



## FRIENDS' SCHOOL

### ATTENDANCE POLICY

School promotes good attendance in the context of the following factors:

- a) An ethos in School which encourages respect for learning, fosters a sense of personal responsibility and promotes high standards;
- b) A curriculum that is relevant to pupils and is effectively delivered;
- c) Parents' awareness of school procedures, especially the need to provide advance notification of foreseen absence and a written explanation after an absence or period of absence;
- d) Pupils' awareness of, and compliance with, registration procedures;
- e) The implementation of appropriate registration, monitoring and follow-up procedures by pastoral staff
- f) The involvement of other agencies when appropriate e.g. Education Welfare Service and medical professionals

#### **Aims**

The Attendance Policy seeks to:

1. Promote regular and punctual pupil attendance at School;
2. Promote and value high standards;
3. Promote self responsibility in pupils;
4. Outline the responsibilities of pupils, staff and parents with regard to attendance, absence and lateness;
5. Outline the procedures in place to promote good attendance and punctuality;
6. Recognise and reward good attendance by pupils.

#### **Rationale**

Friends' School is committed to ensuring that all pupils achieve their full academic potential and are prepared for the world of work beyond School. We therefore acknowledge the correlation between good attendance and high academic achievement, progress and involvement in school life, leading to pupils taking responsibility for their learning, feeling part of the school community and gaining in confidence and self-esteem. The school therefore places great importance on attendance and punctuality and acknowledges that good attendance and punctuality is an outcome of the partnership between School, parents and pupils.

However, we recognise that full attendance is not always possible and that absence may be the result of circumstances beyond the control of the pupil such as illness, bereavement or other family circumstances. It is also recognised that underachievement may be the result of a number of interrelated factors of which poor attendance is only one.

We offer support to all pupils with particular medical or pastoral circumstances which prevent attendance at School and promote regular communication with parents and other involved external agencies, working to ensure a return to School that is appropriate for the pupil concerned. It is however expected that pupils and their parents/guardians will attempt to keep non attendance to a minimum.

#### **Responsibilities**

**The responsibilities of all pupils:**

Pupils are encouraged to:

1. Take personal responsibility for maximum attendance at school during term time and for punctuality in the mornings for Registration and for classes throughout the day.
2. Follow the school procedures (outlined below) when late for School, requesting an Exeat during the school day, planning an absence or returning to School following a period of absence.
3. Communicate with their Collect Teacher and Year Teacher to explain unforeseen absence.

**The responsibilities of all staff:**

All members of staff are encouraged to promote good attendance at School and in classes, both in pastoral and teaching roles:

1. Ensure that all pupils are clear about the procedures regarding absence and punctuality.
2. Apply the school procedures outlined below in a fair and consistent manner.
3. Monitor pupil attendance and punctuality regularly according to agreed procedures

A Senior Teacher has responsibility for pupil attendance, liaising with the Vice Principal with overall responsibility for pastoral care.

The Year Teachers monitor absence and lateness on a weekly basis, in conjunction with the Collect Teacher

Subject teachers are aware of the importance of careful record-keeping regarding attendance using Lesson Monitor for each lesson throughout the school day.

**The responsibilities of parents/guardians:**

We expect parents to:

- i. Make every effort, where possible, to ensure that their child attends school and is punctual.
- ii. Familiarise themselves with the school procedures regarding absence and punctuality.
- iii. Communicate with the school re: pastoral issues which may impact on their child's attendance or punctuality.
- iv. Support the school when sanctions are to be imposed due to truancy, persistent lateness or failure to bring absence notes on a repeated basis.

