

St. Patrick's College



Promoting Personal Excellence

Attendance Policy

1. Introduction

- 1.1 **St. Patrick's College** is committed to providing an education of the highest quality for all its pupils and recognises this can only be achieved by supporting and promoting excellent school attendance for all. This is based on the belief that only by attending school regularly and punctually will children and young people be able to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. High attainment depends on good attendance.
- 1.2 The whole school community – pupils, parents and carers, teaching and support staff and school governors – have a responsibility for ensuring good school attendance and have important roles to play. The purpose of the policy is to clarify everyone's part in this.
- 1.3 The policy has been drawn up based on current government guidance. The school will ensure that all members of the community know of the policy and have access to it.

2. School's roles and responsibilities

- 2.1 All staff (teaching and support) at **St. Patrick's College** have a key role to play in supporting and promoting excellent school attendance and will work to provide an environment in which all our pupils are eager to learn, feel valued members of the school community and look forward to coming to school every day. Staff also have a responsibility to set a good example in matters relating to their own attendance and punctuality.
- 2.2 Attendance Leaders
The Head of Pastoral Care and the Principal will oversee, direct and co-ordinate the school's work in promoting regular and improved attendance and will ensure the Attendance Policy is consistently applied throughout the school. They will ensure that up-to-date attendance data and issues are shared with the Senior Leadership Team, are made regularly available to all staff, pupils and parents (who will regularly be reminded about the importance of good school attendance) and that the Governing Body is fully aware of attendance data and targets. They will ensure that attendance issues are identified at an early stage and that support is put in place to deal with any difficulties.

2.3 Registration

- i) The school is required to mark the attendance register twice each day; once at the start of the day and once during the afternoon session. Classroom teachers are responsible for completing the attendance registers. The admin staff complete the registers using the prescribed codes (shown overleaf).

REGISTER CODES

A – Artistic endeavour

B – Bereavement

C – Suspended

D – Temporary code, used until such time as explanation is received from parent/guardian, must be replaced by alternative code. Should only be used in exceptional circumstances.

F – Family holiday agreed by principal. Authorised absence, only to be used in exceptional circumstances.

G – Family holiday not authorised or approved.

H – Other Absence this is not authorised and could include false allegation of illness, birthday party, shopping, getting a hair-cut, couldn't or wouldn't get up.

I – Illness, authorised absence.

L – late before register closed.

M – Medical or dental appointments, can be used for part session.

N – Temporary code only, no reason provided for absence. (CANNOT BE USED BEYOND 5 DAYS.)

O – Exceptional circumstances absence, genuine crisis or very important or exceptional event.

P – Approved sporting activity

R – Religious Observation

S – Study Leave

U – If someone arrives late after the register is closed and provides no reason or a poor reason like not being able to find their shoes for their lateness. (U is considered as an unauthorised absence.)

V- Approved Educational Activity – educational visits and interviews that are school related.

W - Work experience

X – Inset days, pupils not required to attend

Y – Exceptional closure, death of a pupil or teacher, snow, burst pipes, etc

1 - Alternative education approved by ELB

2 - Tuition when a pupil is an in-patient in a facility like the hospital or CAHMS

3 - When parents elect to educate their child at home

4- Pupil who has been referred to a referral unit approved by the ELB

5- Pupil attending course at another shared learning area RVLC

6 - Approved educational activity educated off-site

7- Pupils attending FE college or RVLC school

8 - Pupils being educated at a Intensive Learning Support Unit

9- CAHMS – Pupils who are being educated at Beechcroft Unit

The register will be called promptly at **9:10 am** and **1:40 pm** by each form teacher or class teacher and a mark will be made during the registration period in respect of each child.

- ii) The registers will close at **9:30 am** and **2:00 pm**. Any pupil who arrives **after** the closing of the register will be marked as **absent**. Any child arriving late but before the closing of the register will be marked as **late**.

