

JONES MEMORIAL PRIMARY SCHOOL



ATTENDANCE POLICY

Jones Memorial Primary School stresses the need for pupils to consistently attend school. It is a 'given' that poor attendance inevitably has a negative impact on learning and achievement. We encourage pupils to attend school every day and to be punctual to school and lessons.

Jones Memorial Primary School:

- **Encourages every pupil to aim for 100% attendance**
- **Insists that pupils arrive punctually to school**
- **Monitors pupil attendance and punctuality closely through the SIMS**
- **Will utilise home/school links when there are concerns over a pupil's attendance**
- **Will collaborate with home and outside agencies to endeavour to resolve problems as they are identified.**

All staff will continually stress the importance of full attendance to pupils and encourage them to strive towards this goal.

What is expected of Parents?

Family Holidays during Term Time:

Jones Memorial Primary School strongly discourages holidays during term time due to the impact that they have on pupils' learning. Parents/carers must contact the school, prior to booking any holiday to explain the need to remove a pupil from school during term time. The contact should be in the form of a letter addressed to the Principal.

Currently there is no legislation in Northern Ireland with regard to holidays in term time (as there is in the rest of the United Kingdom) However, if a pupil's attendance falls below 85% in a school year, the school concerned is obliged to contact the Educational Welfare Officer.

Absence:

Pupils must bring a written explanation of the absence from his/her parent/carer to the first registration on returning to school. This note should include:

- **the pupil's full name and registration class**
- **the date(s) of the absence**
- **as full an explanation as possible for the absence**
- **the name of the parent / carer in block capitals along with their signature**

To assist in this matter a new proforma “Absence Note” has been devised (see Appendix E) which must be used (additional copies available from Office).

Parents are expected to Adhere to the enclosed leaflet:

Under Article 45 of the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986 (“the 1986 Order”), it is the duty of parents/carers who have a child of compulsory school age to ensure their child receives efficient, full time education suitable to their age, aptitude, ability and to any special educational needs they may have.

- Source: School Attendance Matters – A Parent’s Guide.

Paragraph 3 of Schedule 13 to the 1986 Order states that it is the duty of a parent of a registered pupil of a school to secure their regular attendance at school. This applies to all children of compulsory school age who are on the roll of a school. As a parent you are legally responsible for making this happen.

- Source: School Attendance Matters – A Parent’s Guide.

- **Ensure that their children attend school**
- **Ensure that pupils arrive punctually for the start of the school day**
- **Ensure that pupils are properly prepared for the school day e.g correct uniform and equipment.**
- **Contact school before 9.00am on the first day of absence if a pupil is unfit to attend school**
- **Follow the absence procedure**

Parents should ensure that:

- **Their children are absent only when ill health or bereavement prevents them from attending school**
- **Medical appointments and dental appointments should be arranged for a time outside school hours.**
 - **If a medical/dental appointment cannot be arranged outside school hours, parents must provide a signed note and or appointment card.**
 - **If an appointment is organised at short notice by a parent ie. There is no note provided, it is essential that the school has confidence in any person collecting a pupil and therefore this person should be the parent/guardian or someone with clear responsibility for the child.**

What is expected of students?

Pupils are expected to place importance on their education and to attend school and all lessons punctually and properly prepared.

Pupils should be in school by 9.15am at the latest for the start of the school day at 9.20am.

- **If a student is late for a valid reason, they must bring a short written note from the parent explaining the reason for lateness.**
- **Parents and pupils should note that 'I slept in' or 'I missed the bus' will not be accepted as valid reasons for lateness.**

Pupils must remain on the school premises at all times throughout the day. The school premises are self-contained and pupils have no reason to leave the grounds until the end of timetable for the day. Pupils attending unavoidable medical or dental appointments.

- **Pupils leaving school with a member of staff for an approved educational activity.**

Pupils must bring a note from their parent explaining any absence from school on the day they return.

When a pupil cannot avoid being absent from school for a valid reason, (for either part of a day or a full day) a note should be given to the teacher, preferably the day in advance. This is recorded on the register.

