



Newton International School Lagoon

Secondary (Middle & Upper School)

Attendance and Punctuality Policy

2026–2027

Last Reviewed: 18 June 2026 | **Reviewed By:** Hugo Pedro Queiros (Deputy Head of Pastoral) | **Next Review:** June 2027

Policy Alignment: NISL Flourishing Framework | Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy | MOEHE Guidelines 2025–26

1. Purpose and Vision

Attendance as a Condition for Flourishing

At Newton International School Lagoon, we believe that pupils flourish when they feel safe, known, supported and connected to a strong school community. Regular, purposeful attendance is not simply a compliance requirement — it is a prerequisite for the belonging, engagement and learning through which character is formed and academic excellence is achieved.

This policy establishes the shared expectations, structures and procedures that enable pupils to attend school regularly, arrive prepared to learn, and access the full opportunities of school life. It reflects the values set out in the NISL Flourishing Framework and is aligned with the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, recognising that attendance and welfare are deeply interconnected.

The school is committed to combining high expectations with strong pastoral support. Persistent absence is understood both as a barrier to learning and as a potential indicator of wider wellbeing or safeguarding concerns. The school therefore responds to attendance with the same graduated, relational and developmental approach that underpins all aspects of pupil support at NISL.

This policy should be read alongside the NISL Flourishing Framework, the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, and the MOEHE Student Protection and Care Policy (2025–26).

2. Aims

- To ensure that all members of the school community understand their shared responsibilities in supporting regular and punctual attendance.
- To maintain high standards of attendance and punctuality, recognising the strong correlation between consistent school presence and academic progress, personal development and wellbeing.
- To respond early and proactively when attendance concerns emerge, using a graduated approach that combines support with appropriate accountability.

- To safeguard pupil welfare by recognising that patterns of absence, persistent lateness or unexplained non-attendance may indicate a pupil in need of additional support or intervention.
- To build strong, transparent and supportive partnerships with families, recognising that regular attendance requires commitment and collaboration from all stakeholders.
- To ensure full compliance with MOEHE guidelines and the statutory requirements of the State of Qatar governing pupil attendance and welfare.

3. Expectations

3.1 Attendance Requirements

The school year consists of approximately 180 taught days. Pupils are expected to attend school every day and to arrive on time, prepared and ready to learn. The following minimum expectations apply:

- **Minimum attendance:** 90% of all school days (162 days minimum)
- **Maximum absences:** No more than 18 days per academic year
- **Registration window:** 7:00 am – 7:10 am daily
- **Lateness equivalence (MOEHE):** 3 late arrivals = 1 day's absence
- **Placement at risk:** Pupils exceeding 18 days may not be offered a place for the following academic year

Pupils who exceed 18 days of absence may have their placement for the following academic year reviewed. Families are strongly encouraged to schedule holidays, medical appointments and personal commitments during the 185 non-school days available each year.

3.2 Punctuality

Punctuality is an expression of respect for learning and for the school community. Being fifteen minutes late to school each day is equivalent to missing two full weeks of school per year. Pupils who arrive late miss registration, morning routines and the relational warmth of a settled classroom start — all of which contribute to the sense of belonging that supports flourishing. Traffic delays may be considered for isolated incidents but will not be accepted as justification for habitual lateness.

4. Rights and Responsibilities

Attendance is a shared responsibility. Pupils, families and staff each play an essential role in creating and sustaining a culture of regular, purposeful presence.

4.1 Pupils

- Attend school every day and arrive on time, prepared and ready to learn.
- Take increasing responsibility for their own punctuality and engagement, particularly in Upper School.
- Report to reception promptly if arriving late and collect a late slip for class entry.
- Speak with their tutor or a trusted member of pastoral staff if experiencing difficulties that are affecting their attendance or engagement.

4.2 Parents and Families

- Ensure their child attends school every day and arrives on time, ready to learn.
- Contact the school by 8:15 am on the first day of any absence and on each subsequent day, providing a clear reason.

- Provide medical documentation or supporting evidence on the pupil's return following illness or appointment.
- Avoid scheduling medical, dental or personal appointments during the school day wherever possible.
- Apply in advance for any leave of absence during term time (minimum one week's written notice) using the Request for Student Absence form.
- Engage openly and constructively with the school when attendance or punctuality concerns are raised, recognising that the school's response is rooted in care for their child's wellbeing and progress.

