

Lissan Primary School



ATTENDANCE POLICY

"Together we learn, grow and play in God's love and care."

Attendance Policy

Attendance is one of the biggest indicators of school success. By attending school regularly your child can take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them by law.

Children who are absent from school frequently develop large gaps in their learning which will impact on their progress and their ability to reach their true potential. A child whose attendance drops to 90% each year will, over their time at primary school, have missed two whole terms of learning (see appendix 1 for further break downs of % attendance).

Our policy applies to all children registered at this school and is made available to all parents/carers of pupils who are registered at our school on our school website <https://www.lissanps.com> and from the school office at any time.

This policy has been written to adhere to the relevant parts of the Education & Libraries Order 1986, Children's Order 1995, Regulations and Guidance from the Department for Education in addition to guidance from the Local Authority.

Although parents/carers have the legal responsibility for ensuring their child's good attendance, the Principal and Governors in our school work in partnership with other professionals and agencies to support pupils to develop good attendance habits. Procedures in this policy are followed to ensure this happens.

Aims & Objectives

This attendance policy seeks to ensure that all staff, governors, parents and pupils know the clear actions required to promote good attendance and how to promptly address poor punctuality and absences.

We promote a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure, and valued, and encourage in pupils a sense of their own responsibility. As a school we aim to create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm and seen to be valued by the school.

In doing so we are mindful that chronic illness or life events may affect attendance temporarily or long term. But otherwise a pupil's attendance should be no less than 95% to reach their potential. Awareness of the importance of

uninterrupted attendance at every stage of a child's life and how absence can quickly add up is vital for your child to succeed.

Definitions

Authorised absence

- An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or carer. For example, if a child has been unwell and the parent telephones the school to explain the absence and a note of explanation provided.
- Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents do not have this authority. Consequently, not all absences supported by parents will be classified as authorised.

Unauthorised absence

- An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the school.
- Therefore, the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent.

Procedures

To support good attendance our school will comply with the following measures:

- To maintain appropriate registration processes.
 - To maintain appropriate attendance data.
 - To communicate clearly the attendance procedures and expectations to all staff, governors, parents and pupils.
 - To have consistent and systematic daily records which give detail of any absence and lateness.
 - To follow up absences and persistent lateness if parents/carers have not communicated with the school.
 - Attendance falls below 95% - class teacher to investigate/monitor.
 - Attendance is between 90% and 94% - inform principal
 - Attendance is between 85% and 89% - send a '1st letter' home to parents.
 - or arrange a 'pre-referral' meeting
 - Attendance is below 85% - refer to Principal to make a referral to the EWO and send a 2nd letter home.
 - To strongly discourage unnecessary absence through holidays taken during term time.
 - To work with parents to improve individual pupil attendance and punctuality
 - To refer to the Educational Welfare Service any child whose attendance causes concern and where parents/carers have not responded to school initiatives to improve.
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- To report attendance statistics to Education Authority and Department of Education when requested.
- All staff should be aware that they must raise any attendance or punctuality concerns to those responsible for monitoring attendance.
- Establish a pattern of monitoring attendance and ensure consistency in recognising achievement and dealing with difficulties.
- Recognise the key role of all staff, but especially class teachers, in promoting good attendance.
- Holiday lists for the next academic year communicated to parents at the school's earliest convenience.
 - To enable our school to accurately record and monitor attendance in a consistent way we will adhere to the guidance provided in the Department of Education Circular 2015/02, which can be found at the following link:

<http://www.deni.gov.uk/index/support-and-development-2/school-attendance/recording-pupil-absences.htm>

Responsibilities

All members of school staff have a responsibility for identifying trends in attendance and punctuality. The following includes a more specific list of the kinds of responsibilities which individuals have.

Class teachers are responsible for:

- Keeping an overview of class and individual attendance looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/ or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/ carers
- Informing relevant staff where there are concerns and acting upon them by providing background information to support referrals
- Monitoring follow-up once actions have been taken to correct attendance concerns
- Emphasising with their class the importance of good attendance and promptness
- Following up absences with immediate requests for explanation which should be noted inside the register
- Discussing attendance issues with parents when required

Principal is responsible for:

- Overall monitoring of school attendance
- Trends in authorised and unauthorised absence
- Contacting families where concerns are raised about absence including arranging meetings to discuss attendance issues
- Monitoring individual attendance where concerns have been raised
- Sending out standard letters regarding attendance
- Making referrals to the Education Welfare Service
- Providing reports and background information to inform discussion with the school's Education Welfare Officer.
- Liaising with other professionals to determine potential sources of difficulties and reasons for absence.