2.4 Categorising absence

- i) A mark will be made in respect of each child following the close of the registers. Any child who is not present will be marked unauthorised absence unless leave has been granted by the school in advance or the reason for absence is already known and accepted by the school as legitimate. Where a reason for absence is given and accepted by the school at a later stage, the register will be amended in such a way that the original entry and the amendment / correction are distinguishable. The decision about whether the absence should be authorised or unauthorised rests with the Headteacher.
- ii) **St. Patrick's College** recognises the clear links between attendance and attainment, and attendance and safeguarding children. It recognises that inappropriate authorisation of absence can be as damaging to a child's education as authorised absence, will potentially send a message to parents that any reason for non-school attendance is acceptable and can render children extremely vulnerable to harm. If absence is frequent or continuous, except where a child is clearly unwell, staff at **St. Patrick's College** will challenge parents about the need and reasons for their child's absence and will encourage them to keep absences to a minimum. A note or explanation from a pupil's home does not mean an absence becomes authorised. The decision whether or not to authorise an absence **will always rest with the Principal**.
- iii) If no explanation about an absence is received by the school **within 2 weeks**, the absence will remain unauthorised;
- iv) Absence will be authorised in the following circumstances:
 - (a) where leave has been granted by the school in advance, for example –
 - a pupil is to participate in an approved performance for which a licence has been granted by the Local Authority,
 - a pupil is involved in an **exceptional** special occasion – in authorising such an absence the individual circumstances of the particular case and the pupil's overall pattern of attendance will be considered,
 - in **exceptional** circumstances, permission has been granted for a family holiday for which the parents have sought permission in advance (see appendix for the school's term-time holiday form);
 - (b) where the school is satisfied that the child is too ill to attend;
 - (c) where the pupil has a medical appointment (although parents should be encouraged to make these out of school hours wherever possible, and to return their child to school immediately afterwards – or send him / her to school beforehand);
 - (d) where there is an unavoidable cause for the absence which is beyond the family's control, eg extreme weather conditions;
 - (e) the absence occurs on a day exclusively set aside for religious observance by the religious body to which the pupil's / student's parents belong;
 - (f) the pupil lives more than two miles (if he/she is under eight) or three miles (if he/she has reached eight) and no suitable transport arrangements have been made by the Local Authority;

- (g) the pupil / student is of no fixed abode, his/her parent is engaged in a trade which required him/her to travel, the pupil / student has attended school as often as the nature of the trade permits **and**, have reached the age of six, he/she has attended 200 sessions in the preceding 12 months;
 - (h) in other **exceptional circumstances** (eg a family bereavement) and **for a very limited period**.
- v) Except in the circumstances described above, absences will be unauthorised. Some examples of reasons for **not** authorising absence would be:
- no explanation has been given by the parent;
 - the school is not satisfied with the explanation;
 - the pupil or parents are staying at home to mind the house;
 - the pupil or parents are shopping during school hours;
 - the pupil is absent for **unexceptional** reasons, eg a birthday;
 - the pupil is absent from school on a family holiday without prior permission;

2.5 Approved educational activity

Where a student is engaged in off-site approved educational activities, the school will check his/her attendance on a daily basis before entering the appropriate code in the register.

2.6 Absences after close of class registers

Any sudden absences that occur during the day will be picked up immediately by the class teacher and reported to the school office. The school office will advise the Headteacher.

2.7 Staff Training

The School Attendance Leaders will ensure that all staff responsible for taking registers, including any temporary or supply staff, receive sufficient training to enable them to perform the task accurately.

3. **Collection and analysis of data**

3.1 The Head of Pastoral Care and the Principal will ensure that attendance data is complete, accurate, analysed and reported to the senior leadership team, parents and the governing body. The report should include commentary on the trajectory and the school target. The data will inform the school's future practice to improve attendance and prevent disaffection.

3.2 Attendance is monitored by year group and by reasons for absence. It is also analysed by gender, ethnicity, pupils / students with special educational needs and those who are vulnerable to poor attendance.

3.3 Accurate attendance returns are made to DENI/WELB/CCMS within the stipulated time frame.

4. Systems and strategies for managing and improving attendance

4.1 Attendance has a very high profile at **St. Patrick's College**. Parents are regularly reminded in newsletters, the rewards system, day book and school meetings about the importance of good attendance and its links to attainment.

