



LONGSTONE SCHOOL

Attendance Policy

UNCRC Article 28
Every child has the right to an
education.

February 2024



Refer to Department of Education Circular: 2015/02

INTRODUCTION

Regular 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. Longstone School will strive to promote an ethos and culture which encourages good attendance and where each pupil will feel valued and secure. (**Article 28 the right to an education**).

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that as a school we do all that we can to ensure maximum attendance for all pupils. Any problems that prevent full attendance will be identified and addressed as soon as possible in line with the procedures outlined below. (**Article 3 best interests of the child**).

VISION STATEMENT

“Empowering and developing young people to achieve their full potential.”

Our school promotes the UN Convention on the Rights of a Child. Articles 3 and 29 underline our school vision:

Article 3

‘The best interests of the child must be a top priority in all our actions.’

Article 29

‘Education must develop every child’s personality, talents and abilities to the full. It must encourage the child’s respect for human rights, as well as respect for their parents, their own cultures, and the environment.’

OBJECTIVES

- To improve/maintain the overall attendance and punctuality of pupils at Longstone School.
- To develop a framework that defines roles and responsibilities in relation to attendance.
- To provide advice, support and guidance to parents/carers and pupils in relation to attendance.
- To record and monitor attendance and absenteeism and apply appropriate strategies.
- To promote good relationships with the Education Welfare Service.
- To ensure a consistent approach throughout the school.

ROLE OF THE SCHOOL

The Principal has overall responsibility for school attendance; the teachers should bring any concerns regarding school attendance to his attention.

The Board of Governors provide support by reviewing school attendance figures and targets..

Teaching staff regularly monitor the attendance and punctuality of pupils by ensuring that attendance is recorded on a daily basis.

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

ROLE OF THE PARENT/CARER

Longstone School is committed to working with parents/carers to encourage regular and punctual attendance.

Parents/carers have a legal duty [Article 45 (1) of the Education and Libraries (NI) Order 1986] to ensure their child of compulsory school age shall receive efficient full time education suitable to age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs they may have, either by regular school attendance or otherwise.

If a child is registered in school, their parent/carer has a legal duty to ensure that they regularly attend that school. **(Article 28 right to an education).**

It is important that everyone works together to help children obtain the best possible start in life with a good education. Parents/carers are therefore encouraged to 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. **(Article 29 develop talents and abilities).**

It is a parent's/carer's responsibility to inform the school of the reason for a pupil's absence on the first day of absence. This should be confirmed with a written note when the pupil returns to school. 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. **(Article 28 the right to an education).**

Pupils are expected to be in school at 9.00 am for registration and the beginning of classes/Assembly. It is the responsibility of parents/carers to ensure that their child is punctual. Lateness is recorded at registration and on your child's attendance record.

If a child appears reluctant to attend school the parent/carer should discuss this with the class teacher or Principal to ensure that both the child and parent/carer receive maximum support. **(Article 3 best interests of the child).**

ROLE OF PUPILS

Each pupil at Longstone School must attend school punctually and regularly. If they have been absent from school, a written note from a parent/carer must be provided to their teacher when they return.

ABSENCE PROCEDURES

All parents/carers are required to notify the school. To assist parents/carers with this they can complete an Absence Notification Form which provides a clear reason for any absence. (Appendix 1) A record of forms which have been issued is kept by Class teachers on the Unexplained Absence Dates – Monitoring Sheet.

FAMILY HOLIDAYS DURING TERM TIME

The Department of Education for Northern Ireland and Longstone School discourages holidays during term time due to the impact they have 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. **(Article 28 right to an education).**

PROCEDURES FOR MANAGING NON-ATTENDANCE

At Longstone School, we promote a culture and ethos in which children enjoy coming to school, and do not want to miss out **(Article 29 develop talents and abilities).** We aim to provide sensitive and appropriate guidance to parents/carers concerning pupil attendance, taking into account guidance from the Department of Education.

- We will give a high priority to conveying to parents/carers and pupils the importance of regular and punctual attendance.
- The VP will monitor pupil attendance.
- We recognise that parents/carers have a vital role to play and that there is a need to establish strong home-school links and communication systems that can be utilised whenever there is concern about attendance.
- We will work towards ensuring that all pupils feel supported and valued.
- We will send a clear message that if a pupil is absent, she/he will be missed.
- We will ensure that all staff are aware of the requirements of the registration process and that they receive training on Registration Regulations and the Law relating to attendance.

