

HARMONY PRIMARY SCHOOL



Whole School Attendance Policy

INTRODUCTION

All children of school age have the right to an appropriate full time education regardless of age, aptitude, ability or any special needs he/she may have. Regular school attendance is essential if a child is to make the most of the educational opportunity available to them. The staff of Harmony Primary School recognise their responsibility in monitoring and promoting the regular attendance of all its pupils. We acknowledge that irregular attendance seriously disrupts continuity of teaching and learning and impedes the child's ability to develop and maintain friendships within school.

This policy has been developed in consultation with the Board of Governors, teachers, Educational Welfare Services, parents and children. It seeks to ensure that all parties involved are aware of attendance matters in the school and to outline the school's commitment to attendance matters detailing procedures monitoring and promoting pupil attendance.

WHY IS SCHOOL ATTENDANCE IMPORTANT?

- It is required by law.
- Children need to attend school regularly to keep up with their work and promote social development.
- A good education will give your child the best possible start in life and enable him or her to make the most of the opportunities available.
- Children need to develop good habits in readiness for later life.
- Employers of school leavers will take into account the young person's school attendance and punctuality record before making a job offer.
- Young people who are away from school without good reason are at risk of becoming victims of crime or abuse.

AIMS

In Harmony we aim to raise and maintain high levels of attendance by:

- promoting a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure and valued
- promoting opportunities to celebrate and reward pupil's successes and achievements
- ensuring that attendance is monitored effectively and reasons for absences are recorded promptly and consistently

MANAGEMENT OF ATTENDANCE

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS

The Board of Governors have the ultimate responsibility for school attendance; however, this is delegated on a daily basis to the Principal. The Board of Governors have the responsibility to monitor school attendance and the effectiveness of the school's policy and practice.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PRINCIPAL

The Principal is responsible for attendance on a daily basis and in her absence the Vice Principal will undertake these duties. The Principal will:

- alongside the Board of Governors determine resources and staffing to deal with attendance issues
- assume responsibility for attendance and ensure that the school meets all legal requirements, sets targets for attendance and unauthorised absence and reports to stakeholders regarding attendance figures.
- Ensure that parents and pupils are aware of their responsibilities regarding attendance and punctuality at the point of admission.
- meet with the Education Welfare Officer every month to discuss pupil attendance issues
- ensure that the Board of Governors are informed about attendance issues and ensure statistical information is provided as required by the government

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE CLASS TEACHER

The class teacher will:

- develop trusting relationships with all pupils
- monitor daily attendance by marking registers, collecting absence notes and assisting the Principal in identifying irregular attendance patterns
- follow-up any unexplained prolonged absence by contacting parents
- contact parents when they fail to send absence notes
- promote class attendance
- refer pupils to the Principal
- provide support to children whilst on long term absence and upon their return to school

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE OFFICE STAFF

The office staff will:

- operate the SIMS system
- take phone calls/texts from parents when pupils are absent from school and inform class teachers
- collate registration data

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PARENTS

The duty of a parent, in relation to the education of their children, is found in the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986 and says: *“The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause*

him/her to receive efficient full time education suitable to his/her age ability and aptitude, and to any special educational needs he/she may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.”

Parents / guardians can help the school to manage attendance by:

- Contacting the school on the first day of a child’s absence. They should state the reason for the absence and also the date on which the child is to return to school. This should be followed by a note of explanation on the child’s return.
- Ensuring that their children arrive in school on time, well prepared for the school day and that homework has been completed.
- When an appointment has been made for medical reasons (and these should be made outside school time when possible) the appointment card should be shown in advance to the class teacher.
- Taking family holidays during school holiday periods. Holidays during term time are discouraged due to the impact they have on pupil’s learning. Family holidays during term time will be categorised as unauthorised absence. Only in exceptional circumstances will a holiday be authorised.
- working closely with the Educational Welfare Officer(EWO) to resolve any problems that may impede a child’s attendance

If your child appears reluctant to attend school, please discuss the matter promptly with the class teacher or Mrs Johnston to ensure that both you and your child receive maximum support.

Parentally condoned, unjustifiable absence is equally as damaging as truancy. If, in the opinion of the school, an explanation offered by a parent for absence is unacceptable (or where no explanation is given) the absence will be treated as UNAUTHORISED.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PUPILS

It is expected that the pupils will:

- Attend school regularly.
- Arrive on time and be appropriately prepared for the day.
- Tell a member of staff about any problem or reason that may prevent them from attending school.

