



**Attendance Protocol
Intervention Guidelines
February 9, 2018**

Vision Statement

The Newfoundland and Labrador English School District is an educational leader preparing all students to achieve to their fullest potential in a safe and caring environment.

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Background Information

Students who are at risk of not meeting with academic success require a collective understanding of, and appreciation for, the barriers that may limit their success. It is critical that schools conduct a thorough review of the at-risk student's file to identify these barriers. When the circumstances of an at-risk learner are well understood, the school community is better able to provide appropriate supports and targeted interventions. One of the critical contributors that may limit a student's ability to reach their potential is low attendance.

Research presents compelling evidence to suggest there is a direct link between a student's academic success and school attendance. As children grow older and become more independent, families play a critical role in making sure their children attend school every day.

Vision Statement

The Newfoundland and Labrador English School District is an educational leader preparing all students to achieve to their fullest potential in a safe and caring environment.

Working towards the vision of the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District (NLESD), children need to be actively engaged in learning. Inherently, attending school is a prerequisite to reaching their potential and to progressing sequentially through grade levels. When students are absent from instruction, they begin to lose the foundations of knowledge necessary for future growth and understanding.

If the issue of low attendance is not resolved, there is a disruption in the essential building blocks of learning. As a result, students' abilities to understand the curriculum are negatively impacted. Invariably, students become very frustrated and may be unable to cope in school. According to Statistics Canada, approximately 10 per cent of students withdraw from school before graduation and are left to enter society with inadequate skills only to risk further failure in their attempts to obtain employment in a competitive job market.

The intent of this attendance protocol is to foster educational environments where identification of at-risk learners occurs early in the school year and appropriate measures are established to bridge achievement gaps. In doing so, we are continuing to support a learning culture that is engaging, responsive, and reflective of our vision.

Working towards this vision, along with the mission and core values of NLESD, it is recognized that our collective work is critical to supporting the learning capabilities of each student. Effective September 2016, all schools are required to implement intervention plans for students who are at risk of not meeting academic success.

Student non-attendance or low attendance can be the result of a number of factors. NLESD and its schools first attempt to deal with this issue by using a motivational approach. We seek to establish an environment where students are motivated to attend. However, despite our best

efforts there will be some students who, for various reasons, choose not to attend. The following guidelines are intended to address those students through a series of escalating interventions.

Roles and Responsibilities

Academic success is the collective responsibility of students, teachers, administrators, and parents/guardians. It is our collective responsibility to ensure students attend school and they are actively engaged in learning.

Role of Students

- Students are expected to be present, prepared and responsible for their learning.
- Students should work to the best of their abilities and adhere to the classroom/school Code of Conduct.

Role of Teachers

- Teachers are responsible for creating a welcoming and supportive classroom environment.
- Teachers are responsible for accurately recording student attendance in PowerSchool.
- Teachers are expected to contact home to discuss student chronic absenteeism.

Role of the School Administration

- School administrators are key instructional leaders who must ensure structures and routines are in place to support student learning and intervention processes as needed.
- School administrators will promote academic rigour and high expectations for all students.
- School administrators will ensure there is a school-wide protocol established and followed to identify, understand and support at-risk students. This process will involve a formalized series of escalating levels of interventions designed to engage all at-risk learners.
- School administrators will establish a school-wide protocol considering all facets of this protocol in dealing with truancy.
- School administrators will ensure a school-based attendance protocol is well communicated to all stakeholders.
- School administrators will review monthly attendance to identify truant students and implement intervention strategies

Role of Parent/Guardians

- Learning is a partnership between the school and the family. It is the parents’/guardians’ responsibility to ensure their children attend school.
- Parents/guardians are to ensure their children are prepared and they are ready to learn to

the best of their capabilities.

- Parents/guardians are asked to communicate with the school when their children are absent using school protocols.
- Parents/guardians should encourage their children to complete missed work.
- Parents/guardians are requested to make every attempt to avoid taking their children on family vacations during school time, especially during formal examination periods.
- In extenuating circumstances whereby students have to miss school, parents/guardians should discuss with school administration.
- Parents/guardians have a responsibility to understand and adhere to the school's attendance protocol.

