

Our Lady and St Patrick's College, Knock



Attendance Policy for Students

Policy Details

Legal Status	Adopted	Version Date	Last Review	Next Review	Responsible
Statutory	4 th June 2025	May 2025	June 2024	June 2028	Ms McCarthy

Related Documents

1. School Development Plan
2. Child Protection/Safeguarding Policy
3. Pastoral Care Policy
4. Study Leave Policy
5. Addressing Bullying Policy
6. Educational Visits Policy
7. Special Educational Needs Policy
8. DE Circular 2024/13 (as amended) - Attendance Guidance & Absence Recording by Schools
9. DE: Miss School = Miss Out: Improving Pupil Attendance Strategy
10. DE: School Attendance Matters: A Parent's Guide

All policies are available on the College Website and Private Folders.

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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 his/her potential. In keeping with our Mission Statement, Our Lady and St Patrick's College, Knock strives to promote a school ethos and culture which values and encourages good attendance and where each student feels safe and secure. Good attendance is consistently recognised and rewarded through the Consequences and Rewards (CARE) Scheme and at annual College 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 2024/13 (as amended). This Attendance Policy for Students also reflects guidance in Miss School = Miss Out: Improving Pupil Attendance Strategy (DE, December 2016) and the documents listed on Page 8.

2. Aims

1. To maximise the attendance rate of students to ensure they reach their full potential and improve their life chances.
2. To improve the overall attendance of students as per the College's three-year average target in the School Development Plan.
3. To develop a framework that defines roles and responsibilities in relation to attendance.
4. To provide advice, support and guidance to parents/guardians and students.
5. To recognise and reward good attendance.
6. To implement strategies to improve poor attendance.
7. To promote good relationships with the Education Welfare Service.

3. Every School Day Counts

Every single day a student is absent from school equates to a day of lost learning. Attendance percentages can be misleading. The College uses statements from the Department of Education table below when reporting on student attendance, as well as data on Absence Tiers provided by the Education Authority.

100% Attendance	0 Days Missed	Excellent
95% Attendance	9 Days of Absence 1 Week and 4 Days of Learning Missed	Satisfactory
90% Attendance	19 Days of Absence 3 Weeks and 4 Days of Learning Missed	Poor
85% Attendance	28 Days of Absence 5 Weeks and 3 Days of Learning Missed	Very Poor

4. Role of the School

Improving attendance is an integral part of the College's School Development Plan. The College's Pastoral Team, which includes subject teachers, Tutors, Heads of Year, Heads of School and the Vice Principal (Pastoral Care), has responsibility for school attendance; the Vice Principal (Pastoral) has overall responsibility for monitoring school attendance as part of the School Development 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 DE. 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 provides support by reviewing school attendance figures and targets. School attendance is part of the Principal's report which is an agenda item at every meeting of the Board of Governors.

5. Role of Parent/Guardian

It is widely accepted that the attitudes of parents/guardians can have a significant impact on the school attendance levels of children. The College is, therefore, committed to working with parents/guardians to encourage regular and punctual attendance for all students.

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, parents are asked to communicate a reason on the School Gateway App on the day of absence. If the parent/guardian is aware that the absence will be extended, they should advise the College of the dates the student is likely to be absent using the 'Advise of Future Absence' facility on the School Gateway App. 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.

Parents/Guardians can view their child's attendance data on the 'Reporting' section of the School Gateway App and should contact the Tutor if they have any concern about their child's Attendance, Late Arrival or Early Departure record.

Parents/Guardians should be aware of the link between student attendance levels and their subsequent academic achievement. They should work in partnership with and support the College's Pastoral Team in order to address their child's poor attendance.

6. 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. Every student is required to set a personal attendance target at the beginning of each academic year and track his/her attendance in the Student Planner every month. All students are required to follow the Absence, Late Arrival and Early Departure Procedures as outlined below.

7. Absence Procedures

An alert will be sent to the parent/guardian each day via the School Gateway App if a student has not attended Registration, signed the Late Book or informed the school that he/she will be arriving late. It is each individual student's responsibility to sign the Late Book on his/her arrival at the College to avoid inaccurate absence alerts going home.

