

ATTENDANCE POLICY



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Please note that the use of the word Parent throughout this policy refers to either Parent or Guardian or person with Legal caring responsibility for a child.

1. Mission Statement

Omagh High School is committed to the development of all its pupils, whatever their abilities. We aim to encourage in our pupils:

- A curious mind
- A love of learning
- An industrious attitude to their work and study
- A respect for others
- A respect for self
- High personal moral standards based on a Christian understanding of the world
- The acquisitions of skills necessary for future progress and success

Central to this is the employment and development of a committed, flexible, motivated staff whose love for children and of their profession manifests itself in their classroom practice and pastoral care.

2. Aim of the Attendance Policy

Omagh High School stresses the need for pupils to consistently attend school. It is a 'given' that poor attendance inevitably has a negative impact on learning and achievement. We encourage pupils to attend school every day and to be punctual to school and lessons. Close links are maintained with the Education Welfare Service. Working in collaboration with the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) we aim to reduce unnecessary absences from school by offering support and help to parents and pupils. Together strategies may be developed and implemented to address or improve school attendance.

Omagh High School:

- Encourages every pupil to aim for 100% attendance
- Insists that pupils arrive punctually to school and lessons
- Monitors pupil attendance and punctuality closely through the Pastoral structure
- Utilises home/school links when there are concerns over a pupil's attendance
- Collaborates with home and outside agencies to endeavour to resolve problems as they are identified.

All staff will continually stress the importance of full attendance to pupils and encourage them to strive towards this goal.

3. The Role of the School

The Principal at Omagh High School has overall responsibility for school attendance; the Pastoral Vice-Principal will bring any concerns regarding school attendance to his attention.

The Board of Governors provides 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 at the beginning of morning and afternoon registration sessions.

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 2017/15.

(www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/circular-201715-attendance-guidance-and-absence-recording-by-schools)

Omagh High School is committed to working with parents to encourage regular and punctual attendance.

4. What is expected of Parents/Guardians?

Under Article 45 of the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986, parents and carers have a legal duty to ensure that their children of compulsory school age receive a suitable full-time education. Paragraph 3(i) of Schedule 13 to the 1986 Order states that it is the duty of a parent of a registered pupil of a school to secure their regular attendance at school. This applies to all children of compulsory school age who are on the roll of a school. Parents are legally responsible for making this happen.

To this end, it is important that everyone works together to help children obtain the best possible start in life with a good education. Parents should work in partnership with the school, notifying the school of the reason for any of their child's absences and highlighting any areas of concern they may have so they can be addressed promptly. Parents should note that 'minding the house', looking after family members, shopping or holidays are not valid reasons for absence from school.

The Department in conjunction with EWS has produced a leaflet called, "Attendance Matters – A Parent's Guide" (appendix C). This leaflet is summarised in the school Homework Diary (appendix D), published on the school website and referenced in a separate school handout regarding attendance (appendix E). This information clearly and concisely explains the importance of good attendance, legal requirements regarding school attendance and how parents can help.

Parents are expected to:

- Ensure that their children attend school
- Ensure that pupils arrive punctually for the start of the school day

- Establish a good morning and evening routine so that children are prepared for the day ahead.
- Ensure that pupils are properly prepared for the school day e.g. correct uniform and equipment.
- Contact school before 9.00am on the first day of absence if a pupil is unfit to attend school
- Provide a written, signed explanatory note upon the pupil's return to school. This note should be addressed to the House teacher.
 - No pupil should have an unexplained absence on their record. It is essential that notes are sent by parents to explain every absence. Unexplained absences will be treated as trancies and 3 days will attract an after school detention.
- Take truancy seriously as children may be putting themselves at risk.
- Support school staff in their efforts to control difficult or challenging behaviour.

Parents should ensure that:

- Their children are absent only when ill health or bereavement prevents them from attending school
- Medical appointments and dental appointments are arranged for a time outside school hours.
 - If a medical/dental appointment cannot be arranged outside school hours, parents must provide a signed note and an appointment card. These are to be shown to, and the note signed by the House Teacher, Pastoral Leader or Senior staff member. These should be shown at the school reception before signing out of school.
 - If an appointment is organised at short notice by a parent i.e. there is no note provided, it is essential that the school has confidence in any person collecting a pupil and therefore this person should be the parent/guardian or someone with clear responsibility for the child. This person should enter school and counter sign the 'signing out' book at reception before leaving with the pupil.
 - Pupils should sign back into school upon return. This is essential to ensure the school fulfils its legal obligation to keep an accurate record of all persons on the school premises at any time
- Family holidays are taken outside term time due to the impact they have on pupils' learning. Holidays during term time will be categorised as an unauthorised absence. Only in exceptional circumstances will a holiday be authorised.
- They attend parent evenings and when possible school events.
- Any problems or difficulties with the school are discussed with the House Teacher as soon as parents become aware of an issue.
- Achievements at school, including good attendance, are rewarded and praised.

