



Macosquin Primary School

Pupil Attendance Policy



1. Introduction

Our staff team firmly believe that 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. As a school we will strive to promote an ethos and culture which encourages good attendance and where each pupil will feel valued and secure.

Attendance is one of the biggest indicators of school success. Pupils who attend school frequently are naturally exposed to more than those who are routinely absent. By attending school regularly your child can take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them by law.

Children who are absent from school frequently develop large gaps in their learning which will impact on their progress and their ability to reach their true potential. A child whose attendance drops to 90% each year will, over their time at primary school, have missed two whole terms of learning (see **Appendix 1** for further break downs of % attendance).

Our policy applies to all children registered at this school and is made available to all parents/carers of pupils who are registered at our school on our school website www.macosquinprimary.co.uk and from the school office at any time.

This policy has been written to adhere to the relevant parts of the Education & Libraries Order 1986, Children's Order 1995, Regulations and Guidance from the Department for Education in addition to guidance from the Local Authority.

Although parents/carers have the legal responsibility for ensuring their child's good attendance, the Principal and Governors at our school work in partnership with other professionals and agencies to support pupils to develop good attendance habits. Procedures in this policy are followed to ensure this happens.

2. Aims

1. To improve/maintain the overall attendance of our pupils.
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 Education Welfare Service.

3. Definitions

Authorised absence

An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or carer. For example, if a child has been unwell and the parent telephones the school to explain the absence and a note of explanation provided. Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents do not have this authority. Consequently, not all absences supported by parents will be classified as authorised.

Unauthorised absence

An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the school. Therefore, the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent.

4. Role of the School

The Principal at Macosquin Primary has overall responsibility for school attendance; The teachers bring any concerns regarding school attendance to her attention. The Head of pastoral care support the Principal in this role.

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

Teaching staff regularly monitor the attendance and punctuality of pupils by ensuring that attendance is recorded (along with reasons for non-attendance) at the beginning of morning and afternoon registration on SIMS.

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 2015/02 which can be found at the following link.

<https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/de/Final-attendance-circular-2015.pdf>

The staff at Macosquin are committed to working with parents to encourage regular and punctual attendance. The school sends out information on the parents' role through Induction, monthly updates and the school website.

5. Role of Parent/Guardian

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/guardian's responsibility to inform the school of the reason for a pupil's absence on the first day of absence by phone call. This should be confirmed with the absence note (**Appendix 2**) when the pupil 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 school at 9.00am 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 recorded 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.

6. Role of Pupils

Each pupil at our school has a duty to ensure that they attend school punctually and regularly. If a child has been absent from school an absence note from a parent/guardian must be provided to the class teacher on their return to school.

7. Absence Procedures

If a child is absent, the parent/guardian must inform the school by ringing on the first day of the child's absence before 10am.

When parents/carers notify us of their child's absence it is important that they provide us with details of the reason for their absence. This should be confirmed with the absence note (**Appendix 2**) on return to school, these can be accessed from the website or the school office.

All absences are recorded by teachers as either authorised or unauthorised absences on the computer system SIMS (**Appendix 3**). It is important that we receive accurate information from parents with reasons for the child's absence. This information is used to determine whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised. The Principal has the responsibility to determine whether absences are authorised or unauthorised.

Where we have not received reasons for a child's absence then we send a letter requesting these details. If this letter is not completed and returned by the specified date, then the absence will be recorded as an unauthorised absence.

If no phone call has been received by the parent/guardian by 10am, the office will contact a parent/guardian of the child.

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.

Teachers monitor absence closely and liaise with the Head of Pastoral Care who will keep the Principal informed.

8. Lateness

The school doors are closed at 9.00am the only way to get into school is via the school office and front door. Any pupil who comes into school this way after 9.00am will be marked as late in the attendance record. Records are kept of those pupils who are late, this is documented on the electronic register for each pupil (Attendance code L). Any child who arrives for school later than 10.45a.m. will be marked as having an unauthorised absence for the morning. (Attendance code U).

Children who have attended a dentist or doctor's appointment and subsequently come to school later than 10.45 a.m. will have the absence recorded as a medical absence (Attendance code M) when evidence given.

Children who are persistently late miss a significant amount of learning, often the most important aspect, as the beginning of the day is where the teacher explains the learning and what each child is expected to achieve.

Where there have been persistent incidents of lateness parents/carers will receive a letter advising them of the concerns and the school will provide opportunities for parents/carers to seek support, advice to address these issues and where applicable a set period of time to improve attendance.

9. Illness

If children are off for short term illness we will not send any school work or homework home to them. If the absence (or isolation period) is likely to continue for an extended period, or be a repetitive absence, the school will provide home learning material and if required will contact the support services to see if arrangements can be made for the child to be given some home tuition outside school.

