
Strathearn School

Pupil Attendance

Date of approval:	May 2025
Date for review:	May 2028
Signed: (Chair of Governors)	



Introduction

Regular School attendance is crucial in ensuring that every child can have full access to the curriculum and reach their potential. We recognise that significant absence from school can have an impact on the interpersonal and social development of a pupil. We acknowledge the correlation between good attendance and high academic achievement, and place importance on attendance and punctuality. At Strathearn School, we strive to promote an ethos and culture which encourages good attendance and where each pupil feels valued and secure.

Strathearn School adheres to the guidance provided in the Department of Education (DE) *Circular 2024/13 - Attendance Guidance and Absence Recording by Schools*.

Attendance / Absence Statistics

DE's Attendance Strategy *Miss School, Miss Out* (2016) seeks to improve pupil attendance. Through the strategy, Schools share the following data with parents:

Percentage Attendance	Days of School missed	Weeks of Learning missed	Category of Attendance
100	0	None	Excellent
95	9	1 week 4 days	Satisfactory
90	19	3 weeks 4 days	Poor
85	28	5 weeks 3 days	Very Poor
80	38	7 weeks 3 days	Unacceptable

Attendance Matters – A Parent Guide (DE)

DE developed a new approach to pupil attendance reporting using Absence Tiers in 2022. These present pupil absence statistics in a way that helps inform and support Schools, parents and pupils. Strathearn School will present attendance data using these tiers and will analyse the data regularly to implement timely and appropriate support for pupils whose attendance is unsatisfactory. The tiers are identified over:

Tier	Category of Absence	% of absence
Tier 1a	Regular Attendance	0 - 4.99
Tier 1b	At Risk	5 – 9.99
Tier 2	Chronic	10 – 19.99
Tier 3	Severe Chronic	20 +

All pupils should aim to be in Tier 1a.

Lateness statistics

Any absence from School will affect the learning and achievement of pupils. Regularly being late to School will lead to a loss of learning.

Minutes late per day	Equivalent of days lost per academic year
5	3.4 days
10	6.9 days
15	10.3 days
20	13.8 days

Aims of the policy

- To promote maximum and regular attendance;
- To provide a clear framework of the roles, responsibilities, and procedures to support attendance;
- To work in partnership with parents, pupils, and staff to understand and address barriers to attendance;
- To deliver early, constructive interventions that improve attendance before problems escalate;
- To celebrate and reward good attendance, while offering support where required; and
- To maintain strong working relationships with the Education Welfare Service and other external agencies.

Roles and Responsibilities

Board of Governors

The Board of Governors provide support by reviewing School attendance figures and targets and ensuring it is placed as an agenda item at each Curriculum and Pastoral committee meeting as well as at Full Board meetings.

Principal

The Principal has overall responsibility for School attendance.

Vice Principal Pastoral

The Vice Principal Pastoral brings issues related to pupil attendance to the Senior Leadership Team (SLT). They work with the Senior Leader (Pastoral) to monitor and intervene where the absence of specific pupils gives serious cause for concern or if attendance rates continually fall below 85% for a period of three months or more. Where such individual concerns persist, the Vice Principal will bring these to the attention of the Principal. The Vice Principal is responsible for facilitating a relevant programme of staff development designed to build the capacity of School staff to assist pupils with individual needs, e.g. social, emotional, behavioural difficulties or more specific learning needs. The Vice Principal supports the return of pupils who have had periods of long-term absence through clear strategies to help them catch up on work missed and reintegrate into the life of the School. Regular contact is maintained with parents and external agencies, where appropriate in these situations.

Senior Leader Pastoral

At the start of each academic year, the Senior Leader will ensure that clear guidance, on the coding of absences, is provided to staff. They will provide training for staff in the recording and monitoring of attendance as necessary throughout the year. In addition, they will work with the Study Supervisor and Receptionist in identifying areas of concern in attendance administration, for example, queries in relation to absence coding. The Senior Leader will monitor attendance records to ensure they are as accurate as possible. They will analyse attendance statistics on a regular basis in preparation for reports to the Board of Governors and SLT. The Senior Leader will monitor attendance on a monthly basis and provide a report to the Vice Principal and Heads of Year. The report will identify pupils using Absence Tiers. Where absences are unaccounted for, the Senior Leader will make final attempts to investigate and verify the reason for absence before deciding on any appropriate sanction or course of action. Any sanction will be administered in line with the School's Positive Behaviour Policy. The Senior Leader will also support the return of pupils who have had periods of long-term absence through clear strategies to help them catch up on work missed and reintegrate into the life of the school. The Senior Leader will raise major concerns with the Vice Principal (Pastoral). They will also inform them when a pupil's attendance falls below 85%. The Senior Leader will provide advice and support to the Heads of Year where there is significant concern about a pupil's attendance. Where appropriate, the Senior Leader works with the Head of

Year to generate, and implement, an Attendance Support Plan (ASP) where there are concerns that a pupil may become a persistent absentee.