4.3 The School

- Monitor attendance and punctuality daily, responding promptly and consistently to emerging concerns.
- Contact families each morning for absent pupils where no prior notification has been received, in line with safeguarding responsibilities.
- Provide a graduated and relational response to attendance concerns, combining early support with clear accountability at every stage.
- Report attendance data on all end-of-term reports and recognise excellent attendance, effort and improvement across the school community.
- Ensure that persistent or unexplained absence triggers a welfare review in line with safeguarding responsibilities.

5. Authorised and Unauthorised Absences

All absences are recorded in the school register and reflected in end-of-term reports. The school applies the following framework in determining whether an absence is authorised or unauthorised.

Authorised absences include:

- Illness supported by medical documentation
- Medical or dental appointments with evidence
- Religious observance (e.g. Hajj) — written request required in advance
- Genuine family emergencies
- Leave of absence approved in advance by the Principal

Unauthorised absences include:

- Minor illness without medical documentation
- Family holidays or trips not approved in advance
- Caring for a sibling or completing household duties
- Birthday celebrations or personal events
- Avoidance due to unhappiness, anxiety or unresolved conflict

Where absence is driven by anxiety, emotional difficulty or avoidance, the school's response will prioritise pastoral support and early intervention over sanction. Families are encouraged to contact the school honestly and promptly so that appropriate support can be put in place.

6. Registration Procedures

Registration opens at 7:00 am and closes at 7:10 am. Pupils who arrive after 7:10 am without prior notification from a parent or carer will be marked absent. All late arrivals must report to reception,

where a late slip will be issued for class entry. Receptionists record late arrivals between 7:10 am and 7:40 am at designated school entrances. Pupils arriving after 7:40 am must sign in at reception.

6.1 Lateness to Lessons During the School Day

Pupils are expected to move between lessons promptly. Where a pupil has not arrived within five minutes of a lesson starting, the teacher will record an **L code** (late). Arrival more than ten minutes after the lesson start will be recorded as a **B code** (internal truancy) unless the pupil can provide a satisfactory explanation.

6.2 Out-of-Class Procedures

Pupils leaving the classroom during a lesson must carry a signed pass indicating the time of departure. Teachers limit passes to one pupil at a time and should avoid issuing passes during the final fifteen minutes of a lesson. Discrepancies between stated purpose and time away may result in a late or truancy code being applied.

7. Illness and Daily Absence Communication

When a pupil is absent, parents are asked to contact the school by telephone before 8:15 am on each day of absence. Timely communication is essential not only for the administration of attendance records but as a fundamental safeguarding responsibility — the school must know where every pupil is.

- Where no contact has been received, the school will attempt to reach parents by 8:15 am each morning.
- Following three consecutive days of unexplained absence without contact, a welfare check will be initiated.
- Medical documentation must be provided on the pupil's return following any illness-related absence.
- Pupils absent for extended periods may be referred to the school counsellor or pastoral team upon return to support successful reintegration.

8. Leave of Absence and Term-Time Requests

8.1 Exceptional Leave During Term Time

Leave during term time is strongly discouraged. Where families request absence for exceptional circumstances, a written request must be submitted to the school office a minimum of one week in advance, using the Request for Student Absence form. Leave is granted solely at the Principal's discretion, assessed case by case. Holidays booked during term time without prior authorisation will be recorded as unauthorised absence and may result in a parent meeting.

8.2 Religious Leave

Written requests for religious leave should be submitted in advance. Where possible, religious observance should be aligned to weekends or school holiday periods. Religious leave will be considered sympathetically and respectfully, in keeping with the school's commitment to Islamic values and cultural respect within the Qatari context.

8.3 Early Release

Early release is only permitted for verified medical appointments for the pupil or genuine family emergencies confirmed with the school office. Parents must report to reception, complete an Early Release form, and provide evidence. Unauthorised early release will result in a full day's absence being recorded.

9. Attendance Support: A Graduated Approach

The NISL Flourishing Framework establishes a graduated approach to pupil support — universal, targeted and intensive. The school applies the same developmental, relational and escalating framework to attendance concerns, combining early support with clear accountability at every stage.

9.1 Universal Support

All pupils are supported through strong classroom practice, positive relationships with trusted adults, and the wider pastoral culture of the school. Regular communication with families, half-termly attendance reports and celebration of excellent attendance are embedded within the universal offer for all pupils.

9.2 Early and Responsive Support

When attendance concerns begin to emerge, staff respond proactively. Early support may include:

- Tutor or pastoral check-ins and welfare conversations with the pupil.
- Early communication with parents and carers.
- Monitoring of attendance data across weekly SIMS and PLT reviews.
- Referral to pastoral or counselling staff where wellbeing concerns are identified.

