



North East Futures UTC ATTENDANCE POLICY

Why is attendance important?

UTC attendance is subject to various Education laws and this UTC attendance policy is written to reflect these laws and the guidance produced by the Department for Education.

At NEFUTC we believe that good attendance and punctuality are important in helping students achieve the best that they can be. Students should be at the UTC on time and dressed in accordance with the UTC dress code. Students should be ready to learn, every day that the UTC is open, unless the reason for absence is unavoidable.

Promoting excellent attendance is the responsibility of the whole UTC community including students, parents, governors and staff.

It is a parent's legal responsibility to ensure their child receives an appropriate education. Poor attendance disrupts a student's education as well as their peers'. Good attendance is important because:

- statistics show a direct relation between underachievement and poor attendance;
- regular attenders make better progress academically;
- regular attenders make better progress socially.

The percentages below illustrate the impact of absence:

- 95% equates to half a day off every two weeks
- 90% equates to a day off every two weeks
- 85% equates to one and a half days off every two weeks
- 80% equates to one whole day off every week
- **A secondary age child whose attendance is 80% each year will have missed ONE WHOLE YEAR of education by the time they leave the UTC in Year 11.**

Statutory Framework

This policy meets the requirements of the guidance [working together to improve school attendance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE),

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](#)

Under Section 444 of the 1996 Education Act, a student is required to attend school regularly. Should a student fail to attend regularly legal action may be taken.

The UTC is required to complete a register twice during the school day. This is once at the start of the day, 9:00, and again for the afternoon session at 12:10. The UTC is obliged by law to differentiate between authorised and unauthorised absence. A written message or telephone message from a parent does not in itself authorise an absence. It is for the UTC to determine if an absence is to be authorised (The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006).

**Parent - Education Law defines a parent as:*

- *All natural parents, whether they are married or not;*
- *Any person who has parental responsibility for a child or young person; and,*
- *Any person who has care of a child or young person i.e. lives with and looks after the child on a daily basis.*

It is important to note that even though a parent may not live in the same home as the student, that parent is still responsible for ensuring the child attends the UTC every day.

Parental responsibilities

- Support the UTC and your child in aiming for 100% attendance each academic year.
- Ensure your child attends the UTC every day, punctually, dressed in accordance with the UTC dress code
- Ensure your child is present at the UTC by the start time of 9:00am.
- Contact the UTC office as early as possible (attendance@nef.tynecoast.academy) to provide an explanation if your child is ill and unable to attend the UTC.
- Provide supporting evidence wherever possible to help the UTC to decide if an absence is authorised (e.g. medical appointment card with one appointment entered, letter from a professional, doctor's note, medication prescribed by a doctor, copy of prescription, print screen of medical notes, letters concerning hospital appointments or any other relevant evidence). **If contact is not made an absence will be recorded as unauthorised.**
- If illness is frequently claimed as a reason for absence then supporting evidence should be provided; see the above bullet point for examples of suitable evidence. If this evidence is not provided, then the absence will be marked as unauthorised.
- Ensure appointments (e.g. medical, dental etc) are made outside of UTC hours.
 - If this is not possible, a written note must be provided; this should include the date, time and location of the appointment. Supporting documentation e.g. appointment card, medical appointment letter etc must also be provided. If supporting documentation is not brought into the UTC then the absence may be recorded as unauthorised.
- Ensure your child returns to the UTC immediately after any appointments.
- Ensure holidays are booked outside of term dates.
- Only request leave of absence if it is for an exceptional circumstance.
- Ensure the UTC has updated contact numbers and address details. It is essential that the UTC is kept informed of changes to contact details such as phone numbers and addresses. In cases where we continue to be concerned we may make a 'home visit' or request the police to undertake a 'Safe and Well' welfare visit.

- Actively work with the UTC staff and relevant multi-agency staff to solve any attendance issues as and when they occur.
- Inform the UTC if contact details change. Details can be updated by contacting the UTC office or via the Arbor app.

Student responsibilities

- Aim for 100% attendance and punctuality for registration, lessons and be appropriately prepared for the day (correct dress code and equipment).
- Remain on UTC premises all day and not truant from any lessons.
- Tell a member of staff about any problem or reason that may prevent them from attending the UTC.
- Take responsibility for registering at the main UTC office if they are late or are leaving the UTC site during UTC hours.

