



**Woodlawn Primary School**

# **Attendance Policy**

**Designed: May 2021**

**Ratified: June 2021**

**Reviewed and Updated: June 2024**

## **Rationale**

Schools in this area are committed to ensuring that children and young people achieve in school and thrive as individuals.

A high level of pupil attendance at school is crucial for the success and well-being of pupils. To manage attendance reflects the school's commitment to pupils' pastoral care and their academic success.

Department of Education NI Circular 2015/02 entitled "Attendance Guidance and Absence Recording by School" highlights the responsibilities of Boards of Governors of all schools regarding pupil attendance.

The Department of Education's guidelines define 95% attendance as satisfactory attendance only.

### **Benefits of consistent attendance at school**

- Consistent learning and development of key skills
- Consistent development of social skills and maintaining friendships
- Forming regular habits and routines
- Developing the life skill of punctuality and good time management
- Reducing the risk of dangerous behaviour
- Improving readiness for employment

## **Aims**

We hope to achieve the following aims:

1. Pupils, parents and staff will strive for high attendance.
2. Our overall pupil attendance will be a minimum of 95%.
3. Punctuality, in particular, will be of a high standard.
4. Pupils being removed from school for appointments during the school will be minimal.
5. Parents will not plan holidays for their families during periods when school is in session.
6. Pupils' attainment will be increased.
7. Pupils being tracked for poor attendance will show prolonged improvement.
8. Referrals to outside agencies will be extremely low.

## **Values and Mission Statement**

Consistent attendance helps:

- Children and young people to succeed in school
- Children and young people to be learners and thinkers
- Nurture children and young people's well-being

Schools will:

- Work with parents and support healthy families
- Recognise our need to work with other key professionals when families require support.
- Work together to invest in education for the good of the whole community.

## **Attendance Expectations**

### **School**

The Principal is responsible for the overall management of the school's attendance policy and procedures. This work is supported via the work of the school office. Classroom teachers have a pivotal role to play in this aspect of the school's work. The teachers are working with pupils and have a more holistic view of the issues facing each pupil in their care. There must be clear communication and cooperation between the administrative staff and the teachers.

### **Parents**

Parents must accept their responsibilities to ensure pupils' attendance is high. Parents have a pastoral and legal duty to make sure their children attend school. If parents fail to meet their obligations, it will have a profound impact on their children's education and future opportunities.

Parents should communicate with the school if there are reasons why it becomes difficult for their child to attend school consistently. This enables the school to meet the pastoral care needs of the pupil and help families access external support if required.

School recognises that there are often demands on families which present challenges to punctuality and attendance. We want to work with parents to ensure families access supports available to help with these demands as relevant.

If a parent is failing to meet their responsibilities the school is obliged to intervene. Failure to send a pupil to school regularly is a reason for the involvement of outside agencies, possible legal action and in the most extreme situations, an investigation into potential neglect and/or abuse.

### **What is expected of parents?**

All parents should:

- Communicate to their children how important school is and the need to attend.
- Contact school before 9.30am on first day of absence (either via phone or SeeSaw)
- Have good routines in place to encourage punctuality.
- Make dental or medical appointments outside of the school day.
- Plan holidays away during school holidays only.

- Only keep pupils off when necessary and return them as soon as possible.
- Cooperate fully when a pupil is placed on an attendance intervention e.g. phoning school when requested and returning letters promptly.

### **What is expected of the teachers?**

All teachers should:

- Mark absences and lateness with details accurately in Sims.
- Store notes from parents concerning attendance.
- Communicate any concerns about attendance to the teacher with responsibility for attendance.
- In consultation with the attendance teacher decide if an intervention is required for pupils with attendance below 90%. There may be very genuine reasons why a pupil is off and no intervention is required e.g. an extended period in hospital or an ongoing illness. In these cases, the pupil will be awarded an exemption.
- If an exemption is awarded parents may be contacted for pastoral support
- Maintain and support interventions for targeted pupils.
- Assess and share information with parents related to attendance and punctuality.
- Collaborate with outside agencies when required e.g. the E.W.O. etc.
- Support whole school approaches to promote high attendance.

### **What is expected of the office staff?**

The office staff should:

- Produce a monthly list of individual attendance.
- If deemed necessary, help administer and record the attendance protocols. This may involve writing letters and phoning parents, arranging interviews with parents, liaising with the Educational Welfare Officer (E.W.O.) and securely storing all this information.
- Maintain a database of pupils with low attendance to track their progress.
- Respond to teachers' requests to ring parents to check why they are not in school.
- Record and communicate parents' messages to teachers concerning attendance.

