



MOUNTNORRIS PRIMARY SCHOOL

Attendance Policy

March 2023

Abstract

This Policy was created to outline the current provision for monitoring and promoting good attendance in Mountnorris Primary. It was devised in line with relevant documentation, current practice and stakeholder consultation.

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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 potential.

Our vision is to create a safe, secure and caring environment in which all children are accepted, respected and valued. Within this atmosphere we will foster a stimulating, vibrant and challenging learning environment wherein the spiritual, social, physical, intellectual and aesthetic needs of the children are met and talents are nurtured so that each one may be enabled to fulfil their potential and become enthusiastic, confident, independent young people, equipped to achieve success and contribute positively to a constantly evolving society.

Aims

In keeping with our vision, our aim at Mountnorris Primary School is to strive to promote an ethos and culture which encourages good attendance and where each pupil will feel valued and secure.

We aim:

- To improve/maintain the overall attendance of pupils at Mountnorris Primary School.
- To encourage those children with good school attendance.
- To achieve a minimum of 95% attendance for all children (except for those who have chronic health issues).
- To develop a framework that defines 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.

The Importance of Attendance:

- It is required by law.
- Children need to attend school regularly to keep up with their work and promote social development.
- A good education will give the child the best possible start in life and enable him or her to make the best of the opportunities available.
- Children need to develop good habits in readiness for later life.
- Young people who are away from school without good reason are at risk of becoming victims of crime or abuse.

Roles & Responsibilities

All members of the school community have a responsibility for identifying trends in attendance and punctuality.

The role of each pupil at Mountnorris Primary School is to attend school punctually and regularly. If a pupil has been absent from school, a written note from a parent/guardian must be provided to your teacher on the day of return ('Absence Form' available on the school website).

Parents/Carers have a legal duty and are responsible for:

- Ensuring 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.
- Ensuring 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 before 10am. This should be confirmed by completing and returning the 'Absence Form' on the school website when the pupil returns to school. 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.
- Informing the school in advance of any medical appointments during school time. For the absence to be recorded as a medical absence we do require evidence from the doctor or dentist. (Appointment card/letter)
- Making requests for authorised absence in term time, only if absolutely necessary as these are not automatically authorised.
- Talking to the school as soon as possible about any child's reluctance to come to school so that problems can be quickly identified and dealt with.

Individual class teachers are responsible for:

- Keeping an overview of class and individual attendance looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/ or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/ carers.
- Informing the Principal where there are concerns and acting upon them.
- Providing background information to support referrals.
- Monitoring follow-up once actions have been taken to correct attendance concerns.
- Emphasising with their class the importance of good attendance and promptness.
- Recording details of children who arrive late or go home.
- Following up absences with immediate requests for explanation which should be noted inside the register.
- Discussing attendance issues at Parent Teacher meetings, when necessary.

The Principal is responsible for:

- Overall monitoring of school attendance.
- Trends in authorised and unauthorised absence.
- Contacting families where concerns are raised about absence including arranging meetings to discuss attendance issues.
- Monitoring individual attendance where concerns have been raised.
- Making referrals to the Educational Welfare Service.
- Providing reports and background information to inform discussion with the school's Educational Welfare Officer.
- Informing the Governors at each meeting of any children who fall under the 95% attendance target.
- Liaising with other professionals to determine potential sources of difficulties and reasons for absence.

The secretary is responsible for:

- Collating and recording registration and attendance information on SIMs.
- Taking, recording and passing on to the Teachers messages from parents regarding absence.
- Keeping an overview of class and individual attendance looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/ or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/ carers and reporting concerns to the principal.

The Board of Governors are responsible for:

- Ensuring that the principal keeps a General Register of the pupils at the school and a Pupil Attendance Register and that appropriate action is taken to encourage good attendance at school.
- Provide support by reviewing school attendance figures and targets ensuring attendance is placed as an agenda item at each meeting.

The Education Authority through the Education Welfare Service have a legal responsibility to make sure that parents and carers meet their own responsibility towards their children's education. If they do not, the Education Authority is duty bound to use the legal processes of Court action to uphold a parent's duty to make sure that the young people in their care receive an education.

Reasonable Reasons for Absence

When can children be absent from school?

A child registered at Mountnorris Primary School can legally miss school only in very limited circumstances. These include when he or she:

- is ill.
- has an unavoidable medical or dental appointment.
- is taking part in a religious event.
- has an exceptional family circumstance, e.g. wedding or a funeral

Some unacceptable reasons for absence:

- birthdays
- visiting relatives
- shopping
- family holidays during term time
- hair appointment
- looking after other members of the family.

Please note that the above list is not exhaustive

Definitions

It is the principal's discretion as to whether a child's absence is recorded as authorised or unauthorised.

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. For example, if a child has been unwell, the parent writes a note or telephones the school to explain the absence.

Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents do not have this authority. Consequently, not all absences supported by parents will be classified as authorised. For example, if a parent takes a child out of school and gives the reason that it was to go shopping for school shoes, this will not mean it is an authorised absence.

Unauthorised absence:

An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of both the school and a parent. Therefore, the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent.

Persistent absence (PA):

The Department for Education define a 'persistent absentee' as a pupil who, at any point in the year, has accumulated absences at 10% or more of the available sessions regardless of whether or not any of it is authorised. The PA status may change as the terms progress, but these pupils are at particular risk of achieving poor outcomes at school and beyond.

