**LOANENDS PRIMARY SCHOOL**

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**Pupil Attendance Policy**

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| **Date of Rewrite of Policy** | December 2022 | **Mrs L Armour****PRINCIPAL** |
| **Date of Governor****Ratification of Policy** |  | **Mr M Lucas****CHAIR OF BoG** |
| **Review Date of Policy** | December 2025 |  |
| **Person (s) Responsible for review and update of Policy** | **Mrs L Armour****Mr M Lucas** | **Mrs L Armour****Mr M Lucas** |

**December 2022**

**PUPIL ATTENDANCE POLICY**

**Introduction**

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 full potential. Loanends Primary School will strive to promote an ethos and culture which encourages good attendance and where each pupil will feel valued and secure.

**Aims**

1. To improve/maintain the overall attendance of pupils at Loanends Primary School;

2. To define roles and responsibilities in relation to attendance;

3. To provide advice, support and guidance to parents/guardians and pupils and

4. To commit to the Service Level Agreement with the Education Welfare Service.

**Role of the School**

The Principal has overall responsibility for school attendance; Teachers should bring any concerns regarding school attendance to her attention. 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. From September 2019, this will be recorded on SIMS by the class Teachers.

It is the responsibility of the school to ensure attendance and lateness records are up-to-date. Upon returning to school, if a reason for absence has not been provided, letters are sent to parents requesting a reason for absence. If none is provided, then the absence will be recorded as such.

The school shares the attendance percentage with parents at the end of each school year in the Annual Report and more frequently where there are concerns.

To record and monitor attendance accurately and in a consistent way, school will adhere to the guidance provided in the Department of Education Circular 2017/15, which can be found at the following link:

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

Loanends Primary School is committed to working with parents/guardians to encourage regular and **punctual** attendance.

**Role of Parent/Guardian**

Parents have a legal duty to ensure that their child attends school regularly and arrives on time. The duty of a parent, in relation to the education of their children, is found in the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986, which states:

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

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

I would also refer you to the Department Strategy for promoting school attendance: **“Miss School: Miss Out.”** <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/consultations/miss-school-miss-out-strategy-improving-pupil-attendance>

It is a parent’s/guardian’s responsibility to inform the school of the reason for a pupil’s absence on the first day of absence; this can be done by contacting the school office before 9.15 am. This should be confirmed with a written note on the first day when the pupil returns to school. Absence slips are provided to parents at the start of each term. 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.

As part of our Safeguarding procedures, the school office may on occasion, contact the parent or carer and other emergency contacts if a message has not been received regarding the reason for the absence, to check on the safety of the child.

Pupils are expected to be in school at 9.00 am for registration and the beginning of classes. It is the responsibility of parents/guardians to ensure that their children are punctual. Lateness is recorded at registration and on children’s attendance records.

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 support.

Loanends Primary School **discourages** holidays during term-time due to the impact that has 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.

Parents should ensure as far as is possible that all medical/dental appointments are outside school hours.

**Role of Pupils**

Each pupil at Loanends Primary School must attend school punctually and regularly. If you have been absent from school, a written note from a parent/guardian must be provided to your teacher when you return.

All pupils are responsible for lining up quietly with their class when the bell rings at 8.55 am. Each pupil is shown at the beginning of the year where they are to line up.

**Arrival at school**

Pupils are expected to arrive at school between 8:45 and 9.00am. At 9:00am the side gates will be locked and late comers should enter the school by the main door.

P1 pupils for the month of September, can be accompanied by a parent or carer to the external classroom door. From the beginning of October, they should be accompanied to the side gate and then make their own way round to the external classroom door.

The school does not accept legal responsibility for any pupils until 8.45 am Parents who choose to drop children off earlier in the morning are made aware of this.

**Educational Welfare Service**

In cases when a child’s attendance falls below 85%, the school is legally obliged to report this to the

Educational Welfare Officer (EWO). In many cases an explanation can be provided by the school (such as long-term medical condition, etc. However, if this is not possible then the EWO may choose to investigate and contact parents.

Non-attendance is an important issue which is treated seriously. However, each case is different and the school acknowledges that no one standard response will be appropriate in every case. Consideration is given to all factors affecting attendance before deciding which intervention strategies will be applied.