Role of the District

- The District will work with schools to ensure a school-based attendance protocol is established and well communicated to all stakeholders.
- The District will clearly communicate the guidelines for an attendance protocol to be followed by each school.
- As prescribed by the District protocol and the Schools Act, 1997 the District will support the follow up of truant students.
- District personnel will extract from PowerSchool school monthly attendance reports by the 15th of the following month.

Compulsory Attendees

1. This group is defined in **Section 4(1)** of the **Schools Act, 1997** as referenced in Appendix A.
2. The teacher shall contact the home when students are absent for **3 consecutive days** to determine the reason for the absence.
3. The principal will contact the parents/guardians of any student who misses **5 or more days** in a month for unexcused reasons or if the student has extensive excused absences. See sample letter in Appendix B.
4. The principal will make contact with the parents/guardians of any student who cumulatively misses **15 or more days** in the school year for unexcused reasons or if the student has extensive excused absences. See sample letter in Appendix C.
5. Following contact by the principal as per 3 or 4 above, school personnel who have been assigned the task of tracking the student's attendance will closely monitor the situation and report further absences to the principal.
6. If the absences continue the principal shall:

- Request that the Guidance Counsellor and Educational Psychologist complete a file review.
 - Send a letter to the parents/guardians requesting a meeting (See sample letter in Appendix C). The Guidance Counsellor and Educational Psychologist should also attend the meeting.
 - Establish a course of action for the student's return to school (full time attendance, partial day programming, home tutoring, home schooling, etc.). This may include a letter from the principal to support the family for a medical referral.
 - Provide parents/guardians with meeting minutes outlining the action plan for each party.
7. In accordance with Section 19(2) of the **Schools Act, 1997**, when a principal is satisfied that every effort has been made by the school to return a truant student to schooling, he/she will provide a written report of the situation to the Director of Education his/her designate (See sample letter in Appendix E). The parent/guardian is to be notified in writing of this referral (See sample letter in Appendix F). The context of the letter will depend on the situation.
 8. The Director or his/her designate will send a letter to the parents/guardians. This letter will outline the legal requirements and possible further action (See sample letter in Appendix F). A copy of the letter is to be forwarded to the appropriate Educational Psychologist and the principal.

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Please note: Careful consideration must be given to the circumstances of the truancy before such a letter is sent.

9. If the truancy persists, the director or his/her designate shall report the matter to the police as stated in Section 19(3) of the **Schools Act, 1997** (See sample letter in Appendix G). The parents/guardians are to be notified in writing that the matter has been referred to the police (Copied to G).
10. It is essential that throughout this process an accurate record is kept of all contact with the parents/guardians and that the school fully documents its attempts to resolve issues with the absentee student.

Voluntary Attendees

1. These students fall outside of the parameters set out in **Section 4(1)** of the **Schools Act, 1997** and are not **legally** required to attend school.

2. NLESD requires such students to attend school on a regular basis and will make every attempt to ensure that they do so. However, when a voluntary attendee becomes a truant case, no report will be made to the police since it is not a legal matter. The exception to this is a young offender who has been ordered by the court to attend school regularly. The school will notify the proper authorities when such students breach the court order.
3. When students are unexcused absent for **3 consecutive days, the teacher** shall contact the home to determine the reason for the absence.
4. On a monthly basis, the principal will contact the parents/guardians of any student who misses **5 or more days** for an unexcused reasons or if the student has extensive absenteeism. All such contact is to be fully documented.
5. Following this initial contact by the principal, the school personnel who have been assigned the task of tracking the student's attendance will closely monitor the situation and report further absences to the principal.
6. If the absences continue, the principal shall send a letter to the parents/guardians requesting a meeting (See sample letter in Appendix B). The Guidance Counsellor may also attend the meeting.

Procedures for Dealing with Truant Students

When faced with a truancy issue, a file review that should be conducted by a Guidance Counsellor and the Educational Psychologist.

In reviewing a profile of a truant student, here are some guiding questions to reflect on:

- What is the attendance history?
- What are the family circumstances?
- What are the student's grades?
- Do we have to review any completed educational assessments? New ones?
- Are there any student misbehaviours?
- Has something occurred in the school environment to generate fear, anxiety, or embarrassment in the student?
- Is the student involved in extra-curricular activities?

