
Strathearn School

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Approved By Board of Governors –

Signed : _____

(Chair of Governors)



Introduction

Regular school attendance is crucial in raising standards in education and ensuring that every child can have full access to the school curriculum and reach their potential. Strathearn School strives to promote an ethos and culture which encourages good attendance and where each pupil will feel valued and secure.

The School aims to establish an inclusive community where all pupils and staff are treated with dignity and respect, regardless of individual differences including culture, race, religion, beliefs, sexual or gender orientation, appearance and personal capability. In such an environment, we believe students will be free to reach their full potential.

Strathearn School adheres to the guidance provided in the Department of Education Circular 2015/02, 'Attendance Guidance and Absence Recording by Schools', which can be found at the following link:

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

Aims of the Attendance Policy

1. To ensure maximum attendance of pupils at Strathearn.
2. To develop a framework that defines roles and responsibilities in relation to attendance.
3. To provide advice, support and guidance to parents/guardians and pupils regarding school attendance.
4. To maintain good relationships with the Education Welfare Service.

Roles within the School

- The **Principal** has overall responsibility for school attendance.
- The **Board of Governors** provides support by reviewing school attendance figures and ensuring that attendance is placed as an agenda item at each meeting.
- The **Vice Principal Pastoral** has oversight of attendance issues on a day to day basis, liaising with administrative staff, teachers, pupils and parents in order to clarify and address unacceptable attendance issues. The Vice Principal monitors and intervenes where the absence of specific pupils gives cause for concern or if attendance rates fall below 85%; where such individual concerns persist, the issues are brought to the attention of the Principal. The Vice Principal analyses attendance statistics on a regular basis in

preparation for reports to Board of Governors. The Vice Principal Pastoral brings issues related to pupil attendance to the Senior Management Team.

- **Heads of Year/Key Stage** provide ongoing support to Form Tutors through advice and intervention as appropriate when attendance or punctuality issues are identified. Heads of Year pass on concerns about the attendance of individual pupils during regular meetings with the Vice Principal Pastoral.
- **Form Tutors** record attendance on SIMS (School Information Management Systems) each morning during registration; if pupils are not in school at 8.50am they will be marked absent. Pupils who arrive in School after 8.50am, when the register is already completed, must sign in at reception and they will be given a 'late' code mark by the Study Supervisor. This will contribute to the award of a Behaviour Point (see School Policy on Positive Behaviour) unless an acceptable parental note is received within one week. Tutors request and receive written explanations of pupil absence and lateness from parents/guardians; they are supported in the management of this by the Sixth Form Study Supervisor who provides a weekly summary of outstanding parental notes to each tutor.
- **Teaching staff** regularly monitor the attendance and punctuality of pupils in all taught classes by ensuring that attendance is recorded on Lesson Monitor (SIMS). Class teachers report any concerns regarding attendance to Form Tutors in the first instance. The afternoon attendance register is linked to the period 7 class register which is marked by class teachers. Notes can be added to the electronic register to highlight when pupils have arrived late to class etc and such issues are followed up by Form Tutors.
- The **Sixth Form Study Supervisor** maintains the SIMS register for pupil attendance and ensures that any hard copy attendance registers (e.g. completed by substitute teachers) are used to update SIMS without delay. The Study Supervisor prepares a weekly report for Form Tutors listing pupils who have failed to provide notes for their absence or lateness so that Tutors can follow these up with pupils. The Study Supervisor applies the appropriate code on SIMS for each pupil absence upon receipt of a parental note. Failure to provide parental notes for absence, in spite of reminders from Form Tutors and contact from reception staff, will result in a Behaviour Point for pupils.
- **Reception Staff** receive calls or emails from parents on the first day of a pupil's absence and they forward this information to respective Form Tutors. Office staff circulate a pupil absence list to all teachers at the end of period 2 each day. If a parental call or email has not been received for a pupil who is absent at 10.00am, reception staff will call home and ask for a reason for absence. In addition, reception staff will call home after 1 week when a pupil has returned from absence without bringing a parental note to the Form Tutor.
- **School Prefects** collect hard copy registers from Form Tutors at 8.50am each morning and deliver them to the Study Supervisor.

Strathearn School is committed to working with parents to encourage regular and punctual attendance.

Role of Parent

- Parents have a legal duty to ensure their child of compulsory school age shall receive efficient full time education suitable to age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs they may have, either by regular school attendance or otherwise.
(Article 45(1) of The Education and Libraries (NI) Order 1986)
- If young people are registered in a school, their parents have a legal duty to ensure that they regularly attend that school.
- It is a parent's responsibility to inform the school of the reason for a pupil's absence on the first day of absence. Parents should do this using the telephone line dedicated to this use or via email. Reasons for absence must be confirmed with a written note when the pupil returns to school. If the absence is likely to be prolonged, this should be explained to enable the school to assist with homework or any other necessary arrangements which may be required.
- Pupils are expected to be in school at 8.45am for registration and the beginning of classes. It is the responsibility of parents to ensure that their child is punctual. Lateness is recorded at registration and on the child's attendance record.
- If a child appears reluctant to attend school the parent/guardian should discuss the matter promptly with School (Form Tutor in the first instance) to ensure that both parent and child receive maximum support.