**Procedures****Collect and Registration**

- Pupils are required to be in School for 8.45 am. Period 1 begins with Registration taken by the subject teacher.
- If you arrive in School between 8.45 am and 9.00 am you should go straight to your Period 1 class where your subject teacher will mark you present.
- If you arrive in School after 9.00 am you should report to the General Office and sign in, then go straight to class. No pupils should go directly to classes after 9.00 am without having signed in at the General Office. This applies even if prior authorisation for absence has been given, for example, attendance at a medical appointment, otherwise pupils are marked absent. Likewise, pupils leaving School during the day for a medical appointment and returning later in the day must report to the General Office on their return.
- Persistent Latecomers will be placed in Detention (on the 2nd Late).
- At School's discretion, a Late pass may be issued to a pupil who, through particular circumstances, is unable to be in School by 8.45 am. Application should be made to Mr Elliott (Vice-Principal).

**After School**

- Pupils are required to leave the School premises by 3.30 pm on Monday to Thursday unless participating in an after-school activity led by staff.
- On Friday, pupils are required to leave the School premises by 2.55 pm, although study is available in the Library/PS6 until 3.30 pm.

#### **Returning after Absence**

- Absence notes should not be sent into school. Instead, parents should email [fslattendance154@c2kni.net](mailto:fslattendance154@c2kni.net) with "Absence Note" as the subject heading. The email should include the pupil's name, Collect, date of birth, date(s) of absence(s) and brief explanatory details. Please also include the most convenient contact number in case clarification is required.
- In the case of an unplanned absence (normally due to illness) that lasts for THREE days or longer, parents/guardians should contact the General Office by the third day of absence to give the reason for the absence.

#### **Pupil Exeat during the school day**

- Advance requests for a pupil to leave school during the day (e.g. for a medical appointment) should also be emailed to [fslattendance154@c2kni.net](mailto:fslattendance154@c2kni.net) with "Request for Absence" as the subject heading.
- No pupils are permitted to leave School during the school day without informing a Vice-Principal or the School Nurse. Pupils becoming ill during the day should report to the Nurse's Room where contact with home will be made in the event of them needing to leave School. No pupil should contact home and leave the School premises without informing a member of staff.

#### **Absence from School for one day or longer**

- Requests for planned absences of one day or longer should also be emailed to [fslattendance154@c2kni.net](mailto:fslattendance154@c2kni.net) with "Request for Absence" as the subject heading, at least one week in advance. The nature of the absence determines whether or not the absence is recorded as authorised or unauthorised. A list of what constitutes authorised/unauthorised absences can be obtained from School.

#### **Truancy**

- Truancy from School merits a sanction. The level of sanction is determined by the seriousness and extent of the absence from School. In the case where there is an underlying pastoral issue, School makes every effort to support the pupil. All cases of truancy are reported to an EA Welfare Officer.

#### **Monitoring Attendance and Punctuality**

The Year Teachers will monitor absence and lateness on a weekly basis. This will be done in conjunction with the Collect Teacher.

If a pattern of absence is detected or if the attendance rate falls below 90%, except where the absence is clearly the result of illness, a member of the Year Teacher will interview the student to establish the reason(s) for the absences.

If a pattern of absence continues or the attendance rate falls below 85%, a letter will be sent home informing the parent/guardian of the situation regarding attendance. If attendance does not improve, the Year Teacher may conduct an interview with the parent/guardian to discuss attendance issues.

In the highly unlikely situation where (i) or (ii) above do not properly address the situation a parental interview with the Vice Principal or Principal may take place.

#### **SIMS Parent App**

Session Attendance will be displayed in the SIMS Parent App. A weekly notification will also be sent that summarises attendance over the prior week. This will be sent on Fridays at 18:00.

**Educational Welfare**

School works with the Education Authority (South Eastern Region) Education and Welfare Officer based in Lisburn, and all pupil attendance in Key Stages 3 and 4 that falls below 85% is reported.

**Educational Maintenance Allowance**

Those Sixth Form students entitled to receive Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA) should be aware that high levels of attendance and punctuality are essential if they are to qualify for the full payments. A separate policy regarding EMA has been drawn up.

**Revised September 2020**