

St. Patrick's Primary School

Attendance Policy



Date Approved by Board of Governors: June 2025

Next Policy Review Date: June 2029

Introduction

Regular school attendance is crucial in raising standards in education and ensuring that all children have full access to the school curriculum to ensure they reach their full potential.

St Patrick's Primary School strives to promote an ethos and culture which encourages good attendance and where each pupil will feel valued and secure.

Mission Statement

'This is what we are about

We plant seeds that one day will grow.

We water seeds already planted, knowing that they hold future promise.

We lay foundations that will need further development.

We provide yeast that produces effects far beyond our capabilities.

We are prophets of a future not our own.'

Archbishop Oscar Romero

Aims

1. To improve/maintain the overall attendance of pupils at St Patrick's Primary School.
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. Mrs McSheffrey monitors pupils' attendance and reports to the principal. Teachers should bring any concerns regarding attendance to Mrs McSheffrey'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 each day.

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, which can be found at the following link

<https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/circular-202413-attendance-guidance-absence-recording-by-schools>

St Patrick's Primary School is committed to working with parents to encourage regular and punctual attendance and excellent attendance is acknowledged.

Role of the Parent/Carer

Parents/carers have a legal duty (Article 45 (1) of the Education and Libraries (NI) Order 1986) to ensure that their child of compulsory school age shall receive efficient full-time education suitable to age, ability and aptitude and to any special needs they may have, either by regular school attendance or otherwise.

Parents/carers are legally responsible for ensuring that their child regularly attends the school at which he/she is registered in.

It is the responsibility of parents/carers to inform the school of the reason for their child's absence. This should be confirmed with either a phone call on the first day of absence or a written note when the child returns to school.

Parents/carers may also complete the Absence Report Form by following the link on the school's website. If the absence is likely to be prolonged, this information should be provided to enable the school to assist with extra work or any other necessary arrangements which may be required.

At St. Patrick's Primary School pupils are expected to be in school by 8:45am for registration and the beginning of classes. It is the responsibility of the parent to ensure that his/her child is punctual. Lateness is recorded at registration on each child's attendance record.

- If your child arrives after 8:45am but before 9:15am, L (Late before registration closed) will be recorded.
- If your child arrives after 9.15am, U (Late after registration closed) will be recorded along with the time of arrival.

(See Appendix 2 for all Absence Codes used in school.)

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

Role of Pupils

Each pupil at St Patrick's Primary School must attend school punctually and regularly. If you have been absent from school, a phone call from your parent/carer on the first day of absence or a written note from your

parent/carer must be provided to your teacher when you return. Your parent/carer may also complete an Absence Report Form which is available on the school's website.

Absence Procedures

All Parents/carers are required to contact the school if their child is absent. An Absence Report Form, phone call or note to school is necessary to account for each period of absenteeism. If the school does not receive a reason for absence, then a notification form will be sent home (see Appendix 1).

Family Holidays During Term Time

St Patrick's Primary School does not condone holidays taken 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 (Code:G).

Education Welfare Service

The Education Authority (EA) through the Education Welfare Service (EWS) has a legal duty to make sure that parents meet their responsibility towards their children's education.

If a pupil's absence/punctuality causes concern or if his/her attendance falls below 85%, a referral may be made to the Education Welfare Service (EWS), if appropriate. The Education Welfare Service will support staff and parents in developing and implementing strategies to address or improve school attendance.

Monitoring Attendance

Class teachers bring any concerns they have about children's attendance to Mrs McSheffrey's attention. Mrs McSheffrey runs an Attendance Report for the whole school at the end of each calendar month showing children whose attendance has dropped below 85%. She uses this information to prepare for meeting with the Education Welfare Officer for St. Patrick's Primary School, Miss Patricia McLaughlin. At this meeting they discuss any concerns staff or parents/carers have in relation to pupils' attendance for the previous month. Any action required to address a pupil's attendance is decided at this meeting.

Appendix 1

Absence Notification Form



Dear Parent/Carer

Your child _____ was absent on _____
and we did not receive a note to explain the reason for the absence.
Please let us know why your child was absent from school
immediately.