Role of Pupils

- Each pupil at Strathearn must attend school punctually and regularly. Registration is at 8.45am and pupils must be in their form rooms at this time each day; arriving after 8.50am will warrant a late mark which must be explained by a note from home.
- If pupils arrive in school after 8.50am, they must sign in at reception and a note from a parent/guardian must be provided to explain the lateness.
- If absent from school, a written note from a parent/guardian must be provided to the Form Tutor teacher when the pupil returns.
- Upon returning after absence, the pupil should make plans with teachers to catch up on work missed. Support is available from Form Tutors (and the School Learning Support staff) to help with this, if necessary.
- When leaving school for a prearranged appointment during the school day (see below), the pupil must sign out of school at reception and sign in again when she returns. Such signing records are of crucial importance to school management of emergency evacuation procedures.

Management of Attendance in Collaboration

- Students coming to Strathearn for collaborative classes sign in and out at reception on arrival and departure from school. Subject teachers record attendance on their SIMS class register.

- Strathearn pupils attending collaborative classes on other sites sign in to Strathearn at reception on arrival at school. Collaborative schools email the Strathearn collaboration co-ordinator without delay to report when a pupil is absent from class.
- Staff at Campbell College (CCB) contact Strathearn reception to inform when Strathearn pupils boarding at CCB will be absent or late. Reception staff in Strathearn email CCB when a CCB boarding student is listed on the daily absence report.

Absence Request Procedures

- Every effort should be made to organise appointments, medical or otherwise, outside school time. Where an essential appointment does fall within the school day, a note from a parent/guardian should be presented to reception in advance, and a permission card will be provided for the pupil.
- The pupil should show the card to her teachers in advance of the appointment and make plans to catch up on work missed.

Family holidays during Term Time

Strathearn 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. Only in exceptional circumstances will such absences be authorised. Any requests to remove pupils from school during term time must be submitted in writing to the School Principal.

Procedures for Managing Non-attendance

- **The Vice Principal Pastoral:**
 - ensures that there is clear guidance for staff who code pupil absences at the beginning of each school year and as necessary for new staff.
 - provides training for staff (teaching and non-teaching) in the recording and monitoring of attendance as necessary throughout the year.
 - works with the Study Supervisor in identifying areas of concern in attendance administration, for example queries in relation to absence coding.
 - works with the Head of Year to put in place an individual action plan where there are concerns that a pupil may become a persistent absentee. Such plans may include pupil mentoring, school counselling service, additional study support, a tailored curriculum or alternative arrangements for registering attendance. These strategies are managed and monitored by a wide team of pastoral staff and co-ordinated by the Head of Year.

- is responsible for facilitating a relevant programme of external and internal staff development designed to build the capacity of school staff to assist pupils with individual needs, e.g. social, emotional or behavioural difficulties or more specific learning needs.
 - supports the return of pupils who have had periods of long term absence through clear strategies to help them catch up on work missed and reintegrate into the life of the school. The full range of pastoral staff (Head of Year, Form Tutor, SENCos, School Health Nurses and classroom assistants) work alongside subject teachers to provide maximum support for such pupils. Regular contact is maintained with parents / guardians (and also external agencies, if relevant) in these situations.
- **The Heads of Year / Key Stage** review attendance at the end of each half term and send information letters to parents when a pupil's attendance falls below 90% (See Appendix Section). Parents are required to come for interview when attendance falls below 85% in order to identify and address any issues related to the non attendance. Parents will be reminded that 85% is the threshold for Education Welfare Service involvement.
 - **The School Health Nurses and staff in the SENI Department** work to support pupils who are confronting difficulties at school to keep pupils in school even when they are not at full strength.
 - **The Study Supervisor** produces a weekly reminder for tutors to request any outstanding absence notes from pupils.
 - **Reception Staff** call parents when no contact has been made with school to explain absence on the first day and also when no absence note has been received from returning pupils in spite of reminders from Form Tutors.

Procedures for Promoting Full Attendance

- The school policy on Attendance is communicated to staff, pupils and parents on an annual basis.
- Making direct contact with parents about attendance issues before it becomes a problem following routine analysis of the statistics.
- Awarding school merits to pupils each term when attendance has been 99% and above.
- Receiving special commendations for full attendance on pupil reports.
- Celebrating attendance achievements by displaying list of pupils with full attendance on screens around school.
- Encouraging attendance at sixth form through form class competitions.

- Recognising and communicating to pupils the significance of attendance in appointing posts of responsibility in sixth form.
- Requiring that pupils returning to school for sixth form should sign a 'Sixth Form Agreement', giving a commitment to full attendance.

Education Welfare Service

- The Education Authority (EA) through the Education Welfare Service (EWS) has a legal duty to make sure that parents meet their responsibility towards their children's education.
- If a pupil's absence causes concern, or if their attendance falls below 85%, they will be referred to the EWS, if appropriate. EWS will support staff and parents in developing and implementing strategies to address or improve school attendance.

Monitoring and Review

This policy will be monitored and reviewed every three years unless information is received from DE that requires alterations.

To do:

- *Introduce to parents the use of dedicated phone line for absence reporting*
- *Develop a pupil and parent information flyer*