Family holidays during Term Time:

Mountnorris 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. Holiday lists, for each school year, will be made available to parents/carers in the March/April of the previous year, via the school app and a copy can also be downloaded from the school website. Only in exceptional circumstances will a holiday be authorised.

Procedures for Managing Non-attendance

At Mountnorris Primary School we expect attendance of at least 95%. It is important for children to establish good attendance habits early on in their primary school career. It is the responsibility of the Principal and the Governors to support good attendance and to identify and address attendance concerns promptly.

In Mountnorris Primary School we rely upon parents to ensure their child attends school regularly and punctually. Non-attendance is an important issue that is treated seriously and therefore where there are concerns regarding attendance parents are always informed. Initially concerns about attendance are raised with parents via a telephone call, discussion or letter from either the class Teacher or Principal.

Should attendance not improve, the parent is then invited to come to meet with the Principal and Designated Teacher where there will be opportunities for them to discuss reasons for absence. Support will then be given by the school with the aim to improve attendance by identifying strategies that could be put in place via an action plan. Consideration is given to all factors affecting attendance before deciding what intervention strategies to apply. Every case is different and the school acknowledges that no one standard response will be appropriate. In every case, early intervention is essential to prevent the problem from

worsening. It is essential that parents keep the school fully informed of any matters that may affect their child's attendance.

It is hoped that a quick response and change in levels of absence will prevent the need for a referral to the Education Welfare Service (EWS).

Where a child's attendance record does not improve over a period of time, then the school has a responsibility to make a referral to the EWS. If a child is missing school without good reason, schools and the Education Authority have a number of legal powers that they can use.

The Education Welfare Service receives referrals from schools when pupils' attendance is a cause for concern or when attendance drops below 85%. The initial response to a referral of a pupil by a school to the EWS is a home visit. This provides the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) with an opportunity to assess whether the absence is condoned by parents and if they are in a position to ensure regular attendance.

The EWO will issue penalty notices to parents where there has been a referral to the EWS from the school as part of the school's processes to address poor attendance patterns. Article 45 of the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986 states that it is the duty of parents who have a child of compulsory school age to ensure their child receives efficient, full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude, ability and to any special educational needs they may have. The order also states that it is the duty of a parent of a registered pupil of a school to secure their regular attendance at school. Parents are legally responsible for making this happen. If a child or young person who is registered at school does not attend regularly, a parent can receive a fine not exceeding £1000 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.

1: School Attendance Matters – A Parent's Guide (DENI)

Promoting Good Attendance

At Mountnorris Primary School we operate a positive reward ethos and are keen to promote any success that an individual may have, including good or improving attendance and punctuality.

We use the following strategies to support and promote good attendance:

- Clear procedures for monitoring and identifying attendance and lateness patterns.
- Parents are kept informed of attendance below 90%.
- Ensure that information recorded is accurate.
- Each class has a Seesaw page, which parents can access from a range of devices in order to communicate absences with the Class Teacher.
- School Website has an 'Absence Form' which parents may complete to inform the school of the absences.
- Incentives for before and after school include a Breakfast Club and a selection of afterschool activities covering a wide-range of interests.

There are a wide range of incentives on offer for pupils in all classes. These include stickers, reward charts, class dojo points, treat boxes and certificates. Each individual child's circumstances will be taken into account in this process.

Procedures for Recording Attendance

Attendance/absence of pupils should be recorded at the beginning of the morning using class registers and Mrs Anderson (School Secretary) will transfer information from this register onto the SIMS registration software at the end of each month.

The codes contained in Appendix 1 will be used to record pupils' attendance and absence as detailed in Circular 2019/14.

Accurate records of all pupils' attendance or absence at school will be recorded diligently by teaching staff as this information may be required as evidence in cases of non-attendance being brought to court.

Schools are required by law to continue to hold copies of pupil attendance records and pupil

registration records for not less than 10 years from the date on which the register ceased to be used.

To enable our school to accurately record and monitor attendance in a consistent way we will adhere to the guidance provided in Department of Education Circulars, the most recent being 2019/14, Attendance Guidance and Absence Recording’.

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

Designed	April 2023
Reviewed by Principal	-
Reviewed by Staff	April 2023
Reviewed by Parents/Guardians	May 2023
Reviewed by Governors	April 2023
Ratified by Governors	June 2023
Implemented	June 2023
Due for Review	June 2027

Chairperson: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 1

ABSENCE CODES:

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

F Family Holiday (agreed) Authorised Absence

G Family Holiday (not agreed) Unauthorised Absence

H Other Absence Unauthorised Absence

I Illness (not medical or dental appointments) 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 Unauthorised Absence
(temporary code only)

O Other Exceptional Circumstances Authorised Absence

P Approved Sporting 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 Approved Educational Activity

W Work Experience Approved Educational Activity

X Only staff should attend Attendance not required

Y Exceptional Closure Attendance not required

* Not on roll Attendance not required

& Holiday for all Attendance not required

! No attendance required Attendance not required

1 Alternative Education Provision (organised by Approved Educational Activity by the Education Authority)

2 Home/hospital tuition (organised by the Approved Educational Activity)

3 Elective Home Education Attendance not Required

4 Pupil Referral Unit Approved Educational Activity

5 Another mainstream school (under Entitlement Approved Educational Activity)

Framework – EF)

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