Checklist: Escalating Levels of intervention for Truant Students

Student Name: _____

Action taken	Date	Notes
Teacher recognizes an absenteeism issue		
Teacher has a conversation with the student if applicable		
Teacher calls home to discuss unexcused absences or extensive absenteeism with parents/guardians		
Teacher refers the issue to the principal or designate		
Principal or designate may discuss further with student and / or a call is made home		
For any student who has 5 or more unexcused absences in a month, the Principal writes a letter (Appendix B) to the parents/guardians		
For any student who misses 15 or more cumulative unexcused absences the Principal writes a letter (Appendix C) to the parents/guardians		
File review of truant student conducted by Guidance Counsellor/Educational Psychologist		
For any student who misses 20 or more cumulative unexcused absences the Principal writes a letter (Appendix D) to the parents/guardians		
Principal and team meet with the parents and student to develop a course of action for the student's return to school. Principal may write a letter of support for the family for a medical referral or, if necessary, the Principal writes a letter to the Director/designate (Appendix E)		
Director writes a letter to the parents/guardians Cc: Principal (Appendix F)		
Director writes a letter to the police (Appendix G) Cc: Parents/guardians and principal		

Appendix A

Schools Act, 1997:

School attendance in Newfoundland and Labrador is governed by the **Schools Act, 1997**. **Section 4(1)** of the **Schools Act, 1997** reads as follows:

- ➡ A person who
- (a) is entitled under subsection 3(1) to an education program in a school year;
 - (b) on December 31 in a school year is 6 years of age or older; and
 - (c) on September 1 in a school year is younger than 16 years of age
- shall attend a school for the entire school year.

➡ **Section 19(1)** of the **Schools Act, 1997** reads as follows:

A teacher, principal and director shall make every reasonable effort to secure the regular attendance of students at school.

➡ **Section 16** of the **Schools Act, 1997** reads as follows:

A parent shall ensure that his or her child attends school unless the child is excused from attendance under this Act.

1. Students are expected to attend school unless excused from attending for a valid reason. Valid reasons for missing school are defined in **Section 5** of the **Schools Act, 1997**, **which** reads as follows:

➡ Notwithstanding **Section 4**, a student is excused from attending a school where the student,

- (a) is unable to attend school by reason of illness or other unavoidable cause and the teacher is advised of it, but the principal may require that the illness be certified by a medical practitioner;
- (b) has been expelled or suspended from school under the Act;
- (c) with the prior written approval of the director, is under instruction satisfactory to the director, at home or elsewhere, for a period specified by the director;
- (d) has the written permission of the principal to be absent from school for a reasonable period because, in the opinion of the principal and in accordance with the policy of the board, the student will be exposed to other experiences of significant educational and social value;
- (e) is absent for another reason that in the opinion of the principal does not constitute neglect or refusal to attend school under this Act; or
- (f) has successfully completed the requirements for senior high school graduation.

The NLESD excuses students from attending school only for a reason that can be granted under a subsection of Section 5 of the **Schools Act, 1997**.

2. Schools must keep a record of student attendance and whenever a student is absent the school must ascertain the reason.
3. When it becomes apparent that a student is missing an inordinate amount of time for questionable or unexcused reasons, the procedures to be followed are partially dependent upon the age of the student. There are two categories of students to be considered. The first category (compulsory attendees) includes students who are legally required to attend school according to the **Schools Act, 1997**. The second (voluntary attendees) includes students who are not legally required to attend school.

Appendix B

SAMPLE LETTER #1 INFORMING PARENTS OF ABSENTEEISM (5 or more unexcused absences in one month)

November 16, 2016

Dear Parents/Guardians of:

A review of your child's attendance indicates name _____ has missed _____ days/ classes to date.

Students who are supported by their homes and attend a safe and caring school environment are most likely to succeed in school. Attendance is directly tied to achievement and we want to ensure each student performs to his or her potential. Regular, consistent attendance is extremely important. Students who miss time in school, even for legitimate reasons,

- may experience gaps in their learning
- may be less confident to participate in class
- may struggle to complete assigned work
- may not be well connected to a peer group
- may not develop important skills necessary for later in life

If there are any issues you feel we may be able to assist you or your child with please do not hesitate to contact us. Otherwise, we anticipate that John will attend school regularly.