UTC responsibilities

- Promote good attendance and reduce absence, including persistent absence, ensure every student has access to full-time education to which they are entitled and differentiate between authorised and unauthorised absence in order to act early to address patterns of absence.
- Contact parents on the first day when a student fails to attend the UTC without providing good reason.
- Take timely action on any problem notified to us and involve appropriate outside agencies in order to support students and their families. This may include a 'home visit' or a request to the police to undertake a 'Safe and Well' welfare visit.
- Keep parents fully informed of their child's attendance/punctuality record.
- Analyse UTC attendance data and secure improvements when they need to be made.

Absence

Any student who is on roll but not present in the UTC must be recorded within one of these categories:

1. Unauthorised absence

This is for those students where no reason has been provided, or whose absence is deemed to be without valid reason.

2. Authorised absence

This is for those students who are away from the UTC for a reason that is deemed to be valid under the Education Act 1996.

3. Approved Educational Activity

Students recorded in this category are deemed to be present for attendance returns purposes.

This covers types of supervised educational activity undertaken off site but with the approval of the UTC.

This would include:

- Work experience placements
- Field trips and educational visits
- Sporting activities
- Link courses or approved education off site

Under the 1996 Education Act parents commit an offence if the child does not attend school regularly. If your child cannot come to the UTC because of illness you should advise the UTC on the first day of absence by email. If no message is received, we will make every effort to contact you (e.g. via telephone call or email)).

Authorised Absence

Some absences are allowed by law to be recorded on the UTC register as 'authorised'; this is for those students who are away from the UTC for a reason that is deemed to be valid under the Education Act 1996. Under the 1996 Education Act, parents commit an offence if their child does not attend UTC regularly. If your child cannot come to UTC because of illness, you should advise the UTC on the first day of absence. If no message is received, we will make every effort to contact you. Where there is persistent illness, parents will be asked to supply medical documentation demonstrating that their child has been seen by a relevant healthcare professional.

Parents are asked to make routine medical and dental appointments outside of UTC hours wherever possible. Where such appointments in UTC time are unavoidable, parents should inform the UTC in advance and submit a copy of the appointment card. The absence will be marked unauthorised if a parent fails to submit the appointment card. If a parent rings the UTC to confirm a student is unwell, the UTC may request supporting evidence; this could be in the form of:

- medical appointment card with one appointment entered
- letter from a professional
- doctor's note
- medication prescribed by a doctor
- copy of prescription
- print screen of medical notes, as well as letters concerning hospital appointments or any other relevant evidence.

The UTC may choose not to authorise absence without this supporting evidence as it is for the UTC to determine if an absence is to be authorised. ***If illness is frequently claimed as a reason for absence then supporting evidence should be provided; see the above bullet points for examples of suitable evidence. If this evidence is not sent in, then the absence will be marked as unauthorised.***

It is a decision for the UTC to decide whether absence is recorded as authorised. Where the UTC is not satisfied with the reason(s) supplied for an absence, this will be recorded as 'unauthorised absence'. Providing evidence listed above will help us to decide if your child's absence is deemed to be for an authorised reason.

We will closely monitor your child's attendance and alert you if we feel there is an issue. The UTC undertakes a range of measures to support students where attendance is an issue. Where we fail to see an improvement in a student's attendance, it may be necessary to make a referral to an appropriate external agency to ensure the student receives the support required. It is important that parents work with the relevant external agency in order to improve their child's attendance.

If your child is experiencing difficulties, you should contact the UTC at an early stage and work with us to resolve any issues. This is nearly always successful. If the difficulties cannot be resolved in this way, the UTC will make a referral to the Local Authority Attendance Team; they will assess the case to determine the appropriateness of use of statutory enforcement procedures e.g. Fixed Penalty Notices, Magistrates Court, seek an Education Supervision Order etc.

Unauthorised Absence

If a child is absent from the UTC for a reason which is not permitted by law, this will be recorded on the UTC register as 'unauthorised absence'. Examples of unauthorised absence are:

- Staying off due to Birthday
- Issues with transport resulting in student being absent
- Going on holiday
- Parental illness
- Family gathering/Visiting family
- Family day out
- Sleeping in and staying off
- Not having dress code

An absence will be recorded as 'unauthorised' when an explanation has not been provided for an absence, or when the UTC is not satisfied with the reason provided. A note from a parent does not automatically mean an absence is authorised; it is down to the UTC to decide if the reason for absence is acceptable and will investigate further where necessary.

Please see the 'authorised absence' section for examples of supporting evidence that help the UTC to decide if an absence should be recorded as authorised.