### **What is expected of the Principal and teacher with responsibility for attendance?**

The Principal and above teacher should:

- Set high standards and expectations for attendance.
- Implement and monitor the school's attendance policy and procedures.
- With SLT update and review the policy and procedures as required.
- Provide training and support for staff to implement the policy and procedures.
- Carry out a monthly evaluation of attendance patterns and decide upon actions required.
- Liaise with parents, staff and outside agencies as required.
- Report to the Governors a minimum of once per term on pupils' attendance.

### **Authorised Absences**

Absences can only be authorised if judged to be reasonable at the discretion of the Principal.

## Proactive Promotion of Attendance

Our approach is first positive and proactive. Our aim is to create a culture of high expectations in which all pupils are aspiring for 100% attendance. We strive to achieve this through:

- School holidays are published well in advance and circulated regularly to help to reduce holidays being taken during the school year.
- Class teachers will create an expectation of punctuality and attendance.
- The pupils' annual reports are used to stress the high level of attendance required for success.
- Each June we reward those who achieve 100% attendance with a 100% Certificate. This is presented in a special assembly and is stressed as a great achievement.
- Monthly Attendance is displayed in the corridor outside the Assembly Hall
- Monthly awards in assembly to celebrate best attendance (P1-3) and (P4-7)
- Attendance reminders to parents at class induction, Tuesday Cheer Up and in notes home.

## Protocols to Support improvements in Attendance

If pupil attendance is not consistent we have a rigorous four-stage protocol to support improvement.

This protocol applies to pupils with attendance below 90%.

Our four-stage protocol has a clear progression if increased intervention is required. The principal and teachers have some freedom to make a professional judgment if a pupil needs to move up a stage.

If a pupil is being tracked and their attendance is improving (but still below 90%) their progress through the stages will be halted. For example, if a pupil at 'Stage 1' of the process has 87% attendance and in the following month it increases to 88% they do not move to 'Stage 2'. Their progress will be tracked, however, to ensure the progress is maintained.

Pupils will only 'exit' the procedure if their attendance rises to 90% and remains there for a minimum of two months.

Stage	Details	Actions
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'Exemption'	A pupil has attendance below 85% but there is a significant medical or pastoral reason.	The pupil's attendance will be tracked*. Under 'Stage' it will be recorded as 'Exempt.' The parent may be called. The purpose of the call will be to offer support and provide them with an update of their child's attendance.
Stage 1	For the first month the pupil's attendance has fallen below 90%.	The class teacher will phone the parent to inform them that their child's attendance is below 90%. The teacher will encourage them to try to increase their child's attendance. The teacher will also indicate that their child's attendance will be monitored until it goes above 90%.
Stage 2	For the second consecutive month the pupil's attendance has been below 90% 1. with no improvement 2. with improvement	1. with no improvement. A letter will be sent to the parent. It will inform them that their child's attendance has been for the second time during the school year below 90% without improvement. 2. With improvement. A second letter will be sent out noting the improvement, thanking the parent and encouraging them to continue with improved attendance.
Stage 3	For the third consecutive month the pupil's attendance has been below 90%.	A second letter will be sent to the parent. It will inform them that their child's attendance has been for the third time during the school year below 90%. The letter will ask the parent to ring the office to arrange an interview with the principal. During the interview the principal will stress the very serious situation that the pupil's attendance is presenting. The principal will give the parents time to respond to the concerns and to provide other information that may be relevant. It will be explained that if attendance does not improve in the coming month then an educational welfare referral may be submitted. The purpose of this referral will be to support the pupil and the family to improve the situation. The tracking and recording processes will continue as outlined in Stage 2.
Stage 4	On the fourth consecutive month the pupil's attendance has been below 90%.	A fourth letter will be sent to the parent. It will inform them that their child's attendance has been for the fourth time during the school year below 90%. The letter will explain that a referral has been made to educational welfare.

## Assessment & Reporting

Attendance will be reported on each pupil's annual report.

Attendance will be included in staff induction.

Governors will be updated about attendance levels once per term.

### **Review cycle of policy**

The Attendance Policy will be reviewed and if required updated every three years. This process will involve a staff and governor consultation.

Staff will be issued with a hard copy of the new policy and scheme after its approval. An electronic version will be stored at Staff/Policies/Attendance