



PUPIL ATTENDANCE POLICY

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. Lurgan College will strive to promote an ethos and culture which encourages good attendance and where each pupil will feel valued and secure.

'Academic excellence in a caring environment'

Aims

1. To improve/maintain the overall attendance of pupils at Lurgan College to enable them to achieve their full potential.
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.

Role of the School

The Principal at Lurgan College has overall responsibility for school attendance;

The Pastoral Vice-Principal, Heads of Year and administrative staff should bring any concerns regarding school attendance to his attention.

The Board of Governors provide support by reviewing school attendance figures and targets and ensuring that it is placed as an agenda item at each meeting.

The Principal emphasises the importance of attendance and punctuality in a letter addressed to Parents in August.

House Teachers regularly monitor the attendance and punctuality of pupils in their House group by ensuring that attendance is recorded at the beginning of the morning session.

All teaching staff are responsible for recording attendance of pupils during each timetabled class throughout the school day using Lesson Monitor.

To enable our school to accurately record and monitor attendance in a consistent way we will adhere to the guidance provided in the Department of Education Circular 2015/02, which can be found at the following link:

<http://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/circular-201715-attendance-guidance-and-absence-recording-by-schools>

Role of the Senior Clerical Staff

To run the Absence Call System and ensure all information is written over to the School MIS system i.e. SIMS.

To provide Heads of Year, House Teachers and the Pastoral Vice-Principal with percentage attendance reports at the end of each month.

To inform the Head of Year when a pupil has been absent for more than 5 days in order that the home can be contacted and work set via Google Classroom / Learning Logs if required.

To prepare on a weekly basis an attendance report for Years 13 and 14 pupils for the purposes of EMA administration.

To prepare any statistics concerning attendance as required by the Headmaster.

Role of Parents

Parents 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.

**Article 45(1) of The Education and Libraries (NI) Order 1986*

If a child is registered in school, their parent has a legal duty to ensure that they regularly attend that school.

When a pupil is registered as absent, the school will send an Absence Alert Text from 07908669256 via the Absence Call System and it is a parent's responsibility to inform the school of the reason for, and if applicable, the expected duration of the pupil's absence via text reply on the first day of absence.

Pupils are expected to be in school at Lurgan College for registration and the beginning of classes. It is the responsibility of parents to ensure that your child is punctual. Lateness is recorded at registration and on your child's attendance record.

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.

Role of Pupils

Pupils are required to be punctual. They must report to House Teachers for registration no later than 9.00 am.

Those arriving at school after 9.00am - and before the start of period 1 must report immediately to the Late Room (The Study Space) and provide a reason for their lateness, which will be recorded. Poor punctuality will be dealt with in line with the Promoting Positive Policy.

Pupils arriving after the end of registration must report to the office.

Pupils may not leave the school grounds before 3.35 pm unless a parental request/absence call message from a parent/guardian has been received by the school.

All pupils must report to the School Office before signing out. If a parent request/communication has not been received, the pupil must remain in school until parents have been contacted, arrangements confirmed and permission received.

Absence Procedures

House teachers inform the Head of Year about any pupil in their House group who has had three consecutive days of absence. The Head of Year will then phone parents to establish a reason for absence unless the parent has already made contact with school.

Arrangements are made for work to be set via Google Classroom and Learning Logs if the pupil is likely to require further time off to recover from illness.

Office staff inform the Head of Year if a parent has contacted the school to report illness of their child.

Parents of those pupils whose attendance has given cause for concern (unauthorised absences / pastoral concerns) to be contacted on the first day of absence.

House Teachers encourage students to ensure parents provide a reason via text following the period of absence if this has not been forthcoming. This should be provided no later than 5 days after their period of absence from school. Failure to do so should be further investigated by the House Teacher and then reported directly to the Head of Year (if a pastoral care concern is affecting attendance) or to the Vice Principal (Pastoral) for more serious issues.

