"páistí a chothú, pobal a chruthú"

Attendance and Punctuality Policy

Principal: Claire Donnelly

Chairperson: Alden Henderson

Date of Last Review: December 2025

Date of Next Review: December 2028

"páistí a chothú, pobal a chruthú"

Attendance and Punctuality Policy

1. **INRODUCTION**

Regular school attendance and punctuality are extremely important, valuable learning time is lost when pupils are absent or late. Pupils need to attend regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. This is especially true in an Irish Medium setting, where regular exposure and immersion in Irish is key to language acquisition. The school's nuturing ethos demonstrates that children feel that their presence in school is important, that they are missed when they are absent or late. The school will take appropriate action, when necessary, in order to promote the aims of the policy.

2. **AIMS**

To maximise attendance of all children.

- To provide an environment which encourages regular attendance and makes attendance and punctuality a priority for all those associated at the school.
- To monitor and support children whose attendance is a cause for concern and work in partnership with parents and carers to resolve any difficulty.
- To analyse attendance data regularly to inform future policy and practice.
- To work closely and make full use of the support from the wider community including the Education Welfare Service and multi-agency teams.
- To engage in nurturing practices to promote and support good attendance.

3. **ROLES AND RESPONSIBLITIES**

<u>Responsibilities of families</u>

The responsibility for ensuring children attend school regularly and punctually rests with parents. However, where school attendance problems occur, the key to resolving these problems is engaging the child through collaborative working between the parent, the school and the EA.

Parents should:

- Ensure their children attend school regularly.
- Ensure they are punctual for school. Class learning begins at 9am.
- Ensure they are appropriately dressed and in a condition to learn.
- Comply with the attendance policy.
- Make sure their child understands the reasons for good attendance and punctuality.
- Make sure appointments are made outside of school hours wherever possible and show evidence of the appointment when it is not.
- Notify the school when their child is absent as soon as possible, preferably on the first day.
- Provide an explanation for their child's absence on their child's return to school.

Reasons for absence must be emailed to info@scoilandroichid.belfast.ni.sch.uk

- Follow the procedure for term time holidays.
- Only allow absence from school for legitimate reasons.
- Work in partnership with the school.

Responsibilities of the school

The school will:

- Have a registration system that is accurate, informative and understood.
- Analyse data regularly and identify the actions that need to be taken.
- Follow up unexplained absences promptly.
- Ensure that attendance and punctuality have a high profile in our communications with parents.
- Have clear written guidance for parents.
- Promote good attendance and punctuality for all.
- Work in partnership with families and the Educational Welfare Service.
- Inform parents of their child's attendance regularly during the school year.
- Set and monitor progress towards annual targets for attendance.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the Attendance Policy

Responsibilities of the Educational Welfare Service

The Education Welfare Service will:

- Monitor registers regularly.
- Identify pupils/families with attendance difficulties.
- Agree time limited action which needs to be taken by the school or education welfare officer.
- Feedback on the progress of cases and exchange of information.
- Issue penalty notices where applicable.
- Provide advice to the school.
- Work in partnership with the school and families.

4. SCHOOL PROCEDURES

The school uses Attendance Manager provided by SIMS to store and monitor its legal responsibilities in relationship to attendance. This system consists of specialised software and OMR sheets.

Registers are a vital legal document, and teachers are required by their contractual duties to take an attendance register at the beginning of both the morning and afternoon sessions.

Registers must be completed carefully and accurately, as they provide a record of a pupil's attendance. Failure to complete a register accurately leaves the school vulnerable to complaint from parents or carers and constitutes a risk if an emergency evacuation has to take place.

