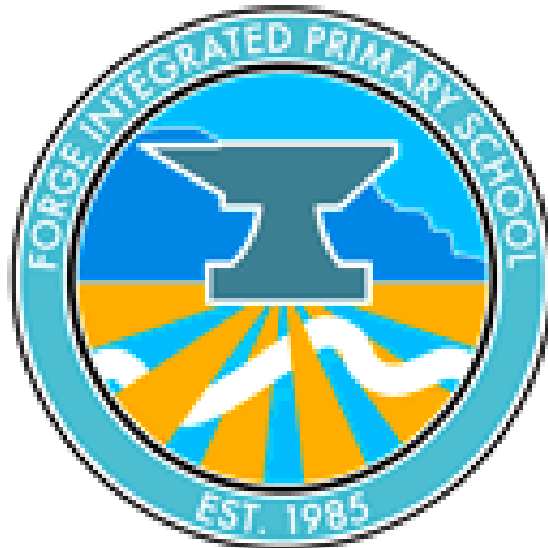


# Forge Integrated Primary School

## Attendance Policy



*Forging A Better Future Together*

**2025**

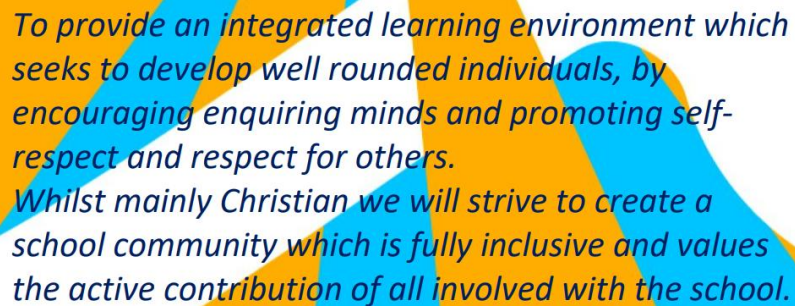
The pastoral care of our children is central to the aims, ethos and teaching programmes in Forge Integrated Primary School and we are committed to developing positive and caring attitudes in our children and staff. Our Attendance Policy is part of our collective pastoral care policies.

## 1. Rationale

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.

Forge Integrated Primary School will strive to promote an ethos and culture which encourages good attendance and where each pupil feels valued and secure.

The mission statement of Forge Integrated Primary School is:



*To provide an integrated learning environment which seeks to develop well rounded individuals, by encouraging enquiring minds and promoting self-respect and respect for others.  
Whilst mainly Christian we will strive to create a school community which is fully inclusive and values the active contribution of all involved with the school.*

## 2. Aims

The aims of the Attendance Policy are:

1. To improve/maintain the overall attendance of pupils at Forge Integrated 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.

## 3. Roles and Responsibilities

### Responsibilities of Parents:

Parents/guardians have a legal duty to ensure 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.

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 should be confirmed with a written note 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.
- ✓ Pupils are expected to be in school at 9am in the morning for registration and the beginning of classes. It is the responsibility of parents/guardians to ensure that your child is punctual. Lateness is recorded at registration and on your child's attendance record.
- ✓ Provide a reason for any lateness.
- ✓ 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.
- ✓ Keep requests for their child to be absent to a minimum.
- ✓ Take family holidays during school holiday periods and be aware that requests for holidays during term time will be refused except in exceptional circumstances
- ✓ Where necessary, work closely with the school and Education Welfare Officer (EWO) to resolve any problems that may impede a child's attendance
- ✓ Support their child and recognise their successes and achievements

### **Role and Responsibilities of Forge IPS:**

Overall responsibility for attendance on a day-to-day basis lies with the Principal. The Principal has the role, along with the Board of Governors for determining resources and staffing to deal with attendance issues, ensuring the Board of Governors are informed about attendance issues and ensuring statistical information is provided as required by government.

#### *Principal*

- ✓ liaise with the education welfare service about individual pupils
- ✓ talk to pupils with irregular attendance
- ✓ send letter to parents of pupils who are absent from school on a regular basis without explanation
- ✓ make a referral to the Education Welfare Service if improvement in attendance is not made
- ✓ collate and report attendance information
- ✓ take responsibility for overall monitoring of attendance

#### *Class Teacher*

- ✓ Provide a welcoming atmosphere
- ✓ Provide a safe learning environment
- ✓ Develop trusting relationships with all pupils
- ✓ Keep regular and accurate records of attendance and punctuality and monitor each individual child's attendance and punctuality
- ✓ Follows up on absences to:
  - *Ascertain the reason*
  - *Ensure the proper safeguarding action is taken*
  - *Identify whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised*
- ✓ Promote good attendance and punctuality and reduce absence through a system of recognition
- ✓ Inform parents of the % attendance of all pupils during Parent Teacher meetings (twice per year) and on the Annual Report
- ✓ Refer pupils to the Principal as required

- ✓ Endeavour to keep in contact with families during a prolonged or significant absence and provide support to pupils after a long absence from school

#### *Office Staff*

- ✓ Operating the SIMS system
- ✓ Taking phone messages from parents when pupils are absent
- ✓ Maintaining the late register
- ✓ Compiling lists of absentees
- ✓ Collating registration data

#### **Responsibilities of the Board of Governors:**

The Board of Governors has the ultimate responsibility for school attendance but this is delegated to on a day-to-day basis to the Principal. The Board of Governors has a responsibility to monitor school attendance and the effectiveness of the school's attendance policy and practice.

