



Newtownhamilton High School Pupil Attendance Policy

Following consultation, this policy was ratified by the Board of Governors on 06/02/18

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.

Newtownhamilton High School 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 Senior Management Team and Form Teachers will 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.

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 Newtownhamilton High
- 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.

Expectations on Attendance

To ensure regular attendance and punctuality, Newtownhamilton High School has the following expectations from pupils and parents:

Role & Responsibilities of the Pupil

- To be in school each day
- To be on time for morning registration at 8.50am
- To attend all classes required by his/her timetable
- To remain in school the full day and never leave school during the day without permission
- To provide parental notes and medical cards/letters to the Form Teacher and subsequently the Principal/Vice Principal in order to request early leave from school during the day
- To submit a written note to the Form Teacher explaining absence on the first day back following absence
- To catch up on all work missed during any absence

Role & Responsibilities of the 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/she may have, either by regular school attendance or otherwise'.

(Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986)

- 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 provide a written note or medical card/letter requesting that their child can leave school during the day (funeral, medical appointment)
- To provide a written note providing an explanation for their child's absence. This should be submitted on the first day that their child returns to school following absence
- To provide, where possible, an accompanying medical card/letter in the event of forthcoming absence
- To provide information to the school if their child will be absent for a prolonged period of time
- To collect work from the school if their child is off for a prolonged period of time
- 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 school if their child is reluctant to attend school
- To work in partnership with the school and the Educational Welfare Service 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 2015/02, which can be found at the following link:

www.deni.gov.uk/index/support-and-development-2/school-attendance/recording-pupil-absences.htm

- To implement the Pupil Attendance Policy, including a Pupil Attendance Strategy (Every Day at Newtownhamilton High School 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 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 intervention strategies which will deter absences and truancy
- To record attendance via SIMS
- To contact parents/guardians to discuss any attendance concerns at various identified trigger points (See Pupil Attendance Strategy)
- To work in partnership with the Education Welfare Officer
- To attend Education Strategy Meetings, as arranged by Educational Welfare Officer
- To provide work for the pupil if he/she will be off for a prolonged period of time (this does not include holidays taken during term time). 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 the 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.

Monitoring Pupil Attendance - SIMS

Form Teachers and office staff will record and monitor attendance on SIMS using the following coding system:

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
F*	Family Holiday (agreed)	Authorised Absence
G*	Family Holiday (not agreed)	Unauthorised Absence
H*	Other Absence	Unauthorised Absence
I	Illness (not medical or dental appointments)	Authorised Absence
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 Sporting 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	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	Individual 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	Approved Educational Activity
9	CAMHS	Approved Educational Activity

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

Positive Measures to Encourage Good Attendance

- Form Teachers and the Senior Management Team will closely monitor pupil's attendance through SIMS
- Pupils will gain a merit (in line with the Positive Behaviour Policy) for daily attendance
- 100% attendance will be acknowledged and rewarded at the annual Prize Night event.
- A very good attendance record will result in a positive and supportive reference to future employers and other educational establishments.

Punctuality/Lateness

Newtownhamilton High School 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 report to the school office to get registered and then make their way to class. This will be recorded by office staff as a code **L** (present, but late) in SIMS.

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 Form Teacher will contact the parent/guardian to alert them to lateness and if this persists the parent/guardian will be invited for a meeting with the Form Teacher and/or Senior Management Team.

Leaving School during the day

As already stated, it is the role and responsibility of the parent to communicate with the Form Teacher (via a written note) if they need their child to be released from school during the day. Advance notice of appointments should be given and medical cards/letters must be presented. This permission will be recorded by office staff on SIMS.

The pupil must present the written note or medical card/letter to their Form Teacher during morning registration. The Form Teacher will then allow the pupil to bring the note to the Principal/Vice Principal for authorisation. Once the note is signed, the pupil should bring it to the office staff for perusal before signing out in the 'Early Leave' book.

In an emergency a parent may phone the school requesting that their child be allowed out of school early. Such calls will be checked before permission is given and the parents will be asked to collect their child from the school office with the pupil completing the 'Early Leave' book before leaving the premises.

Under no circumstances (eg illness) should a pupil contact a parent/guardian to collect them from school. They should speak to a member of staff.

In all situations of early leave, the pupil must wait at the school office until he/she is collected by a parent/guardian or other relative.

Morning (AM) & Afternoon (PM) Registration

The computerised SIMS attendance system has morning (8.50am – 11.59am) and afternoon (12.00pm-3.00pm) attendance sessions.

It should be noted that pupils who arrive into school after the morning session has ended will not receive a morning (am) present mark. Similarly, pupils that leave school before the afternoon (pm) registration commences at 12.00pm and do not return to school before 3.00pm, will not receive a present mark.

These types of scenarios will result in pupils either losing a morning (am) or afternoon (pm) present mark thus impacting on their overall attendance percentage.

Parental Request for a Family Holiday during Term Time

Parents are requested not to book a family holiday during term time. It is recognised that the pupil's learning would be disrupted and it can result in them falling behind in their learning. In the event of an unauthorised holiday, the school will not provide work in advance of the absence – it will be the responsibility of the pupil to catch up on missed work and collect relevant materials from teachers.

Family holidays during term time can only be granted in exceptional circumstances. We do recognize that the holiday is important for the well-being and cohesion of the family unit following a serious or terminal illness, bereavement or other traumatic event (in this situation Code **F** will be recorded on SIMS).

'Every Day at Newtownhamilton High School Counts'

We adopt an 'Every Day at Newtownhamilton High School Counts' strategy in order to promote good attendance. A summary of the strategy is provided below:

'Every Day at Newtownhamilton High School Counts'

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

90% attendance sounds good and most parents would be very pleased if their child achieved 90% in a test. However, it means missing 1 whole day of school every fortnight.

Every single day a child is absent from school equates to a day of lost learning.

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
- EA Kinnego Learning Centre
- EA EOTAS Learning Centre
- EA Behaviour Support Team
- Training for Business Programme (STEPS)