St. Patrick's College has procedures for dealing with unexplained absences:

- ***The school secretary will send out a text to the parent/guardian to highlight the absence of students who are not in school.***
- *A phone call home on the second day of absence by Form teacher or Head of KS if parent has not been in contact with the school. If pupil is still not in school after a few days a follow up call to enquire about their return to school unless there is a bereavement or a serious illness that the school has been informed about.*
- *If attendance does not improve a letter will be sent out by Head of Key Stage to say attendance has dropped below 90% and is being monitored and may be referred to the EWO.*
- *If there is still no improvement, an invitation will be issued for the parent/guardian to come in to school to discuss their child's attendance.*
- *A referral will be made to EWO by the Head of Pastoral Care if attendance still does not improve and is below 85%*

4.2 Lateness and punctuality

Pupils are expected to arrive at school on time every day. It is very disruptive to their own education, and that of others in their class, if they are late. Pupils who arrive after the register closes will be marked absent for the whole session (a session being a morning or an afternoon). This absence will be unauthorised unless the school is satisfied that there is a legitimate reason for the pupil being late. Such a reason will not include things such as missing the bus, clothes in the washing machine or lost shoes. A pupil who is persistently absent by reason of lateness will be dealt with in the same way as other students with an emerging pattern of absence. If the matter is not resolved quickly, it will be referred to the Education Attendance Service.

4.3 Pupils / students who arrive late for school but before the register closes will be recorded in the "Late Book". They will then be marked as late. Students who arrive after 9:25am will report to the school office. Students who are late three mornings in a short time period will be put on detention after school.

4.4 For health and safety reasons it is important that the school knows who is in the building. Pupils arriving late should therefore report to the school office. **It is important that all pupils arriving late follow this procedure.**

4.5 For the same reason it is important that parents of pupils leaving the premises legitimately (eg for a medical appointment), or returning to school later in the day inform the school office. The school office will record that the child has left the school site and will mark them back in when they return.

4.6 Post-registration truancy

Post-registration truancy occurs when a pupil goes missing from school having previously registered for the session. This behaviour not only means the pupil will not be receiving a full-time education, it also potentially renders him/her vulnerable to harm. St. Patrick's College takes this very seriously and will endeavour to ensure it does not happen. If, however, a pupil appears to have left the premises without authorisation, the school will try to make contact with his/her parents immediately.

5. Term-time Holidays

5.1 Term-time holidays are intended for children whose parents are unable to take holiday at any other time.

5.2 St. Patrick's College will consider every application individually, its policy is NOT to grant leave of absence for a holiday other than in the most exceptional circumstances. Time off school for family holidays **is not a right**. An application must be made in writing, with appropriate evidence, **in advance** of the intended holiday.

5.3 St. Patrick's College will consider authorising holidays for:

- service personnel and other employees who are prevented from taking holidays during term-time;
- when a family needs to spend time together to support each other during or after a crisis;
- parents who are subject to a strict and un-negotiable holiday rota and evidence is provided to this effect.

5.4 Requests for holidays for the following reason will not be authorised:

- cheaper cost of holiday;
- availability of the desired accommodation;
- poor weather experienced in school holiday periods; and
- overlap with beginning or end of term.

5.5 St. Patrick's College will respond to all requests for a leave of absence giving the reasons for the decision.

5.6 St. Patrick's College will NOT authorise a holiday during periods of national tests, ie SATS and GCSE or GCE examinations.

6. Extended leave of absence

6.1 In considering absence for extended trips overseas St. Patrick's College will take account of the following:

- a visit to family overseas has a very different significance from a normal 'holiday';
- such visits may be important in terms of children's identity and self-esteem as they grow up;
- parents may feel that the reasons for their visit outweigh the importance of their child's uninterrupted attendance at school (although parents could be encouraged to use the school holiday periods for at least part of their trip);
- the reasons for wishing to make a visit is more difficult, particularly for minority ethnic families, where huge distances and high costs are involved;
- where extended leave of absence is granted there will be an expectation that the pupil undertakes some school-set work during this period.

7. Parents' / carers' responsibilities

7.1 The prime responsibility for ensuring children receive an appropriate and full-time education rests with parents / carers (defined by the Education Act 1996 as those with parental responsibility and those who have the care of a child), who will be supported and encouraged by St. Patrick's College.

7.2 St. Patrick's College expects parents / carers will:

- ensure their children attend the school regularly;
- support their children's attendance by keeping requests for absence to a minimum;
- not expect the school to automatically agree any requests for absence, and not condone unjustified absence from school.

