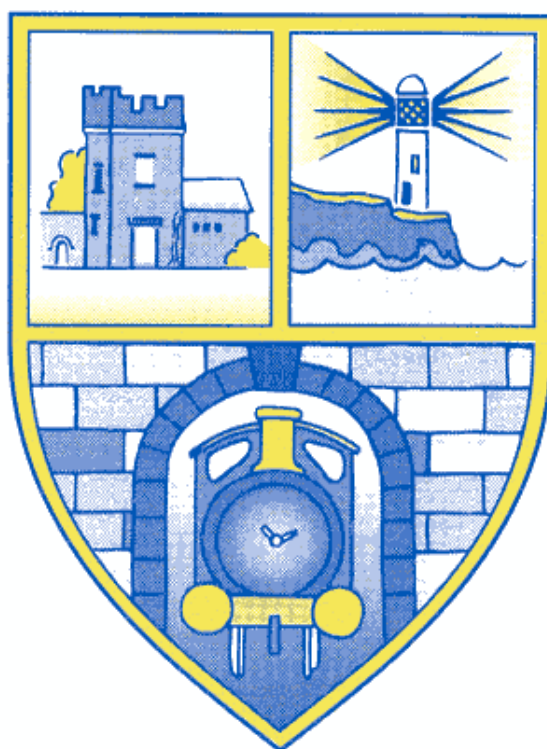


Whitehead Primary School & Nursery Unit

Valued, Inspired, Prepared



Pupil Attendance

Last Review	November 2023	Mr J Loughins
Next Review	November 2027	Mr J Loughins

Ethos, Vision & Mission

Ethos

A nurturing, inclusive environment, where everyone is valued, inspired and prepared; in order to thrive and contribute to the world.

Vision

Empowering everyone to SHINE

Mission Statements

Share

We will foster a culture of collaboration where everyone is encouraged to share ideas, time, resources and successes to build a strong, connected community.

Help

To show kindness and empathy while supporting one another, offering help when it's needed and knowing that asking for help is a strength, not a weakness.

Include

To welcome and respect everyone and, through our daily interactions, promote a sense of belonging, ensuring that every voice is heard and everyone is valued.

Nurture

To provide a happy, safe and supportive environment, where every child is nurtured emotionally, socially and academically so that they can grow into confident, resilient learners.

Excel

Through engaging high quality, meaningful learning opportunities and by setting high expectations, challenging each pupil at their level and providing constructive feedback, we will inspire every child to reach their full potential.

In Whitehead Primary School we believe that high levels of attendance and punctuality are vital components in helping pupils to have full access to the Northern Ireland Curriculum enabling them to achieve their full potential and pursue excellence.

In Whitehead Primary School we strive to promote an ethos and culture which encourages good attendance and punctuality and where each pupil will feel valued and secure.

Rationale

- To improve the overall attendance and punctuality of pupils at Whitehead Primary School.
- To develop a framework that defines roles and responsibilities in relation to pupil attendance and punctuality.
- To work in partnership with parents/carers to establish good patterns of punctuality and attendance.
- To encourage parents/carers to ensure their children are at school and on time every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.
- To keep parents/carers informed about their child's attendance and punctuality.
- To encourage children to be independent and come to school every day, on time and with the correct resources and/or equipment.
- To develop a positive reward system that encourages good pupil attendance and punctuality.
- To liaise closely with the Educational Welfare Officer with regard to attendance.

Good Attendance and Punctuality

Good attendance and punctuality are vital components in facilitating opportunities for the children to:

- Learn.
- Have fun.
- Make new friends.
- Experience new things in life.
- Develop awareness of other cultures, religion, ethnicity and gender differences.
- Achieve their full potential.
- Develop new skills.
- Build confidence and self-esteem.
- Develop the confidence to attempt new work and to learn alongside others.
- Develop good habits that will last throughout their lives.
- Have the best possible start in life.

Young people who regularly miss school without good reason are more likely to become isolated from their friends, to underachieve in their education and are at risk of becoming involved in anti-social behaviour.

Roles and Responsibilities of the Principal

- The Principal is responsible for managing pupil attendance.
- To organise incentives to promote good attendance and punctuality.
- To analyse attendance trends and to correspond with parents/carers/pupils if a problem is identified.
- To provide guidance and support to parents/carers who are having difficulty getting their child to attend school each day.
- To distribute the Miss School = Miss Out leaflet to all parents/carers at the beginning of each year to remind them of the importance of having a good pattern of attendance (<https://www.education-ni.gov.uk>).
- To send an initial letter (Appendix 1) to parents/carers of children whose attendance has dropped below 90%.
- To send a further letter to parents/carers of children whose attendance has dropped below 85% (Appendix 2).
- Should a child's attendance drop below 80% (with no acceptable explanation) the principal will engage with the parents/carers of the child, in order to further support them and in order to discuss a referral to the EWO.
- Provide an annual attendance figure for the whole school to be included in the annual school report.
- To ensure that pupil attendance is an item on the agenda at each Governors' meeting.
- Monitor punctuality and speak to parents/carers of any children who are regularly late.

