



Orritor Primary School and Nursery Unit

Attendance Policy

Abstract

This Policy was designed to outline the school's procedures in relation to Attendance. It was devised in line with relevant documentation and stakeholder consultation.

Principal: Mr. Ian Cheevers
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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 full potential. Orritor Primary School and Nursery Unit will strive to promote an ethos and culture which encourages good attendance and where each pupil will feel valued and secure.

AIMS

1. To improve/maintain the overall attendance of pupils at Orritor Primary School and Nursery Unit.
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.
4. To promote good relationships with the Education Welfare Service.

ROLE OF THE SCHOOL

The principal has overall responsibility for school attendance; Teachers/staff should bring any concerns regarding school attendance to his 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.

It is the responsibility of the school to ensure attendance and lateness records are up-to-date. Parents must complete the Absence Notification Form on the School App on the first day that their child is absent from school.

The school shares the attendance percentage with parents at the end of each school year in the Annual Report and more frequently where there are concerns.

To record and monitor attendance accurately and in a consistent way, school will adhere to the guidance provided in the Department of Education Circular 2017/15, which can be found at the following link: www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/circular-201715-attendance-guidance-and-absence-recording-by-schools

Orritor Primary School and Nursery Unit is committed to working with parents/guardians to encourage regular and punctual attendance.

ROLE OF PARENT/GUARDIAN

Parents have a legal duty to ensure that their child attends school regularly and arrives on time. The duty of a parent, in relation to the education of their children, is found in the Education & Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986, which states:

“The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him/her efficient full-time education suitable to his/her age, ability and attitude and to any special educational needs he/she may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.”

If a child is registered in school, their parent/guardian has a legal duty to ensure that they regularly attend that school.

It is a parent's/guardian's responsibility to inform the school of the reason for a pupil's absence on the first day of absence; this can be done by contacting the school office before 9.15 am. If the absence is likely to be prolonged, this information should be provided to enable the school to assist with homework or any other necessary arrangements which may be required.

As part of our Safeguarding procedures, the school office may contact the parent or carer and other emergency contacts if a message has not been received regarding the reason for the absence, to check on the safety of the child.

Pupils are expected to be in school at 9am for registration and the beginning of classes. It is the responsibility of parents/guardians to ensure that their children are punctual. Lateness is recorded at registration and may impact children's attendance records.

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.

Orritor Primary School and Nursery Unit discourages holidays during term-time due to the impact that has on pupils' learning. Family holidays taken during term-time will be categorised as an 'unauthorised absence'. Only in exceptional circumstances will a holiday be authorised.

Parents should ensure as far as is possible that all medical/dental appointments are outside school hours.

ROLE OF PUPILS

Each pupil at Orritor Primary School and Nursery Unit must attend school punctually and regularly. The doors of school will open when the bell rings at 8:45am. Children will then be responsible for walking quietly to their classroom.

Arrival at school

- Pupils should arrive between **8:45am and 9:00am**.
- All children must be in school by the **second bell at 9:00am**.
- **Breakfast Club** pupils may enter from **8:00am**.
- Children should **not be left at school before 8:45am** unless attending Breakfast Club.
- Supervision for pupils arriving by car begins at **8:45am**. If dropped off earlier, they will not be supervised.

Start of the School Day

- School starts promptly at **9:00am**.
- The first part of the morning includes registration, dinner register, and daily routines such as tests.
- Arriving late can disrupt learning and cause children to miss important activities.

Late Arrivals

- If your child arrives after **9:05am**, they must enter through the **main entrance**, not their usual classroom door.

ACTION FOR LOW ATTENDANCE

Pupil attendance is monitored intermittently throughout the year. In cases where lateness or absence is causing concern, parents will be contacted and requested to take appropriate steps.

EDUCATIONAL WELFARE SERVICE

In cases when a child's attendance falls below 85%, the school is legally obliged to report this to the Educational Welfare Officer (EWO). In many cases an explanation can be provided to the school (such as long-term medical condition, etc) however, if this is not possible then the EWO may choose to investigate.

Non-attendance is an important issue which is treated seriously. However, each case is different and the school acknowledges that no one standard response will be appropriate in every case. Consideration is given to all factors affecting attendance before deciding what intervention strategies will be applied.

In every case early intervention is essential to prevent the problem from worsening. It is essential that parents keep school fully informed of any matters which may affect their child's attendance.

LATENESS

The class register is taken between 9:00am to 9:05am. Pupils arriving after this will be marked as 'Late'. Frequent lateness is disruptive to learning, both for the child concerned and the class. This will be discussed with parents at Parent Teacher consultations and if serious enough may be referred to Education Welfare Officer (EWO).

AUTHORISED ABSENCE

An absence is classified as 'authorised' when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or carer. Examples may include a family bereavement, hospital internment, or a relevant sporting/musical activity.

UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE

An absence is classified as 'unauthorised' when a child is away from school without the permission of the principal. Unauthorised absences are those which school does not consider reasonable and for which authorisation has not been given.

This may include (but not exhaustively):

- Parents keeping children off school unnecessarily;
- Truancy during the school day;
- Absences which have never been properly explained;
- Term-time holidays.

AUTHORISING ABSENCE

Only the Principal can authorise absence for approved reasons. The absence must be unavoidable or clearly in the pastoral interests of the child/family. The principal is not obliged to accept a parent's explanation. Authorised absence codes will only be used after there has been some communication between the parent and school. The following reasons are examples (but not an exhaustive list) of the kinds of absence that **will not be authorised**:

- Pupil kept off school unnecessarily;
- Pupils who arrive at school after the morning session has been closed and are too late to be marked as present for the morning session;
- Shopping trip;
- Annual visits to events;
- Family holiday during term-time.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE/HOLIDAY ABSENCE

Time off school for family holidays cannot be authorised. Schools have the discretion, in exceptional circumstances, to authorise leave absence:

- For service personnel and other employees who are prevented from taking holidays outside term-time **if the holiday will have minimal disruption to the pupil's education.**
- When a family needs to spend time together to support each other during or following a crisis.

