



# Attendance Policy

## Policy Details

| Legal Status | Adopted      | Version Date  | Last Review | Next Review | Responsible  |
|--------------|--------------|---------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|
| Statutory    | 5 March 2014 | November 2013 | N/A         | June 2017   | D McLaughlin |

## Related Documents and Location

1. Department of Education Circular No 2013/13, *Attendance Guidance and Absence Recording* – DE website [www.deni.gov.uk/](http://www.deni.gov.uk/)
2. School Improvement Plan 2012-2015 - Website and Private Folders

## **1. 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. In keeping with our Mission Statement Our Lady and St Patrick's College, Knock strives to promote an ethos and culture which encourages good attendance and where each student feels valued and secure. Good attendance is consistently recognized and rewarded through the College Merit System and at annual College and SEELB Award Ceremonies. To enable our school to record and monitor attendance in a consistent way, the College adheres to the guidance provided in the Department of Education Circular 2013/13.

## **2. Aims**

1. To improve the overall attendance of students at Our Lady and St Patrick's College, Knock. The three-year average target in the College's School Improvement Plan 2012-2015 (Action Plan 11) is 96.25%.
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 students.
4. To recognize and reward good attendance.
5. To implement strategies to improve poor attendance.
6. To promote good relationships with the Education Welfare Service.

## **3. Role of the School**

The College's Pastoral Team which includes subject teachers, Tutors, Heads of Year, Heads of School and the Vice Principal (Pastoral) has responsibility for school attendance; the Vice Principal (Pastoral) has overall responsibility for monitoring school attendance as part of the School Improvement Plan and liaising with the Education Welfare Service. Attendance is recorded by the Tutor during Morning Registration. Teaching staff regularly monitor the attendance and punctuality of students by ensuring that attendance is recorded at the beginning of every lesson on SIMS Lesson Monitor. The Student Secretary has particular responsibility for collating all attendance data on a daily basis and providing relevant reports to DENI. She also prints off attendance lists at 9.35am every morning which are used in the event of an emergency evacuation. The Board of Governors provide support by reviewing school attendance figures and targets and ensuring it is placed as an agenda item at meetings on a regular basis.

## **4. Role of Parent/Guardian**

The College is committed to working with parents/guardians to encourage regular and punctual attendance. Parents have a legal duty to ensure:

*"Every child of compulsory school age shall receive efficient full time education suitable to age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs he may have, either by regular school attendance or otherwise."* (Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986)

If a student has been absent from school a written note from a parent/guardian must be provided to the Tutor on the day the student returns stating the reason for any absence. In the event of a student being absent for three consecutive days, it is a parent/guardian's responsibility to inform the College by telephone of the reason for this absence on the third day. 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.

Students are expected to be in school at 9.20am for registration and the beginning of classes. It is the responsibility of parents/guardians to ensure that their child is punctual. Lateness is recorded at registration and recorded on a child's attendance record.

If a child appears reluctant to attend school, parents should discuss the matter promptly with the Tutor/Head of Year to ensure that both parents and students receive maximum support.

## **5. Role of Students**

Each student has a duty to ensure that he/she attends school punctually for Registration at 9.20am. He/She should attend school regularly and aim to meet or indeed exceed the College's attendance target. All students are required to follow the absence procedures outlined below.

## **6. Absence Procedures**

If a student has been absent from school a written note from a parent/guardian must be provided to the Tutor on the day he/she returns stating the reason for any absence. The Tutor will then enter the reason for this absence on Lesson Monitor using the Absence Codes in Appendix 1.

If a student arrives late to school, he/she must sign the Late Book outside the Student Office, write a reason for his/her absence and report to his/her Head of Year with a note from his/her parents.

If a student has an appointment and needs to leave school early, he/she must bring a note to his/her Head of Year/School at 9.30am and sign the Early Departure Book outside the Student Office before leaving the premises. If a student returns to the College after an appointment, he/she must sign the Late Book outside the Student Office to indicate that he/she has returned to school.

The Student Secretary has responsibility for printing off a list of Unexplained Absences to be placed in the tutor file every Tuesday.

Heads of Year are responsible for monitoring absence procedures in the respective year group and ensuring that all absences are accounted for.