Roles and Responsibilities of the Board of Governors

- To ensure that pupil attendance is an item on the agenda at every meeting.
- To support the Principal in the outworking of the Attendance Policy.

Roles and Responsibilities of Teachers

- Class teachers have an important role to play in managing attendance by marking the attendance register each day, collecting absence notes and identifying pupils with irregular attendance patterns. Teachers can speak to pupils about their attendance and to parents about their child's attendance. Teachers will discuss each child's attendance at the parent/teacher consultation in October and in February informing parents of their child's percentage attendance and the number of days they have missed. Each child's attendance will be recorded on the consultation record.
- Teachers will record an attendance percentage and the number of days missed for each child on their school report in June.
- Teachers will also promote class attendance through curriculum activities.
- When a child is regularly late,
 - Teachers will speak to their parents in the first instance, particularly if a child is late ≥ 7 times in the month of September.
 - Teachers will update parents during Parent/Teacher Consultations in October.
 - If there is no improvement in November, the teacher will refer the issue to the principal who will speak directly to the parents/carers of the child.
 - Their punctuality will continue to be monitored and the parents will be updated during the Parent/Teacher Consultations in February.

- Class teachers will record punctuality on the annual pupil report (if it continues to be an issue throughout the school year).

Roles and Responsibilities of Parents/Carers

- Contact the teacher by Seesaw on the first morning of the absence and inform the teacher the reason for and expected length of the absence.
- Keep the teacher informed if the absence is going to be more prolonged than initially anticipated.
- To provide the teacher (through Seesaw) with a written explanation for the absence on return to school.
- To arrange medical/dental appointments where possible outside school hours. If an appointment has to be made during school hours a written explanation must be provided stating clearly the time of the appointment. If a child attends an appointment during school hours a present mark is awarded providing the child returns to school for the remainder of the day.
- To inform the Principal if a pupil is reluctant to attend so that we can support the parent and the child.
- To avoid arranging holidays during term time. Parents are furnished with details of the school holidays well in advance of the beginning of the school year. The school discourages parents from taking children on holiday during term due to the impact on pupils' learning. Parents/Carers must contact the school prior to booking any holiday to explain the need to remove a pupil from school during term time. The contact should be in the form of a letter/email addressed to the Principal. Any holidays in term time are considered unauthorised absences. Children will not be given work by their teacher to complete during the holiday absence.
- To ensure that children are punctual (in school by 9.00am). Full attendance involves being present the entire school day. A record is kept of all late arrivals. If a child goes home in the morning due to illness he/she will be marked absent for the afternoon session.

Roles and Responsibilities of Pupils

It is the responsibility of pupils to:

- Attend school regularly.
- Arrive at school on time.
- Be organised and ready for school.
- Inform the teacher about any problem that may prevent them from attending school regularly and on time.

Procedures to Record and Monitor Attendance and Punctuality

Arrival and Registration

- Pupils should arrive at school between 8.45 – 9.00am and should proceed directly to class through their designated door.
- All pupils who arrive after 9.00 am will be marked as late.

Monitoring Punctuality

- Should a pupil be recorded late ≥ 7 times in September the pupil's teacher will engage with the parents/carer of that pupil.
- During Parent/Teacher Consultations in October teachers will record and update parents/carers, regarding punctuality.
- Should punctuality continue to be an issue in November the teacher will inform the principal who will contact the parents/carers directly.
- During Parent/Teacher Consultations in February teachers will once again record and update parents/carers, regarding punctuality.
- Should punctuality be an ongoing issue throughout the school year, teachers will record this on the pupil's annual report.

Monitoring Attendance

- If a teacher is concerned about a child's attendance, they should use SIMs to check attendance and if appropriate speak to the principal.
- The principal will undertake an audit of attendance in October, February & May and will update the Board of Governors.
- Based on the audit the principal will issue letters to the parents/carers of pupils whose attendance is:
 - $\leq 90\%$
 - $\leq 85\%$
- Should a pupil's attendance be $\leq 80\%$ (with no acceptable explanation) the principal will be in direct contact with the parents/carers of that pupil.
- Teachers will record and report attendance to parents/carers during Parent/Teacher Consultations in October, February and also on the annual pupil report.

Based on DE guidance (September 2022), a pupil's attendance can be described as outlined below.