Staff in the School Office are responsible for:

- Collating and recording registration and attendance information.
- Taking and recording messages from parents regarding absence
- Ensuring the Absence/Late is recorded on SIMS
- Contacting parents of absent children where no contact has been made.
- Recording details of children who arrive late or go home

Parents

Parents/Carers are responsible for:

Ensuring that their child attends school (Article 45(1) of The Education and Libraries (NI) Order 1986)

- That their child attends regularly and punctually unless prevented from doing so by illness.
- Contacting the school office on the first morning of absence.
- As much as possible planning medical appointments around school times. Otherwise informing the school in advance of any medical appointments interrupting their school day. The explanation will enable absence to be recorded as a medical absence however we do require evidence from the doctor or dentist. (Appointment card/letter)
- Talking to the school as soon as possible about any child's reluctance to come to school so that problems can be quickly identified and dealt with.

Pupils (pending age and ability)

The level of a pupil's ability to interact and learn is very much dependent on home routines. Therefore, it is vital that bed routines are stable and appropriate to age. Equally, ensuring the pupil eats a healthy breakfast is very important so that your child has sufficient energy to learn.

The School day:

The school opens for pupils at 8:40am. All pupils should make their way directly to the hall for supervision.

Each class teacher has the responsibility for keeping an accurate record of attendance. Any pupil who is absent must be recorded at the beginning of the morning and afternoon session. The attendance register must be completed by the class teacher - recording attendance in two parts of the school day (pre and post lunch). This is recorded onto SIMS attendance register.

All attendance records are documented using SIMs software, which is supported by the Education Authority. Attendance registers are legal documents, and these must be kept secure and preserved for a period of three years after the date they were last used.

Lateness

Once the school gates are closed at 9.05am and class registration begins, the only way to gain access to the school is by pressing the buzzer on the pedestrian gate. Any pupil who arrives into school after registration, will be marked as late in the attendance record. Records are kept of those pupils who are late, this is documented on the electronic register for each pupil (Attendance code L). Any child who arrives for school later than 10.45a.m. will be marked as having an unauthorised absence for the morning. (Attendance code U).

Children who have attended a dentist or doctor's appointment and subsequently come to school later than 10.45 a.m. will have the absence recorded as a medical absence (Attendance code M) when evidence given.

Children who are persistently late, miss a significant amount of learning, often the most important aspect, as the beginning of the day is where the teacher explains the learning and what each child is expected to achieve.

Where there have been persistent incidents of lateness parents/carers will receive a letter advising them of the concerns and the school will provide opportunities for parents/carers to seek support, advice to address these issues and where applicable a set period of time to improve attendance.

ABSENCES

Parents/carers should contact the school on the first day of their child's absence. When parents/carers notify us of their child's absence it is important that they provide us with details of the reason for their absence.

All absences are recorded as either authorised or unauthorised absences on the computer. It is important that we receive accurate information from parents with reasons for the child's absence. This information is used to determine whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised. The Principal/Class teacher has the responsibility to determine whether absences are authorised or unauthorised.

Where we have not received reasons for a child's absence then we send a letter requesting these details. If this letter is not completed and returned by the specified date, then the absence will be recorded as an unauthorised absence.

Illness

When children have an illness that means they will be away from school long term, the school will do all it can to send material home, so that they can keep up with their school work.

If the absence is likely to continue for an extended period, or be a repetitive absence, the school will contact the support services to see if arrangements can be made for the child to be given some home tuition outside school.

Where over the course of an academic year, a child has repeated periods of illness, the school will write to parents to ask them to provide medical evidence retrospectively and for each future period of illness related absence. This evidence could be a Doctor's note, appointment card or copy of a prescription. We may seek written permission from you for the school to make their own enquiries.

Parental Request for Absence from School for Holiday

Naturally the school discourages holidays during term time due to the impact they have on pupils' learning. Family holidays taken during term time will be categorised as an unauthorised absence.

Addressing Attendance Concerns

Initially concerns about attendance are raised with parents via letters which are sent home. There will be opportunities for the parent/carer to discuss reasons for absence and support to be given by the school with the aim to improve attendance. Where a child's attendance record does not improve over a period then the school has a responsibility to make a referral to the Educational Welfare Service. Parents will be informed in advance of a referral being made to the Education Welfare Service.

The EWS is a statutory service within the Education Authority. They carry out audits of attendance, necessitating absences to be explained by parents to the school. The EWS is governed by the Education and Libraries Order 1986 where by

Every child of compulsory school age shall receive efficient full time education suitable to age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs he may have, either by regular school attendance or otherwise.

The Education Welfare Service (EWS) will conduct a home visit and complete an initial assessment. Subsequent intervention will depend on the individual assessment of each case. Intervention may include a referral to outside agencies to support the pupil and/or family. Additionally, individual pieces of work may be completed with the pupil. The EWS will regularly meet with parents and pupil individually or at meetings until attendance is improved and sustained.