Timing of the School Day

	Start	Register taken	Register closes	Session ends
Morning Session	9:00am	9.05	Pupils are registered under the code 'l' (late) between 9:05-9:30 Pupils who arrive after 9:30am are marked under the code 'u' and this code will affect their overall % attendance.	12.00pm
R1-2 Lunch	12:00pm			12:45pm
R3-7 Lunch	12.30pm			1:15pm
R1-2 Afternoon Session	12:45			2:00
R3-7 Afternoon Session	1::15			3:00pm *2pm Friday

School opens at 8.45 – Children can play in the playground with supervision from staff

5. **ABSENCE**

(Attendance codes available in school office)

Lateness

- Pupils arriving after the register has been taken at 9.05am, will be considered late.
- Pupils arriving after 9.05am must report to the School Office so that their attendance can be recorded.
- Pupils arriving after 9.30am will be officially absent for the morning session. This will be considered an unauthorised absence unless a satisfactory reason is given, for example a medical appointment.
- Lateness is monitored and recorded on SIMS

Action to address lateness will be taken in line with the school's strategy to improve punctuality.

Illness

- Parents/carers are asked to contact the school on the first day of absence to provide the reason for the absence. Parents/carers should provide an explanation on their child's return to school.
- Where Office Staff are not made aware of the reason for a child's absence they will, wherever possible, contact parents/carers by telephone on the first day of absence.
- If any member of staff is concerned about a reason for absence, the Principal or Vice Principal should be informed.
- We promote good attendance at school but children who are too unwell to learn should not attend. The PHA have advice on when to keep your child off school (appendix. 1)

Reasons for absence must be emailed to info@scoilandroichid.belfast.ni.sch.uk

Medical or Dental Appointments

- Absence from school due to a medical or dental appointment will be considered as an authorised absence. Parents should inform the school in advance and show the letter or appointment card as evidence. Only the necessary time for the appointment for the appointment should be taken.
- Parents/carers are encouraged to make all medical appointments out of school hours.

Holidays During Term Time

- Holidays during term time are **strongly** discouraged because of the detrimental effect on education. Holidays should be taken during the school holiday periods.
- Family holidays taken during term time will be categorised as an unauthorised absence.

- If a child is going to miss school for a considerable period of time for any reason, then parents should inform the principal in writing.

Since 2020 we have seen an increase in the numbers of families removing their children from school during term time to go on holiday. We are asking families to work with us and refrain from booking term time holidays. The school will seek support from the Education Welfare Service in relation to this matter if necessary.

6. MONITORING ATTENDANCE

- Attendance is monitored regularly. The attendance monitoring file is kept by senior management.
- The Secretary will attempt to telephone families whose child is absent on the first day of absence where no reason has previously been given.
- Teachers must inform the principal when they notice patterns of absence.
- Attendance data will be collected monthly to establish patterns of irregular attendance. This will include children with incomplete weeks; Monday and Friday absences; lateness; periods of extended absence; periods of un-authorised; and all children with attendance below 90%.
  This data will be discussed with the EWO as part of the regular monthly meetings.
- The Principal and EWO will discuss the impact of the School's Attendance Policy, attendance target and the strategies used to promote good attendance annually and the principal will recommend an attendance target to the Governors.
- The Governors will set an annual target of attendance and unauthorised absence and review this annually at its first meeting.

7. REPORTING ATTENDANCE

All absences and lateness will be reported to the parents twice a year, at the Parent Teacher meetings in Term 2 and at the end of the academic year within their child's report. The secretary will produce these reports for SIMS attendance module.

In order to give parents/carers a benchmark to their child's attendance to other children in the school and nationally the following grades will be used:

100% - Excellent
98% - 99.9% - Very Good
94% - 97.9% - Good
90% - 93.9% - Satisfactory
Under 90% - Unsatisfactory

% absences are grouped into the following tiers;

Tier	Category	%	Intervention
1a	Regular Absence	Up to 5% absence	Universal strategies will be used by school to encourage good attendance for all pupils.
1b	At Risk Pupils	Up to 10% absence	Schools will implement more focused strategies to ensure attendance improves and pupils who need more support will receive it, to avoid chronic absence. This may include early letters, texts and / or offers of support.
2	Chronic Absence	Up to 20% absence	At this level, schools will introduce interventions such as action planning for the pupil, mentoring or personalised early outreach to the pupil. We will engage with our EWO through school audits and identify at an early stage, children and young people experiencing school related attendance difficulties. We aim to use a wide range of data to help inform us of what preventative measures would be helpful, so that there is a good chance that issues can be addressed before they escalate.
3	Sever Chronic Absence	More than 20% absence	At this level, specific interventions implemented by EWS in conjunction with the school are recommended, which may include interagency work and / or court action.

