# *ST PAUL'S HIGH SCHOOL, BESSBROOK*

**Pupil Attendance Policy**

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| **Version:** | 2 |
| **Date:** | May 2024 |
| **Review Date:** | May 2026 |

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## 1. Mission Statement

St Paul's High School is a Catholic community, committed to providing high quality education in an atmosphere of mutual respect where everyone is valued as an important member of our school family. We value the personal, moral, social and spiritual development of each student, encouraging respect for self and others including the core values of truth, kindness, integrity and compassion.

## 2. 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. We believe pupils will be happy members of the school community if they attend school every day.

The Governors and staff of St Paul's are committed to providing a full and effective education for all our pupils to ensure they achieve their full potential in all that they do. As a Catholic School, we work together to engender in our pupils' positive attitudes and behaviours based on respect for self and others. We will strive to promote an ethos and culture which encourages good attendance and where each pupil will feel valued and secure. Pupils, parents and teachers work together to maintain high standards of attendance. Our school aims to achieve good attendance by implementing a Pupil Attendance Policy within which staff, pupils, parents and the Education Welfare Service can work together in partnership.

DE's Policy for School Improvement ***'Every School a Good School'*** **April 2009;** states that every school should ensure that '***…a culture of achievement, improvement and ambition exists – with clear expectations that all pupils can and will achieve to the very best of their ability'.***

DE's Circular on ***'Attendance Guidance and Absence Recording by Schools' 2015/02*** states that ***'pupil attendance and educational achievement are inextricably linked.'***

This policy, therefore, emphasises the important link between good attendance and educational achievement. All staff have a responsibility for pupil attendance in school. The Pastoral Leader, Mrs. Mary Mc Mahon, the Whole School Attendance officer, Ms. Karina Traynor, Year Heads and Form Teachers liaise with home and other agencies about pupil's attendance when appropriate. There is also a strong link with the Educational Welfare Service, via our assigned EWO, who is an invaluable member of our Pastoral Team.

## 3. Aims

We aim to foster positive attitudes towards education and encourage pupils to value the importance of good attendance and punctuality in line with Article 29 of UNCRC ***'The role of education is to encourage children to reach their potential'.***

- To improve the overall attendance of pupils in St Paul's.
- To recognise good attendance with awards.
- To develop a framework that defines roles and responsibilities in relation to attendance.
- To promote good attendance through positive home school partnerships.

- To provide advice, support and guidance to parents/guardians and pupils.
- To promote and develop effective working relationships with the Education Welfare Service.

## 4. Objectives

- To ensure that all those involved in encouraging regular attendance and punctuality in St. Paul's, are familiar with their roles and are aware of the procedures to be followed.
- To ensure that the procedures put in place to encourage pupil attendance, are followed in a consistent and sensitive manner.

## 5. The Roles and Responsibilities of everyone involved in attendance.

**Role & Responsibilities of the Pupil**

- To be in school each day.
- To be on time for class registration at 9.00am.
- To attend weekly year group assemblies for class registration.
- To attend all classes required by his/her timetable.
- To remain in school for the full day and never leave school during the day without permission.
- To provide medical notes and/or parental notes in Pupil Planner, requesting release from school during the day.
- To get absence pro forma in Pupil Planner signed by parent/guardian, explaining any period of absence to form teacher.
- To catch up on all work missed during any absence.

**Role & Responsibilities of the Parents**

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 they may have, either by regular school attendance or otherwise'.***
**(Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986)**

The link below will give guidance on a parent's responsibility.
School attendance matters - a parent's guide (education-ni.gov.uk)

- To value the importance of a good education.
- To support the school's Pupil Attendance Policy.
- To ensure that their child is in school every day and on time.
- To use the Pupil Planner to correspond with the form teacher regarding any request for their child to leave school during the day (funeral, medical appointment).
- To use the Pupil Planner to correspond with the form teacher regarding any explanation for absence.
- To provide, where possible, an accompanying medical note in the event of absence.
- To provide information to the school if their child will be absent for a prolonged period.
- To collect work from the school if their child is off for a prolonged period.
- To take holidays during holiday time and not to book family holidays during term time.
- To arrange dental/medical appointments out of school time, where possible.

- To contact the Form Teacher or Year Head if their child is reluctant to attend school.
- To work in partnership with the school and EWS in promoting good attendance

**Role & Responsibilities of the School**

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 2023 11 for 2023 24, which can be found at the following link:
https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/education/Circular%202023%2011%20for%202023%2024%20Academic%20Year%20-%20Attendance%20Guidance%20and%20Absence%20Recording%20By%20Schools.pdf

- To implement the Pupil Attendance Policy, including a Pupil Attendance Strategy (Every Day at St Paul's Counts!).
- To have attendance included in the School Development Plan.
- To record and monitor attendance and punctuality in a consistent way in line with DE guidance (Department of Education Circular 2015/02).
- To have attendance on the agenda at each Pastoral Team and Year Group Pastoral Team meetings.
- To develop strategies to encourage good attendance.
- To contact the parent/guardian on the third consecutive day of absence or as and when required if the individual situation requires, via form teacher phone call.
- To use sanctions which will deter absences and truancy.
- To record attendance every lesson via Lesson Monitor.
- To contact parents/guardians to discuss any attendance concerns at various identified trigger points (See Pupil Attendance Strategy) (Form Teacher, Year Head, Head of Pastoral Care)
- To work in partnership with the Education Welfare Officer.
- To attend Education Strategy Meetings, as arranged by EWO.
- To provide work for the pupil if she will be off for a prolonged period (the parents must inform the school of the reason for this absence).
- To provide information on request for a pupil's attendance record to employers and other educational establishments.
- To review school attendance and targets and present to Board of Governors.