5. What is expected of pupils?

Pupils are expected to place importance on their education and to attend school and all lessons punctually and properly prepared.

Pupils should be in school by 8.55am at the latest for the start of the school day at 9.00am.

- If a student is late for a valid reason, they must bring a short written note from the parent to their House teacher explaining the reason for lateness.
- A pupil who is late for school on any given day, without providing a signed parental note explaining a valid reason, will be assigned a lunch-time detention.
- A pupil who is late without providing a signed parental note explaining valid reasons will be assigned a lunch time detention on that day
- A pupil who is late three times without providing a signed parental note explaining valid reasons will be assigned an afterschool detention.
- Parents and pupils should note that 'I slept in', 'there was heavy traffic' or 'I missed the bus' will not be accepted as valid reasons for lateness.

Pupils must remain on the school premises at all times throughout the day. The school premises are self-contained and pupils have no reason to leave the grounds until the end of timetable for the day. The exceptions to this are:

- Sixth form and year 12 students - who may leave the grounds for lunch on designated days only having provided a parental permission slip. This privilege may be withdrawn from pupils for failure to comply with school rules and/or procedures.
- Pupils attending unavoidable medical or dental appointments.
- Pupils leaving school with a member of staff for an approved educational activity.

Pupils must bring a note from their parent explaining any absence from school on the day they return.

Pupils must catch up on any work missed due to absence.

When a pupil cannot avoid being absent from school for a valid reason, (for either part of a day or a full day) a note should be given to the House teacher, preferably the day in advance. This is recorded on the register.

6. What is expected of Teaching Staff?

Teachers are expected to:

- Record all absences and punctuality for every lesson on the 'Lesson Monitor' database.
 - If a pupil arrives late to period 1 or 2, teachers must record an L code against the pupil's name.
 - Pupils arriving late after period 2 are to be coded with a U.
 - Pupils with notes explaining their legitimate lateness or absence can be coded accordingly.
- Inform other staff via email of the names of any pupil who is absent from school on an 'approved educational activity' and to record the appropriate code against the names of pupils who will be absent.
- Provide relevant classwork for pupils to complete where absence is planned or work is requested by the parent/guardian.
- Support pupils in 'catching up' on work missed when a pupil returns to school.

7. What is expected of House Teachers?

House Teachers must:

- Continually stress the importance of full attendance and punctuality. Data available to House Teachers on SIMS indicates those pupils for whom this is a concern.
- Ensure pupils record their monthly attendance percentage in their homework diary.
- Closely monitor attendance of all pupils in the House class and refer when appropriate any concerns to the Pastoral Leader with evidence from SIMS.
- Collect and store written explanations of absence and emphasise the necessity of these.
- Reinforce the need to catch up on work missed following a period of absence.
- Monitor closely pupils who fall below **95%** attendance until improvement is evident. Interviews with pupils are to be noted and any liaison with Pastoral Leaders.

House teachers should demonstrate concern for their pupils by endeavouring to speak to any pupil on their return to school after an absence.

House teachers are expected to follow up pupils' absences by requesting written, explanatory notes from pupils. House teachers must amend the attendance record on SIMS appropriately when notes are produced.

House teachers should assist pupils to catch up with work missed by providing advice, support and practical help e.g. collating work from other staff.

House teachers must take a morning registration each morning. If unable to do this due to for example a planned absence, a House teacher must inform the relevant Pastoral Leader in advance so that arrangements can be made for a replacement.

House teachers are expected to monitor pupil attendance. Attendance reports are to be reviewed by House teachers monthly (weekly when there is cause for concern). Concerns over any pupil must be referred to the Pastoral Leader when appropriate and discussed at the monthly Pastoral meeting as follows:

- When attendance for any pupil falls below 95%
- When attendance for any pupil falls below 90%
- When attendance for any pupil falls below 85%

House teachers are expected to commend any pupil who achieves full attendance in any calendar month. These pupils are identified by the Attendance Officer and awarded 4 Achievement points in the 'Reward' scheme.