Sincerely,

John Doe
Principal

Appendix C

SAMPLE LETTER #2 INFORMING PARENTS OF ABSENTEEISM AND REQUESTING MEETING (15 days cumulative unexcused absences)

November 12, 2016

Mr. and Mrs. Smith
P. O. Box 22
Somewhere, NL
A0E 2K0

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Smith:

This is written, further to my correspondence of October 15, 2016 regarding John's absenteeism from school.

Based on our attendance records, John's absenteeism continues to be a major concern.

To date, he has a total of 15 unexcused absences. It is very concerning for a student to miss 15 days of school and we are fearful it will impact John's success this year.

The guidance counsellor and I would like to meet with you and John this Thursday afternoon at 3 o'clock to discuss this matter. If this time is not convenient for you, please contact this office prior to the appointed time to make alternate arrangements.

Sincerely,

John Doe
Principal

Appendix D

SAMPLE LETTER #3 INFORMING PARENTS OF ABSENTEEISM AND REQUIREMENT TO ATTEND A MEETING

December 13, 2016

Mr. and Ms. Smith
1 Hillburst Street
Mount Pearl, NL
A1N 4N6

Parents/Guardians:

Further to my correspondence of October 15 and November 12, and our meeting on November 20, 2016. Attempts by school personnel have been unsuccessful in reaching a positive resolution to John's poor attendance. To date, John has 25 unexcused absences.

As a result, I am preparing to refer your case to the Director of Education. To resolve this matter of John's absence from school, I am requesting that our Guidance Counsellor and the Educational Psychologist for ABC Academy, Ms. Jane Doe, meet with you as soon as possible to offer assistance.

If this meeting does not result in John returning to school, I shall have no recourse but to refer this matter to the Director of Education requesting that he engage the police to proceed with action under Section 17 of the **Schools Act, 1997**, which reads as follows:

- 17(1)** A parent who neglects or refuses to enroll his or her child in school or does not make every reasonable effort to ensure that his or her child attends school is guilty of an offence.
- (2)** A person who by threat, intimidation or otherwise prevents or attempts to prevent the attendance of a child at school is guilty of an offence.
- (3)** A conviction under this section does not bar further prosecution for the continued contravention of this section and each day's continued contravention shall constitute a separate offence.
- (4)** A person who is guilty of an offence under this section is liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding \$500 or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 3 months or to both a fine and imprisonment.

I wish to impress upon you the importance of ensuring that _____ is attending school on a regular basis from this time forward. Thus, I am requiring that you **contact the school by Monday, December 16 to set up a meeting** with Ms. Doe and school personnel to work out a plan for _____'s return.

As always, we are very willing to use our school and district resources to help in any reasonable manner. However, if contact is not made with the school to set up the meeting and the unexcused absenteeism continues I will proceed with a referral to the Director to engage the police for actions that are appropriate under the above mentioned **Schools Act, 1997**.

Sincerely,

Principal
Copy / Student File

Appendix E

SAMPLE SCHOOL REFERRAL TO DIRECTOR/DESIGNATE

January 12, 2017

Mr. /Mrs. Director or SEO
Newfoundland and Labrador English School District
Suite 601, Atlantic Place
215 Water Street
St. John's, NL
A1C 6C9

Dear Director or SEO:

I am forwarding the name of John Smith, a Grade 6 student at School X, to your attention in relation to Section 19(2) of the **Schools Act, 1997**. John has missed a total of 56 days so far this year for unexcused reasons.

Outline the details of the school's actions and include a timeline (which the Director will need)
For example...

As background to provide context for situation with John....

The school has engaged extensively with John's family to encourage his attendance at school but we have not been successful. John has a history of school absenteeism that dates back to Kindergarten and ranges 23-43 days per year through the primary/elementary grades. Last year in grade __, the absenteeism continued and during the period April 22, 2016 to school closing on June 24, Student's name attended for 0.5 days. Thus far this year student has ...

- *What else has occurred?*
- *Dates of contact with home/parent*
- *Dates of letters sent to parent*
- *Dates, attendees and outcomes of any meetings that have occurred*

I have attached copies of correspondence that was sent home.

Since three more weeks have gone by and John has not returned to school, I am requesting that you refer this matter, under Section 19(3) of the **Schools Act, 1997**, to the appropriate authorities for further investigation and possible legal action.