The Board of Governors is fully aware of the school's Attendance Policy.

The Principal reports to the Board of Governors about attendance issues in the school development plan. Attendance is a standing item on Board of Governor's meeting agendas.

#### **Responsibilities of the Education Authority:**

The Education Authority (EA) has a responsibility to provide education and promote regular attendance of all statutory school age children.

Through the EWO, the Education Authority provides support to schools and parents to fulfil their legal duty. The EWO is the enforcement agency of the Education Authority and as well as providing guidance and support through its officers may take a parent to court for not fulfilling their duty in relation to school attendance.

## **4. School Procedures for Recording and Monitoring Attendance**

### 4.1 Recording Attendance

The class teacher will take a register recording who is present and absent from school at **9.00am**.

Absences will be recorded onto the attendance section of SIMS and all the present pupils marked present. The offered reasons for any absences will be assessed and the appropriate code entered into the system.

If a child is absent, the parent should:

- *Contact the school on the first day of absence, by telephone; **AND***
- *Provide a **written letter** detailing the reason for absence on the first day back after absence*

A reason for a period of absence is always required. The school will contact parents who have not offered a reason and after a three week process will mark the absence as unauthorised if no reason is provided.

Sometimes a child may be reluctant to attend school. Where this is the case, we believe that effective home/school communication contributes to a solution. This will help us to identify the root cause of the reluctance to attend and plan the way forward together.

#### 4.2 Attendance Codes

A set of standard codes are used consistently within the register. These codes are input into the electronic register (SIMS) as required and are used to provide information on trends or patterns of absence.

For 2025/26, the attendance codes used will be:

/\	Present		
L	Late	U	Late after registration has closed
I1	Ill	I4	Ill – EBSNA
M	Medical appointment	B	Bereavement
R	Religious observation	A	Artistic Endeavour
P	Approved Sports	E	Educational Visit
C	Suspended	H	Other Absence
Y	Enforced Closure		
O1	Exceptional circumstances	O2	Temporary Exception to the Curriculum
J	Extended Leave (apply to EA)	G	Family Holiday (not agreed)
D	No reason		

#### Authorised Absences

From time to time children need to be absent from school for other reasons such as medical appointments. Such absences usually **only take up part of a day**.

School should be informed of such absences in writing in advance, with accompanying documents and children should be brought in to school for morning registration and back to school straight after the appointment.

Every effort, however, should be made to arrange medical appointments outside school hours. Every single day a child is absent from school equates to a day of lost learning.

Examples of authorised absences are:

- Illness
- Religious observance by the religious body to which the child's family belongs
- Absences allowed by the school. These would usually include:
  - *Medical appointments*
  - *Exclusions*
  - *Family occasions, e.g. close family wedding, bereavement etc.*
  - *Extreme family emergencies, e.g. house fires, burglaries etc.*
  - *Representing the school, county or country at an approved event*
  - *Taking music, dance or drama examinations*

### *Extended Leave*

Extended Leave allows pupils, for a maximum of two weeks only, to travel outside Northern Ireland without their attendance levels being adversely affected.

Extended Leave can be applied for in the following circumstances:

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

It is the responsibility of the family concerned to make an application to the school, outlining the reasons for the request and the proposed period of extended leave. A Request for Extended Leave form should be requested from the school office.

Each request will be considered on an individual basis, considering the circumstances for which leave is sought, the pupil's attendance (and attainment) to date, previous similar requests and whether the pupil's specific needs will be met (both personally and academically) during the proposed absence.

It is the responsibility of the family concerned to provide the following documentation to the Department in support of applications:

- An email or letter from the parent's employer confirming the dates and location of placement/employment outside the UK
- An email or letter from the hospital or clinic confirming appointment details for the individual receiving medical treatment outside Northern Ireland
- An email or letter confirming appointment details at either a passport office or a visa application centre outside Northern Ireland – alternatively a photocopy of the renewed documentation will suffice.

If there is a failure to provide the required documentation, then schools should advise the parent accordingly and should determine which other codes would be most appropriate.

Family holidays do not fall under the remit of Extended Leave.

### **Unauthorised Absences**

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given.

Examples of unauthorised absences are:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- Unexplained absences i.e. the absence has never been properly explained to school
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- Day trips or holidays in term time
- Truancy

Forge Integrated 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.