Reluctant attenders/school refusal

You should do everything possible to ensure your child attends the UTC. However, if the reason for your child's reluctance appears to be school based, such as difficulty with accessing the curriculum or bullying, you should discuss this with us at the earliest opportunity and we will do everything possible to resolve it. Remember that issues like this are rarely solved immediately and can only be solved if you work with us to get your child in to the UTC. Supporting your child's reluctance to attend is likely to make the matter worse.

Holiday/Planned Absence During Term Time

Time off from the UTC for family holidays cannot be authorised. There are strict regulations regarding the holidays during term time issued by the Government. **The Principal is not allowed by law to grant holidays during term time.** Parents have no entitlement to remove their child from education to go on holiday unless there is an exceptional circumstance. The law states:

"Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances"

Any parent who is wishing to remove their child from the UTC for any period of time must write to the Principal at least 4 weeks in advance by using the 'leave of absence form'; this is available from the UTC office and also on the UTC website.

Any leave of absence that has been declined or the parent(s) has not sought approval for will be recorded as unauthorised. These cases will be referred to the Local Authority and a Fixed Penalty Notice could be issued to each parent for each student.

Punctuality

The AM start time for students is 8:30am.

All students must be at the UTC by 9:00, otherwise they will have to sign in at the student reception and will receive a 'late' mark on the register. The AM UTC register closes at 9:50am.

The PM register is taken at the beginning of period 4 (12:10pm) and closes at 13:00.

The UTC registers close at the times stated above or the PM session. This means that a student arriving after the stated register closed times will be marked with an *unauthorised late mark (U code)*, unless there is a good reason (e.g. *emergency* appointment with proof supplied). U codes are unauthorised absences. Any child who arrives after the AM or PM registers close is marked on the register with a code that **DOES NOT** count towards their attendance percentage, whether this is legitimate (e.g. emergency appointment) or not. To prevent your child's attendance percentage being impacted, **please ensure all appointments are booked outside of UTC hours** and your child is present for their am and pm register marks.

Pupils who do not start school

Young people who are allocated places in a school but fail to start are also treated as Children Missing Education. If we have been unable to make contact with you during a ten-day period after the expected arrival, we will refer your child to the Local Authority for further checks.

Leavers

You must inform us in writing if you are planning to remove your child from this UTC to move to another school, other than at normal leaving times. You must give us full information about your plans and reasons for moving, including date of move, new address, the new school your child will attend and start date when known. This is because we have a legal responsibility to ensure that no child goes missing from education. We also need to transfer school information.

Penalty Notices and Prosecution

The Local Authority may issue Penalty Notices, or refer to court for prosecution in line with the national framework where absences were unauthorised and support has been provided but has not worked or been engaged with, or would not have been appropriate in the circumstances of the offence (e.g. an unauthorised holiday in term time).

A Penalty Notice is an out of court settlement which is intended to change behaviour without the need for criminal prosecution. The threshold is 10 sessions of unauthorised absence. This can be made up of a combination of any type of unauthorised absence, all taken within any 10 school week period which may span different terms or school years (e.g. 2 sessions of unauthorised absence in the Summer Term and a further 8 within the Autumn Term).

From the Autumn Term 2024, the Local Authority will only issue 2 penalty notices to the same parent in respect of the same child within a 3 year rolling period and any second notice within that period 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 issued to the same parent in respect of the same pupil is 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 will be taken instead. This will often include considering prosecution.

Further detail about Penalty Notices can be found on the Sunderland Council website.

Staged response for poor attendance and/or punctuality

When attendance or punctuality become a cause for concern, a staged response system is in place to help rectify concerns.

Stage	Reasons for concern	Actions
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attendance concern - A student has been absent for numerous sessions which could mean 95% is not achieved during the academic year. Punctuality concern. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Standard letter emailed to parents to state the punctuality or attendance concern.
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attendance has not improved. Punctuality has not improved. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Second letter emailed to parents regarding the concern. Parents invited to a meeting to discuss concerns with a member of staff and agree an attendance contract.
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No improvement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Serious concern letter advising of referral to LA Attendance Team. Involvement of Local Authority attendance team. Local Authority attendance team could: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Issue a Penalty Notice to each parent in respect of each child Summons each parent to attend the Magistrates Court (a finding of guilty will result in a criminal conviction) in respect of each child. Apply for an Education Supervision Order

Please note: penalty notices and prosecutions outlined in this policy can take place when thresholds are met.

Parents can log into the Arbor app to view their child's attendance data. We also send regular emails (typically weekly) to parents to keep them up to date with regards to their child's current attendance percentage, punctuality and absences (authorised and unauthorised).