Where over the course of an academic year, a child has repeated periods of illness, the school will write to parents to ask them to provide medical evidence retrospectively and for each future period of illness related absence. This evidence could be a Doctor's note, appointment card or copy of a prescription. We may seek written permission from you for the school to make their own enquiries.

10. Family holidays during Term Time

The School discourages holidays during term time due to the impact they have on pupils' learning. Family holidays taken during term time will be categorised as an unauthorised absence. Information on holidays during term time is sent out annually to parents. Occasionally a holiday may be granted due to exceptional circumstances. Teachers do not provide work for parents during an unauthorised holiday.

11. Procedures for Managing Non-attendance

For those identified below the acceptable level, we will work with parents and if necessary the EWO to improve this. Depending on the child's condition, illness or situation the following will take place:

- Phone calls
- Letters
- Strategies to improve attendance
- Nurturing sessions
- Involvement with EWO

Initially concerns about attendance are raised with parents via phone calls and letters which are sent home. There will be opportunities for the parent/carer to discuss reasons for absence and support to be given by the school with the aim to improve attendance. Where a child's attendance record does not improve over a period of time then the school has a responsibility to make a referral to the Educational Welfare Service.

12. Promoting Pupil Attendance

We are extremely fortunate at Macosquin and have regular high attendance through our preventative ethos and communication to parents. The following ensures high attendance continues:

- Designated Teachers to monitor absence;
- All stakeholders aware of school policy through training;
- Summary and evaluation linked to School Development Plan; and
- Parents regularly informed and attendance guidance issued yearly.

13. Internet Safety

The school adopts a proactive approach to teaching pupils about being safe when on-line and communicating appropriately when engaged with social media/on-line gaming, etc. Issues with bullying are dealt with in accordance to our Anti-Bullying Policy.

14. 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.

The Education Welfare Service (EWS) will conduct a home visit and complete an initial assessment. Subsequent intervention will depend on the individual assessment of each case. Intervention may include a referral to outside agencies to support the pupil and/or family. Additionally, individual pieces of work may be completed with the pupil. The EWS will regularly meet with parents and pupil individually or at meetings until attendance is improved and sustained.

15. Monitoring and Review

Our Attendance policy outcomes are monitored and tracked continually by Staff and Governors ensuring it has a positive impact. The policy will be reviewed in consultation with all stakeholders every 3 years or if any outcome gives cause for immediate review.

16. Policy Training and Resources

All staff are expected to acquaint themselves fully with the Attendance Policy. To further ensure continued success, our whole school staff (teaching and non-teaching) receive yearly training in delivery of this policy.

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- Pastoral Care Policy
- Positive Behaviour Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Child Protection Policy
- E-Safety Policy
- Special Educational Needs Policy
- Health & Safety Policy
- PDMU Policy

17. COVID-19 Annex 2021 2022

During this period, it is vitally important that parents/carers following the guidance set out by the school in respect of illness and absence. Please refer to the latest guidance.

Pupil Attendance

We will follow the guidance on attendance for pupils who have health conditions and those who live with people with health conditions or are pregnant. It is the parents' responsibility to contact the school and inform them of any medical needs /shielding and seek advice from their medical consultants to ensure it is safe to return to school.

Schools should follow latest guidance on attendance for children and young people who have health conditions, who live with people with health conditions or who are pregnant.

- Pupils who are clinically vulnerable are those with pre-existing conditions who have been advised to stringently follow the social distancing guidelines and should learn from home where possible. A small minority of pupils will fall into this category. **Parents should contact the school to discuss.**
- Pupils who live with someone who is clinically vulnerable (but not clinically extremely vulnerable), including those who are pregnant, can attend their education or childcare setting. **No risk assessment necessary.**
- Pupils who were previously shielding (clinically extremely vulnerable people). These restrictions eased over time and as of 1 August 2020 'shielding' has been paused. Pupils should follow the guidance of their hospital consultant or General Practitioner (GP) if in doubt and **should have an individual risk assessment conducted.**
- Pupils living with someone who was previously shielding. These restrictions eased over time and as of 1 August 2020 'shielding' has been paused. Such pupils **should have an individual risk assessment conducted.**

Pupils Who Are Clinically Vulnerable

- All schools should follow the latest guidance on attendance for children and young people who have health conditions or who live with individuals who have health conditions or are pregnant. Current guidance on these categories is published on NI Direct and by PHA here. If in doubt, specific advice should be sought from a Hospital Consultant or GP.
- There will be a small number of children where medical guidance would be to refrain from school. The school should satisfy themselves, through evidence provided by the family that the pupil is shielding due to underlying medical conditions. If evidence is not received, then an unauthorised absence should be recorded.