7.3 Parents will also be expected to:

- notify St. Patrick's College on the first day of absence by contacting the school **027 77741324** or reporting to the school office.
- ensure their children arrive at school on time, properly dressed and with the right equipment for the day.
- work in partnership with the school, for example by attending parents' meetings and consultations, signing homework diaries when asked to do so, taking an interest in their children's work and activities;
- contact the school without delay if they are concerned about any aspects of their children's school lives. St. Patrick's College will endeavour to support parents to address their concerns.

8. Pupils' responsibilities

- 8.1 All pupils should be aware of the importance of regular school attendance. If they are having difficulties that may prevent them from attending school regularly, they should speak to their class teacher.
- 8.2 Pupils should attend all their lessons on time, ready to learn. If they have been absent from school they should give their class teacher a note from their parents to explain the absence. Pupils also have a responsibility for reporting to the school office if they arrive late. Reasons for absence should be recorded in the students daybook and signed by parent/guardian.

9. Governors' responsibilities

- 9.1 The governing body of St. Patrick's College shall make arrangements for ensuring that their functions relating to the conduct of the school are exercised with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children who are pupils at the school.

10. Conclusion

Reviewing the policy

The school will review this policy each year with its allocated Education Welfare Officer.

A G U I D E F O R P A R E N T S

1. When does my child need to be in School?

Your child should be at school before 9:10 am to be ready to go into registration at 9:10. The register is taken at 9:10am. Afternoon school starts at 1:40 p.m.

2. What happens if my child is late?

Registration finishes at 9:25 am in the morning and 2:00 pm in the afternoon.

Pupils who arrive after registration should report to the school office.

A series of unauthorised late marks may lead to referral to the EWO (Education Welfare Officer).

3. Does the School need letters explaining my child's absence or will a phone call do?

We would expect a parent to telephone the school on the first day of absence. St. Patrick's will send a text if your child has not arrived in school by 10:00 a.m. On return to school, a letter explaining the absence is expected. If we do not receive an explanation, or if the explanation is unsatisfactory, we will not authorise the absence.

If we are concerned about aspects of your child's attendance or punctuality we will contact you to discuss the best way forward.

An accumulation of unauthorised absences will lead to a referral to the Educational Welfare Service.

4. What reasons will the school accept for absences?

- Illness
- Emergency dental/medical appointment.

(Please make routine appointments after school or during the holidays)

- Day of religious observance
- Family bereavement
- Family holidays in exceptional circumstances (only when prior approval has been given)

Except in the case of illness, you should ask for permission for your child to miss school well in advance, giving full details. In cases of recurring absences through illness you may be asked to produce a medical certificate.

5 What is unacceptable?

The school will not authorise absences other than those in exceptional circumstances. Family holidays, day trips, shopping or birthdays are not classed as exceptional.

7 Can we take family holidays during term-time?

Family holidays should be taken during school holidays. Only in exceptional circumstances will permission be given during the school year. You need to request permission for your child to accompany you on a family holiday during term time. You should complete a pyramid leave of absence application form (see appendix) stating the reason why the holiday must be taken in term time. The Headteacher has the right to refuse permission.

8. I am thinking about sending my child on an extended absence for an overseas trip to visit relatives. What should I do?

The school recognises that such absence can be important for children to keep in touch with their extended family, particularly for minority ethnic families. Contact your child's class teacher or form tutor as soon as possible to discuss the best time for such a visit.

The school would strongly recommend that such absences do not take place during important exams. You need to write a letter making a request for extended leave of absence and if the Headteacher then approves the visit, the school will set work for your child to complete while away.

As far as possible we will ensure the work set reinforces the educational value of such a visit.

9 What can I do to encourage my child to attend School?

Make sure your child gets enough sleep and gets up in plenty of time each morning. Ensure that he / she leaves home in the correct clothes and properly equipped. Show your child, by your interest, that you value his / her education. Your child will bring home a school day book each evening. Please ensure you look at it with your child and sign it ready for the next day.

10. My child is trying to avoid coming to School. What should I do?
Contact your child's class teacher immediately and openly discuss your worries. Your child could be avoiding school for a number of reasons – difficulties with school work, bullying, friendship problems, family difficulties. It is important that we identify the reason for your child's reluctance to attend school and work together to tackle the problem.