House teachers are expected to monitor pupil punctuality through 'Lesson Monitor' reports and to use the 'Reward' scheme to reward or sanction punctuality appropriately.

House Teachers are expected to

- interview those pupils whose attendance or punctuality is giving cause for concern i.e.
 - 3 days or more unexplained lateness to school or unexplained absence from school.
 - Refer these pupils to the Pastoral Leader for an after school detention.
 - Attendance level is between 95% and 90%.
- assist any interviewed pupil by setting targets for improvement.
- provide counselling and support for any pupil who has been interviewed.
- monitor closely until improvement is evident, any pupil who has been interviewed.

8. What is expected of Pastoral Leaders?

Pastoral Leaders are expected to:

- Liaise closely with House Teachers and other staff to monitor and review attendance and punctuality.

Pastoral Leaders are also expected, in consultation with House Teachers and the Attendance Officer, to identify those pupils whose attendance is greater than 85% and less than 90%. Pastoral Leaders are to monitor these pupils closely.

A Pastoral Leader must:

1. Contact home by phone when attendance falls below 90% and/or there are significant unexplained absences. Discuss with parents the amount of time lost and the likely effects of poor attendance/punctuality on attainment.
2. Contact home by letter if no improvement is evident or attendance continues to fall to arrange a pre-referral meeting with the EWO.
3. Refer when necessary to the Head of Pastoral Care any pupil whose attendance falls below 85%. A standard letter must be sent to the parent informing them of this.

9. What is expected of the Head of Pastoral Care?

The Head of Pastoral Care will:

- Liaise closely with pastoral leaders regarding attendance. It will be a standing item on the weekly Pastoral Meeting agenda.
- In consultation with Pastoral Leaders, make any necessary referrals to the EWO.
- Meet on a monthly basis with the EWO to review the attendance of all pupils.
- Support the Pastoral Leaders in the delivery of the agreed strategies for improved attendance and punctuality.
- Report on attendance to the Board of Governors.
- Keep the principal apprised of attendance and punctuality matters relating to all pupils.

10. What is expected of the School Attendance Officer?

The School Attendance Officer will:

- Maintain the integrity of pupil attendance records by updating where necessary
- On a daily basis
 1. check the attendance data and
 2. produce a list of pupils who were late to school on that day and
 3. place all those pupils in a lunch time detention on SIMS.
- Produce and disseminate weekly attendance and punctuality reports to House Teachers
- Award full attendance achievement points to relevant pupils on a monthly basis.
- Produce standard letters to parents when required by Pastoral Leaders.
- Change an M code for prearranged Medical appointments to a present mark when the pupil arrives back in school.

11. What is expected of the Clerical staff?

Clerical staff will ensure good communication regarding attendance by passing information expediently to teaching and pastoral staff.

Clerical staff will produce attendance sheets in the event of an emergency.