On receipt of a response from a parent/guardian, the Student Secretary or Tutor will then enter the reason for this absence on Lesson Monitor using the Absence Codes in Appendix 2. While the Tutor is the first point of contact for any support, it is recommended that all communication about attendance is provided via the School Gateway App. When advising the College of an absence, it is useful to provide the student's tutor group.

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

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

Annual Reports include a student's percentage attendance with a statement and College records are available to parents on request.

8. Late Arrival - Punctuality

Students who arrive late to school (after Registration has ended) must take the following steps:

- They must sign the Late Book outside the Student Office.
- They must write a reason for their absence.
- If the reason is not linked to a late arrival of a school bus they must report immediately to their Head of Year with a signed written note from their parent/guardian.
- A signed written note from a parent/guardian is not required if the parent/guardian has used the 'Advise of Future Absence' facility on the School Gateway App.
- If a student does not have a signed written note or a parent /guardian has not notified the College via the School Gateway App, the student must report to the Head of Year immediately, and again the following day with a signed written note from his/her parent/guardian.

Heads of Year are responsible for monitoring punctuality in the respective year group and ensuring that all Late Arrivals are accounted for. Heads of Year will check the Late Book throughout the day; therefore, it is essential that students sign the Late Book on arrival.

Annual Reports include a statement on a student's punctuality and College records are available to parents on request.

9. Early Departure or Feeling Unwell

Students who need permission to leave the College during the school day must not leave the College without their parents/guardians taking the following steps:

- Parents/Guardians should use the 'Advise of Future Absence' facility on the School Gateway App to communicate the time the student will be leaving the College, as well as the reason for leaving. They should also indicate if the student is returning after an appointment.
- The student must sign out in the Early Departure Book outside the Students Office before leaving the College.
- 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.
- Students who feel unwell should alert their class teacher who, if necessary, will contact the College First-Aider. Students should otherwise remain in the classroom until break/lunchtime and report to the Medical Room for assistance at the start of break/lunchtime. Students should not contact their parents prior to reporting to the Medical Room. College staff will contact parents.

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

Early Departure records are available to parents on request.

10. 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, Heads of School and the Vice Principal (Pastoral Care). Parents/Guardians can also view their child's attendance data on the 'Reporting' section of the School Gateway App. Attendance/absence responses are processed manually by the Student Secretary

every day but will only be reconciled on the School Gateway App when the system is updated at the end of the working day. The College will endeavour to respond to any absence queries from parents/guardians within 72 hours.

Early intervention is crucial to avoid the emergence of poor patterns of attendance and, on occasion, a student may require a form of tailored support to improve attendance. The College's Pastoral Team utilises a range of interventions to tackle particular barriers to attendance.

Students whose attendance falls below 90% will be interviewed by their Head of Year. The Head of Year will endeavour to determine the root cause of poor attendance and targets will be set for improvement. A letter (Att1) will be sent home to parents/guardians 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/guardians. A referral will be made to the Education Welfare Service (Att3) if attendance does not improve within an agreed timeframe.

11. Procedures for Managing Poor Punctuality/Unauthorised Early Departures

Heads of Year are responsible for monitoring absence procedures in the respective year and ensuring that all Late Arrivals/Early Departures are accounted for.

Early intervention is crucial to avoid the emergence of poor patterns of punctuality/early departure and, on occasion, a student may require a form of tailored support to improve. The College's Pastoral Team utilises a range of interventions to tackle particular barriers to attendance.

Students who arrive late to school on four occasions (with no valid reason) will be interviewed by their Head of Year. The Head of Year will endeavour to determine the root cause of poor punctuality/attendance and targets will be set for improvement. A letter (P1) will be sent home to parents/guardians if the Head of Year deems a student has no valid reason for Late Arrivals. If poor punctuality/attendance persists, students will be interviewed by their Head of School and a second letter (P2) will be sent home to parents/guardians.

Students who have a pattern of Early Departures (with no valid medical reason) will be interviewed by their Head of Year. The Head of Year will endeavour to determine the root cause for absence from class/study and targets will be set for improvement. A letter (ED1) will be sent home to parents/guardians if the Head of Year deems a student has no valid reason for Early Departures. If the pattern persists, students will be interviewed by their Head of School and a second letter (ED2) will be sent home to parents/guardians.

Students who leave the College premises early without permission from a Head of Year/School will be sanctioned in accordance with the Positive Behaviour Policy.

