

St Patrick's Academy, Dungannon



ATTENDANCE POLICY

'Achieving Excellence Together'

June 2026

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.

Saint Patrick's Academy will strive to promote an ethos and culture which encourages good attendance and where each pupil will feel valued and secure. Pupils who have 100% attendance throughout the year will receive special commendation. We recommend that attendance should not fall below 96% unless there are exceptional circumstances. In view of this we acknowledge our fundamental role in ensuring good patterns of attendance and also acknowledge parents' legal responsibility to ensure that their children attend school regularly.

Aims

1. To improve/maintain the overall attendance of pupils at St. Patrick's Academy.
2. To develop a framework that defines roles and responsibilities in relation to attendance.
3. To provide advice, support and guidance to parents/carers and pupils.
4. To promote good relationships with Education Welfare Service.

Role of the School

The Principal at St. Patrick's Academy has overall responsibility for school attendance.

Form tutors, Heads of Year, Senior Management Team and Vice Principals monitor attendance closely and should bring any concerns regarding school attendance to Mrs K Boyle's attention (Senior Teacher with responsibility for Attendance & Punctuality).

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.

Teaching staff regularly monitor the attendance and punctuality of pupils by ensuring that attendance is recorded at morning and afternoon registrations, as well as the beginning of each class throughout the day. Pupils who sign out of school before afternoon registration (Period 5 concluding at 12.15pm) will be recorded with the appropriate absence code for the afternoon session; unless they sign back in at reception, in which case they will be recorded as present.

To enable our school to record and monitor attendance in a consistent way we will adhere to the guidance provided in the Department of Education Circular 2021/16:

<https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/circular-202116-attendance-guidance-and-absence-recording-by-schools>

St. Patrick's Academy is committed to working with parents to encourage regular and punctual attendance.

Role of Parent/Carer

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)

It is a parent/carer's responsibility to inform the school of the reason for a pupil's absence on the first day of absence. If the reason for absence has not been communicated by phone; a written note should be sent with the pupil when he/she 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 the form room; or assembly hall on general assembly days, by **8.55am SHARP** for registration and the beginning of classes. It is the responsibility of parents to ensure that a child is punctual. If a pupil arrives to school after 9am they must sign in the Late Book at reception. Lateness is recorded at registration and recorded on your child's attendance record.

No pupil should be on the school premises before 8.15am or after 3.30pm unless they are involved in school business. No pupil should be in the school building after 6pm unless they are attending an extra-curricular event.

If your child appears reluctant to attend school, please discuss the matter promptly with the form teacher or HOY to ensure that both you and your child receive maximum support.

Role of Pupils

Each pupil at St. Patrick's Academy has a duty to ensure that they attend school punctually and regularly. If you are absent from school your parent should contact the school/respond to Truancy Call. If no contact has been made a written note from a parent/guardian must be provided to your form teacher when you return. Pupils who are absent from class due to an extra-curricular activity should catch up on work missed that evening. If a pupil is absent due to illness or for a pro-longed period, it is their responsibility to speak to their subject teacher and agree on a schedule for catching up on work missed with the Senior Teacher in charge. It is acknowledged by the school that this may take a period of time to complete.

Absence Procedures

- Parent/carer should contact the school before 8.50am if their child is going to be absent that day.
- If parents have not got in touch as requested then the automated call system will contact parents by phone or text on the first day of their child's absence.
- An authenticated telephone explanation from parent/guardian or voice/text response to Truancy Call will be accepted as reason for absence and forwarded directly to the school's Information Management System e.g. BROMCOM or SIMS so that the pupil's absence code can be amended accordingly. *In cases where attendance is of concern to the school, parents may be requested to submit a written record in addition to the telephone message.*
- If the reason for absence has not been communicated by phone a written note should be sent with the pupil when he/she returns to school. Failure for pupil to submit note will result in appropriate sanctions.
- A summary of phone messages/responses to Truancy Call will be e-mailed to the relevant Head of Year for follow up action as applicable the next morning.
- The school will keep attendance records for every class from Year 8-14.

- Heads of Year will receive monthly data which identifies individuals with unacceptable levels of attendance and punctuality. They will communicate this information to tutors and work with these pupils to achieve improvements.
- The school will provide parents/carers with ongoing access to their child's attendance and punctuality record through SIMS Parent App. A printed attendance record will be posted home once a year and/or on request.
- Awareness of the importance of regular attendance and punctuality will be raised through the Pastoral Care Programme.
- The school will liaise closely with parents so that school and home can work together to assist improvement e.g. through phone calls, attendance concern letters and meetings.
- The school will reward pupils who have achieved 100% attendance throughout the year.

Signing Out of School

Having been signed in on the school roll, students are expected to remain in school for the full school day.

1. Pupils are not permitted to leave the school premises during the school day without
 - a. legitimate reason*
 - b. verified approval of parent or guardian
 - c. authorisation by a senior member of staff

All three of the above are required for a pupil to be signed out from school.
A member of staff must be present when the pupil is collected and signed out.

*Legitimate reason:

There are three categories of legitimate reasons for being signed out of school:

1. Emergency situations such as pupil illness or injury, serious illness in the immediate family, bereavement in the immediate family or other crisis in the immediate family. In such situations, a senior member of staff should be consulted and the school will consider appropriate supports for the child on returning to school.
2. Approved activities; such as taking part in music, drama, sporting or other competitions.
Taking an examination external to the school in, for example, music grades, speech & Drama, university entrance examination / interview or a Driving test.
3. Essential appointments.
Emergency GP appointments.
Hospital appointments
Other medical appointments such as physiotherapy
CAMHS appointments
Dental appointments: Routine dental appointments are normally made well in advance and it is expected that these would be made outside of school hours or outside of term time.