Reason for absence

Signed: _____
Parent/Carer

Appendix 2

ABSENCE CODES: GUIDANCE FOR SCHOOLS

CODE	DESCRIPTION	STATISTICAL MEANING
/ \	Present: / = (AM); \ = (PM)	Present
A	Artistic Endeavour	Authorised Absence
B	Bereavement	Authorised Absence
C	Suspended	Authorised Absence
D	No reason provided for absence	Unauthorised Absence
G	Family Holiday (not agreed)	Unauthorised Absence
H	Other Absence	Unauthorised Absence
I1	Illness (not medical or dental appointments)	Authorised Absence
I4	Illness-Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance (EBSNA)	Authorised Absence
J	Extended Leave	Attendance not required
L	Late (before registration closed)	Present
M	Medical/Dental Appointments	Authorised Absence
N	No reason yet provided for absence (temporary code only)	Unauthorised Absence
O1	Other Exceptional Circumstances	Authorised Absence
O2	Temporary Exceptions to the Curriculum	Authorised Absence
P	Approved Activity	Approved Educational Activity
R	Religious Observance	Authorised Absence
S	Study Leave	Approved Educational Activity
U	Late (after registration closed)	Unauthorised Absence
V	Educational Visit/Examination	Approved Educational Activity
W	Work Experience	Approved Educational Activity
X	Only staff should attend	Attendance not required
Y	Exceptional Closure	Attendance not required
#	Holiday for all	Attendance not required
!*	No attendance required	Attendance not required
1	Community Providers/EOTAS (organised by the EA)	Approved Educational Activity
2	Exceptional Teaching Arrangement/hospital tuition (organised by the EA)	Approved Educational Activity
3	Elective Home Education	Attendance not Required
4	Pupil Referral Unit	Approved Educational Activity
5	Another mainstream school (under Entitlement Framework - EF)	Approved Educational Activity
6	Training Organisation (under EF)	Approved Educational Activity
7	FE College (under EF)	Approved Educational Activity
8	Intensive Support Learning Unit	Approved Educational Activity
9	CAMHS/Mental Health Support	Approved Educational Activity

Present/Approved Activity	Authorised Absence	Unauthorised Absence	Attendance not required
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Attendance and Absence Codes

The attendance codes, a brief explanation of each code and some examples can be found in this section. The codes for 'present', 'attendance not required', 'authorised absence' and 'unauthorised absence' have been grouped together for ease of reference.

Present codes:

Codes / \: Present

/ = AM

\ = PM

These codes should be used when a pupil is present during both/either of the registrations at AM or PM. If a pupil leaves the school premises after registration he/she would still be counted as present for statistical purposes, although schools should have a system in place to identify that a pupil has left during a session.

Please note if a pupil leaves after registration without an appropriate reason their present code may be changed to unauthorised absence using either code D or H.

For health and safety reasons, schools need to be aware of the whereabouts of all pupils, particularly those leaving or arriving on the premises during a session.

Dual Registration

This is when a pupil is registered in one school and attends another school. The two schools are categorised as:

1. Main school - where the pupil is originally enrolled; and
2. Subsidiary school - where the pupil has been referred to and is attending for purposes identified in codes 1 - 8.

The Main school is required to record attendance for the sessions when the pupil is attending their school and the Subsidiary school using the appropriate code. **The Main school should make arrangements with the Subsidiary school to inform them if the pupil has or has not attended.** The Subsidiary school should also record the attendance accordingly. Attendance statistics for publication will be taken from the Main school's data in the Census returns.

Present/Approved Education Activity Codes

Code L Late (before registration closed)

This code should be used when a pupil arrives late to school but before registration is closed. Schools should actively discourage late arrival. Schools should identify in their Attendance Policy how long registers are kept open. In circumstance such as bad weather transport difficulties, schools may keep the register open for a longer period.

If a pupil persistently arrives late before registration the school should address this with the parent/carer.

