



September  
2023

# PUPIL ATTENDANCE POLICY

Policy Date: November 2015  
January 2022  
September 2023  
Review Date: As required

## 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 potential.

Sullivan Upper 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 maintain/improve the overall attendance of pupils at Sullivan Upper.
- 2 To develop a framework that defines roles and responsibilities in relation to attendance.
- 3 To provide advice, support and guidance to parents/guardians and pupils.
- 4 To promote good relationships with the Education Welfare Service.

## ROLE OF PARENT

Parents/guardians 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 has a legal duty to ensure that they regularly attend that school.

It is the responsibility of parents/guardians to inform the school of the reason for a pupil's absence **via Parentmail using the 'Notify Absence' function by 8.45 am** at the latest on the first day of absence. 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.

Pupils are expected to be in school **by 8.45 am** for registration and the beginning of classes. It is the responsibility of parents/guardians to ensure that their child is punctual. Lateness is recorded at morning (AM) and afternoon (PM) registration on their child's attendance record.

Parents/guardians are able to view their child's attendance record (AM and PM sessions) on the **SIMS Parent App**. It is the responsibility of parents/guardians to monitor their child's attendance record. A weekly notification on the SIMS Parent App is sent at the end of each week which summarises their child's attendance over the prior week.

**Attended (✓)** - This will be recorded for all pupils who register as present.

**Absence (X)** - X means that the pupil has been recorded as absent. Parents should ensure that the school has been notified of this absence via Parentmail to ensure that the absence is not recorded as unauthorised. An unauthorised absence affects the pupil's overall attendance percentage.



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If a pupil appears reluctant to attend school the matter should be discussed promptly with the Form Teacher or Year Head.

## ROLE OF PUPILS

Each pupil at Sullivan must attend school regularly and punctually, and to be punctual for each class they attend in the course of the school day. Pupils are able to view their attendance record on the SIMS Student App. It is their responsibility to monitor their attendance record.

**Attended (✓)** - recorded for all pupils who register as present.

**Absence (X)** - X means that the pupil has been recorded as absent. If the school does not receive a reason for absence, the absence will be recorded as unauthorised. An unauthorised absence affects the pupil's overall attendance percentage.

Pupils in Year 13 and Year 14 should ensure they follow the correct sign-out procedures with the Study Supervisor during study periods so their attendance record is accurate.

Pupils must notify their class teacher in advance if they will be absent from class, eg for a music lesson.

## ROLE OF THE SCHOOL

The Board of Governors provides support by reviewing school attendance figures and targets and ensuring school attendance is placed as an agenda item at each meeting.

The Vice-Principal (Pastoral) has overall responsibility for school attendance. Staff should bring any concerns regarding school attendance to her attention.

Staff regularly monitor the attendance and punctuality of pupils by ensuring that attendance is recorded through Lesson Monitor.

In order to record accurately and monitor attendance in a consistent way the school adheres to the guidance provided in the Department of Education Circular 2023/11, which can be found at the following link:

<https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/attendance-guidance-absence-recording-by-schools-circular-202311>

Sullivan is committed to working with parents to encourage regular and punctual attendance.

## EDUCATION WELFARE SERVICE

The Education Authority through the Education Welfare Service (EWS) has a legal duty to make sure that parents meet their responsibility towards their children's 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 in developing and implementing strategies to address or improve school attendance.

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## REGISTRATION PROCEDURES

- 1 A warning bell rings at 8.45 am and Morning Registration is taken at 8.50 am sharp. If a pupil arrives after 8.50 am, they are marked as late.
- 2 Pupils' attendance is recorded using Lesson Monitor in SIMS.net by the Form Teacher. Attendance for every lesson is recorded by the teacher at the start of the lesson.
- 3 Pupils arriving in school late (after 8.50 am) must sign-in at reception using the VPASS system (an electronic signing-in system). If pupils do not sign-in this results in a 'N' code (unauthorised absence) for the duration of the AM session.

## ABSENCE PROCEDURES

Parents are asked to assist the school in a number of ways.