Erratic attendance or any period of absence giving cause for concern should be reported immediately to the Head of Year.

Promotion of the importance of good attendance and punctuality throughout the school

The following are some of the strategies implemented by Lurgan College to encourage good attendance and punctuality throughout the academic year:

- Pupils with 100% attendance are presented with certificates at Speech Day to recognise this achievement and promote the importance of good attendance.
- Initiative introduced to celebrate pupils with 100% attendance per term and also to recognise those students who have improved their attendance figure per term. Certificates are presented in a special Year Assembly dedicated to attendance.
- Poster campaigns to highlight the importance of good attendance and punctuality.
- Guest speaker to conduct an Assembly for Year 12 pupils on the theme of Attendance and Punctuality. Information regarding how attendance is monitored within the workplace and the procedures followed if attendance is deemed as unsatisfactory.

- Personal development period dedicated to attendance with PowerPoint presentation highlighting correlation between attendance and exam performance. Group work activities whereby students assume the role of employer and discuss how they would deal with poor attendance. Focusing pupils' attention on the fact that attendance less than 95% is unacceptable. Try to alter the perception that the percentage figure in the 80's does not equate to good attendance.
- Heads of Year are informed of % attendance for their Year Group per month. They then speak to those pupils whose attendance is giving cause for concern.
- Pastoral Vice-Principal liaises with the Education Welfare Officer as regards attendance of pupils in Years 11 and 12. Pupils whose attendance falls below 85% are referred to EWO when there is no satisfactory explanation for days missed.

Family holidays during Term Time

Lurgan College strongly discourages holidays during term time as this can have a significant impact on a pupils' learning. Family holidays taken during term time will be categorised as an unauthorised absence.

Procedures for Managing Non-attendance

If no significant improvement is evidenced after the Head of Year has spoken to a pupil whose attendance is giving cause for concern, then they will make contact with parents / guardians of a pupil to establish reason for poor attendance. Depending upon the reason cited, the Head of Year will liaise with the Pastoral Vice-Principal and decide upon the best course of action.

If a pupil is failing to attend with no valid reason for absence, then the Pastoral Vice-Principal will explain to the parent that a significant improvement must be seen during the following days / weeks at school and, if not, the Education Welfare Officer will be informed.

Education Welfare Service

The Education Authority (EA) through the Education Welfare Service (EWS) has a legal duty to make sure that parents meet their responsibility towards their children'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.

Procedures for Managing Lateness

Pupil lateness will be monitored via the Late Register, which will be taken each morning during registration in the late room (The Study Space). House Teachers and Heads of Year will be able to monitor lateness for individual pupils and/or house groups on a weekly basis as part of the House Time Schedule. Pupils who have been late on three occasions per term will be highlighted in yellow, six occasions - highlighted amber, and nine or more occasions - red. This will allow appropriate sanctions to be applied consistently as per the Promoting Positive Behaviour Policy.

The late register will be reset each term.

Review and Evaluation

This policy will be revised on an annual basis.

APPENDICES

Copies of the following are included:

Appendix 1 - Letter home to Parents regarding Family holidays during Term Time / Email template

APPENDIX 1

Date

Dear _____

Thank you for your absence communication of _____ informing the school that _____ was out of school in order to go on holiday.

While I understand that you may have genuine reasons for wishing to take your child out of school, I must point out that we have a statutory duty to discourage pupils as far as possible from taking time off during the school year. It is our experience that there is a strong correlation between pupil absence and underachievement in examinations.

I must also inform you that, in line with DE Circular 2024/13 Attendance Guidance & Absence Recording By Schools, I have no option other than to record officially such absence as 'unauthorised'.

I would also wish to emphasise that it is _____ responsibility to ensure that all work missed during the period of absence is completed at the earliest opportunity.

I trust that you will understand the school's position in relation to this matter.

Yours sincerely

W K MCCALLAN
HEADMASTER