploitation, bullying, mental ill health or other harm. Concerns will be shared with the Designated Safeguarding Lead in accordance with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

16. Monitoring and review

The Senior Attendance Champion will evaluate attendance strategies and report relevant information to the governing board. The governing board will regularly review attendance data, including groups with protected characteristics, SEND, disadvantaged pupils and persistent or severe absence, and will support and challenge leaders to improve outcomes.

This policy will be reviewed annually, and sooner if statutory guidance, regulations, the North Yorkshire local code of conduct or the school's attendance arrangements change.

17. Useful references

- Department for Education: Working together to improve school attendance, statutory guidance, July 2026.
- School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024.
- Education Act 1996, including sections 444 and 444A.
- Education (Penalty Notices) (England) Regulations 2007, as amended in 2024.
- Keeping Children Safe in Education, current edition.
- North Yorkshire Council local code of conduct for penalty notices and school attendance procedures.