- (a) When a pupil is absent from school the parent/guardian is required to notify the school via Parentmail using the 'Notify Absence' function before 8.45 am on the first day of absence. Parents/guardians should indicate the number of days the pupil is expected to be absent.

In Parentmail, if choosing the 'Other' option, additional information must be provided, so that the absence can be coded correctly, otherwise the absence may be coded as unauthorised which affects a pupil's overall attendance percentage. Parents should ensure each day of absence is explained. The absence will be coded in accordance with the Department of Education coding guidance (see [Appendix 2](#)).

Please note absences should NOT be reported through the school 'info' email account, telephone or staff email address.

- (b) **Requests for pupils to be absent for appointments, etc** should be notified via Parentmail (when notifying future absences, parents should ensure this is done as far ahead of the event as possible and date(s) and explanation are given). Parents are asked to arrange dental and medical appointments outside school hours if they possibly can. Parentmails requesting permission to be absent for part of the school day should state the time at which the pupil will have to leave school and, where appropriate, the time at which he/she will return.
- (c) **Family holidays during term-time** - Sullivan discourages holidays during term-time due to the impact they have on pupils' learning. Parents are asked not to take their children on holiday during term-time. It is difficult for children to catch up what they miss, even after a few days' absence. It is also difficult for the school to do its best for the pupils if they miss more classes than they need to. Controlled Assessment/coursework and practical assessment, for example, must fit into a tight schedule, and changes in our arrangements cannot be made to accommodate additional holidays. Family holidays taken during term-time will be categorised as an unauthorised absence. Only in exceptional circumstances will a holiday be authorised.
- (d) Please note that **if the school organises for pupils to be absent during the course of the day** on an approved educational visit, then the pupil will be marked present using the appropriate code on their registration certificate. However, if parents remove children from school, then the pupil will be marked absent.



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- (e) No pupil is permitted to leave the school buildings or grounds during the course of the school day unless he or she has permission *ie ParentMail has been received in advance to notify the school of an appointment. If a pupil is unwell during the school day pupils must go to the School Nurse. If the School Nurse is unavailable pupils should report to Reception.* Pupils must NOT contact parents about illness before seeing the school nurse, who will contact parents if necessary. If a pupil leaves school without permission this will be dealt with under the Positive Behaviour Policy.

If a pupil is absent 3 or more days and there has been no explanation, contact will be made with the parent/guardian.

The school reserves the right to use any of the disciplinary sanctions (as outlined in the Positive Behaviour Policy) when responding to poor attendance and/or poor punctuality. Poor attendance/punctuality may preclude holding positions of responsibility within the school (such as prefectship) and may lead to loss of privileges. The school reserves the right to withdraw a pupil with poor attendance (below 90%) from school trips or other activities. Attendance and punctuality concerns may also be mentioned on references from the school.

### MONITORING ATTENDANCE

- A record of each pupil's attendance is kept. Attendance record is included on pupils' Progress Reports and Annual Report.
- The Department of Education considers attendance below 90% as poor (see [Appendix 1](#))
- When issues over attendance become evident, the Head of Year will contact home.
- Attendance letters (for those with very poor attendance below 85%) are sent when necessary. Depending on the level of absence, an appointment may be requested to meet with a parent/guardian in person.
- When attendance drops below 85%, the school is obliged to discuss attendance with the Education Welfare Service, and may need to make a formal referral.
- To enable the school to record and monitor attendance in a consistent way, we will adhere to the guidance provided in the most recent Department of Education Circular.

### MONITORING NUMBER OF SESSIONS LATE

- A record of number of sessions late for each pupil is kept. The number of sessions late is included on pupils' Progress Reports and Annual Report.
- When a pattern of lateness presents, the Year Head will be in contact with home and may request a meeting with the parents to discuss.
- Those who are persistently late for registration [ie 4 times or more in a calendar month] will be required to attend initially a one-hour Monday detention but if lateness persists, a special Friday detention (3.35 pm to 5.00 pm).
- Pupils arriving in school late must sign-in at reception using the VPASS system.
- If pupils arrive late, after 10.30 am, they will be given a 'U' code (unauthorised absence).