Code P: Approved Activity

This code should be used in the event of a pupil attending an activity which the school deem has a direct correlation to their ongoing academic or educational progression.

This code may also be used when a pupil is participating in or attending an approved sporting activity such as participation as an amateur in a school-organised sport or as a representative at county, provincial or international level.

Code V: Educational Visit/Examination

This code should be used for pupils attending school organised trips and visits, including residential trips. It may also be used for other trips of a strictly educational nature, which are arranged by external organisations, provided the school deem have a direct correlation to the pupils' ongoing academic attainment or educational advancement.

Code V can also be used for academic interview. The school should be satisfied that the interview is linked to future education such as Further & Higher Education.

This code can also be used in the event of a pupil attending a recognised examination where a correlation can be made between it and ongoing educational attainment/progression.

Code 1: Community Providers / EOTAS (organised by the EA)
(Post Primary)

This code should be used for a registered pupil who is attending a Community Provider and/or an EOTAS setting by approval of the Education Authority. This code is for pupils at Key Stage 3 & 4 only. A pupil's placement in either a Community Provider and/or an EOTAS provision must be arranged through the Education Authority.

The Main school should make arrangements with the EOTAS facility to inform them if the pupil has or has not attended. The Main school should record the attendance accordingly.

Code 2: Education Teaching Arrangement (ETA) or Hospital tuition
(organised by the EA)

This code should be used for a registered pupil who is currently being educated off-site by an ETA or in hospital under arrangements approved by the Education Authority.

The Main school should make arrangements with the ETA provider/hospital school to inform them if the pupil has or has not attended. The Main school should record the attendance accordingly.

Code 4: Pupil Referral Unit
(Primary)

This code should be used for a registered pupil who is currently being educated off-site at a Pupil Referral Unit as organised and approved by the Education Authority.

The Main school should make arrangements with the unit to inform them if the pupil has or has not attended. The Main school should record the attendance accordingly.

Code 5: Another mainstream school (under Entitlement Framework - EF)

This code should be used for a registered pupil who is currently being educated off-site at another mainstream school (under the EF). The pupil may be attending days or sessions at other post primary schools for selected courses through arrangements made under the EF.

The Main school should make arrangements with the EF school to inform them if the pupil has or has not attended. The Main school should record the attendance accordingly.

Code 6: Training Organisation (under Entitlement Framework -EF)

This code should be used for a registered pupil who is currently being educated off-site at another training organisation (under EF). Pupils attending days or sessions at a training organisation through arrangements made under the EF.

Code 7: Further Education (FE) College (Under Entitlement Framework -EF)

This code should be used for a registered pupil who is currently being educated off-site at a FE College (under the arrangements of EF).

Code 8: Intensive Support Learning Unit

This code should be used for a registered pupil who is currently being educated off-site at an Intensive Support Learning Unit (ISLU).

The Main school should make arrangements with the ISLU to inform them if the pupil has or has not attended. The Main school should record the attendance accordingly.

Code 9: CAMHS/Mental Health Support

This code should be used for a registered pupil who is currently either being educated off-site whilst an in-patient or whilst they are attending sessions at a Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) facility.

Code 9 can also be used for pupil attending other support systems organised by the Education Authority.

The Main school should make arrangements with the CAMHS facility to inform them if the pupil has or has not attended. The Main school should record the attendance accordingly.

Attendance Not Required Codes

Code J: Extended Leave

This code should only be used following approval by DE.

Extended leave is not to be considered the same as a family holiday and should only be considered in circumstances such as:

- Short-term parental placement/employment outside the UK
- Family required to leave N. Ireland for a specific complex family need such as:
 - death of a relative
 - to care for a sick relative
 - sibling or parent receiving medical treatment outside NI
 - attend to immigration matters.

The school should ensure they are content with the information provided by the parents/carers before they record the absence and the appropriate template has been completed (see link: <https://bit.ly/3yZCmOF>).