9.3 Targeted Support and Escalation

Where attendance reaches threshold levels, the school responds in a structured and consistent way:

- **Early Concern (6 unauthorised absences):** Written notification to parents. Tutor check-in. Attendance is being monitored.
- **Moderate Concern (12 unauthorised absences):** Formal attendance letter. Parent communication. Pastoral review and support conversation.
- **High Concern (18+ unauthorised absences):** Placement for the following year at risk. Senior pastoral meeting with family. Welfare review. Potential MOEHE notification.

The same graduated framework applies to punctuality concerns, with written communication to families at the 6, 12 and 18+ late arrival thresholds.

9.4 Intensive and Safeguarding-Led Response

Where a pupil is persistently absent and engagement with the family has not resolved the concern, the school will initiate a welfare review and, where appropriate, a referral to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL). Persistent absenteeism is a recognised indicator that a pupil may be experiencing difficulties that extend beyond school life. In accordance with Article 3.11 of the MOEHE Student Protection and Care Policy (2025–26) and the Compulsory Education Law, the school will notify the Private Schools and Kindergartens Administration where absences are prolonged, unexplained, or indicate a safeguarding concern. All such concerns are logged in CPOMS and reviewed by the DSL.

10. Internal Truancy

Internal truancy refers to a pupil being present in school but absent from — or significantly late to — a scheduled lesson without authorisation. Internal truancy is recorded using a B code in SIMS and is monitored weekly through the PLT and pastoral team. It is understood not simply as a behaviour concern, but as a signal that a pupil may be struggling with relationships, curriculum, wellbeing or safety within school.

The school's response to truancy is graduated and relational:

- Three B codes in a week result in a Behaviour Report Card, to be signed daily by parents for one week.

- Continued truancy during the monitoring period will result in an after-school detention and a formal Behaviour Contract.
- Behaviour Contracts last four weeks and include weekly meetings with the school counsellor.
- Failure to engage with the Behaviour Contract process will result in a formal parental meeting at senior pastoral level.

11. Recognition and Celebration

At NISL, we believe that the culture of a school is shaped not only by what it corrects but also by what it celebrates. The school therefore intentionally recognises excellent attendance and meaningful improvement alongside academic achievement.

- Pupils who achieve 100% attendance in a term are recognised and celebrated.
- Pupils who demonstrate significant improvement in attendance or punctuality are acknowledged through pastoral and whole-school systems.
- Attendance achievements are communicated to families and celebrated through assemblies, reports and the wider life of the school.

12. Attendance and Safeguarding

Attendance monitoring is a safeguarding function as well as an administrative one. The school actively monitors attendance and investigates any instances of pupils missing from education. Repeated absences, unexplained withdrawals or sudden changes in attendance patterns will trigger a welfare review and, where necessary, a referral to the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Absence can sometimes mask or indicate welfare concerns, including domestic difficulty, young carer responsibilities, emotional health difficulties, exploitation, or other safeguarding risks. All staff have a responsibility to raise attendance concerns with the pastoral team or DSL where there is reason to believe that a pupil's safety or welfare may be at risk. All attendance-related safeguarding concerns are logged in CPOMS and reviewed by the DSL in line with the NISL Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

13. Attendance Documentation

13.1 Request for Student Absence

Extended or frequent absences are strongly discouraged. Regular attendance is essential for your child's learning, wellbeing and belonging at school. Please consult this policy before submitting a request. All absences are recorded in the school register and reflected in end-of-term reports.

- **Section 1 — Student Information:** Student Name(s) | Class
- **Section 2 — Absence Details:** Reason for Absence | Number of School Days to be Missed | Start Date | Expected Return Date
- **Section 3 — Parent / Guardian Declaration:** Parent / Guardian Name | Signature | Date
- **Section 4 — School Use Only:** Comments | Principal's Signature | Date

13.2 Early Release Slip

Early release is only permitted for verified medical appointments or genuine family emergencies. Departure without valid justification will result in a full day's absence being recorded.

- Student Name(s) | Class | Reason for Early Release | Time of Early Release | Lessons Missed | Parent / Guardian Name | Signature | Date

14. Policy Alignment

This policy forms part of the NISL suite of policies rooted in the NISL Flourishing Framework. It should be read in conjunction with:

- NISL Flourishing Framework (Character, Conduct and Behaviour for Learning)
- NISL Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy (June 2026)
- Secondary Behaviour for Learning Policy
- SEND and Inclusion Policy
- NISL SEMH and Wellbeing Policy
- MOEHE Student Protection and Care Policy (2025–26)

NISL Pastoral Team | Newton International School Lagoon | Reviewed June 2026 | Next Review: June 2027 | Aligned to the NISL Flourishing Framework