Parents can make an appointment with the SENCo or Principal to discuss any concerns they have regarding attendance or emotional based school avoidance. We can signpost to advice and support for EBSA via our Nurture Unit / EANI /Outside Agencies.

Educational Welfare Service

The Principal provides an attendance print out of 90% and below to assist the Educational Welfare Officer with their register check. This report is shared with the Educational Welfare Service.

Reporting To the Governing Body

The Principal's Report includes an attendance update each term.

8. PROMOTING AND SUPPORTING GOOD ATTENDANCE

Pro-active interventions for improving and maintaining attendance include;

- an engaging and supportive curriculum
- whole school nurturing approaches
- emotional health and wellbeing support – 'an cosán cuidiú' our Social & Emotional / Mental Health referral pathway
- Our revised school attendance policy
- Regular data analysis and sharing of results with the whole school
- Positive re-enforcement with pupils and parents

9. NURTURE APPROACH TO ATTENDANCE

As a nurturing school with a dedicated Nurture Unit, we recognize that attendance and punctuality are closely linked to pupils' emotional wellbeing and sense of security. Our approach is guided by the Six Principles of Nurture and aims to support children and families in overcoming barriers to regular attendance.

Key Commitments

- Relationship-Based Support
  We prioritize positive, trusting relationships with pupils and families. Attendance concerns are addressed through empathetic conversations rather than punitive measures.
- Early Identification and Intervention
  Staff monitor attendance alongside emotional wellbeing. Where patterns of absence or lateness emerge, we offer early support through nurture-based strategies such as soft starts, breakfast club, or time in the Nurture Room.
- Collaborative Problem-Solving
  We work in partnership with parents to understand underlying reasons for absence (e.g., anxiety, family stress) and agree practical solutions, including phased returns or flexible arrangements where appropriate.
- Individual Support Plans
  Pupils experiencing attendance difficulties may have a tailored plan incorporating nurture interventions, pastoral support, and multi-agency input if needed.
- Positive Reinforcement
  We celebrate small steps towards improved attendance.
- Safe Spaces and Transitions
  The school will work to find an appropriate a safe base here for pupils who find transitions challenging. Staff support gradual reintegration into class routines for those who have been absent for extended periods.
- Staff Training and Awareness
  Staff are trained in nurture principles and understand the link between attachment, trauma, and attendance. Responses to attendance issues are consistent with restorative and relational practices.

Scoil an Droichid does not present certificates of 100% attendance as rewards to children as we understand that there are, at times, legitimate reasons for absence i.e. Health. Many attendance factors are beyond the control of a child and, at primary level, are the responsibility of the parent/carer. No pupil should ever feel stressed or under pressure about their own attendance.

The aim throughout this process is to ensure all children have the best attendance possible. The school will work in partnership with parents and consider individual circumstances, applying the process accordingly. We encourage parents to reach out to us for support at anytime. We are a nurturing school and as a community as we will work together to give our children the best opportunities and educational experiences.

Do I need to keep my child off school?

HSC Public Health Agency

Chicken Pox Until all spots have crusted over	**Conjunctivitis** No need to stay off but school or nursery should be informed	**Diarrhoea & Vomiting** 48 hours from last episode	**Glandular Fever** No need to stay off but school or nursery should be informed	**Hand, foot & mouth** No need to stay off but school or nursery should be informed	**Impetigo** Until lesions are crusted & healed or 48 Hours after commencing antibiotics
Measles or German Measles 4 days from onset of rash	**Mumps** 5 days from onset of swelling	**Scabies** Until after first treatment	**Scarlet Fever** 24 hours after commencing antibiotics	**Slapped Cheek** No need to stay off but school or nursery should be informed	**Whooping Cough** 48 Hours after commencing antibiotics
	Flu Until recovered	**Head Lice** No need to stay off but school or nursery should be informed	**Threadworms** No need to stay off but school or nursery should be informed	**Tonsillitis** No need to stay off but school or nursery should be informed	