Applications for Leave of Absence where dates can be known ahead MUST be made in advance of the requested date. Consideration is given to each request before a decision is reached on behalf of the Board of Governors. Each case will be judged on its merits in line with the criteria outlined above. The decision is final and once the decision not to authorise the leave is taken it cannot be authorised retrospectively.

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| Appendix 1 | - | DE School Attendance Matters |
| Appendix 2 | - | Copy of Orritor Primary School and Nursery Unit letter |

REVIEW AND MONITORING

This Attendance Policy will be reviewed annually by the school's Senior Leadership Team and approved by the Board of Governors. Once approved, it will be shared with parents, pupils and staff and published on the school website.

The policy will be implemented through staff induction and training, regular communication with parents, and consistent application as part of the school's day-to-day practice. Attendance procedures and expectations will be embedded across all classes and monitored on an ongoing basis by the Senior Leadership Team.

The Board of Governors will monitor attendance patterns and the effectiveness of this policy through regular reports provided by the Principal, ensuring that attendance is promoted, monitored and supported in line with statutory requirements and the school's safeguarding responsibilities.

REVIEW

Designed/Renewed	November 2025
Reviewed by Principal	November 2025
Reviewed by Parents	November 2025
Reviewed by Governors	November 2025
Ratified by Governors	November 2025
Implemented	November 2025
Designed/Renewed	November 2026

Chairperson: *Elaine Thompson*

Mrs Elaine Thompson

Date: November 2025



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SCHOOL ATTENDANCE MATTERS **A Parent's Guide**





WHY ATTENDANCE AT SCHOOL IS SO IMPORTANT -

If a child of compulsory school age is registered at a school it is essential that they attend their school regularly and maintain a pattern of good attendance throughout their school career.

Excellent attendance at school is important to allow a child or young person to fulfil their potential.

Below are just some of the key reasons why it is so important children attend school:

- To learn.
- To have fun.
- To make new friends.
- To experience new things in life.
- To develop awareness of other cultures, religion, ethnicity and gender differences.
- To achieve.
- To gain qualifications.
- To develop new skills.
- To build confidence and self-esteem.
- To have the best possible start in life.



**Miss School -
Miss Out!!**



Key Point

Young people who regularly miss school without good reason are more likely to become isolated from their friends, to underachieve in examinations and/or become involved in anti-social behaviour.



WHAT THE LAW SAYS –

Under Article 45 of the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986 (“the 1986 Order”), it is the duty of parents who have a child of compulsory school age¹ to ensure their child receives efficient, full time education suitable to their age, aptitude, ability and to any special educational needs they may have. Such education may be provided by regular attendance at school or otherwise, for example home education.

Paragraph 3 (1) of Schedule 13 to the 1986 Order states that it is the duty of a parent of a registered pupil of a school to secure their regular attendance at school. This applies to all children of compulsory school age who are on the roll of a school. As a parent you are legally responsible for making this happen.

Under Part III of Schedule 13 to the 1986 Order, if a child or young person who is registered at a school does not attend regularly, a parent can receive a fine not exceeding £1,000 in court (for each child). An Education Supervision Order (ESO) could also be made by a court under Article 55 of the Children (NI) Order 1995.

Key Point

Education is not an option – it’s compulsory.

FAMILY HOLIDAYS –



You can demonstrate your commitment to your child’s education by not taking holidays during term time. Any child or young person who is absent from school due to a holiday will miss out on important learning and will fall behind with their school work.

In each Academic Year there are only a maximum of 190 statutory school days – this allows plenty of time for holidays to be arranged outside term time.

Holidays taken during term time will be categorised as an unauthorised absence.

Key Point

Avoid taking family holidays during the school term.

¹ www.deni.gov.uk/index/schools-and-infrastructure-2/admission-and-transport/pupils-and-classes/compulsory-school-age.htm



EVERY SCHOOL DAY COUNTS –

Every single day a child is absent from school equates to a day of lost learning.

Attendance percentages can be misleading.

100% Attendance	0 Days Missed	Excellent
95% Attendance	9 Days of Absence 1 Week and 4 Days of Learning Missed	Satisfactory
90% Attendance	19 Days of Absence 3 Weeks and 4 Days of Learning Missed	Poor
85% Attendance	28 Days of Absence 5 Weeks and 3 Days of Learning Missed	Very Poor
80% Attendance	38 Days of Absence 7 Weeks and 3 Days of Learning Missed	Unacceptable
75% Attendance	46 Days of Absence 9 Weeks and 1 Day of Learning Missed	Unacceptable

For some parents, 90% may seem like an acceptable level of attendance, but the reality is that 90% attendance means that your child will miss half a school day each week or 19 days of school during the school year – that’s nearly 4 school weeks.



Give your child the best start in life – every school day counts.

Appendix 2



Orritor Primary School and Nursery Unit

249 Orritor Road
Cookstown
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Principal:

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Vice Principal:

Mrs K Black BA (Hons)
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Dear,

Pupil Ref:

As Term ___ draws to a close I have been looking at pupil attendance for the whole school.

As of today, your child's attendance is ____%. I am reminding you 85% is the agreed referral to our named Education Welfare Officer.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you wish to discuss this further.

I look forward to seeing an improvement in your child's school attendance or I will have to make a referral to the Education Welfare Officer at the end of Term ____.

Yours sincerely

Mr Ian Cheevers.
(Principal of Orritor Primary School and Nursery Unit)