The New Walk School *Bespoke support. Brighter futures.*

Attendance Policy

The New Walk School policy framework

Policy	Attendance Policy	**Version**	V1
Issue date	08 May 2026	**Next review**	08 May 2027
Policy owner	Headteacher	**Approved by**	Directors of The New Walk School Ltd

1. About The New Walk School

The New Walk School is an independent specialist day school for pupils aged 7 to 19 who have Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs, autism spectrum conditions, learning difficulties and communication difficulties. The school is located on New Walk in Leicester — a setting with a long-standing association with academic life — and is operated by The New Walk School Ltd, a Company Limited by Guarantee.

The majority of our pupils hold an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) and many have experienced previous educational placements that did not meet their needs. Our offer combines a broad academic curriculum with an in-built therapeutic provision rooted in the PACE model — Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity and Empathy — developed by Dr Dan Hughes. PACE is a relational approach designed to build trust, regulate distress and create the safety from which learning can take place. It informs how every adult in the school speaks to, listens to and works with our pupils.

2. The PACE therapeutic model in practice

Many of our pupils have histories of school refusal, anxiety-based avoidance and emotionally based school non-attendance. PACE shapes our attendance work because no pupil returns to school through pressure alone:

- Playfulness — staff use a light, warm tone to reduce shame and de-escalate distress, using humour appropriate to the pupil and the moment.
- Acceptance — pupils' feelings and inner experiences are accepted unconditionally, even where specific behaviours are not. Acceptance is communicated before any limit is set.
- Curiosity — staff seek to understand the meaning behind a pupil's behaviour rather than reacting to its surface, asking 'what is this telling me?'
- Empathy — staff name and stay with the pupil's emotional experience, communicating that the pupil is not alone with what they feel.

PACE is not a behaviour-management tool layered on top of practice; it is the relational foundation from which all other aspects of the school operate.

3. Statutory framework

This policy is in line with the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (as amended), the DfE's Working Together to Improve School Attendance, and the Education Act 1996.

4. Expectations

The New Walk School expects every pupil to attend every day they are well enough to do so. We treat attendance as a measure of how well the school is meeting the pupil's needs as much as a measure of pupil compliance.

5. Registration

Registers are taken twice daily — at the start of the morning session and at the start of the afternoon session — using DfE attendance codes. Lateness after registers close is recorded as unauthorised absence.

6. Reporting absence

Parents/carers are asked to telephone the school by 9.00am on each day of absence with the reason. The school will make a same-day welfare contact for any pupil whose absence has not been notified, and a follow-up safeguarding contact where necessary.

7. Authorised and unauthorised absence

Absence is authorised where the pupil is genuinely ill, attending a medical appointment that cannot be made out of school hours, observing a religious occasion, or where the Headteacher has agreed leave for an exceptional circumstance. Holidays in term time are not authorised.

8. Persistent and severe absence

A pupil whose attendance falls below 90% is identified as a persistent absentee; below 50% is severely absent. The school works with the pupil and family to understand the cause — emotional, sensory, social, medical or otherwise — and to put in place an attendance support plan with realistic, scaffolded re-engagement steps.

9. Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance (EBSNA)

Where a pupil is unable to attend for emotional reasons, the school does not treat this as truancy. A multi-disciplinary plan is built with the pupil, family, SENCO, therapeutic mentor and (where relevant) external clinicians. Re-engagement is graduated, often beginning with relational contact outside the building, then short, low-demand visits, then increasing time in school.

10. Children missing in education

Where a pupil is absent for ten consecutive school days without explanation, or where there are safeguarding concerns about non-attendance, the school follows the Children Missing Education procedure and notifies the local authority.

11. Working with the local authority

The school works closely with Leicester City Council's attendance and inclusion teams, and with the home local authority of any pupil placed by another council. Penalty notices and prosecution are matters for the local authority; the school provides accurate attendance data and supports families to engage.

12. Roles and responsibilities

- Headteacher — overall responsibility, including statutory returns.
- Attendance lead — daily monitoring, family contact, support plans.
- DSL — safeguarding oversight of all absence.
- Class teachers — daily registers, noticing patterns and feeding back.
- Parents/carers — ensuring attendance and notifying the school of absence.

Monitoring and review

This policy is reviewed annually by the Headteacher in consultation with the senior leadership team and the Directors of The New Walk School Ltd. It will be reviewed earlier where there is a material change in legislation, statutory guidance or the operational needs of the school. The most recent version is held on the school's policy register and is made available to parents, carers and staff on request.

Linked policies and documents

This policy should be read alongside the school's wider policy suite, including: Safeguarding and Child Protection; SEND; Behaviour and Relationships; Anti-Bullying; Equality, Diversity and Inclusion; Health and Safety; Curriculum; and Complaints.