An ASP may Include:

- Weekly check-ins with Form Tutor, Head of Year or Senior Leader;
- Clear, achievable targets for attendance improvement; and/or
- Access to School counselling, study support, or timetable adjustments, if required.

Where absence reaches a critical level, the Senior Leader will make referrals to outside agencies such as the Educational Welfare Service. A referral will be made in consultation with the parent/guardian, and the Senior Leader will maintain liaison with these agencies throughout their involvement.

Heads of Year

Heads of Year provide ongoing support to Form Tutors through advice and intervention when attendance or punctuality issues are identified. They will receive monthly attendance reports to assist in monitoring the attendance of pupils in their year group. Where appropriate, they will meet with pupils, whose attendance falls between 86 and 95%, to identify reasons for absence. Support will be provided, as necessary. The Head of Year may contact, or meet with, parents to discuss concerns relating to attendance. Where a concerning pattern of attendance, by an individual or group of pupils, is identified by the Head of Year, they will inform the Senior Leader or Vice Principal Pastoral.

Form Tutor

Form tutors have day to day oversight of attendance patterns within their form class and will address concerns with pupils and parents where appropriate. Any concerns regarding attendance should be reported to the Head of Year including when a pupil has been absent for three consecutive days.

Form Tutors record attendance using SIMS during morning registration. The register is taken at 8.50am. If a pupil is not in School at 8.50am they will be marked absent with an N code. Form tutors are provided with a record of pupils for whom a reason for absence has not been received. Upon receipt, they should ask the pupil to request a reason for absence, from their parent/guardian. Failure to provide a reason for absence will result in a sanction as outlined in the School's Positive Behaviour policy.

Pastoral Staff

The full range of pastoral staff (Form Tutor, Head of Year, SENI Department, School Health Nurse and Adult Assistants) work alongside subject teachers to provide maximum support for such pupils.

Study Supervisor

The Sixth Form Study Supervisor maintains the SIMS register for pupil attendance and ensures that any hard copy attendance registers (e.g. completed by substitute teachers) are used to update SIMS without delay. They will check the absence email account each morning and code absences in line with DE guidance (see Appendix 1). Where there is a query, concern or important information, arising from an absence email, the Study Supervisor will direct these to the most appropriate member of staff. Where a provided reason for absence is unclear, the Study Supervisor may contact the parent to seek clarity.

Staff

Staff will monitor the attendance and punctuality of pupils in all taught classes or study periods by ensuring that attendance is recorded on Lesson Monitor (SIMS). The afternoon attendance register is linked to Period 7. Where a pupil is absent from a lesson/study, and there is no code to suggest they should be absent, or where there is evidence to show they have been in School earlier in the day, the Teacher or Study Supervisor should inform Reception as soon as possible. If a teacher or Study Supervisor has a concern about a pupil's level of attendance in a class or study, they should note this concern to the pupil's Form Tutor. Teachers and the Study Supervisor can add a note on Lesson Monitor (SIMS) to identify when a pupil arrives late to class. Such issues will be followed up by the Form Tutor.

Reception staff

Late Arrival of pupil

When a pupil arrives late to School, this will be recorded on SIMS by Reception staff using the appropriate absence code and noting the time of arrival.

Pupil leaving during the School Day

Should a pupil need to leave School before 3:30pm, Reception staff will record their departure. They should check that an absence email has been received before permitting the pupil to leave. Where an absence email has not been received, Reception staff will attempt to contact the parent to confirm the reason for absence.

Pupil leaving School following assessment from School Health Nurse

Should a pupil be medically unable to remain in School, and once arrangements for collection have been made by the School, the pupil will present a signed medical card to Reception staff. They will code this on SIMS.

Pupil absence list

Reception staff will generate a pupil absence list and email to all staff no later than 10:15am each morning.

Unexplained absences

Should a pupil be absent from School and an absence email has not been received, a member of the Reception staff will contact the parent to confirm the reason for absence. Where they are successful in confirming the reason for absence, Reception staff will code the absence on

SIMS. If they are unable to confirm the reason for absence, the pupil will be given an N code on SIMS.

Parent⁺

Under the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986, parents have a legal duty to ensure their child, who is of compulsory School age, receives efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability, and aptitude and that suits any special educational needs (SEN) they may have. If a young person is registered at a School, their parents have a legal duty to ensure that they regularly attend that School.

