

Nishkam School Trust



Nishkam School Trust Pupil Attendance Policy

Approved by:	Trustees	Date: February 2023
Last reviewed on:	January 2023	

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Our Vision and Ethos

Nishkam schools are Sikh ethos multi faith schools that take a distinctive approach to many traditional faith schools. The Nishkam School Trust education model is led by virtues such as, compassion, humility, service, contentment, optimism, trust and forgiveness. Virtues are prevalent throughout our teaching and learning model and are modelled by our pupils, staff and teachers. Our pupils explore the divine context of humanity and wonder of all creation and also learn from the wisdom of all religions and in doing so explore the infinite human potential to do good unconditionally. We support all pupils and staff to develop aspects of their own religious, spiritual or human identities. In service of God, we pray for guidance in this endeavour and forgiveness for the errors we may make.

1. Introduction

NST are committed to providing all pupils with a full-time education experience that maximises every pupil opportunities and allows each to realise their true potential. We meet our obligations with regards to school attendance by;

- Promoting good attendance and reducing absence, including persistent and severe absence;
- Ensuring every pupil has access to full time education to which they are entitled
- Acting early to address any patterns of absence.
- Building strong relationships with families to ensure pupils have the support in place to attend school
- We will also promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

In accordance with legislation, we actively support parents to perform their legal duty to ensure their children of compulsory school age attend regularly, and will promote and support punctuality in attending lessons.

The level of attendance and punctuality expected from all our pupils is included in our school's Home School Agreement, which parents and pupils will adopt following their child's admission to school.

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of the [school attendance guidance](#) 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 complies with our trust's funding agreement and articles of association.

3. Roles and responsibilities

3.1 The Trust and the Trust Board

The board of Trustees is responsible for:

- Promoting the importance of school attendance across the Trust'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 Trust

- Holding the Principal/ Headteachers to account for the implementation of this policy

Each LGB have a Safeguarding, Attendance and Behaviour Link Governor that review the attendance data for their respective school and ensures that this policy is applied consistently and reports back to the LGB.

3.2 The Principal/ Headteacher

The Principal/ Headteacher is responsible for:

- Implementation of this policy at the school
- Monitoring school-level absence data and reporting it to governors
- Supporting staff with monitoring the attendance of individual pupils
- Monitoring the impact of any implemented attendance strategies
- Issuing fixed-penalty notices, where necessary
- Making sure school staff receive adequate training on attendance

3.3 The designated senior leader responsible for attendance at each school

The designated senior leader is responsible for:

- Leading attendance across the school
- 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

3.5 The School Attendance Officer (s)

The School Attendance Officer or equivalent at each school is responsible for:

- Monitoring and analysing attendance data (see section 7)
- 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 responsible for attendance and the headteacher
- Working with education welfare officers to tackle persistent absence
- Recommending when to issue fixed-penalty notices to the Principal/ Headteacher when to issue fixed-penalty notices

The Attendance Officer can be contacted via the school office.

3.6 All staff

All staff will:

- Following this policy and ensuring pupils do so to
- Ensuring this policy is implemented fairly and consistently
- Modelling good attendance behaviour

- Using their professional judgement and knowledge of individual pupils to inform decisions as to whether any welfare concerns should be escalated
- Where designated, taking the attendance register at the relevant times during the school day.

3.7 School Office staff

The School Office staff will:

- Take calls from parents about absence on a day-to-day basis and record it on the school system
- Transfer calls from parents to the school attendance officer or equivalent in order to provide them with more detailed support on attendance

3.8 Parents/carers

Parents/carers are expected and legally responsible to:

- Support the school with their child in aiming for 100% attendance each year
- Promoting good attendance with their children by demonstrating good habits for attendance and punctuality
- Make sure that our child arrives in school on time and is collected on time, every day.
- Call the school to report their child's absence before school starts or ideally by 9am 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 two emergency contact numbers for their children, updating the school if their details change.
- Make sure that any absence is clearly accounted for by telephone on each day of the absence.
- Avoid taking their child out of school for non-urgent medical or dental appointments. Ideally these should be booked outside of the school day. In the event an appointment must take place during the school day, pupils are expected to return to school straight after the appointment in order to avoid missing valuable learning time.
- Ensure that, where possible, appointments for their child are made outside of the school day
- Adhere to the Nishkam Home School Agreement

3.9 Pupils

Pupils are expected to:

- [Primary schools] Attend school every day on time
- [Secondary schools] Attend every day on time and attend every lesson on time
- Adhere to the Nishkam Home School Agreement

4. Recording Attendance

4.1 Attendance register

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
- 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 I 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
- We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.
- Pupils must arrive in school on time each school day.

We will keep every entry on the attendance register for 3 years after the date on which the entry was made.

4.2 Unplanned absence

A child not attending school is considered a safeguarding matter. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

In the event we have not been contacted regarding a child's absence and we have any concerns regarding their wellbeing, staff may carry out a safe and wellbeing check and make a visit to the child's home.

This is in order to support the family and to work together to ensure the child returns as quickly as possible back to school.

The pupil's parent/carer must notify the school of the reason for the absence on the first day of an unplanned absence by 9am or as soon as practically possible by calling the school office staff (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/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 school is not satisfied about the authenticity of the illness, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and parent/carer will be notified of this in advance.

4.3 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

Please contact the School Office to request leaves of absence.

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. Go to section 5 to find out which term-time absences the school can authorise.

4.4 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

All lateness is recorded daily. This information will be required by the courts, should a prosecution for non-attendance or lateness be necessary.

Pupils who are consistently late are disrupting not only their own education but also that of the other pupils. Ongoing and repeated lateness is considered as unauthorised absence and will be subject to legal action.

Parents, guardians or carers of pupils who have patterns of lateness will be contacted to discuss the importance of good time keeping and how this might be achieved. If lateness persists parents, guardians or carers will be invited to attend a meeting and discuss the problem and support offered.

Please collect your child promptly at the end of the school day. Where late collection is persistent and/or significantly late, the school will place the child into the after-school care provision and will be charged for this service. The school is obliged to take any uncollected pupil to a place of safety and share concerns, as necessary, with other agencies.

4.5 Following up unexplained absence

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

- Call the pupil's parent/carer on the morning of the first day of unexplained absence to ascertain the reason. If we cannot reach any of the pupil's emergency contacts, we may [insert measures, e.g. contact police]
- 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 an education welfare officer

4.6 Reporting to parents/carers

Parents are able to access their child's using the MCAS (My Child At School) application that provides daily updates. Attentively the school will issue regular updates to parents using a mutually agreed method.

5. Authorised absence and unauthorised absence

We are obliged to inform all parents about major adjustments to the Education Regulations which have been passed to safeguard children's well-being and improve their academic progress. The Regulations which came into effect in September 2013 **do not** allow leave during term time, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

- The school may not grant any leave of absence during term time.
- Legally, parents or carers are not entitled to take their child on holiday during term time.
- Legally, parents or carers are unable to demand leave of absence as of right.
- If children are taken out of school without permission both parents may be fined and risk losing the child's place at the school.

5.1 Approval for term-time absence

Taking holidays in term time will affect your child's schooling as much as any other absence and we expect parents to help us by not taking children out during school time.

Impact on education

Attendance during one school year	equals this number of days absent	which is approximately this many weeks absent	which means this number of lessons missed
95%	9 days	2 weeks	50 lessons
90%	19 days	4 weeks	100 lessons
85%	29 days	6 weeks	150 lessons
80%	38 days	8 weeks	200 lessons

The Principal/Headteacher 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/Headteacher 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.