Early intervention is the best way to deal with attendance issues, therefore it is crucial when any of the following signs emerge that you approach the school;

- Refusal to get out of the taxi/car/bus/bed
 - Anxious
 - Scared
 - Feeling overwhelmed socially or academically
 - Low mood/self- esteem.
 - Any complaints about not being able to do the work (at home or school).
 - Friendship issues
 - Anti-social behaviour impacting on school life.
 - Any issue at home can be shared confidentially to enable school to understand any temporary emotional response to this change,
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this may include diagnosis of an illness (mentally or physically), parental separation etc.

By sharing this intervention with the appropriate staff member, it will enable a non-delayed supportive response and help to minimise effect on the pupil's school career.

- Appendix 1: Miss School Miss Out (breakdown of %)
 - Appendix 2: Letter requesting explanation for absence
 - Appendix 3: Letter advising of attendance concern
 - Appendix 4: Letter advising parents of EWS referral
 - Appendix 5: Invitation in to school to discuss attendance
 - Appendix 6: Note requesting to be excused for an appropriate reason
 - Appendix 7: Note explaining absence from school
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Appendix 1

Every Day Counts

Help reach you full potential by raising your attendance.

Did you know that every single day you are absent from school it means a day lost learning.

What does my attendance mean?

100%	0 days missed	Excellent
95%	9 Days absence 1 week & 4 days of learning	Satisfactory
90%	19 Days absence 3 weeks & 4 days of learning missed	Poor
85%	28 days of absence 5 weeks & 3 days of learning missed	Very Poor
80%	38 days of absence 7 weeks and 3 days of learning missed	Unacceptable
75%	46 days of absence 9 weeks & 1 day of learning missed	Unacceptable

Appendix 2

Dear Parent/Guardian,

Date

In line with the school's attendance policy you are expected to explain any absences your child may have during the academic year. The following date/s have been identified as being unexplained:

- e.g. 28.04.19

Therefore, we would request you fill in the form below as soon as possible. If you have any difficulties completing this, then please speak to *your child's class teacher or Mrs McIntyre*, as we would be happy to help.

Thank you for your co-operation with this matter.

Mrs Ciara McIntyre

Principal

XX

Pupils Name: _____

Parents Name: _____

Dates of absence: _____

Reason for absence:

Parent/Guardian's Signature:

Appendix 3

Dear Parent/Guardian,

Date

Re: PUPILS NAME

I am writing to advise that your child's attendance is beginning to cause concern and is affecting his/her chance of reaching their true academic potential.

Currently PUPILS NAME attendance is at _____ %, which, in line with the attendance policy, has triggered parental contact to be made, in the hope any issue affecting attendance may be resolved at the earliest stage. If there is no sustained improvement from the above date, we will have no option but to invite you into the school to discuss further.

For your information I have attached PUPILS NAME attendance record. I would welcome you to contact me if you have any queries or concern about this letter.

Thank you for your co-operation with this matter.

Mrs Ciara McIntyre

Principal

Appendix 4

Dear Parent/Guardian,

Date

Re: PUPILS NAME

Following my last letter regarding PUPILS NAME attendance, I would like to invite you in to school to discuss the impact that his/her absence is having on his/her education. Please contact the school office to make an appointment.

Currently PUPILS NAME attendance is _____ %, which, in line with the attendance policy is unacceptable.

For your information I have attached PUPILS NAME attendance record.

Thank you for your co-operation with this matter.

Mrs Ciara McIntyre

Principal

Appendix 5

Dear Parent/Guardian,

Re: Pupils Name

I am writing to advise that your child's attendance continues to cause concern and is having a detrimental impact on PUPILS NAME education.

At present PUPILS NAME attendance is _____ %, which, in line with the attendance policy, warrants a referral to be made to the Education Welfare Service.

The Education Welfare Officer will be in contact with you shortly.

For your information I have attached PUPILS NAME attendance record. I would welcome you to contact me if you have any queries or concern about this letter.

Thank you for your co-operation with this matter.

Mrs Ciara McIntyre

Principal

Appendix 6

This note should be given to the class teacher or school office in the event of your child needing to be excused from class.

Alternatively, parents can handwrite a note including all of the information on this template.

EXCUSE FROM CLASS **(by parent/guardian only)**

Pupil's Name: _____

Class: _____

Date/Time of proposed absence: _____

The above pupil has an appointment to attend: (Please indicate:
doctor/dentist/hospital/: Or other - Please state)

Parent/Guardian: _____

Dated: _____

Teachers signature _____