Categorising Absence

Authorised Absence

Examples include:

- **Illness**
- **Unavoidable medical appointments**
- **Taking part in a religious event**
- **Exceptional family circumstance (Eg: wedding or funeral)**
- **Representing their club/school/county/country in a particular event Eg sport, music etc.**

Unauthorised Absence

- **Birthdays.**

- Visiting relatives.
- Looking after other members of the family.
- A pupil is unnecessarily kept off school.
- Shopping.
- Family holiday/ long weekend break.

What is expected of teaching staff?

Teachers

Teachers are expected to record all absences and punctuality for every lesson on SIMS.

- If a pupil arrives late teachers must record an L code against the pupil's name.
- Pupils arriving late after 9.45 are to be coded with a U.
- Pupils with notes explaining their legitimate lateness or absence can be coded accordingly.

Teachers should demonstrate concern for their pupils by endeavouring to speak to any pupil on their return to school after an absence.

Teachers are expected to follow up pupils' absences by requesting written, explanatory notes from pupils. Teachers must amend the attendance record on SIMS appropriately when notes are produced.

Teachers should assist pupils to catch up with work missed by providing advice, support and practical help

Concerns over any pupil must be referred to the Principal when appropriate:

- When attendance for any pupil falls below 95%
- When attendance for any pupil falls below 90%
- When attendance for any pupil falls below 85%

Principal/Vice Principal

Is expected to –

- Liaise closely with teachers and other staff to monitor and review attendance and punctuality.
- Contact home by phone or letter when attendance falls below 90% or there are persistent unexplained absences. See Appendix A

- To send initial letters (See Appendix B & C)
- Refer when necessary to the EWO (Below 85% attendance) and send a standard letter to the parents. (See Appendix D)

Roles and Responsibilities of the Board of Governors

To consider the Principal's report on school attendance each year.

What is expected of the Clerical staff?

- Maintain the integrity of pupil attendance records by updating where necessary
- Produce and disseminate weekly attendance and punctuality reports to teachers
- Produce standard letters to parents when required by Principal
- Change an M code for prearranged Medical appointments to a present mark when the pupil arrives back in school.
- Ensure good communication regarding attendance by passing information expediently to teaching and pastoral staff.
- Produce attendance sheets for emergency evacuation procedures

Educational Welfare Service

The Education Authority, through the Educational Welfare Service (EWS) has a legal duty to make sure that parents/carers 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/carers in developing and implementing strategies to address or improve school attendance.

“Under Part III of Schedule 13 to the 1986 Order, if a child or young person who is registered at a school does not attend regularly a parent/carer can receive a fine not exceeding £1000 in court (for each

child). An Education Supervision Order (ESO) could also be made by a court under Article 55 of the Children (NI) Order 1995.”

(Source: School Attendance Matters – A Parent’s Guide)

Incentives to Improve Attendance and Punctuality

- **Assembly (twice per term) by the Vice-Principal who will talk to the pupils about the importance of good attendance and punctuality.**
- **The Vice-Principal will talk to individual pupils when necessary.**
- **The Vice-Principal will liaise with the Clerical Staff to monitor and record monthly attendance. This will be shared with the pupils in the form of an attendance graph.**
- **The Principal will present an attendance trophy to the class from the key stage with the best attendance. A photograph of the class with their trophy will be celebrated on our Social Media Sites.**
- **Children with 100% attendance will receive a book prize and a certificate at the prize-giving ceremony.**
- **Posters advertising the importance of attendance will be placed on the main entrance areas of the school.**

Monitoring of the Policy

The Co-ordinator will review the policy every two years and present any changes to the Principal, Governors and staff. The policy will be available for parents to view.

School Attendance

Dear Parent/Carer

In September we distributed to all parents a leaflet supplied by the Department of Education entitled 'School Attendance Matters – A Parent's Guide'. This leaflet makes the point, **“For some parents, 90% attendance may seem acceptable but the reality is that your child misses 19 days in the school year – that’s nearly 4 school weeks”**. When a pupil's attendance falls below 85% the Education Welfare Officer becomes involved. At Jones Memorial Primary School we have very high standards and take great pride in seeing our children achieve their potential. In order for us to continue to achieve our goals we need our pupils to have a pattern of good attendance throughout their school career.