**Role & Responsibilities of the Local Authority Education Welfare Service**

Local Authorities, through the Education Welfare Service, have a legal responsibility to make sure that parents meet their responsibility towards their child'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.

## 6. Monitoring Pupil Attendance using Lesson Monitor

Staff must monitor lesson attendance using the computerised SIMS system 'Lesson Monitor'. This programme allows each class teacher to mark the attendance register at the beginning of each lesson using the following Coding System:

**ABSENCE CODES: GUIDANCE FOR SCHOOLS**

| CODE | DESCRIPTION | STATISTICAL MEANING | NOTE |
|---|---|---|---|
| **/ ** | 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 / including learning remotely from home | | 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 tuition (organised by the EA) | | Approved Educational Activity |
| **3** | Elective Home Education | | Attendance not Required |
| **4** | Pupil Referral Unit | | Approved Educational Activity |
| **5** | Another mainstream school (under Entitlement Framework – EF) | | Approved Educational Activity |
| **6** | Training Organisation (under EF) | | Approved Educational Activity |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **7** | FE College (under EF) | Approved Educational Activity |
| **8** | Intensive Support Learning Unit / shielding due to Covid-19 | Approved Educational Activity |
| **9** | CAMHS / Mental Health Support | Approved Educational Activity |

The **recommended codes** to be used **to record attendance** at St Paul's should be **/ P V W 4 7 9.**
**Absences** should be recorded using the following codes **M I N B.**

Through SIMS, the form teacher must record the pupil's attendance/absence and class teachers should follow through by using the same code (e.g., **I** if the form teacher has used this code to indicate they have been provided with a reason for the pupil's absence). A comment can be added to SIMS to indicate the nature of the illness. The form teacher must also use SIMS to note if a pupil will be leaving school during the school day, as requested by the parent. If this is a medical reason, then the class teacher must use the **M** code to acknowledge this. Code **N** is used by the form teacher, until they have been provided with a reason for the pupil's absence.

Through Lesson Monitor, teachers can check pupils' attendance from the previous lessons. A pupil should only be absent from class if the reason is an authorised one. An authorised absence will be indicated by a comment, written by the Form Teacher, on Lesson Monitor. If a pupil is absent from the current lesson, without a valid reason, the teacher will email the pupil's Form Teacher and record an **N** code in Lesson Monitor. The Form Teacher will follow up on this absence during registration, or by contacting the parent.

Form Teachers will record an **S** code (Study Leave) in Lesson Monitor for pupils who are doing Public Examinations in Years 11,12, 13 and 14 during the examination period. Study Leave (Code S) will not be used for internal examinations or in advance of the commencement of the examination timetable.

## 7. Positive Measures to Encourage Good Attendance

- Class registers will be completed accurately by staff at the beginning of each lesson.
- Form Teachers will monitor pupil's attendance through Lesson Monitor.
- Attendance will be checked by The Whole School Attendance Officer every day and Form Teachers and Year Heads will be asked to address any missing marks.
- Attendance issues will be addressed at assemblies by the Year Heads.
- Regular audits will be carried out and meetings with parents are arranged, where necessary.
- After each audit, if a pupil's attendance is 85% or below, a letter 1 (or 2, if letter 1 has already been sent), will be sent out on The Parent App, by the Whole school attendance Officer.
- If mediation, by the school, to encourage attendance has failed, a referral may be made, by the Whole School attendance officer, to the EWO. A parental meeting will be sought at this stage and home visits may follow.
- Attendance Awards will be given out, at yearly Key Stage 3, GCSE, A Level Prize giving Ceremonies.

- A very good attendance record will merit a positive and supportive reference to future employers and other educational establishments.

## 8. Punctuality/Lateness

St Paul's places a great deal of importance on the need for all pupils to be punctual and to arrive in school on time. It makes for a good start to the school day and does not interrupt the learning and teaching in the classroom. Any pupil who arrives late to school **must** immediately go to the assigned member of office staff to get registered and then make their way to class. This will be recorded as a code **L** (present, but late) in Lesson Monitor.

Pupils who come to school late on a regular basis in any one week (without a valid reason) will be monitored by their Form Teacher. If the lateness continues the pupil's Form Teacher will contact the parent/guardian to alert them to lateness and if the late coming continues the parent/guardian will receive a Latecomer letter from the Whole School Attendance officer and may be invited in to school for a meeting.