EDUCATION WELFARE SERVICE

The Education Authority through the Education Welfare Service have a legal duty to make sure parents/guardians meet their responsibility towards their children’s education.

If a pupil’s absence causes concern, and/or falls below 85% and there is also a concern, they will be referred to EWS, if appropriate. EWS will support staff and parents in developing and implementing strategies to address or improve school attendance.

SCHOOL PROCEDURES FOR RECORDING AND MONITORING ATTENDANCE

DAILY REGISTRATION PROCEDURES

Class begins promptly at **8.45am (P1-3) & 9am (P4-7)**. The class teacher will take a register recording who is present and absent. Registration will close at **9am (P1-3) or 9.15am (P4-7)**. Any child arriving after this time will be marked late.

The Principal will monitor *punctuality* on a half termly basis. If a pupil is considered to be regularly late, the parents will be informed of the school’s concerns by letter and offered support to resolve any problems that may be impeding their child being in school on time.

THE RECORDING OF ATTENDANCE

ABSENCE CODES

Authorised absence;

Some absences are allowed by law and are known as ‘authorised absences’. For example: if a child is ill, family bereavement, religious observance. We realise that there are **RARE** occasions when there might be a particular problem that causes your child to be absent. Please let us know and we shall try to deal with it sympathetically.

Unauthorised absence;

There are times when children are absent for reasons which are **not** permitted by law. These are known as ‘unauthorised absences’. Examples of unauthorised absence are:

- | | |
|--------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| <i>Got up too late</i> | <i>Other children in the family ill</i> |
| <i>Family day out</i> | <i>Tired after a late night</i> |
| <i>Because it is your child’s birthday</i> | <i>Unapproved holidays</i> |

A set of standard codes are used consistently within the register. These codes are input into the electronic register weekly / monthly and are used to give depth of meaning to the register and provide statistical meaning to the absences.

KEY CODES

/	Present (AM)	V	Educational Visit
\	Present (PM)	W	Work Experience
B	Bereavement	X	Only staff should attend
C	Suspended	Y	Exceptional closure
D	No reason provided for absence		
		!	No Attendance Required
F	Family holiday (agreed)	#	Holiday for all
G	G Family Holiday (Not Agreed)	*	Not on roll
H	Other Absence	-	All should attend / No mark recorded
I	Illness(not medical/dental etc. appointments)	1	AEP (ELB)
L	Late (before reg closed)	2	Home/hospital tuition (ELB)
M	Medical/Dental Appointments	3	Elective Home Education

N	No reason yet provided for absence	4	Pupil Referral Unit
O	Other Exceptional Circumstances	5	Another mainstream school (EF)
P	Approved Sporting Activity	6	Training Organisation (EF)
R	Religious Observance	7	FE College (EF)
S	Study Leave	8	Intensive Support Learning Unit
U	Late (after registers closed)	9	CAMHS

REQUESTS FOR LEAVE OF ABSENCE

If a parent wishes to request a period of absence for their child, they are required to write to the Principal. If the request is denied, the school will inform the parent of the reason by a letter and the request will be noted in the electronic register.

MONITORING PUPIL ATTENDANCE

The Principal and the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) will review the attendance of all pupils on a half termly basis and any pupils identified as cause for concern of less than 85% attendance on a more regular basis.

PROCEDURE

- An initial letter will be sent to parents of any pupil identified as having attendance problems informing them of the school's concerns and offering support to resolve any problems that may be impeding a child from attending.
- The pupil's attendance will be closely monitored and if there appears to be no improvement the parents will receive a second letter informing them of the school's continued concern. It will be stated in this letter that if attendance continues to be a problem and is unexplained, the school will formally refer the pupil to the EWO.
- The electronic registration system provides many reports and information that assist the school to monitor attendance. These reports will be accessed when relevant and provide information to assist the school strategically manage attendance issues. The EWO will also have access to this information and will use the reports to support her role.

MONITORING, EVALUATION AND REVIEW

As part of the school's monitoring and evaluation process, we continually keep abreast of new and effective initiatives and adapt our practice accordingly. Therefore, this policy will be reviewed by the Principal and the Senior Management Team in 2022.