Reporting pupil absence

If a pupil is going to be absent, their parent should inform the School on their first day of absence. The absence should be reported using the dedicated absence email: absence@strathearn.belfast.ni.sch.uk. The parent should include the pupil's surname, forename and form class in the subject field. The nature of the absence should be recorded in the main section of the email. The Department of Education requires specific reasons for absence e.g. stomach upset. Where the reason provided is unclear, clarity will be sought by the School. The expected length of absence should also be noted in the absence email. If the absence is more than three days, the parent should contact the School to allow for support arrangements to be discussed. Where an absence email has not been received, the School will endeavour to contact the parent.

It is the responsibility of the parent, and in their daughter's best interest, that they give an honest account of the reason for absence. If a pupil appears reluctant to attend School the parent should discuss the matter with their daughter's Form Tutor. In doing so, the School will endeavour to provide appropriate support.

Parents should monitor their daughter's attendance through the SIMS Parent App.

Where attendance falls below 85%, the parent will be formally notified. They may be invited to meet with a member of staff to discuss the reasons for the absence and identify appropriate support strategies within the resources available.

Reporting an absence for a medical or dental appointment

Parents should inform the School of any upcoming medical/dental appointments using the absence email: absence@strathearn.belfast.ni.sch.uk. The email should note the time the pupil is required to leave School and their expected time of return.

Punctuality

It is the responsibility of parents to ensure that their child is punctual. Pupils are expected to be in registration at 8.45am where attendance will be recorded at 8.50am. Lateness will remain on the pupil's attendance record. If a parent is aware that their daughter will be late because of an issue beyond their control, they should inform the School through the absence email : absence@strathearn.belfast.ni.sch.uk . Sanctions will be applied where a valid reason for lateness has not been received.

Pupil becoming unwell during the School day

Should a pupil become unwell during the School day, they should attend the Medical Room to be assessed by the School Health Nurse (SHN). Should the Medical Room be closed, the pupil should go to Reception. If the SHN assesses a pupil as unfit to remain in School, contact will be made by the SHN or Reception staff and collection arranged with the parent. Parents should not arrange to collect their daughter.

Pre-arranged term time absences

Any significant absence will have an effect on a pupil's social and academic development. As a result, Strathearn School discourages pre-arranged absences during term time. Such absences of significant duration, including family holidays, will be categorised as an unauthorised absence in line with DE guidance. Only in exceptional circumstances will a pre-arranged absence be authorised by the Principal. Parents are discouraged from giving other reasons for these absences as it may lead to unnecessary follow-up or intervention.

+ Parent also refers to guardian or carer

Pupil

It is important that pupils are punctual and attend School regularly. These are traits the School feels are valuable and wishes to encourage in each of our pupils. Pupils should follow the procedures outlined below regarding absence, illness and signing in and out of School.

The procedures in relation to punctuality and attendance aim to be pro-active in identifying and resolving any problems in which punctuality and attendance are potentially a factor. Strathearn School acknowledges that low attendance rates or inadequate patterns of punctuality may raise additional cause for concern about a pupil's overall wellbeing.

Form Time and Registration – 8:45 – 9:05am

Pupils should attend Form Time each morning and ensure they are registered. Form Time provides an opportunity for important information, about School life, to be shared. It provides time for pupils to settle before heading into the School day. Pupils should be in their Form Room at 8.45am. Registration will be taken at 8:50am.

Late Arrival to School

If a pupil arrives late to School, a reason must be provided even if those reasons are understandable and unavoidable. Registration closes at 8.50am and pupils arriving after this time should sign in at Reception to note their arrival at School. The pupil should then proceed to their form room, or to the relevant classroom. Failure to sign in at Reception can cause significant issues and if a pupil fails to do so they will be sanctioned in accordance with our Positive Behaviour Policy.

Leaving During the School Day

Pupils should not leave School during the day without the School's permission. The only circumstances under which a pupil should leave School is for a prearranged and authorised appointment or if the School Health Nurse is sending them home for medical reasons.

Sixth Form pupils

Sixth Form pupils may leave the School site for collaboration lessons at other Schools and when they are partaking in volunteering organised by the School. Upper Sixth pupils, who have an agreed common room period during Period 9 may go home. Pupils leaving the School site to attend collaboration lessons, volunteering or when leaving to go home, must ensure they sign out at Reception. Sixth Form pupils are also permitted to leave the School site at lunchtime. The date of commencement of the above will be communicated to the pupils and will only be once parental permissions to do so have been sought and received.

If a pupil is leaving during the School day, they should speak to a member of staff at Reception who will verify that an absence email has been received or that they are permitted to leave (Sixth Form only). If received, the pupil will then sign out. If the pupil is returning to School, they should sign in again at Reception. If an absence email has not been received, a member of staff at Reception will contact the parent for confirmation before permitting the pupil to sign out.