COVID 19 and ATTENDANCE

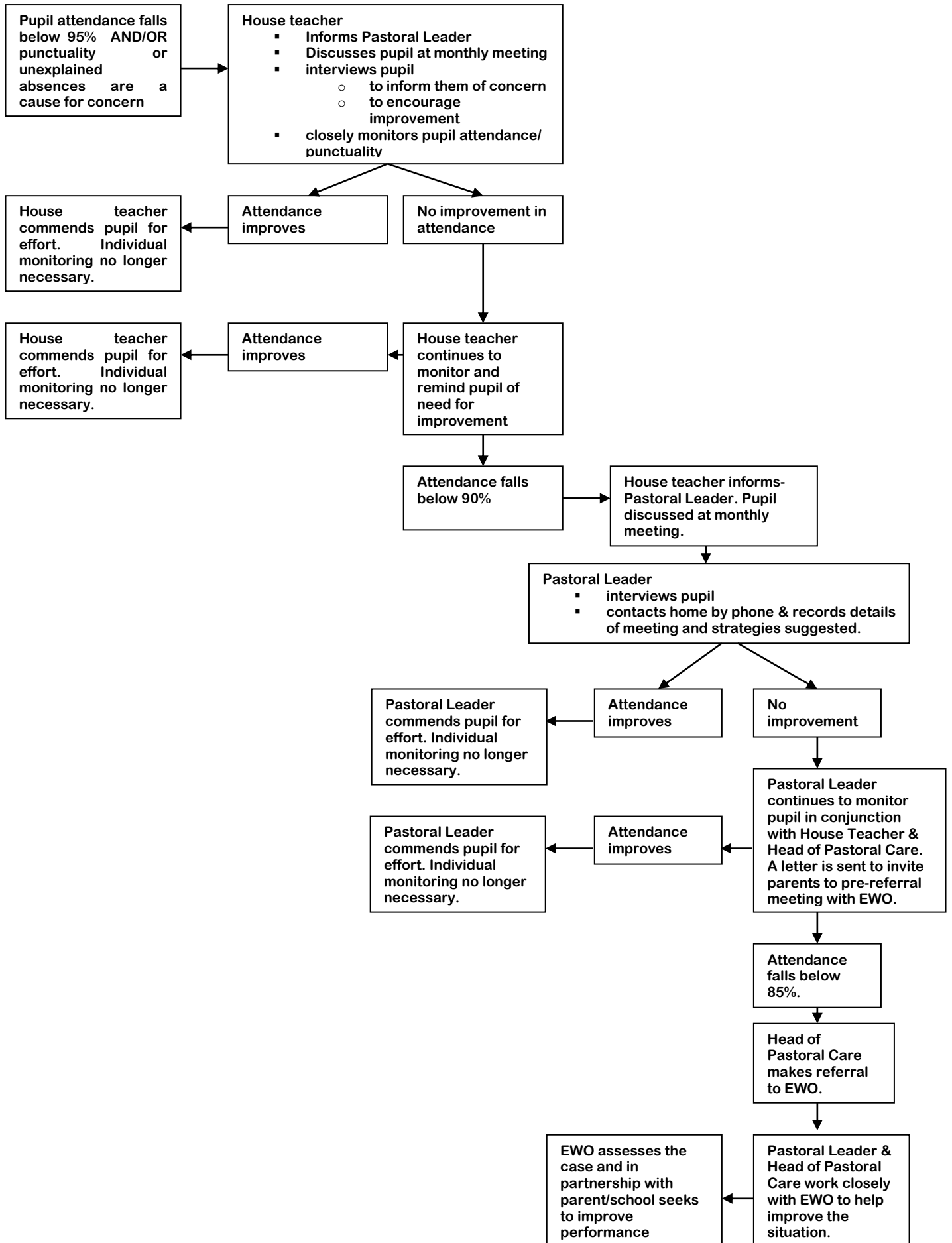
Guidance has been issued to all parents and guardians detailing the procedures in school to support the restrictions in place due to COVID19. The matters relevant to attendance are available on the school website. These will be kept under review by the Senior Leadership Team in line with EA and PHA guidance. Parents and guardians will be informed as necessary of any revision of Covid 19 measures.

In light of current restrictions, all year 12 pupils will remain on site for lunch until further notice.

In the eventuality that a pupil is unable to attend school either due to 'lockdown' or self isolation then:

- Subject teachers will provide the relevant subject work electronically or in hard copy.
- Pastoral Leaders will check in with pupils on a weekly basis to ensure that they are able to access work and to offer any other pastoral support which may be required.
- ICSS will be available to pupils by contacting their pastoral Leader or House Teacher who will liaise with the Head of Pastoral Care to organise a referral to ICSS.
- Pupil absences will be recorded as set out in the department of Education Circular 2020/08. .

Attendance Policy – Procedure Flowchart





SCHOOL ATTENDANCE MATTERS
A Parent's Guide



WHY ATTENDANCE AT SCHOOL IS SO IMPORTANT

If a child of compulsory school age is registered at a school it is essential that they attend their school regularly and maintain a pattern of good attendance throughout their school career.

Excellent attendance at school is important to allow a child or young person to fulfil their potential.

Below are just some of the key reasons why it is so important children attend school:

- To learn. To have fun.
- To make new friends.
- To experience new things in life.
- To develop awareness of other cultures, religion, ethnicity and gender differences.
- To achieve. To gain qualifications.
- To develop new skills. To build confidence and self-esteem.
- To have the best possible start in life.

Miss School -Miss Out!!

Young people who regularly miss school without good reason are more likely to become isolated from their friends, to underachieve in examinations and/or become involved in anti-social behaviour.

WHAT THE LAW SAYS –

Under Article 45 of the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986 (“the 1986 Order”), it is the duty of parents who have a child of compulsory school age¹ to ensure their child receives efficient, full time education suitable to their age, aptitude, ability and to any special educational needs they may have. Such education may be provided by regular attendance at school or otherwise, for example home education.

Paragraph 3 (1) of Schedule 13 to the 1986 Order states that it is the duty of a parent of a registered pupil of a school to secure their regular attendance at school. This applies to all children of compulsory school age who are on the roll of a school. As a parent you are legally responsible for making this happen.

