

ATTENDANCE

Policy Statement



Consultation:

- Principal
- Deputy Principal
- Pastoral Leader
- Staff Consultation
- Education Committee
- Board of Governors

Summary:

M Houston
Principal

Additional Notes

Policy Number: 2014/2

History:

- Created in September 2014
- Updated February 2015 in light of DENI Circular 2015/02
- Updated January 2018

Ratified by the Board of
Governors 25/02/2015

ULIDIA INTEGRATED COLLEGE

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Rationale

We want to ensure that all our pupils will attend school. We believe that this is best achieved by providing an understanding, caring, supportive atmosphere, in which children can develop, mature and realise their full potential. We also believe that encouraging excellent attendance will help our young people to develop self-confidence, independence, self-discipline and a sense of responsibility for themselves. Good attendance habits established in school will prepare our pupils for the future opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life. In these ways this policy and our procedures for the management of pupil attendance support our school aims.

Ulidia Integrated College has a good record of attendance which it aims to further improve. We endeavour to support our students in developing the qualities of reliability and integrity, by reinforcing that excellent attendance and punctuality are desirable personal habits in the world of work.

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.

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

Why is school attendance important?

- It is required by law.
- Children need to attend school regularly to keep up with their work and promote social development.
- A good education will give your child the best possible start in life and enable him or her to make the best of the opportunities available.
- Children need to develop good habits in readiness for later life.
- Employers of school leavers may take into account the young person's school attendance and punctuality record before making a job offer.
- Young people who are away from school without good reason are at risk of becoming victims of crime or abuse.

The Management of Attendance

Responsibilities of Parents

The duty of a parent, in relation to the education of their children, is found in the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986 and says:

“The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him/her to receive efficient full time education suitable to his/her age ability and aptitude, and to any special educational needs he/she may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.”

This means that 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.

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

It is a parent's responsibility to inform the school of the reason for a pupil's absence on the first day of absence. This should be confirmed with a written note 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 8.50am 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, Head of Year, Head of Pastoral Care or Principal to ensure that both you and your child receive maximum support.

We expect the following from parents:

- To ensure their children attend school regularly and punctually.
- To ensure that their children arrive in school well prepared for the school day, with all necessary items and to check that homework has been completed.
- To contact the school on the first day of their child's absence giving the reasons and expected duration of the absence.

or

- To provide us with a note signed and dated explaining the absence on the day that the pupil returns to school.

- To contact the school in confidence whenever any problem occurs that may affect their child's performance in school.

Absence Procedures

Authorised Absence – where the school has been consulted and can approve the absence.

Examples include:

- Illness;
- Unavoidable medical/dental appointments during school hours;
- Bereavement
- Exceptional family circumstances

Unauthorised Absence – where the school cannot approve the absence.

Examples might include:

- Family holiday (except in exceptional circumstances)
- Pupil is kept off school unnecessarily
- When no written reason is provided
- Pupils who arrive at school after the morning register has been closed, and are too late to get a mark for the morning session.

In all of the instances of absence, a note must be provided by the parent explaining the absence. Should the parent fail to supply a note explaining the absence within five days of the absence, the register will be amended to 'D' which means the parent/carer did not provide a reason for absence.

Family holidays during Term Time

Ulidia Integrated College 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. Only in exceptional circumstances will a holiday be authorised.

Punctuality

The school day begins at 8.50am. Pupils who are frequently late disrupt their own education and that of others in their class. The morning register remains open until 9.15am.

Pupils who come to school after this time without prior arrangement or without approved reason will be marked absent for the morning session and this will appear as an unauthorised absence on their school record.

Responsibilities of Pupils

At Ulidia Integrated College we encourage our students to take responsibility for themselves.

We expect the following from all our pupils:

- That they attend school punctually and regularly.
- That they will arrive on time and be appropriately prepared for the day in full school uniform.
- That they will tell a member of staff about any problem or reason that may prevent them from attending school.

Responsibilities of the School

Parents and pupils can expect the following from school:

- Regular, efficient and accurate recording of attendance.
- Early contact with parents when a pupil's attendance begins to fall.
- Immediate action on any problem notified to us.
- Recognition and reward for good attendance.

Monitoring Attendance

The daily register is completed by the Form Teacher in the morning and by the class teacher in the afternoon sessions. This information is then recorded electronically on the Department of Education's system.

Should a child be absent for three consecutive days, without contact from the parent, the college will attempt to contact the parent for an explanation of the absence.

In the event that we are unable to contact the parent within five days, the college will contact Educational Welfare Services and seek advice.

Attendance is reviewed by Pastoral Teams on a monthly basis.

Parents will be notified:

- by letter when their child's attendance falls to 95%.
- by the Head of Year when attendance falls to 90%.

If attendance falls below 85%, we as a school are required by law to refer the child to the Education Welfare Service. Parents will be notified of this by letter.

What may happen if your child does not attend regularly?

The initial response to a referral of a pupil by a school to EWS is a home visit. This provides the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) with an opportunity to assess whether the absence is condoned by parents and if they are in a position to ensure regular attendance.

The EWS will go through a process of trying to engage young people and their families in developing coping strategies and mechanisms that will enable them to ensure children are educated appropriately.

They also work closely with a range of other agencies to ensure the complex needs that families may have, are addressed in the best way possible.

Parent Only Prosecutions are used as a last resort where parents fail to engage with the service and continue to ignore their child's educational and welfare needs. However, this is only one of many avenues explored.

The Education Welfare Service (EWS) can apply to the courts to issue fines to parents of children who are not attending school regularly. In the Magistrates Court the maximum fine that can be imposed is £1,000 in respect of each child who is missing school.

The EWS may apply for Education Supervision Orders in the Family Proceedings Court and these are usually granted in cases that are clearly non-school attendance. However, an application for an Education Supervision Order may be refused if there are concerns about the child's behaviour that are not totally about education.

In these circumstances the Court may direct Social Services to investigate a child's circumstances under Article 56 of the Children (NI) Order 2005.

Rewarding Good Attendance & Punctuality

We believe that it is important that pupils realise that good attendance and punctuality is acknowledged. Rewarding attendance forms part of our rewards system as pupils are credited every day that they attend on time.