If a pupil is unwell during the School day, they should report to the School Health Nurse (SHN). When leaving a lesson or Study Hall, the pupil should request a Medical card from the member of staff and present this to the SHN upon arrival at the Medical Room. The SHN will then assess the pupil and determine if the pupil is fit to remain in School. If the pupil is to go home, the parent will be contacted. Pupils must not contact parents directly to arrange going home without first seeing the SHN.

Returning from Absence

Absences will occur for very many understandable reasons, but it is an unfortunate truth that any absence will result in lost learning. On their return to School, pupils should speak with their teachers and ensure that they copy up on missed work.

Educational Welfare Service

The Education Authority, through the Education Welfare Service (EWS), has a legal duty to make sure that parents meet their responsibility towards their child's education. If a pupil's absence causes concern, or if their attendance falls below 85%, they will be referred to the EWS, if appropriate. EWS will support staff and parents in developing and implementing strategies to address or improve School attendance.

Exceptional Teaching Arrangements (ETA) and Education Other than At School (EOTAS)

The Exceptional Teaching Arrangements Service (ETA) supports children and young people, including those with SEN, arising from difficulties relating to social, behavioural, emotional and wellbeing or a physical need. A referral to ETA can be made by the School if in receipt of relevant and current medical evidence.

Education Other than At School (EOTAS) is an educational provision for children and young people with social, behavioural or emotional wellbeing issues who, without its provision, would not sustain access to suitable education. A referral to EOTAS can be made by the School in consultation with an Educational Psychologist.

Promoting Full Attendance

The School strive to promote an ethos and culture which encourages good attendance. This is done through the following:

- Attendance policy is communicated to staff, pupils, and parents on an annual basis;
- Early identification of attendance issues as a result of routine analysis of attendance statistics;
- Contact with parents;
- Awarding Achievement Points to pupils where their attendance is 98% or above. Similarly, awarding Achievement Points to pupils whose attendance has improved significantly. Both are awarded termly;
- Receiving special commendations for full attendance on pupil reports;
- Recognising the significance of good attendance in appointing Positions of Responsibility in Sixth Form[^];
- Requiring that pupils, returning to Sixth Form, commit to full attendance through the signing of a Sixth Form Agreement.

[^] A pupil's attendance and punctuality record may influence the decision to award them a Position of Responsibility at Sixth Form.

Monitoring and Review

This policy will be monitored and reviewed every three years or when DE recommend an update or amendment.

Appendix 1 – Summary of Attendance Codes (August 2024)

Summary of Attendance Codes on current C2K system (Updated August 2024)				
CODE	DESCRIPTION	CODE	DESCRIPTION	
/ \	Present / = (AM); \ = (PM)	X	Only staff should attend	
A*	Artistic Endeavour	Y*	Exceptional Closure	
B*	Bereavement	#	Holiday for all	
C	Suspended	1	No attendance required	
D	No reason provided for absence	1	Community Providers / EOTAS (organised by the EA)	
F*	Family Holiday (agreed) – Do not use	2	Exceptional Teaching Arrangement / hospital	
G*	Family Holiday (not agreed)	3	Elective Home Education	
H*	Other Absence	4	Pupil Referral Unit	
I	Illness (not medical or dental appointments)	5	Another mainstream school (under Entitlement Framework – EF)	
J*	Extended Leave	6	Training Organisation (under EF)	
L*	Late (before registration closed)	7	FE College (under EF)	
M*	Medical / Dental Appointments	8	Intensive Support Learning Unit	
N	No reason yet provided for absence (temporary code only)	9	CAMHS / Mental Health Support	
O*	Other Exceptional Circumstances		COVID-19 SPECIFIC CODES – SHOULD NO LONGER BE USED	
P*	Approved Activity	(COVID-19 Illness Confirmed – must be used in situations where a pupil has tested positive for Covid-19.	
R*	Religious Observance)	COVID-19 Illness Suspected / Unconfirmed – to be used in situations where a pupil may be Covid-19 positive but this is unconfirmed.	
S*	Study Leave	{	COVID-19 Self-Isolating – Vulnerable Pupil or Household member Pupil chooses not to attend school due to own underlying health conditions or due to health conditions of other family members. If a pupil is sick, they should be recorded as such.	
U*	Late (after registration closed)	}	COVID-19 Self-Isolating - No evidence of learning from home Pupil required to self-isolate but not learning from home / evidence not provided.	
V*	Educational Visit / Examination	[COVID-19 Self-Isolating & Learning from Home Pupil required to self-isolate and learning from home – does not discount from attendance record.	
W*	Work Experience]	COVID-19 Learning from Home - Social Distancing Pupils are not required to attend physically at school due to social distancing rules, imposed by DE or school. E.g. pupils required to attend on certain days or for a certain number of hours per day. This decision must be informed by health professional advice.	
Absence Category Colour Code				
Present / Approved Educational Activity		Authorised Absence	Unauthorised Absence	Attendance not required