



Student Attendance Policy

Introduction

There is a strong correlation between positive school experience, outcomes and levels of attendance. Regular school attendance is crucial in ensuring that every child can fully access the school curriculum, pastoral support and extra-curricular activities.

We strive to promote an ethos and culture which encourages high levels of attendance and in which each student feels valued, secure and ready to learn.

The College adheres to the guidance set out in the Department of Education Circular 2021/16, which can be found at the following link: <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/recording-pupil-attendance>

1. Aims

- To achieve and maintain high levels of student attendance;
- To provide advice, support and guidance to parents, carers and students;
- To work closely with the Education Welfare Service (EWS).

2. Procedures

The first bell of the day rings at 9.00 am to give notice that Form Period is due to start in 5 minutes time. Registration takes place from 9.05 am, when the attendance register is taken by the Form Teacher.

At the beginning of each class during the school day, attendance is marked on SIMS. Unexplained absence from class is referred to the Office immediately.

3. Roles and responsibilities

All students are expected to:

- attend school punctually and regularly;
- include attendance in their self-evaluation and target-setting exercises;
- sign in at the Office if arriving after 9.15 am
- sign out at the Office when leaving the College during the school day.

All staff are expected to:

- promote full attendance by developing a happy and purposeful working atmosphere, in which each student feels in control of their learning;
- maintain accurate and up-to-date registration records;
- consider attendance as one factor in target-setting exercises undertaken in pastoral care;
- celebrate good attendance as one of a range of achievements valued by the College.

Form Teachers are expected to:

- support and advise students with poor attendance;
- ensure that parents and carers are notified or consulted when issues of attendance arise;
- encourage students in their Form Class to aspire to high levels of attendance;
- liaise with Heads of Year and SLT if patterns of low attendance emerge;
- respond to monthly analysis of attendance data as appropriate.



Heads of Year are expected to:

- work closely with their respective Form Teachers to maintain a close oversight role for their respective year group;
- meet with members of the Senior Leadership Team on a fortnightly basis for a progress review;
- are responsible for putting appropriate interventions in place when attendance issues arise.

The Vice-Principal:

- works with pastoral leaders and the Senior Leadership Team, liaising with other agencies such as the EWS and Social Services to provide support when issues of poor attendance arise;
- analyses attendance data each month and produces summary reports for relevant staff for follow-up.

The Principal has overall responsibility for school attendance and reports to the Board of Governors.

The Board of Governors exercise oversight by reviewing school attendance figures and targets at each full board meeting.

Parents and carers:

- have a legal duty to ensure that their child regularly attends school and reinforce the importance of good attendance and punctuality;
- should ensure their child is punctual, lateness is recorded in registration with the exception of school buses arriving late;
- should inform the Office of the reason for a child's absence on the first day of non-attendance, ideally between 8.30 am and 9.00 am. If the absence persists, parents / carers should keep the College updated with expected date of child's return to school;
- should notify the Office of a planned absence, such as medical or dental appointments or family events. For longer absences, parents / carers should notify the College by emailing info@shimna.newcastle.ni.sch.uk;
- should take note of the College calendar and avoid booking family holidays during term time.

If a child appears reluctant to attend school, parents / carers are advised to discuss the matter with the Form Teacher at the earliest opportunity to ensure that support can be put in place.

4. Education Welfare Service

Through the work of the Education Welfare Service, the Education Authority has a legal duty to make sure that parents and carers meet their responsibility towards their children's education.

If a student's absence falls below 85%, if appropriate their attendance will be referred to the EWS.

The EWS supports school, parents and carers in developing and implementing strategies to address or improve school attendance.

<https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/de/attendance-matters-a-parents-guide.pdf>