Pupils Who Live with Someone Who is Clinically Vulnerable

- If a child or young person lives with someone who is clinically vulnerable (but not clinically extremely vulnerable as above), including those who are pregnant, they can attend their education or childcare setting. If in doubt, advice should be sought from the Hospital Consultant or GP of the clinically vulnerable person.

Pupils Who Were Shielding (clinically extremely vulnerable people)

- Advice with regard to shielding eased over time and as of 1 August 2020 'shielding' has been paused. Pupil should follow the guidance of their hospital consultant or GP if in doubt about school attendance.

- When planning for the return of pupils, education settings should consider the distance learning and support the needs of any pupils who are unable to return to school either all or some of the time.
- The most up-to-date guidance and list of underlying health conditions that necessitate shielding should be checked on the NI Direct website under the shielding section.

Pupils Who Are Living with Someone Who Was Shielding

- Pupils who have household members who were considered clinically extremely vulnerable (at high risk of severe illness and requiring 'shielding'). These restrictions eased over time and from 1 August 2020 'shielding' has been paused. Such children should have an individual **risk assessment conducted before the most appropriate place of care is determined.**

Pupil Who Develop Symptoms on Site

- If a pupil develops symptoms of COVID-19 while at school, follow the procedures set out in the flow chart in appendix 1.
- Enhanced cleaning should be carried out within any classroom in which an individual who has developed COVID-19 has been to minimise risk of the spread of the virus. This should be clearly communicated to staff, parents and pupils to provide assurance that the environment is safe.
- It is essential that all staff follow this guidance, as by doing so staff will not only protect themselves but limit the spread of the virus to educational settings and the wider population.

Recording Attendance

- Specific guidance in respect of pupil attendance whether at school or at home will be issued separately see Circular DE2020/08 on the DE website.
- Decisions regarding the recording of pupil attendance will be down to schools and the individual circumstances of each child. It may be possible for some children to continue to learn from home due to being clinically vulnerable if they are able to provide evidence of an underlying medical condition as well as learning at home. If evidence cannot be provided in terms of either the specific medical condition or that learning is not being completed then school should record attendance as an unauthorised absence (Codes D, H or N) where appropriate.

Appendix 1

ABSENCE NOTIFICATION FORM: MACOSQUIN PRIMARY SCHOOL

Please note – This form must be completed for each period of pupil absence and returned to the school immediately.

Name of pupil: _____ Class: _____

Dates of absence: _____

Reason for absence: _____

Any other comments: _____

Signed: _____ Date: _____



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Appendix 2

Every Day Counts

Help reach you full potential by raising your attendance.

Did you know that every single day you are absent from school it means a day lost learning?

What does my attendance mean?

100%	0 days missed	Excellent
95%	9 Days absence 1 week & 4 days of learning	Satisfactory
90%	19 Days absence 3 weeks & 4 days of learning missed	Poor
85%	28 days of absence 5 weeks & 3 days of learning missed	Very Poor
80%	38 days of absence 7 weeks and 3 days of learning missed	Unacceptable
75%	46 days of absence 9 weeks & 1 day of learning missed	Unacceptable

Appendix 3

School Attendance Codes

A Authorised Absence Artistic Endeavour – not organised by school	Attending speech or dancing Festival etc. sitting external music exams. Pupils should return to school after their exam/festival is finished.
B Authorised Absence Bereavement	Death of close relative or another relative who is a member of the household.
C Suspension	As per school procedures.
D Unauthorised Absence No reason for absence has been received after 5 school days following return	Good practice encouraged of telephoning school in the morning.
F Authorised Absence Family holiday due to extenuating circumstances i.e. terminal illness	Should not include: Holidays at beginning or end of term. Cheap holidays. Desired accommodation.
G Unauthorised Absence Family holiday (not due to extenuating circumstances)	Department of Education advises that parents should not normally take pupils on holidays in term time.
H Unauthorised Absence	Other absence not covered by any other code.

I	Authorised Absence Illness Please notify the school as soon as possible when a child is ill	If a pupil is present for registration but returns home because of illness, no absence need be recorded for that session.
L	Late for School Before registration closes at 9.05am	If lateness is due to the school bus, this will be acknowledged on the pupil's records. If late after registration, a 'U' will be marked.
M	Authorised Absence Medical/Dental appointments	Parents are encouraged to make appointments out of school hours for regular dental check-ups.
N	Unauthorised Absence No reason yet provided for absence	This code should be used for up to 5 days after return to school after which the code will be changed to D.
O	Authorised Absence Other exceptional circumstances	Heavy snow. Wedding overseas. Travelling for cultural reasons.
P	Marked Present Approved Educational Activity	In-school organised sport or representative at County, provincial or international level.
R	Authorised Absence Religious Observance	Absence to take part in any day set aside for exclusively for religious observance. Advance notice is encouraged.