In every case early intervention is essential to prevent the problem from worsening. It is essential that parents keep school fully informed of any matters which may affect their child’s attendance.

**Lateness**

The class register is taken between 9:00 am and 9:10am. **Pupils arriving after 9:00am will be marked *late*** and “minutes late” will be automatically recorded electronically on their record.

Frequent lateness is disruptive to learning, both for the child concerned and the class. This will be discussed with parents at Open Evenings and may be referred to Education Welfare Officer (EWO).

**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.

Examples may include a family bereavement, hospital stay, or an approved sporting/musical activity.

**Unauthorised Absence**

An absence is classified as ‘unauthorised’ when a child is away from school without the permission of the Principal. Unauthorised absences are those which school does not consider reasonable and for which authorisation has not been given.

This may include (but not exhaustively):

* Parents keeping children off school unnecessarily;
* Truancy during the school day;
* Absences which have never been properly explained;
* Term-time holidays.

**Authorising Absence**

Only the Principal can authorise absence for ***approved*** reasons. The absence must be unavoidable or clearly in the pastoral interests of the child/family. The Principal is not obliged to accept a parent’s explanation. Authorised absence codes will only be used after there has been some communication between the parent and school. The following reasons are examples (but not an exhaustive list) of the kinds of absence that ***will not be authorised:***

* Persistent non-specific illness, eg poorly/unwell;
* Absence of siblings if one child is ill;
* Parental illness (alternative arrangements should be made to get children to school – emergencies excepted);
* Over-sleeping;
* Inadequate clothing/uniform;
* Confusion over school dates;
* Medical/dental appointments of more than half a day without very good reasons;
* Child’s/family birthday;
* Shopping trip;
* Family holiday during term-time.

**Leave of Absence/Holiday Absence**

**Time off school for family holidays cannot be authorised**. Schools have the discretion, in exceptional circumstances, to authorise leave of absence:

* For service personnel and other employees who are prevented from taking holidays outside term-time if the holiday will have minimal disruption to the pupil’s education;
* When a family needs to spend time together to support each other during or following a crisis.

Applications for Leave of Absence where dates are known ahead MUST be made in advance of the requested date. Consideration is given to each request before a decision is reached on behalf of the Board of Governors.

Each case will be judged on its merits in line with the criteria outlined above. The decision is final and once the decision not to authorise the leave is taken it cannot be authorised retrospectively.

For ease of reference, absence notes for parental use are included at **Annex A.**

**Absence Tiers**

From October 2022 the Department of Education has introduced a system for monitoring attendance, known as “absence tiers.”

**Tier 1a -** pupils with “Regular Attendance” **missing 0% - 4.9% of school (< 1 day per month).** Universal strategies should be used by schools to encourage good attendance for all pupils.

**Tier 1b -** pupils “At Risk Attendance” **missing 5%-9.9% (1+ day per month).** Schools should be implementing more focused strategies to ensure attendance improves and pupils who need more support receive it, to avoid chronic absence.

**Tier 2 –** pupils recognised with “Chronic Attendance”, **missing 10% - 19.9%** **(2-3 days per month).** At this level, schools would introduce interventions such as action planning for the pupil, mentoring or personalised early outreach to the pupil. Schools should be engaging with their EWO through school audits and identifying at an early stage, children and young people experiencing school related attendance difficulties. If schools are considering a wide range of data to help inform what preventative measures would be helpful, then there is a good chance that issues can be addressed before they escalate.

**Tier 3 -** pupils recognised as “Severe Chronic Attendance”, **missing 20% or more** of school. At this level, we recommend specific interventions implemented by EWS in conjunction with the school, which may include interagency work and / or court action.



A new attendance report is being developed currently and schools will be able to run this new Absence Tier report at any time on SIMS. We expect this to be in November / December 2022.

**Review**

This policy will be reviewed every three years or in light of guidance from the Department of Education.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Signed: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Mrs L Armour Mr M Lucas

Principal Chairman

**ANNEX A**

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| **Pupil Absence Form**Please complete and return this form to the class teacher after your child’s absence to ensureyour child’s record and the class register are updated. |
| Pupil Name: | Class: |
| Date(s) of Absence: |
| Reason for Absence: |
|  |
| Parent/Guardian Signature: | Date: |
| **For Class Teacher Use - Date of return:** | **Initial:** |

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