Insofar as possible, appointments should be made outside of school hours. The school, however, understands that some of these appointments must be made during school hours. In such cases, **evidence** of the appointment (for example, an appointment card, letter of

appointment, e-mail or text message from the practice, showing the appointment), along with the parental note, should be presented to the HOY/VP a day in advance of the appointment. In the case of an emergency i.e. there was no prior notice for a pupil to bring a parental note to school either a day in advance or on the day of signing out late then a Signing Out Form will be presented when the parent/guardian arrives at reception to collect the pupil. This form should be used in emergencies only i.e. when there was no prior notice that the pupil would need to sign out early before they left to go to school that morning.

If permission is given, the HOY/VP will sign the letter which can then be shown to his/her Form Tutor. The Principal/Vice-Principal may not give a pupil permission to leave school if the number of appointments are deemed to be excessive.

Pupils who are given permission to leave school to attend an appointment must be collected by a parent/carer. Immediately before leaving, your child should go to Reception, hand the letter which was signed by HOY/VP to the Receptionist and record their name, time of departure and reason for signing out in the PERMISSIONS BOOK. The parent/carer is required to sign the Permissions book. **It is expected that the pupil will return to school after the appointment.** On return to the school, the pupil should present to reception and write the time of return in the Permissions Book so that the pupil is recorded as present for the afternoon session. If a pupil signs out before PM registration (11.40-12.15pm) and will NOT be returning to school that day; the letter from a parent/carer should state the reason why the pupil is unable to return to school e.g. travel time to appointment/appointment duration so that the appropriate code for the PM session can be applied. In so far as possible an appointment card should be presented to verify the time of appointment. (Updated to reflect DE Circular 2025/09).

Signing out of school for any reason should be a rare occurrence for any individual pupil, excepting where there are known and approved circumstances requiring regular appointments during school hours. Where a pupil is required to have a series of appointments, some of which are likely to involve signing out or signing in late, the parent is required to notify the school of this, indicating the name of the Practice that the appointments are with, the known dates and the likely timescale of the course of treatment. All information will be treated sensitively and confidentially.

The school will monitor all instances of signing out or signing in late and will refuse to allow a student to sign out if there is an unacceptable pattern of signing out or signing in late. HOYs will ring pupils with 4 or more appointments as applicable.

Should a pupil feel unwell when the nurse is unavailable, they should go the Receptionist who will send for a member of staff trained in First Aid. This staff member will assess if a parent/carer should be contacted by the office staff to collect the pupil and sign out early.

Family holidays during Term Time

St. Patrick's Academy discourages holidays during term time due to the impact they have on pupil learning. Family holidays taken during term time will be categorised as an unauthorised absence. Similarly, parents are encouraged to make medical and dental appointments outside of school hours whenever possible. It is the responsibility of the pupil to catch up on any work missed due to a family holiday.

Study leave

Study leave (Code S) will be granted at the discretion of the school, in line with DE guidance, to public examination candidates during the examination timetable. The school may decide that certain year groups/ pupils may benefit from supervised study in school rather than off site. Study facilities will be provided in school. Pupils who decide to study from home without school permission will be recorded as an unauthorised absence.

Phased return to school

Some pupils may need to return to school on a phased basis e.g. following an operation/illness. An individual plan will be agreed by school and parent/carers for the pupil's phased return and attendance codes will be applied at the discretion of the school. It is the responsibility of the pupil to speak to their subject teacher and agree on a schedule for catching up on work missed. It is acknowledged by the school that this may take a period of time to complete.

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 educational results and where attendance difficulties exist or a pupil's attendance falls below 85%, Education Welfare Service (EWS) will support staff and parents in developing and implementing strategies to address or improve school attendance.

Online Learning Procedures

In the event that pupils have been instructed by the school to work from home using Google Classroom; pupil attendance will be recorded on SIMS using a special code. This code will NOT affect a pupil's percentage attendance. If a pupil is going to be absent from school for any reason a parent/carers should follow normal school procedures i.e. ring the school in advance of the absence or respond to Truancy Call. If a parent hasn't notified the school in ADVANCE of the absence; where possible an email should be sent outlining the reason for absence **instead** of a note from home info@stpatricksacademy.dungannon.ni.sch.uk

Procedures for Managing Non-attendance at sixth form

(Some of these procedures are applicable to all year groups)

In cases where a pupil has persistently poor attendance without acceptable explanations, the following procedure will be adopted.

Weekly review of attendance by Form Tutors and passed to Head of Year



Pupils whose monthly attendance causes concern, parents/carers will receive a phone call from Tutor/ HOY/SLT detailing the days missed and emphasising the need for improvement.



If attendance remains a cause for concern there will be a phone call / letter home stating that the pupil and parent will be asked to attend a meeting in school if there is not an immediate improvement in attendance.



If attendance fails to improve the pupil will be invited with parents/carers to an attendance meeting with HOY/SLT. Strategies to bring about improvement and targets will be agreed at this meeting.



If agreed targets have not been met and attendance continues to fail to improve, pupil will be invited with parents/carers to attend a meeting before the School Attendance Panel, comprising the Principal and a member of the Board of Governors. At this meeting it will be made clear that the pupil may be removed from the school roll if he or she fails to adhere to the strategies put in place by the school to improve attendance. A review date of two school weeks will be set followed by monthly updates to the panel, which will reconvene to take further action as necessary.

Reviewed: June 2026
To be reviewed: June 2027