#### 4.3 Monitoring

The school will continuously monitor each child's attendance record. The Principal and the EWO will review the attendance of all the pupils on a termly basis and any pupils identified as a cause for concern or less than 85% attendance on a more regular basis.

##### **Attendance of a Pupil between 90% and 95%**

- The school will talk to the classroom teacher to establish reason for absence.
- The school may also contact the parent via telephone to discuss attendance concerns.
- The school will talk to the pupil about attendance to try to establish if there are any concerns or any support which the school can implement.
- If it is deemed appropriate, the school will send out an initial letter to parents informing them of the current percentage of attendance and stating the potential impact this might have on the pupil if it were continue to fall.

##### **Attendance of a Pupil between 86% and 90%**

- The school will talk to the classroom teacher to establish reason for absence.
- The school will contact the parent via telephone to discuss attendance concerns.
- If it is deemed appropriate, the school will send out an initial letter to parents informing them of the current percentage of attendance and stating the potential impact this might have on the pupil if it were continue to fall.
- The pupil's attendance will be closely monitored and if, after a two week period, there appears to be no improvement, the attendance of the pupil will be discussed with the EWO.
- If the pupil is involved with any other agencies, e.g. Social Services, the school will also inform them of their attendance concerns.

##### **Attendance of a Pupil at 85% or below**

- The list of children whose attendance is below 85% will be discussed with the Educational Welfare Officer on a termly basis.
- Where school's action has not resulted in improved attendance, formal referral to the Educational Welfare Service will be discussed/agreed.

This table provided in DENI guidance, 'School Attendance Matters – A Parent's Guide' gives a better understanding of how the percentage of pupil attendance over a whole school year equates to actual days of absence:

100% Attendance	0 days missed
95-99% Attendance	1-8 days of absence
95% Attendance	9 days of absence 1 week and 4 days of learning missed
90% Attendance	19 days of absence 3 weeks and 4 days of learning missed
85% Attendance	28 days of absence 5 weeks and 3 days of learning missed
80% Attendance	38 days of absence 7 weeks and 3 days of learning missed
75% Attendance	46 days of absence 9 weeks and 1 day of learning missed

## 5. School Procedures for Recording and Monitoring Punctuality

**Punctuality** to school is crucial. If your child misses the start of the day they can miss work and the time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons. This can be embarrassing for the child and can encourage absence. It is paramount therefore that all pupils arrive at school on time. The school day starts at **9.00am** and we expect all children to be **in class** at this time.

Children will be supervised in the playground from 8.45am and ready to come into school at 9.00am, when the bell rings. By this time the children should have said their goodbyes and be lined up with their class in the correct place. This creates a positive start to the school day and allows learning to commence promptly.

### 5.1 Recording Lateness

The register will be taken at 9.00am; the register will then be closed at 9.30am, this is a legal requirement.

A child arriving after 9.00am is late. This matter is initially addressed by the class teacher. If work is missed there is an expectation that this will 'made up' by the child. If a child arrives after the main school entrance door has been closed, the child's name and class will then be logged in a late book along with the reason and time.

### 5.2 Attendance Codes

A child who is late into school will have received an L code (late mark) for that day in the school register.

If a child arrives after registers have closed – for reasons not considered acceptable by the school – they will be recorded as 'Late after registers closed'. They are marked as being on site but this does not count as a present mark and will show as an unauthorised absence and affect their attendance record.

### 5.3 Monitoring

School registers and the Late Book is regularly reviewed by the Principal and patterns and frequency of lateness discussed with the Class Teacher for the purposes of addressing with parents at Parental Interviews.

In the case of highly frequent lateness the Principal will contact the parent to suggest a way forward.

The list of children who have patterns and frequency of lateness will be discussed with the Educational Welfare Officer on a termly basis.

## **6. Requests for Absences during Term Time**

Parents demonstrate their commitment to their child's education by not taking holidays during term time. Any child who is absent from school during term time due to holiday will miss out on important learning and may fall behind with their school work.

If a parent wishes to request a period of leave they are required to write to the Principal detailing the reason for absence and how the child will be supported while away and on his/her return to school.

The school does not approve of family holidays taken during term time unless this is due to exceptional circumstances. The school will NOT provide any work for children who are absent from school due to a family holiday. Work will only be provided in the case of long-term sickness, bereavement etc.

## **7. Promoting and Celebrating Good Attendance**

The school will promote good attendance and punctuality by:

- ✓ Ensuring that the curriculum is delivered within a culture of inclusion and in such a way that pupils feel that they have and can succeed
- ✓ Working with individual pupils whose attendance may be a cause for concern to set and achieve personal attendance goals
- ✓ Publishing pupil attendance figures in the annual academic report
- ✓ Providing positive reinforcement to pupils who have been absent from school for a period of time

Policy Agreed by the Board of Governors

October 2025

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(Chair of the Board of Governors)

Review Date: October 2029 or at such times as new guidance becomes available or relevant legislation is passed.