## **7. Family Holidays**

Family holidays should not be taken in term time due to the adverse impact they have on students' learning. Family holidays taken during term time that are not agreed will be categorised as an unauthorised absence. Any leave of absence can only be agreed by the Principal and only exceptional circumstances will be considered. At least one month's notice in writing should be given to the Principal. In no case should students be absent during internal or public examinations.

## **8. Procedures for Managing Non-attendance**

Attendance data for each individual student and tutor group is printed off by the Student Secretary at the end of each month and is monitored by Tutors, Heads of Year and Heads of School.

Students whose attendance falls below 90% will be interviewed by their Head of Year and targets will be set for improvement. A letter (Att1) will be sent home to parents if the Head of Year deems a student has no valid reason for poor attendance. If poor attendance persists, students will be interviewed by their Head of School and a second letter (Att2) will be sent home to parents. A referral will be made to the Education Welfare Service (Att3) if attendance does not improve within an agreed timeframe.

## **9. Education Welfare Service**

Education and Library Boards through the Education Welfare Service have a legal responsibility to make sure that parents meet their responsibility towards their children's education. Regular attendance is an essential requirement for good educational outcomes and where attendance difficulties exist or a student's attendance falls below 85%, the Education Welfare Service (EWS) will support staff and parents in developing and implementing strategies to address or improve school attendance. The Vice-Principal (Pastoral) will meet with a representative from the Education Welfare Service every term.

## Appendix 1

### ABSENCE CODES: GUIDANCE FOR SCHOOLS

| CODE | DESCRIPTION  | STATISTICAL MEANING           | PAGE |
|------|--|-------------------------------|------|
| /\   | Present: / = (AM): \ = (PM)                                  | Present                       | 2    |
| A    | Artistic Endeavour   | Authorised Absence            | 3    |
| B    | Bereavement  | Authorised Absence            | 4    |
| C    | Suspended  | Authorised Absence            | 5    |
| D    | No reason provided for absence                               | Unauthorised Absence          | 6    |
| F    | Family Holiday (agreed)                                      | Authorised Absence            | 7    |
| G    | Family Holiday (not agreed)                                  | Unauthorised Absence          | 8    |
| H    | Other Absence  | Unauthorised Absence          | 9    |
| I    | Illness (not medical or dental appointments)                 | Authorised Absence            | 10   |
| L    | Late (before registration closed)                            | Present                       | 11   |
| M    | Medical/Dental Appointments                                  | Authorised Absence            | 12   |
| N    | No reason yet provided for absence<br>(temporary code only)  | Unauthorised Absence          | 13   |
| O    | Other Exceptional Circumstances                              | Authorised Absence            | 14   |
| P    | Approved Sporting Activity                                   | Approved Educational Activity | 15   |
| R    | Religious Observance   | Authorised Absence            | 16   |
| S    | Study Leave  | Approved Educational Activity | 17   |
| U    | Late (after registration closed)                             | Unauthorised Absence          | 18   |
| V    | Educational Visit  | Approved Educational Activity | 19   |
| W    | Work Experience  | Approved Educational Activity | 20   |
| X    | Only staff should attend                                     | Attendance not required       | 21   |
| Y    | Exceptional Closure  | Attendance not required       | 22   |
| *    | Not on roll  | Attendance not required       | 23   |
| #    | Holiday for all  | Attendance not required       | 24   |
| !    | No attendance required                                       | Attendance not required       | 25   |
| 1    | Alternative Education Provision (organised by the ELB)       | Approved Educational Activity | 26   |
| 2    | Home/hospital tuition (organised by the ELB)                 | Approved Educational Activity | 27   |
| 3    | Elective Home Education                                      | Attendance not Required       | 28   |
| 4    | Student Referral Unit  | Approved Educational Activity | 29   |
| 5    | Another mainstream school (under Entitlement Framework – EF) | Approved Educational Activity | 30   |
| 6    | Training Organisation (under EF)                             | Approved Educational Activity | 31   |
| 7    | FE College (under EF)  | Approved Educational Activity | 32   |
| 8    | Intensive Support Learning Unit                              | Approved Educational Activity | 33   |
| 9    | CAMHS  | Approved Educational Activity | 34   |