Under Part III of Schedule 13 to the 1986 Order, if a child or young person who is registered at a school does not attend regularly, a parent can receive a fine not exceeding £1,000 in court (for each child). An Education Supervision Order (ESO) could also be made by a court under Article 55.

Key Point of the Children (NI) Order 1995.

Education is not an option – it’s compulsory.

FAMILY HOLIDAYS –

You can demonstrate your commitment to your child’s education by not taking holidays during term time. Any child or young person who is absent from school due to a holiday will miss out on important learning and will fall behind with their school work.

In each Academic Year there are only a maximum of 190 statutory school days – this allows plenty of time for holidays to be arranged outside term time.

Holidays taken during term time will be categorised as an unauthorised absence.

Avoid taking family holidays during the school term, or otherwise, for example home education.

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HOW PARENTS CAN HELP –

- Establish a good routine in the mornings and evenings so your child is prepared for the school day ahead.
- Make sure your child goes to school regularly and follows the school rules.
- Ensure your child arrives at school on time – not late.
- Arrange dental and medical appointments outside school hours when possible.
- Always inform the school if your child is absent due to illness – this should be followed up with a written note when your child returns to school.
- Take truancy seriously – if your child is not attending school as you expect they may be putting themselves at risk – Who are they with? What are they doing?
- Take family holidays outside term time.
- Talk to your child about school and take an interest in their school work (including homeworks).
- Attend parent evenings and school events.
- Praise and reward your child's achievements at school.
- Always support school staff in their efforts to control difficult or challenging behaviour.
- Discuss any problems or difficulties with the school – staff are there to help and will be supportive.

EVERY SCHOOL DAY COUNTS –

- Every single day a child is absent from school equates to a day of lost learning. Attendance percentages can be misleading.
- **100% Attendance** 0 Days Missed - **Excellent**
- **95% Attendance** 9 Days of Absence 1 Week and 4 Days of Learning Missed - **Satisfactory**
- **90% Attendance** 19 Days of Absence 3 Weeks and 4 Days of Learning Missed - **Poor**

- **85% Attendance** 28 Days of Absence 5 Weeks and 3 Days of Learning Missed - **Very Poor**
- **80% Attendance** 38 Days of Absence 7 Weeks and 3 Days of Learning Missed - **Unacceptable**
- **75% Attendance** 46 Days of Absence 9 Weeks and 1 Day of Learning Missed - **Unacceptable**
- For some parents, 90% may seem like an acceptable level of attendance, but the reality is that 90% attendance means that your child will miss half a school day each week or 19 days of school during the school year – that’s nearly 4 school weeks.
- Give your child the best start in life – every school day counts.

PUNCTUALITY & ATTENDANCE

PUNCTUALITY

Punctuality is an important part of self-discipline and is essential to good time management.

Lateness to registration will result in an immediate lunchtime detention.

Always make sure that you are in the appropriate classroom at the correct time.

ATTENDANCE

Attendance is of the utmost importance, is closely monitored and detailed records are kept. Following any absence from school an absence note, in the middle of this diary, must be completed by parent/guardian and given to your house teacher on your return to school.

Regular attendance at school is closely linked to success in all aspects of school life. Apart from the obvious gaps in learning which are caused by absence, children may lose the sense of community in class or school, miss out on important life lessons and have to spend time on 'catch-up' work.

Parents are requested not to arrange family holidays during term time. Where this is unavoidable requests for leave of absence should be made in writing well in advance of the date.

Excellent attendance is rewarded in school. Full attendance certificates are awarded for 100% attendance on prize day while full attendance for a calendar month gains 4 achievement points.

Attendance percentages will be issued on a monthly basis indicating your child's attendance rate for the year up to the end of each month.

We ask all parents to help their children to achieve the goal of satisfactory school attendance i.e. **95% or above**. This equates to missing 9 days or less in the school year.

If attendance drops to **90% or less**, (equates to 18 days of absence across a year) then parents will be contacted by the pastoral leader to discuss strategies to improve attendance. Continued unsatisfactory attendance levels will lead to **a pre-referral meeting with the Education Welfare Officer**.

In the case of attendance dropping to **85% or less**, **a referral will be made to the Education Welfare Service** to seek their support in developing strategies to improve your child's attendance.

Parent/Guardian's Signature



ATTENDANCE

Good attendance is essential for enjoyment and success in school.

Attendance is of the utmost importance, is closely monitored and detailed records are kept.

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