

NORTH ISLINGTON NURSERY SCHOOL & CHILDRENS CENTRE –

ATTENDANCE & PUNCTUALITY

Signed on behalf of Governing Body: Sally Franklin

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The following policy is an adapted extract from the Islington Community of Schools document “Access to Learning. Attendance Matters”

Early Intervention: Punctuality and Attendance in Early Years

Much of the advice and recommended good practice contained in other sections in the “Access to Learning, Attendance Matters” document should be applied to early year’s settings and to early year’s classes within schools. However, attendance for children under 5 is not statutory and there is not the same recourse to legal sanctions. There can also be particular issues in maintaining good attendance and punctuality for families with very young children, which need to be dealt with sensitivity and proportionately. These issues, together with challenges around IT infrastructure in most early year’s settings, makes ensuring good attendance when children are young more challenging.

However, the early years are a critical time to establish the good habits and routines needed throughout life and to get the key message about the important of good attendance and punctuality at nursery and school across to parents/carers. This section therefore contains some specific guidance for North Islington Nursery School parents/carers.

Early education and childcare

All early years providers and schools with children in nursery and reception classes work to the same standards set out in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Many families access early years provision as a means of childcare but once a child turns 3, they are then entitled to a funded part-time early education place of 15 hours from the term following their 3rd birthday. The entitlement of 570 hours per year (equivalent to a part-time place in nursery throughout term time) has recently been extended for the term to some 2 year olds following the term after their 2nd birthday. Many children attending nursery classes in primary schools in Islington are given a full time place from the age of 3. Attendance only becomes statutory for the child in the term after their 5th birthday.

Regular attendance is important for all children, even babies, it is only through regular, consistent routines that children build up the secure attachments they need for healthy development. Parents/carers need childcare for very obvious reasons and there are generally few issues about attendance for children accessing early year’s provision for childcare purposes. However, we are concerned that all children do access their funded early education entitlement.

Why is good attendance and punctuality important in early years?

Regular attendance has a positive impact on all aspects of a young child's learning and development. A regular routine supports the child to feel settled and secure. Unsettled children have higher stress levels which, in turn, prevent them from being able to benefit fully from the learning opportunities available.

Research shows that regular part-time attendance from the age of 2 in a good quality early years setting has a lasting impact on children's social development and intellectual attainment throughout school. (Research Brief RBF15-03 – The Effective Provision of Pre-school Education Project: Findings from the Pre-school Period. Sylva et al, IOE, 2003). Islington's Early Years Foundation Stage Profile results (summer 2014) showed a clear correlation between children's attendance and their attainment of the "good level of development" standard

What North Islington Nursery School is expected to do to promote good attendance and punctuality in the early years.

Have clear expectations: Families need to know that good attendance and being punctual are expected when their child takes up a place at North Islington. Attendance is a borough-wide initiative and an issue that affects all age groups. This initiative includes expectations around holidays, which for school-aged children are not permissible in term time. The school also has clear expectations of parents about contacting school to inform us of possible absence and of making clear decisions as to whether a child is well enough to attend school. Further guidance on this issue is in NHS/Islington leaflet "Minor Illnesses and School Attendance". The expectations around attendance, punctuality and steps the school will take to follow up issues will be clearly set out in a home/school agreement which parents will be asked to read and sign as part of their admission process. The school will adopt the borough wide target for all school of 96% attendance through this is likely to be significantly lower when attendance is not statutory.

Attendance is everyone's business: It is not just up to the head teacher to deal with attendance and punctuality issues, nor the job of admin. All staff need to understand and value the importance of attendance and punctuality and raise the issues with parents/carers. The role of the key person in initially talking with parents/carers about attendance should be clear but senior management need to be supportive and involved in reinforcing the message.

First day calling: North Islington has a clear expectation that parents/carers will telephone by 09:30 on the day if their child is absent. If the parent/carer does not let us know, we follow up all absences with a telephone call early in the morning. It is important to ensure that the child is safe but it also gives a clear and consistent message that at North Islington absence from nursery will be treated in the same way as for older children and that without a valid reason, absence will be challenged.

Monitor children's attendance: The school will monitor attendance and comment on it in newsletters. We will also write and speak to parents on an individual basis if we consider a child's attendance or punctuality is becoming unacceptable.

Clear communication: We will use a range of means to communicate messages about attendance and punctuality. Parents/carers may not be aware of the importance and benefits of early year's education and particularly of the importance of play for learning and development. They may be unaware that any absence or late arrival at the setting can affect the child's ability to fully participate and benefit from the day's activities. We will use as many means as possible to explain to parents the EYFS and the practice and routines in our setting so they have the information they need to allow them to value the importance of early education and play for their child's development.

There may be particular families for whom strategies to improve attendance do not appear to work. Children with below 85% attendance are regarded in statutory schooling as persistent absentees and those with attendance of less than 60% in statutory schooling are likely to be referred to Children's Social Care for neglect.

If the family already has social worker or family support worker involvement, we will bring issues of poor attendance to their attention, so it can be further discussed with the family in the Team Around the Child/Family meeting and action agreed about what to do.

For other families, where children's attendance is poor and not improving despite our efforts we may make a referral to our family support worker or health visitor. The child's poor attendance may be a manifestation of other underlying issues the family is facing which a period of family support will help to address. Very poor attendance can be an indication of neglect (see Neglect Toolkit ISCB 2014).

How parents/carers can help their child have good attendance

- From starting at North Islington, parents/carers must make sure their child arrives at school on time, every day. This encourages habits of good timekeeping and lessens any possible classroom disruption.
- If their child has to miss school it is vital that parents/carers let the school know why, preferably on the first morning of the absence.
- Know the school's daily routines.
- Show an interest, attend parent meetings, concerts and other school events and ask about what their children are doing at school.
- Don't let their children take time off school for minor ailments – particularly those which would not stop parents/carers from going to work.
- Where possible, make appointments after school, at weekends or during school holidays. A morning appointment does not mean a whole day of school should be missed. Parents are encouraged to bring their child back to school in the afternoon.
- Take family holidays outside of term time – find out school's term time dates well in advance and plan holidays around these dates.
- Encourage their children to tell them about any problems they may have at school.

Sanctions

- Non-attendance – your place may be withdrawn
- Late dropping off children – you may be asked to take your child home and return in the next session i.e. after lunch

- Early Years Priority Referral places – Head of EYPR allocations will be contacted and your child's place may be reduced in hours/withdrawn completely
- Late collection – fees may be applied.

All at discretion of head teacher