
Strathearn School

Attendance

Date of approval:	
Date for renewal:	
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.

Strathearn School adheres to the guidance provided in the Department of Education Circular 2015/02, 'Attendance Guidance and Absence Recording by Schools'.

Aims

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 and pupils regarding school attendance.
4. To maintain good relationships with the Education Welfare Service.

Management of Daily Attendance

Roles and Responsibilities

Parent

Under the Education and Libraries (NI) Order 1986, parents have a legal duty to ensure their child, who is of compulsory school age, shall receive efficient full-time education suitable to age, ability and aptitude and that suits any special education needs they may have. If young people are registered in a school, their parents have a legal duty to ensure that they regularly attend that school.

- Parents must inform the school of the reason for a pupil's absence on the first day of the absence. Parents should do this using the dedicated absence email: absence@strathearn.belfast.ni.sch.uk. This email will replace any absence note which would have been required in previous years and will be kept on record. The parent should include the pupil's surname, forename and form class in the subject field and the nature of the absence in the main section of the email. DENI required specific reasons for absence eg. Stomach upset. Illness is too vague. The expected length of absence should also be noted. 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.
- It is the responsibility of parents to ensure that their child is punctual. Pupils are expected to be in school at 8.45am and registration will be taken at 8.50am. Lateness is recorded by Reception and will remain on the child's attendance record unless an absence email: absence@strathearn.belfast.ni.sch.uk is received within five working days of the lateness.
- 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 appropriate support.
- If attendance falls below 85% parents will be required to attend an interview to help identify and address the reasons for the absence.

Pre-arranged Term Time Absences

Strathearn discourages pre-arranged absences of significant duration, such as family holidays during term time. This is due to the impact they have on pupils' learning. Any such absences 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.

Pupil

Each pupil at Strathearn School must attend school punctually and regularly.

Lateness

- Registration is at 8.45am and pupils must be in their form rooms at this time each day. If a pupil arrives after 8.50am they must enter via the Main Reception doors and register their attendance using the electronic attendance terminal. They should then make their way to the remainder of registration, assembly or class. Pupils must ensure that their parent/guardian provides an absence email within five working days, outlining the nature of the lateness. If an absence email is not received within this time, a behaviour point will be issued and the late mark will remain. Lateness emails should be sent to the dedicated absence email: absence@strathearn.belfast.ni.sch.uk outlining the nature of the lateness. The subject field should include the pupil's surname, forename and form class.

Absence

- If absent from school, an email from a parent/guardian must be provided using the dedicated absence email: absence@strathearn.belfast.ni.sch.uk. This should be provided on the first day of absence, preferably before 9:00am. Where possible, the pupil should remind the parent/guardian to send the absence email. If an absence email is not received within five working days, then a behaviour point will be given.
- Upon returning after absence, the pupil should make plans with teachers to catch up on work missed.

Absence during the school day eg. attending a medical appointment

- The pupil should inform her teachers in advance of an appointment and make plans to catch up on work missed.
- When leaving school for a prearranged appointment during the school day, the pupil must speak to a receptionist who will confirm if an absence email has been received. If received, the pupil can then sign out using the electronic attendance terminal. They should use this terminal to sign in again when they return. Such signing records are of crucial importance to school management of safeguarding and emergency evacuation procedures.

Form Tutor

Form Tutors record attendance using SIMS (School Information Management Systems) each morning during registration (8:50am). If pupils are not in School at 8.50am they will be marked absent with an N code. Where an email, indicating the reason for lateness, has not been received from a parent/guardian, the form tutor will request this from the pupil; this will be monitored using SIMS. The Sixth Form Study Supervisor supports the form tutor by providing a weekly summary of outstanding parental emails to each tutor. If emails have not been provided within five working days, then the form tutor will record a behaviour point on SIMS. Form tutors have day to day oversight of attendance patterns within their form class and will address concerns with pupils and parents where appropriate. This should also be reported to the Head of Year.

Subject Teachers

Teaching staff 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.

Heads of Year

Heads of Year provide ongoing support to Form Tutors through advice and intervention as appropriate when attendance or punctuality issues are identified.

The Head of Year will receive monthly attendance reports to help them to monitor attendance. They will meet with pupils, whose attendance falls below 85%, to identify reasons for absence and support as necessary.

Where a concerning pattern of attendance by an individual or group of pupils is identified by the Head of Year, they will inform the Senior Teacher or Vice Principal Pastoral.

Senior Teacher (pastoral)

The Senior Teacher will provide advice and support to Heads of year where significant concern is raised about a pupil's attendance.

The Senior Teacher will monitor attendance across the school on a monthly basis and will cross check with the appropriate Heads of Year.

The Senior Teacher will send information letters to parents when a pupil's attendance falls below 90% (see appendix A). Any major concerns or attendance of a pupil dropping below 85% will be reported to the Vice Principal Pastoral.

The Senior Teacher 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.

Vice Principal (pastoral)

The Vice Principal analyses attendance statistics on a regular basis in preparation for reports to the Board of Governors.

The Vice Principal Pastoral brings issues related to pupil attendance to the Senior Leadership Team.

The Vice Principal monitors and intervenes where the absence of specific pupils gives serious cause for concern or if attendance rates continually fall below 85% for a period of three months or more; where such individual concerns persist, the issues are brought to the attention of the Principal.

The Vice Principal 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.

The Vice Principal 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 (Form Tutor, Head of Year, SENI Department, School Health Nurses and classroom assistants) work alongside subject teachers to provide maximum support for such pupils. Regular contact is maintained with parents and external agencies, where appropriate in these situations.

Principal

The Principal has overall responsibility for school attendance.

Board of Governors

The Board of Governors provide support by reviewing school attendance figures and targets and ensuring it is placed as an agenda item at each meeting.

Educational Welfare Service

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

Management of Attendance Systems

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 and Receptionist in identifying areas of concern in attendance administration, for example queries in relation to absence coding.

Sixth Form Study Supervisor

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 **will support the Receptionist in providing** the appropriate code on SIMS for each pupil absence upon receipt of a parental email.

School Reception

Staff will check the absence email: absence@strathearn.belfast.ni.sch.uk each morning. Reasons for absence, whether for part or all of the school day, will be recorded on SIMS using the appropriate code. A report of all lateness will be printed off from the electronic attendance terminal no later than 9:45am each morning and recorded on SIMS. A pupil absence list, from SIMS, will be emailed to all teachers no later than 10:15am each morning. If a parental email, explaining pupil absence, has not been received, a receptionist will call home and ask for a reason for absence.

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.

Monitoring and Review

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

Amendment 1

COVID-19 Temporary Measures

These measures will supersede stated policy and procedure within the areas to which they apply. They are to allow the school to operate effectively while prioritising health and safety for the duration of the covid-19 pandemic. These procedures are subject to change as advice and circumstance around the measures change.

Periods of Self-Isolation

When a pupil is self-isolating, in accordance with Government guidance and PHA advice, the pupil will receive an attendance mark which reflects the circumstance of the isolation, rather than an absent mark. Parents should contact school, as with a normal procedure when a pupil will be absent, to inform us as to the nature of the isolation.