- o To date _____'s current attendance is _____ %.
- o This equates to _____ weeks and _____ days of learning opportunities missed.

We understand that in some cases there are extenuating circumstances, in many cases medical or bereavement issues. It is important that the teacher is made aware of this so that the correct codes are used when filling out the attendance record.

We thank our parents for their continued support of the school and wish to work in partnership with you to give your child the best possible start in life.

Yours sincerely

Mrs S Isherwood
Principal

Every School Day Counts

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	Unacceptable

	9 Weeks and 1 Day of Learning Missed	
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For some parent/carers, 90% may seem like an acceptable level of attendance, but the reality is that 90% attendance means your child will miss half a school day each week or 19 days of school during the school year – that is nearly 4 school weeks.

Appendix B

Date

Dear _____

Your child _____'s attendance record is giving us cause for concern. We will continue to monitor the number of days your child is absent from school. If there is no significant improvement the school will request the assistance of the Education Welfare Office (EWO) who will help with this problem. If you wish to discuss or explain reasons for your child absence please contact the Vice-Principal, Mrs Bailie.

**Yours sincerely
Principal**

Appendix C

Date

Dear _____

I am writing to inform you that there continues to be ongoing concerns regarding your child _____'s attendance. Your child's current level of attendance is _____%. If your child's attendance falls below 85% without a valid reason for the absence he/she will be referred to the Education Welfare Officer.

If you wish to discuss or explain reasons for your child absence please contact the Vice-Principal, Mrs Bailie.

Yours sincerely

**Mrs S Isherwood
Principal**

EWS Referral Form – Updated Sept 2008

Reason(s) for referral, please tick boxes as appropriate

<input type="checkbox"/>	Attendance
<input type="checkbox"/>	Behaviour <small>(where it is impacting on attendance including concerns regarding suspensions)</small>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Welfare Concerns
<input type="checkbox"/>	School Placement
<input type="checkbox"/>	School Age Mother
<input type="checkbox"/>	Social & Emotional <small>(e.g. bullying, transition)</small>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other

If other (please specify) _____

Action taken by school pre-referral

Date of Contact _____ **Please give more information overleaf**

<input type="checkbox"/>	Letters sent to home
<input type="checkbox"/>	Parent(s)/carer(s) contacted by phone
<input type="checkbox"/>	Parent(s)/carer(s) interviewed at school
<input type="checkbox"/>	Individual work with student
<input type="checkbox"/>	Contact with other agencies, please specify _____

Is this a re-referral? Yes ☐ No ☐

One of the following categories should be used:
 Black – African, Black – Caribbean, Bangladeshi, Black – Other, Chinese/Hong Kong, Indian/Sri Lankan, Korean, Mixed Ethnic Group, Malaysian, Other Non White, Pakistani, Irish Traveller, Vietnamese or White.

Ethnicity: _____

Please note that referrals will not be accepted without the family having been informed unless in exceptional circumstances.

Date: _____ Letter ☐ Phone call ☐ Other ☐ Please specify: _____

Does the SENCo know the student? Yes ☐ No ☐

At what stage on the code of practice is this student (1-5)? ☐

To ensure effective EWS assessment the section below must be completed

Please detail the following:

Reasons for absence

School interventions to address pupil's absence

Parent/guardian's response to school's intervention

Please attach a copy of attendance printout with this referral.

Signature: _____ Designation: _____

Name & Designation of person who should be contacted (if different from above): _____

Date of referral: _____

Please note – the contents of this form may be shared with the student and parent(s)/carer(s).

Thank you for taking the time to complete this form.

For Office Use Only	
Date Received	
Allocated to	
Date	

EWS Referral Form – Updated Sept 2008

Please note that referrals will not be accepted without the family having been informed unless in exceptional circumstances.

Appendix E: Absence Reply Slip

(Name) _____ was unable to attend school on (Date)
_____ because he/she was:

Sick ☐

Medical/Dentist ☐

Bereavement ☐

Other

Signed _____ (Parent/Guardian)