- We give high priority to attendance and punctuality. Registration begins at 9.00 am and the register is closed at 9.20 am. A child who arrives at school after registration closes will be registered as late.
- We recognise the importance of early intervention and ask parents/carers for explanations of pupil absence. Parents/carers are contacted by the Vice Principal and interviews arranged if necessary, as a result of attendance concerns.
- If there are problems which affect a pupil's attendance we will investigate, identify and strive in partnership with parents/carers, pupils and if necessary the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) to resolve attendance problems as quickly and efficiently as possible.
- If necessary we hold informal meetings and/or telephone calls with parents/carers to discuss reasons for a pupil's poor attendance – school absence letters are issued when levels of absence becomes a cause for concern.
- The VP will arrange Home Visits to support the parents/carers and the pupil to try to resolve any issues preventing attendance at school.
- Video-conferencing will be used to break down barriers between home and school and facilitate re-integration to school – possibly on a phased return.
- We work closely with the EWO to regularly monitor and review absences and punctuality. The EWO pays particular attention to children whose attendance falls below 85% and it may be necessary after monitoring a child's attendance percentage or pattern of attendance eg. an unusually high number of Fridays off school, for a referral to be made to the Education Welfare Service.
- All staff mark their class register using the same system of appropriate categorisation of absence.
- Any concerns about individual pupils are reported directly to the Vice Principal who decides appropriate action and monitors the results.
- Information relating to attendance is included in the Governors' Annual Report to parents/carers.
- A copy of this policy will be made available from the school office and will be also available to view on the school's website.
- If your child has to be away from school you should notify the school as soon as possible, preferably on the first day of absence.
- An absence record sheet is available to assist parents/carers inform the school of any school absence. (Appendix 1)

- If a parent/carer knows in advance of the absence, you should ask permission from the school giving as much notice as possible and full details.

THE ROLE OF THE EDUCATION WELFARE

The Education Authority (Belfast and South Eastern Region) through the Education Welfare Service (EWS) have a legal duty to make sure that parents/carers meet their responsibility towards their children's education (**Article 28 the right to an education**).

If a pupil's absence causes concern, or if their attendance falls below 85%, they will be referred to the EWS, if appropriate. EWS will support staff and parents/carers in developing and implementing strategies to address or improve school attendance. The EWO can put parents/carers in touch with other agencies that may be able to offer further advice and help.

Parents/carers are legally responsible for ensuring that a child of compulsory school age attends school regularly.

A child with 90% attendance will have missed 19 school days in one academic year.

A child with 85% attendance will have missed 28.5 school days in one academic year.

WHEN A CHILD CAN BE ABSENT FROM SCHOOL

When he or she:

- is ill;
- has an unavoidable medical or dental appointment;
- is taking part in a religious event;
- has an exceptional family circumstance, e.g. wedding or a funeral.
- **Has been identified as a close contact by PHA and been asked to self-isolate due to COVID19.**

SOME UNACCEPTABLE REASONS FOR ABSENCE

- Birthdays;
- Term time holidays;
- Visiting relatives;
- Looking after other members of the family.

CONCLUSION

This attendance policy will be reviewed every two years or as appropriate as a result of new guidance or changes in legislation by the Department of Education N.I.



APPENDIX 1

EDUCATION AUTHORITY - SOUTH EASTERN EDUCATION

LONGSTONE SCHOOL



Principal: Mr I. Skarmoutsos B Sc PGCE M Ed
Telephone: 028 9048 0071 / 028 9048 4660
Fax: 028 9048 1927
E-mail: info@longstone.belfast.ni.sch.uk

Millar's Lane
Dundonald
BELFAST
BT16 2DA

UNCRC – Article 28 “Every child has the right to an Education”.

Date

Name of Pupil

Class

Dear Parent/Guardian

Your child was absent from school on the dates listed below. I would be grateful if you could give a reason for the absence along with your signature.

Your child should only be absent from school if medically unfit to attend and a note should be provided for the absence on the day of your child's return to school.

Date	Reason for Absence	Signature

Thank you for your support.

Mr J Starrs Vice Principal