The Department will require the following documentation to be provided in support of applications where appropriate:

- An email or letter from the parent's employer confirming the dates and location of placement/employment outside N. Ireland.
- An email or letter from the hospital or clinic confirming appointment details for the individual receiving medical treatment outside N. Ireland.
- An email or letter confirming appointment details at either a passport office or a visa application centre in a country outside N. Ireland- alternatively a photocopy of the renewed documentation will suffice.
- In addition, schools may also consider asking for proof of flights booked.

If there is failure to provide the correct documentation then schools should advise the parent accordingly and should determine which other codes would be most appropriate. These can range from:

Code G-Family Holiday Not Agreed

Code H-Other Absence

All approved applications along with supporting evidence must be sent to the Department of Education via email at attendance@education-ni.gov.uk before the absence is recorded in SIMS. *The use of this code is at the discretion of the school.

Code X: Only staff should attend

This code should be used for days on which teachers are in school; however, there is no requirement for pupils to attend. For example, staff training or school development days.

Code X can be used for part session, i.e. AM or PM.

Code Y: Exceptional closure-used for unexpected/unplanned for events

This code should be used when the school has been granted permission by the Department of Education for an exceptional closure day. The Department will consider an application for a reduction in the days on which a school is in operation to take account of specific exceptional circumstance where the closing of the school is outside the control of the school authorities. Schools must not use this code unless they have applied in writing and have been granted permission to take an exceptional closure day/s by the Department's Tackling Educational Disadvantage Team at attendance@educational-ni.gov.uk.

Examples of specific exceptional closures are:

- The death of a teacher or pupil at the school
- Flooding or burst pipes at the school
- Electricity failure
- Damage to school
- Severe weather conditions e.g. heavy snowfall or
- The only exception to an exceptional closure being unexpected is when a school is being used as a polling station for parliamentary/local government elections.

Failure to seek permission may result in exceptional closure being refused.

Partial Closure

Exceptional conditions mean that part of the school is closed due to an unavoidable cause e.g. a school may operate on 2 sites with only 1 site affected.

If part of a school is closed Code Y can be used for those year groups affected **only**. (Note: In the SIMS Attendance Module this code is displayed as *Exceptional Circumstances - For all other exceptional circumstances Code O should be used*)

Code #: Holiday for all

This code should be used for school vacations where pupils and staff are not required to attend. Examples are:

- Between terms
- Half terms
- Occasional days when the whole school (including staff) are on holiday or
- Weekends.

Note: Schools may wish to check that this code is applied on SIMS from 1st August until the first day of the new academic year. If this code is not applied then the period between 1st August and the first day of the new term will otherwise show as missing marks.

Code !: No attendance required

This code should be used where attendance of a pupil or some pupils may not be required in either morning or afternoon session. It may also be used for:

- Induction days e.g. Year 8
- A pupil who is unable to attend due to adverse weather or EA provided transport failure
- When school is closed for partial day due to unforeseen issues such as power failure
- A pupil is dual registered and this code should be used by the Subsidiary school when they are not required to attend that school. It will be the responsibility of the main school to record the attendance
- In exceptional circumstances only, pupils who may, for specific reasons, have been excepted from the statutory curriculum and assessment requirements on a temporary basis (as outlined in DE Circular 1990/45: Temporary Exceptions from the Statutory Curriculum and Assessment Provisions for Individual Pupils)
- A pupil is ordered to attend court
- Industrial action or
- For pupils defined as 'Asylum Seekers and Refugees (ASR)' who have had to move place of residence at short notice and are unable to attend school due to circumstances beyond their control. Until such times as he pupil has been formally registered in a new school, schools should continue to support the pupil in line with DE Circular 2022/16. Schools are

encouraged to record 'ASR' in the notes field of the absence, where appropriate. School should review the situation after four weeks.

Code 3: Elective Home Education

This code should be used for a registered pupil whose parents/carers have elected to educate at home and have advised the school or EA of the position.