Description of Attendance	Percentage	Days Missed/Month
Regular	$> 95\%$	< 1 day
At Risk	90.1 - 95%	1 – 2 days
Chronic	80.1 - 90%	2 – 3 days
Severe Chronic	$\leq 80\%$	≥ 4 days

Nursery Attendance

While we are not required to monitor Nursery, we do feel that it is very important for the children to have good attendance. With this in mind and in line with the protocol for the Primary School, we inform Nursery parents of their child's attendance during their Parent/Teacher consultation in October, February and May. In and of itself we believe that good attendance at Nursery is vitally important and furthermore we feel that developing good attendance habits will be hugely beneficial for the children as they continue their educational journey through Primary School and into Post Primary. Should a child's attendance drop below 85% the parents receive a short letter from the principal to encourage improved attendance. Please see Appendix 3.

Categorising Absence

Authorised Absence	Unauthorised Absence
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Illness▪ Unavoidable medical appointments▪ Taking part in a religious event▪ Exceptional family circumstances (eg wedding or funeral)▪ Representing their club/school/county/country in a particular event, eg sport, music, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Birthdays▪ Visiting relatives▪ Looking after other members of the family▪ A pupil is unnecessarily kept off school▪ Shopping▪ Family holiday/long weekend break▪ No written reason provided on return to school after absence.

Educational Welfare Service

The Education Authority, through the Educational Welfare Service (EWS) has a legal duty to make sure that parents/carers meet their responsibility towards their children's education. If a pupil's absence causes concern, or if their attendance falls below 80%, they will be referred to the EWS if appropriate. EWS will support staff and parents/carers in developing and implementing strategies to address or improve school attendance. The Principal will speak to the parents informing them that a referral will be made.

Incentives to Improve Attendance and Punctuality

- Children with 100% attendance in a half term will receive an attendance sticker from their teacher.
- Children with 100% attendance over a full year will receive a medal at the end of year assembly.
- Any child with full attendance over seven years will receive a book token and a trophy.

Monitoring of the Policy

The Principal, in conjunction with the staff and governors will review the policy every three years. The policy will be available on the school website.

APPENDIX 1

Dear Parent

It is school protocol, as based on DE Policy, to inform parents when their child's attendance is 90% or lower.

Your child's attendance is _____ which DE would describe as "Chronic Attendance". This means that your child is missing 2-3 days per month.

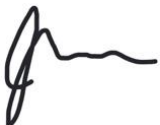
I appreciate that there are many reasons for a child's absence, some of which are very valid. This letter is merely designed to keep you informed and is sent out to all parents whose child's attendance has dropped to 90% or lower.

Should your child's attendance drop to 85% I will be in contact by letter again and I will begin to consider making a referral to the Education Welfare Officer (EWO).

Thank you for your ongoing support as we work in partnership to ensure the best outcomes for your child.

Should you need to discuss this, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours faithfully



J LOUGHINS
Principal

APPENDIX 2

Dear Parent

It is school protocol, as based on DE Policy, to inform parents when their child's attendance is 85% or lower.

Your child's attendance is _____ which DE would describe as "Chronic Attendance". This means that your child is missing 2-3 days per month.

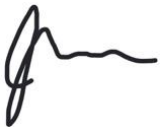
I appreciate that there are many reasons for a child's absence, some of which are very valid. This letter is merely designed to keep you informed and is sent out to all parents whose child's attendance has dropped to 85% or lower.

Should your child's attendance not show an improvement over the next month or fall to 80% or less (Severe Chronic Attendance – missing 4+ days per month) I will be in contact to discuss your child's attendance and to discuss making a referral to the Educational Welfare Officer (EWO).

Thank you for your ongoing support as we work in partnership to ensure the best outcomes for your child.

Should you need to discuss this, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours faithfully



J LOUGHINS
Principal

APPENDIX 3

Dear Parent

Attendance in Nursery is just as important as attendance in School (Y1-Y7).


Although there is no requirement upon me to track the attendance of Nursery children, I do treat the Nursery children the same as those in the school as I believe that developing good attendance habits in Nursery will stand to your child as they begin Year 1 and as they progress through school. As such, I inform Nursery parents of their child's attendance at regular intervals throughout the school year.

You are receiving this letter to inform you that your child's attendance has dropped below 85%. It is currently _____.

If your child was in Y1-Y7 DE would describe your child's attendance as chronic and it would be at this point that I would be discussing your child's attendance with the Education Welfare Officer (EWO).

I fully appreciate that there are many reasons why a child can be absent, and this letter is merely to keep you informed as there is no EWO involvement with Nursery children.

Kind regards.



J LOUGHINS

Principal