## 9. Leaving School during the day

As already stated, it the role and responsibility of the parent to communicate with the Form Teacher if they need their child to be released from school during the day; this permission will be recorded by the Form Teacher on SIMS.

**For safety and security reasons a pupil must**:

- During Registration, present their Pupil Planner note from his/her parent/guardian to the Form Teacher and **show their appointment card if he/she has a medical/dental/other appointment,** which cannot be arranged after school. The Form Teacher will sign a "pupil release form", for the pupil to show to their class teacher. The Form Teacher will record a code **M** in Lesson Monitor.
- **The parent/guardian must collect their child from Reception.** The secretary will sign the pupil out on SIMS, if necessary. Pupils are encouraged to return to school after the medical or dental appointment.
- In an emergency a parent may phone the school requesting that their child be allowed out of school. Such calls will be checked before permission is given and the parents will be asked to collect their child from Reception and to get them signed out.

## 10. Parental Request for a Family Holiday during Term-Time

Parents are requested **NOT to book a family holiday during term-time. It is not permitted**, and it is recognised that the pupil's learning would be disrupted, and it can result in them falling behind in their learning. Code **G** for an unagreed holiday will be recorded on Lesson Monitor.

Family holidays during term-time **can only be granted in exceptional circumstances**. We do recognise that the holiday is important for the well-being and cohesion of the family unit following **a serious or terminal illness, bereavement or another traumatic event**.

## 11. Pupil Attendance Strategy in school.

We adopt an 'Every Day at St Paul's Counts' A summary of the strategy is provided below:

**'EVERYDAY AT ST PAUL'S COUNTS'**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 100% | 0 missed days | Excellent |
| 95% | 9 absent days<br>1 weeks & 4 days of learning missed | Satisfactory |
| 90% | 19 absent days<br>3 weeks & 4 days of learning missed | Poor |
| 85% | 28 absent days<br>5 weeks & 3 days of learning missed | Very Poor |
| 80% | 38 absent days<br>7 weeks & 3 days of learning missed | Unacceptable |
| 75% | 46 absent days<br>9 weeks & 1 day of learning | Unacceptable |

90% attendance sounds good, and most parents would be very pleased if their child achieved this. However, it means missing one whole day of school every fortnight.

## 11. Use of External/Support Agencies

We acknowledge the importance of a range of external support agencies in promoting and supporting good attendance within the school, but also the importance of ensuring that such agencies adhere to the values and ethos of our school.

Current external / support agencies include:

- EWO Service
- Social Services
- School Counsellors
- School Age Mums (SAM)
- PSNI
- Kinnego
- EOTAS
- Training for Business Programme (STEPS and VEP)
- Behaviour Support Team

## 12. Related School Policies

This policy is set within the broader school context of Pastoral Care and, as such, should be implemented in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Pastoral Care Policy
- Safeguarding Policy
- Promoting Positive Behaviour Policy
- Inclusion Policy
- SEN Policy

- Homework Policy

## 13. Dissemination of the Policy

Pastoral Policies are shared annually with Year 8 parents at our Parental Induction Evening and are available on the school's website. A Pastoral Policies overview is emailed to all parents at the start of each academic year.

Pupils are reminded about their roles and responsibilities in relation to attendance during induction at the end of August and reminded throughout the year.

## 14. Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

The Head of Pastoral Care, Mrs. Mary Mc Mahon, The Whole School Attendance Officer, Ms. Karina Traynor and the Pastoral Team are responsible for monitoring, evaluating and reviewing the implementation of the Pupil Attendance Policy. Ms. Traynor will revise the policy and procedures considering any further DE guidance and legislation as necessary and review it annually. This will be done in consultation with governors, staff, pupils, parents and the Education Welfare Service. On-going evaluation will ensure the effectiveness of this policy.

# Appendices

## WORKING TOGETHER TO IMPROVE ATTENDANCE.

**EXPECT**

- Aspire to high standards of attendance from all pupils and parents and build a culture where all can, and all want to be, in school and ready to learn by prioritising attendance improvement across the school.

**MONITOR**

- Rigorously use attendance data to identify patterns of poor attendance(at individual and cohort level)as soon as possible so that all parties can work together to resolve them before they become entrenched.

**LISTEN AND UNDERSTAND**

- When a pattern is spotted, discuss with pupils and parents to listen and to understand barriers to attendance and agree how all partners can work together to resolve them.

**FACILITATE SUPPORT**

- Remove barriers in school and help pupils and parents to access the support they need to overcome barriers outside of school. This might include an early help or whole family plan where absence is a symptom of wider issues.

**FORMALISE SUPPORT**

- Where absence persists and voluntary support is not working or not being engaged with, partners should work together to explain the consequences clearly and ensure support is also in place to enable families to respond. Depending on the circumstances this may include formalising support through a parenting contract or education supervision order.

**ENFORCE**

- Where all other avenues have been exhausted and support is not working or not being engaged with, enforce attendance through statutory intervention or prosecution to protect the pupil's right to an education

## EFFECTIVE SCHOOL ATTENDANCE IMPROVEMENT AND MANAGEMENT.