This code should be used from the date a parent/carer advises the Principal that they have decided to educate their child at home until the Principal provides a certificate of attendance (Form SA1) to the parent/carer, which states the reason for removal as "elective home education". When Form SA1 is issued, the pupil can be removed from the General Register and there will no longer be a requirement to record their attendance. The original of this form should be held by the school and, following consultation with EWS, a copy emailed to the Education Authority at ehe@eani.org.uk, a further copy given to the parents, and a leaving date inserted entered in SIMS once all relevant aspects of SA1 have been completed. Copies of the form S.A.1 can be found at: Form SA1 - Removal of a pupil from registration.

Authorised Absence Codes

Code A: Artistic Endeavour

This code should be used when a pupil is absent from school to attend an event which relates to a pupil's artistic endeavour which has not been organised through the school as part of normal school activities. However, the school is content that there is a correlation between it and the pupil's ongoing educational attainment/ progression.

Code B: Bereavement

This code should be used when a pupil is absent from school due to the death of a close relative. Death of a close relative would be parent/carer, sibling, grandparent, aunt, uncle, cousin, nephew, niece, or other relative who is a member of the household. Should the pupil have to leave the UK then please apply for use of Code J.

Code C: Suspended

This code should be used for a pupil who has been suspended for a fixed period and remains on the school register.

Code I1: Illness (Code I1 has replaced I)

This code should be used when parents/carers phone to say that their child is ill or when parents/carers send a letter after the period of illness to explain the child's absence. Parents/carers should be advised to notify the school as soon as possible when a child is ill. If a pupil is present for registration but returns home because of illness, no absence need be recorded for that session. Schools should keep a record of pupils leaving or returning to school in case of an emergency.

Schools can request parents/carers to provide medical evidence to support absence on the grounds of illness. However, they are advised not to request medical certificates unnecessarily (particularly retrospective certificates), especially if the illness was not treated by a doctor at the time. If the authenticity of illness is in doubt, schools can record the absence as 'Other Absence' (Code H) but should advise parents of its intention.

A pupil receiving medical treatment on site should be marked 'present'.

For an absence at registration due to a medical, dental or hospital appointment please see Code M for additional information.

Code I4: Illness (Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance)

The Department has become increasingly aware of cases of absence due to a range of issues which are associated with pupil emotional health and well-being.

Emotionally Bases School Non Attendance (EBSNA) refers to reduced attendance or non-attendance at school where the avoidance is driven by emotional distress. The term EBSNA does not constitute a diagnosis in its own right, but it is fair to note that it often co-occurs with diagnosable conditions such as anxiety.

There are other terms for EBSNA, including school refusal, school non-attendance , school withdrawal and school phobia.

EBSNA can present differently across individuals but can include one or a combination of the following:

- fear and anxiety (including physical symptoms)
- distress
- complaints of feeling ill without obvious cause
- reluctance to leave home
- tantrums and/or oppositional behaviour
- reluctance to transition into school/separate from parent/carer.

To allow for more accurate monitoring of this issue, the Department is introducing Code I4 'Illness (EBSNA)' to be used in cases where pupils are absent when displaying one or more of the behaviours listed above.

The code represents a period of Authorised Absence and will be regarded for monitoring and reporting purposes as an illness.

Code M: Medical/Dental Appointments

This code should be used when a pupil is absent from registration for a medical or dental appointment. If a pupil is present for registration but has a medical appointment later, no absence need be recorded for that session. Although, for

Health and Safety reasons or in case of emergency, a system must be in place to record that a pupil has either arrived at school or left the premises during the session.

If a pupil misses registration for a medical appointment, which has been notified to the school in advance, but returns to school within that session then the registration code should be changed from M to / or \ as applicable (i.e. present).

Code M should be used for the session if the school had not been notified of the appointment in advance.

Code M can be used for part session, i.e. am or pm.

Medical appointments include:

- Attendance at GP's surgery
- Attendance at a dentist's surgery or
- Hospital appointments (not a stay in hospital).

Code O1: Other exceptional circumstances (Code O1 has replaced O

This code should be used for special occasions that have been agreed at the discretion of the school or an exceptional event outside the control of the pupil. Only exceptional occasions warrant leave of absence. Schools should consider each request individually taking the following into account:

- The nature of the event
- Its frequency (is it a one-off, or likely to become a regular occurrence?)
- Whether or not the parent/carer gave advance notice or
- The pupil's overall attendance pattern.

