

# Newlands Girls' School

**Courage Commitment Compassion**

Headteacher: Miss J. Capon



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Dear Parents and Carers

As we begin our second full week of school in the new academic year, I would like to remind you about the importance of good attendance, what we are doing at Newlands to support your child in achieving this and some changes to attendance legislation and regulations.

We know through research that students who attend school are more likely to do well and achieve their full potential both academically and personally. At Newlands we have seen this ourselves; students with attendance above 95% achieve at least half a grade higher on average than students 95% and below.

To give your child the best chance possible they need to be in school. It is the responsibility of parents and carers, staff, students and governors to ensure all students have good attendance.

If you have any concerns about your child's attendance, do contact their Head of Year who will be able to offer support.

## **Punctuality**

Ensuring students are punctual to school and lessons is just as important as regular attendance. Being late to a lesson can result in missed learning and disrupted teaching. We will be closing the school gates at **8.38am** in the morning to ensure students arrive to school with plenty of time to get to their form for registration which starts at 8.40am. If they arrive after this time, they will have to be let through the visitor's entrance by the reception team. We will be taking a staged approach with students who are repeatedly late which will involve communicating with parents and carers, punctuality reports and support plans.

Please do ensure that your child has enough time to arrive to school with time to spare. We know that sometimes unexpected issues can happen in the morning and on the way to school, however busy traffic is the norm in the morning during term time so please do allow plenty of time for travel.

## **Changes to Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs)**

The Department for Education's (DfE) Working Together to Improve Attendance guidance became statutory in August 2024. As part of this there is a new national framework for the issuing of Fixed Penalty Notices. The following is information from the DfE and Achieving for Children.

A new National Framework for Penalty Notices for school absence is has been introduced through changes to secondary legislation.

There are significant changes in the way that Fixed Penalty notices are to be issued and an increase in the charges associated with them. These are nationwide changes implemented for consistency across all Local Authorities.

The national threshold for issuing a penalty notice is 10 sessions of unauthorised absence in a rolling period of 10 school weeks. This can be met with any combination of unauthorised absence (e.g. 4 sessions of term time holiday plus 6 sessions of arriving late after the registers close). These sessions can be consecutive or can now span across different terms or school years. When the threshold has been met the school will either offer appropriate support if appropriate or immediately issue a penalty notice if it is the best available tool to improve a pupil's attendance.

## **Notices to Improve**

A Notice to Improve is a final opportunity for a parent to engage in support and improve before a penalty notice is issued. If the national threshold has been met and support is appropriate but offers of support have not been engaged with by the parent or guardian or have not worked, a Notice to Improve should usually be sent

to give parents or guardians a final chance to engage in support. A Notice to Improve does not need to be issued in cases where support is not appropriate and an authorised officer can choose not to issue one in any case, including cases where support is appropriate but they do not expect a Notice to Improve would have any behavioural impact (because the parent has already received one for a similar offence). If sufficient improvement is not made following the service of a Notice to Improve, a penalty notice may be issued either during or at the end of the designated time period.

### **Penalty Notices**

From Autumn 2024 only 2 penalty notices can be issued to the same parent/guardian in respect of the same child within a 3-year rolling period and any second notice is charged at a higher rate.

- The first penalty notice issued to a parent in respect of a particular pupil will be charged at £160 if paid within 28 days. This will be reduced to £80 if paid within 21 days.
- A second penalty notice will be charged at a flat rate of £160 if paid within 28 days.
- A third penalty notice cannot be issued to the same parent in respect of the same child within 3 years of the date of issue of the first. In a case where the national threshold is met for a third time (or subsequent times) within those 3 years, alternative action should be taken instead. This will often include considering prosecution, but may include other tools such as one of the other attendance legal interventions.

If the penalty notice is not paid by the end of the 28 day period, the local authority will decide either to prosecute for the original offence to which the notice applies, or withdraw the notice. Parent(s) can only be prosecuted if 28 days have expired, and full payment has not been made. There is no right of appeal against a penalty notice.

### **Illness**

I shared last year that the Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP) had written to all schools with new guidance on medical absences. You can read the full letter here: [Letter to school leaders on mild illness and school attendance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/714442/letter_to_school_leaders_on_mild_illness_and_school_attendance_-_gov.uk.pdf) however the key points are:

- School attendance is vital to the life chances of children and young people. Being in school improves health, wellbeing and socialisation throughout life.
- It is usually appropriate for parents and carers to send their children to school with mild respiratory illnesses. This would include general cold symptoms: a minor cough, runny nose or sore throat. However, children should not be sent to school if they have a temperature of 38°C or above.
- Worry and mild or moderate anxiety, can be difficult emotions, but can also be a normal part of growing up for many children and young people. Being in school can often help alleviate the underlying issues. A prolonged period of absence is likely to heighten a child's anxiety about attending school in the future, rather than reduce it.

Please do follow these guidelines when assessing if your child is well enough to attend school.

### **Attendance Policy**

You can read our Attendance Policy on the school web site. In this document, we ask that all parents and carers will:

- Not keep their child away from school to help at home or to look after other members of the family
- Talk to their child about school and what goes on. Take a positive interest in their child's work and educational progress
- Instil the value of education and regular school attendance within the home environment
- Encourage their child to look to the future and have aspirations
- Inform the school on the first day of absence and all subsequent days, unless the school has indicated otherwise
- Discuss with the Head of Year any planned absences well in advance
- Support the school in aiming for 100% attendance each year for their child
- Make sure that any absence is clearly accounted for by:
  - Emailing the school
  - Messaging via Arbor
  - Phone calls
- Avoid taking their child out of school for non-urgent medical or dental appointments
- Only request leave of absence if it is for an exceptional circumstance
- Put requests for absence in writing. These requests should be sent to the Headteacher using the 'Request for term time absence' form, available from the school website.

To give your child the best chance possible they need to be in school. It is the responsibility of parents and carers, staff, students and governors to ensure all students have good attendance.

### Holidays

Holidays during term-time **will not be agreed**. Any planned absence needs to be agreed by the Headteacher and will be granted on a case by case basis and in advance. Any holidays or periods of absence taken which have not been approved will be recorded as unauthorised absence and may result in a fine.

On return from holidays, parents will be invited in to school for a return to school meeting with the attendance lead and Head of Year.

### Using Arbor to monitor your child's attendance

The introduction of Arbor allows you to keep track of your child's attendance each day and over time. Please do use Arbor regularly to discuss your child's attendance. Form tutors will be using Arbor to monitor attendance for students and you can find further information on how to review attendance in the Arbor guide that was recently sent out.

It is also possible to report absence via the in-app messages using the Arbor app.

### Who can I contact?

To report an absence, you can contact the attendance office by phone: 01628 502663 or email: [attendance@newlandsgirls.co.uk](mailto:attendance@newlandsgirls.co.uk). You can also report an absence via the Arbor app or web site.

If you are concerned about your child's attendance, in the first instance please contact their Form Tutor or Head of Year.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for working with the school to ensure your child has the best possible attendance and is able to fulfil their potential.

Best wishes



Mr Andrew Morbey  
Deputy Headteacher



We are committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expect all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.