Required contact information:

- Name of student
- Date of birth of student
- Parent/guardian student resides with
- Name of parent(s), based on legal documents on file at the school
- Address of parent(s), if both are legal guardians; addresses if separate residences
- Phone number(s) of parent(s)
- In the case of the RCMP; location of nearest detachment and the Name of Sergeant in charge

Sincerely,

John Doe
Principal
Copy Student File

Appendix F
SAMPLE LETTER FROM DIRECTOR/DESIGNATE TO PARENTS

January 18, 2017

Mr. and Mrs. Smith
P. O. Box 22
Somewhere, NL
A0E 2K0

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Smith:

It has come to my attention that your son John has missed approximately 70 days of instructional time this year for unexcused reasons. This is a substantial loss of instructional time that will impact John's ability to be successful this year.

Although school and district personnel met with you on December 16th to develop a plan for John to return to school, that attempt appears to have been unsuccessful in reaching a positive resolution to this problem. As a result, the school has referred your case to my attention. Since Ms. Doe, one of our Educational Psychologists, already met with you and put forth a plan for John's return, I have no recourse but to refer this matter to the police under Section 17 of the **Schools Act, 1997**, which reads as follows:

17. (1) A parent who neglects or refuses to enroll his or her child in school or does not make every reasonable effort to ensure that his or her child attends school is guilty of an offence.
- (2) A person who by threat, intimidation or otherwise prevents or attempts to prevent the attendance of a child at school is guilty of an offence.
- (3) A conviction under this section does not bar further prosecution for the continued contravention of this section and each day's continued contravention shall constitute a separate offence.
- (4) A person who is guilty of an offence under this section is liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding \$500 or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 3 months or to both a fine and imprisonment.

I wish to impress upon you the importance of ensuring that John is in regular attendance at school from this time forward. Please contact my office, or have the school do so, by **January 20th** to confirm that John is attending. Otherwise, I will proceed with a referral to the police for actions that are appropriate under the above mentioned **Schools Act, 1997**.

Sincerely yours,

Director or Designate
Copy Parent/Guardian
Copy School Principal
Copy Student File

Appendix G

SAMPLE LETTER OF REFERRAL TO POLICE

November 30, 2016

Sgt. Sam Spade
Police
P. O. Box 100
Somewhere, NL
AOE 2K0

Dear Sgt. Spade:

The Newfoundland and Labrador English School District requests your assistance in a case of chronic student absenteeism at our school in Somewhere. We refer this case to your attention in accordance with Sections 4, 16, 17 and 19 of the **Schools Act, 1997**, which reads as follows:

4. (1) A person who
 - (b) on December 31 in a school year is 6 years of age or older; and
 - (c) on September 1 in a school year is younger than 16 years of ageshall attend a school for the entire school year.
16. A parent shall ensure that his or her child attends school unless the child is excused from attendance under this Act.
17. (1) A parent who neglects or refuses to enroll his or her child in school or does not make every reasonable effort to ensure that his or her child attends school is guilty of an offence.
 - (3) A conviction under this section does not bar further prosecution for the continued contravention of this section and each day's continued contravention shall constitute a separate offence.
 - (4) A person who is guilty of an offence under this section is liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding \$500 or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 3 months or to both a fine and imprisonment.

19. (2) A principal who

- (a) is satisfied that every reasonable effort has been made to have a student who has been absent from school return to regular attendance at school; and
- (b) believes reasonably that the absence of a student constitutes a breach of this Act, shall give a written report of the situation to the director.

(3) Where the director receives a report under subsection (2) and is satisfied that every reasonable effort has been made to have the student return to regular attendance and these efforts have been unsuccessful he or she shall refer that matter for investigation to the nearest detachment of the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary or of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

The student in question is John Smith, whose date of birth is March 1, 1997 (11 years old). The parents are Mr. and Mrs. Joe Smith who reside at 22 Nowhere Street, Somewhere, NL. Their telephone number is 709-123-4567.

All attempts by the school and our District office have failed to resolve this matter. We have involved our teachers, administrators, guidance counsellor and educational psychologist without success. It is therefore with great disappointment that we refer this case to your attention.

(Outline school and district's response to date based on the information the principal provided in his/her letter)

If you have any questions regarding this matter, or if we can be of further assistance, please contact us at your convenience.

Sincerely yours,

Director or Designate

Copy to Parents/Guardians
Copy to School Principal
Copy Student File