Parents/carers wishing to apply for leave of absence will need to:

- Complete an application form (available from the school office) at least four weeks before the start of the holiday, before making any travel arrangements.
- Supporting documents maybe require evidence to support any request for leave of absence. The completed form must then be sent to the school for approval.
- A meeting will then be arranged with the parents and the Principal/Headteacher to discuss the request.

The school will then write to you within seven school working days to confirm/decline the request. Valid reasons for **authorised absence** include:

- Illness and medical/dental appointments (see sections 4.2 and 4.3 for more detail)
- 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
- Traveller pupils travelling for occupational purposes – this covers Roma, English and Welsh gypsies, Irish and Scottish travellers, showmen (fairground people) and circus people, bargees (occupational boat dwellers) and new travellers. Absence may be authorised only when a traveller family is known to be travelling for occupational purposes and has agreed this with the school, but it is not known whether the pupil is attending educational provision
- Other possible 'exceptional circumstances' where the [headteacher/head of school] may grant term-time holiday
- Study leave - N/A for Primary

If leave of absence is taken that is not authorised the school will notify the Local Authority who may issue a penalty notice/fine

5.2 Legal sanctions

The school or local authority can fine parents for the unauthorised absence of their child from school, where the child is of compulsory school age.

If issued with a fine, or penalty notice, each parent must pay £60 within 21 days or £120 within 28 days. The payment must be made directly to the local authority.

Penalty notices can be issued by a headteacher, local authority officer or the police.

The decision on whether or not to issue a penalty notice may take into account:

- The number of unauthorised absences occurring within a rolling academic year
- One-off instances of irregular attendance, such as holidays taken in term time without permission
- Where an excluded pupil is found in a public place during school hours without a justifiable reason

If the payment has not been made after 28 days, the local authority can decide whether to prosecute or withdraw the notice.

6. Strategies for promoting attendance

NST sets out the following principles underpinning an effective whole school strategy.

- Offer a clear vision for attendance underpinned by our high expectations and core values; these are communicated to our school community;
- Communicate openly and honestly with staff, pupils and families about their expectations of school life and performance so that they understand what to expect and what is expected of them. Model respectful relationships and appropriate communication for staff and pupils. This will help relationships between pupils and staff to reflect a positive and respectful culture.

7. Attendance monitoring

The Trust reviews attendance data at regular intervals monitoring trends focusing on key pupil groups and comparing the data with local and National data ensuring that our planned intervention strategies are appropriate and fit for purpose.

7.1 Monitoring attendance

The school will;

- Monitor attendance and absence data half-termly, termly and yearly across the school and at an individual pupil level
- Identify whether or not there are particular groups of children whose absences may be a cause for concern

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 local governing body.

7.2 Analysing attendance

The school 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

7.3 Using data to improve attendance

The school 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

7.4 Reducing persistent and severe absence

If a pupil misses 10% or more schooling across the school year, for whatever reason, they are defined as persistent absentees. Absence for whatever reason disadvantages a child by creating gaps in his or her

learning. Research shows these gaps affect attainment when attendance falls below 95%. As such, we monitor all absence thoroughly and all attendance data is shared with the local authority and the Department for Education.

The school 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, or are persistently or severely absent, to discuss attendance and engagement at school
- Provide access to wider support services to remove the barriers to attendance
- If your child has had absence and their attendance level is falling towards 90% we will contact you and, depending on the reasons for the absence, you will be invited to attend a meeting with the Attendance leader/officer and the Education Welfare Officer.
- Where a child is identified to be a persistent absentee pupil, parents are subject to an Attendance Plan or a Home School Contract.
- We will mark absence due to illness as authorised unless the school has a genuine concern about the authenticity of the illness. The pupil's parent/carer may be asked 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.

8. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed as guidance from the local authority or DfE is updated, and as a minimum two years by the Executive Team. At every review, the policy will be approved by the full Trust Board.

9. Links with other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Child protection and safeguarding policy
- Behaviour policy
- Home School Agreement