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## MONITORING CLASS ATTENDANCE

- The school records and monitors class attendance through SIMS Lesson Monitor.

## LONG-TERM ABSENCE

- In the case of longer periods of absence the Vice-Principal (Pastoral) works closely with the Education Welfare Service.
- When a pupil has an illness/injury that means they will be away from school for a longer absence, the school will do what it can to support the pupil, including sending material/work home, so that they can keep up with their school work.
- For continued long-term absence, the school will contact Educational Welfare Services to discuss the possibility of tuition outside of school.

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## APPENDIX 1

### DENI GUIDANCE ON ABSENCE FIGURES

The Department of Education has provided guidance to parents and schools regarding attendance statistics in a leaflet entitled:

#### ‘School Attendance Matters – A Parent’s Guide’

<https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/school-attendance-matters-parents-guide>



## 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.



**Key  
Point**

Give your child the best start in life – every school day counts.

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## APPENDIX 2

### SUMMARY OF ATTENDANCE CODES

CODE	DESCRIPTION	CODE	DESCRIPTION								
/ \	Present: / = (AM); \ = (PM)	X	Only staff should attend								
A*	Artistic Endeavour	V*	Exceptional Closure								
B*	Bereavement	#	Holiday for all								
C	Suspended	!	No attendance required								
D	No reason provided for absence	1	Community Providers / EOTAS (organised by the EA)								
F*	Family Holiday (agreed)	2	Exceptional Teaching Arrangement / hospital								
G*	Family Holiday (not agreed)	3	Elective Home Education								
H*	Other Absence	4	Pupil Referral Unit								
I	Illness (not medical or dental appointments)	5	Another mainstream school (under Entitlement Framework – EF)								
J*	Extended Leave	6	Training Organisation (under EF)								
L*	Late (before registration closed)	7	FE College (under EF)								
M*	Medical / Dental Appointments	8	Intensive Support Learning Unit								
N	No reason yet provided for absence (temporary code only)	9	CAMHS / Mental Health Support								
O*	Other Exceptional Circumstances		<b>COVID-19 SPECIFIC CODES - Please refer to DE circular 2023/11</b>								
P*	Approved Activity	(	<b>COVID-19 Illness Confirmed</b> – must be used in situations where a pupil has tested positive for Covid-19.								
R*	Religious Observance	)	<b>COVID-19 Illness Suspected / Unconfirmed</b> – to be used in situations where a pupil may be Covid-19 positive but this is unconfirmed.								
S*	Study Leave	{	<b>COVID-19 Self-isolating – Vulnerable Pupil or Household member</b> Pupil chooses not to attend school due to own underlying health conditions or due to health conditions of other family members*. If a pupil is sick, they should be recorded as such.								
U*	Late (after registration closed)	}	<b>COVID-19 Self-isolating - No evidence of learning from home</b> Pupil required to self-isolate but not learning from home / evidence not provided.								
V*	Educational Visit / Examination	[	<b>COVID-19 Self-isolating &amp; Learning from Home</b> Pupil required to self-isolate and learning from home* – does not discount from attendance record.								
W*	Work Experience	]	<b>COVID-19 Learning from Home - Social Distancing</b> Pupils are not required to attend physically at school due to social distancing rules, imposed by DE or school. E.g. pupils required to attend on certain days or for a certain number of hours per day. This decision must be informed by health professional advice.								
<b>COLOUR CODE</b>											
<table border="1" style="width: 100%; text-align: center;"> <tr> <td style="width: 25%; height: 20px; background-color: #90EE90;"></td> <td>Present / Approved Educational Activity /</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="width: 25%; height: 20px; background-color: #FFFF00;"></td> <td>Authorised Absence</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="width: 25%; height: 20px; background-color: #FF0000;"></td> <td>Unauthorised Absence</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="width: 25%; height: 20px; background-color: #ADD8E6;"></td> <td>Attendance not required</td> </tr> </table>					Present / Approved Educational Activity /		Authorised Absence		Unauthorised Absence		Attendance not required
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