Examples might include occasions such as attending the wedding of an immediate family member or as stated below:

Young Carers -In a genuine crisis, a school can approve absence for a child to care for a relative until other arrangements can be made.

Code O2: Temporary Exceptions to the Curriculum

This code is to be used in very specific cases where a pupil has been excepted from the statutory curriculum and assessment requirements on a temporary basis (as outlined in DE Circular 1990/45 Temporary Exemptions from the Statutory Curriculum and Assessment Provisions for Individual Pupils)

Using this code will reflect a period of Authorised Absence.

Examples where this code may be used include:

- Pupils who arrive from such different educational system that they require a period of adjustment to the curricular requirements.
- Pupils who have spells in hospital, been educated at home or been excluded from school and need time to adjust.
- Pupils who temporarily have severe emotional problems (perhaps because of a family crisis) and need special arrangements.

Settings are requested to email requests for use of this code to the Tackling Educational Disadvantage Team at attendance@education-ni.gov.uk

Code R: Religious observance

This code should be used when a pupil is absent to take part in or to attend any event deemed exclusively for religious observance by the religious body to which the partner/carer belong, including religious festivals. Parent/carer should be encouraged to give advance notice.

Unauthorised Absence Codes

Code D: No reason provided for absence

This code should be used when no reason has been provided for a pupil's absence 5 school days after the pupils return to school. Every effort should be made to establish the reason for a pupil's absence from school. During the absence and in the initial 5 school day period after the pupils' return, Code N (no reason yet provided for absence) may be used as a temporary code.

Code D should only be used in exceptional cases as a reason for absence should always be established.

Schools should be minded that unexplained absence could be deemed as a child protection/safeguarding issue.

(Note: In the SIMS Attendance Module this is displayed as - Did not provide a reason for absence.)

Code G: Family Holiday (NOT agreed)

This code should be used for a family holiday that is not agreed by the school. Examples of reasons a school would not agree a holiday would be as follows:

- A holiday that overlaps the beginning or end of term
- Where a school's prior agreement is not sought and the pupil goes on holiday or
- If a parent/carer keeps a child away for longer than was approved through the Code J application for extended leave, any extra time should be recorded as Code G or Code D as appropriate.

Code H: Other Absence

This code should be used for other absence which are not covered by any other code and where the reason is not acceptable to the school. Some examples might include: False claim of illness; Pupil's/parent's/carer's/sibling's birthday; Shopping; Having hair cut; Unable to get up.

Please note that unexplained absences should be recorded under Code N (initially) and then Code D.

Code N: No reason yet provided for absence (temporary code)

This code is a temporary code and should be only used during a pupil's absence and in the initial 5 school day period following the pupil's return to school.

This code should be used to cover an unexplained absence on a temporary basis until the pupil returns with an explanation of their reason for absence. After 5 school days following the pupil's return to school, if no explanation for the absence has been provided, the code should be changed to Code D and every effort should be made to get a reason of absence from the parents/carers.

Schools should be minded that unexplained absence could be deemed as a child protection/safeguarding issue.

Code U: Late (after registration closed)

This code should be used when a pupil arrives late to school after registration is closed with no relevant reason to code it otherwise.

For example, if a pupil arrives late (after registers have been closed) for reasons such as: they couldn't find their shoes; their school uniform was drying in the tumble dryer; their younger sibling was misbehaving etc., then code U should be used. Although, if a pupil arrives late (after registers have been closed) due to a doctor or dentist appointment, then code M would be used for the session if the school had not been notified of the appointment in advance.

Schools should actively discourage late arrival. Schools identify how long registers are kept open in their Attendance Policy. In circumstances such as bad weather or pupil transport difficulties, schools may keep the register open for a longer period.

Attendance Policy

Signed: *Mrs Siobhan Quinn* (Chairperson of Board of Governors)

Mr Ian Gallagher (Principal)

Date: 26th June 2025