

Donegall Road Primary School



Attendance Policy

Date Ratified By Board of Governors: *January 2026*

Date of Review: *January 2028*

Staff Member Responsible: *Mr. Massey (Principal)*

Introduction

Children need to attend school on a regular basis if they are to achieve their personal, social and academic goals.

Donegall Road Primary School will promote an ethos and culture which encourages children, advises parents and liaises with outside agencies to achieve good regular attendance.

Ethos: In Donegall Road Primary School, all children are valued, nurtured and celebrated in a safe environment, where they are encouraged to succeed to the best of their ability and develop as citizens of the community.

Aims of the Policy

- To improve/maintain the overall attendance of pupils in Donegall Road Primary School.
- To develop a framework that defines the roles and responsibilities in relation to attendance.
- To provide advice, support and guidance to parents/guardians and pupils.
- To promote good relationships with the Education Welfare Service.

As regular attendance is crucial to effective learning and the continuity of learning experiences, the school places great emphasis on this in its communication with parents.

Role of the School

The Principal at Donegall Road Primary School has overall responsibility for school attendance; teachers should bring any concerns regarding school attendance to the Principal's attention.

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.

Teaching staff regularly monitor the attendance and punctuality of pupils by ensuring that attendance is recorded at the beginning of morning and afternoon registration sessions.

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 2024/13 - Attendance Guidance & Absence Recording By Schools, which can be found at the following link:

[https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/circular-202413-attendance-guidance-absence-recording-by-schools#:~:text=Circular%202024%2D13%20%2D%20Attendance%20Guidance%20and%20Absence%20Recording%20By%20Schools%0APDF%20\(458%20KB\)](https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/circular-202413-attendance-guidance-absence-recording-by-schools#:~:text=Circular%202024%2D13%20%2D%20Attendance%20Guidance%20and%20Absence%20Recording%20By%20Schools%0APDF%20(458%20KB))

Donegall Road Primary School is committed to working with parents to encourage regular and punctual attendance.

Role of Parent/Guardian

Parents have a legal duty¹ 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.

If a child is registered in school, their parent has 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. This may also be done by telephoning the school. If the absence is likely to be prolonged, this information should be provided to enable the school to assist with any necessary arrangements which may be required. In the case of medical or dental appointments, the school should be informed in advance where possible with evidence of the appointment e.g. hospital letter. Parents are encouraged to make these appointments out of school hours where possible.

A daily breakfast club and after-school clubs are held in the school to also encourage attendance.

Pupils are expected to be in school at 08:40 for registration and the beginning of classes. It is the responsibility of parents to ensure that your child is punctual. Lateness is recorded at registration and on your child's attendance record. If a child arrives into class after 09:00, they are marked as Late.

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

Role of Pupils

Each pupil at Donegall Road Primary School must attend school punctually and regularly. If you have been absent from school, a written note from a parent/guardian must be provided to your teacher when you return.

Family Holidays During Term Time

Donegall Road Primary 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.

Communication to parents via our weekly newsletter is used as a reminder tool to highlight attendance and punctuality. Each parent/guardian is also provided with a Handbook at the beginning of the school year. These mediums provide information on school holidays at beginning of school year so that parents can plan family holidays during school holidays and

not during term time. The Principal talks to those parents who persistently take their holidays in term time, reminding them of the disruption to their child's education.

Recording Attendance.

A service level agreement is drawn up annually at the beginning of the year between the link Education Welfare Officer and the principal to support the persistent absentees defaulting below 85%.

Attendance targets are set in the school development plan with actions, success criteria and monitoring and review strategies.

The school Principal scrutinises the coding in attendance registers on a daily/weekly and monthly basis in-line with the descriptors in DENI Circular 2024/13.

Teaching staff complete the attendance daily using SIMS and are given updated codes at the beginning of the school year so that attendance can be recorded accurately.

In the case where a parent has literacy difficulties and is unable to provide a written form of communication as to their child's absence, verbal communication is most acceptable.

Procedures for Managing Non-Attendance

The school will formally monitor all absences monthly and, in cases of long-term (greater than two weeks) absence, the school will endeavour to provide some type of home/school support. At this stage, the class teacher and Principal will meet to discuss any concerns which may be school based, or home based and how they can support the parent to improve a child's attendance through school level strategies. However, in cases of intermittent absence, or when a pattern develops, the school will issue a letter the parent/guardian regarding their declining attendance.

If there is no improvement, the parent/guardian will be issued with another letter and formally invited to the school to discuss the problem. If the problem persists (below 85% attendance rate), the matter will be referred to the Education Welfare Service, who will visit the parent/guardian at home/school. The Education Welfare Officer will seek to resolve the issue and put in place strategies in the home to assist parents/guardian and pupils. The Education Welfare Officer will liaise regularly with the Principal, who will provide appropriate feedback to the class teacher who can encourage good attendance and reward accordingly so that a consistent pattern of attendance is established and maintained.

Lateness

In the case of punctuality, regular 'spot checks' will take place, and the Principal will contact the parents of persistent offenders.

Truancy

All staff are concerned about children's regular attendance, and the importance of continuity in each child's learning. They are also concerned about each child's safety, welfare and happiness. Although it is a very rare occurrence for a child to truant, if there is a suspicion that a child might be truanting, then action is taken straight away.

If truancy is suspected, the Principal is notified, who then contacts the parent, either by phone or letter. The Educational Welfare Officer may also be notified. Parents/guardians are encouraged to bring their child to school, so that reasons for the child not wanting to attend can be discussed and, hopefully, resolved. In the event of not being able to talk to the parent, then the Principal talks to the child concerned to find out if there are any worries or problems in school that might make that child not want to attend. The class teacher is then informed, and appropriate action is taken.

This policy forms part of the overall pastoral dimension of the school.