12. Education Welfare Service

The Education Authority through the Education Welfare Service has a legal responsibility to make sure that parents/guardians 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 Year 8-12 student's attendance falls below 85%, the Education Welfare Service (EWS) will support staff and, if appropriate, parents/guardians in developing and implementing strategies to address or improve school attendance. The Education Authority will take legal action, where appropriate, to ensure a child receives an appropriate education.

The Vice Principal (Pastoral Care) will meet with a representative from the Education Welfare Service as arranged by the Education Welfare Officer.

13. **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 will be categorised as an unauthorised absence.

14. **Procedures for Monitoring and Evaluating this Policy**

The implementation and effectiveness of this policy is monitored by means of:

- Data from SIMS Lesson Monitor;
- Feedback from Student Councils;
- Discussion at Pastoral Care Meetings;
- Consultation between Heads of School and the Vice Principal (Pastoral Care) to quantify reports of poor attendance and to monitor the impact of support given.

The Vice Principal (Pastoral Care) and Heads of School review the policy every three years to inform and support improvements in practice.

Students and parents are encouraged to contact the Vice Principal (Pastoral Care) at any time to express their views on this policy.

15. **How to Raise a Concern or Make a Complaint about the Administration of this Policy**

If you have a concern or complaint about the administration of this policy please contact Ms McCarthy, Vice Principal, in the first instance. If necessary, you may then access and follow the College's Complaints Procedure which is available on the College website at www.knock.co.uk. Should you remain dissatisfied with the College's response after completing the internal complaints procedure, you can bring your complaint to the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman within six months. Contact details for the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman are provided on Page 11 of the Complaints Procedure.

Signed: **Mr Leo O'Reilly**
(Chairperson of Board of Governors)

Date: **4th June 2025**

Signed: **Miss Deborah McLaughlin**
(Principal)

Date: **4th June 2025**

Related Documents

DE Circular 2013/09 (11/04/13) - Teaching Days and Hours of Attendance

DE: School Attendance Matters: A Parent's Guide (18/04/13)

ETI: Part One: Attendance in Schools - ETI Good Practice Report (July 2016)

DE Circular 2016/22 (17/11/16) - Guidance on the Enrolment Status of Pupils, including those Subject to SEN and EOTAS Referrals, using Dual Registration

DE: Miss School = Miss Out: Improving Pupil Attendance Strategy (December 2016)

DE Circular 2017/04 (Updated 02/09/24) - Safeguarding/Child Protection - A Guide for Schools - Update

DE Circular 2022/16 (15/11/22) - Guidance on Remote Learning

DE: Attendance at Grant-Aided Primary, Post-Primary and Special Schools in Northern Ireland - 2022/23

DE Circular 2024/12 (27/08/24) - School Exceptional Closure Days

DE Circular 2024/13 (27/08/24) - Attendance Guidance & Absence Recording by Schools

DE: Monitoring and Reporting Pupil Attendance Using Absence Tiers

Summary of Attendance Codes: Guidance for Schools

CODE	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
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 (temporary code only)	Unauthorised Absence
O*	Other Exceptional Circumstances	Authorised Absence
P*	Approved 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/Examination	Approved Educational Activity
W*	Work Experience	Approved Educational Activity
X	Only staff should attend	Attendance not required
Y*	Exceptional Closure	Attendance not required
#	Holiday for all	Attendance not required
!	No attendance required	Attendance not required
1	Community Providers/EOTAS (organised by the EA)	Approved Educational Activity
2	Exceptional Teaching Arrangement/hospital	Approved Educational Activity
3	Elective Home Education	Attendance not required
4	Pupil Referral Unit	Approved Educational Activity
5	Another mainstream school (under Entitlement Framework)	Approved Educational Activity
6	Training Organisation (under Entitlement Framework)	Approved Educational Activity
7	FE College (under Entitlement Framework)	Approved Educational Activity
8	Intensive Support Learning Unit	Approved Educational Activity
9	CAMHS/Mental Health Support	Approved Educational Activity

*The use of this code is at the discretion of the school.

DE Circular 2024/13 (27/08/24) - Attendance Guidance & Absence Recording by Schools

Summary of Attendance Codes on C2k - August 2024