



Phoenix
INTEGRATED
PRIMARY SCHOOL
Achieving & Celebrating Together

Pupil Attendance Policy

Date Ratified: 21.5.14

Signed:

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Reviewed on 21.11.18

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Reviewed 11.11.20

(Chairperson of the Board of Governors)

ATTENDANCE POLICY

This policy forms part of the Safeguarding arrangements for the pupils of Phoenix IPS.

Introduction

Phoenix Integrated Primary School provides a high quality learning environment where children from Catholic and Protestant backgrounds, as well as those of other faiths and none, can learn with, from and about each other. We are committed to the Principles of Integration; equality, faith and values, parental involvement and social responsibility. We strive to provide a child centred ethos in which fairness, tolerance, compassion and forgiveness permeates all relationships within the school community.

At Phoenix we strive to promote an ethos and culture which encourages good attendance and where each pupil will feel valued and secure. Regular school attendance is essential to ensure uninterrupted progress raising standards in education and ensuring that every child can have full access to the school curriculum and reach their potential.

Aims

1. To improve/maintain the overall attendance of pupils at Phoenix Integrated Primary school.
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 Education Welfare Service.

Schools are required to take an attendance register twice a day and this shows whether a pupil is present, engaged in an approved activity off site, or absent. If a pupil is absent, every half day absence has to be classified by the school as either authorised or unauthorised. Only the school can authorise the absence, not parents/carers. This is why information about the cause of each absence is required in writing.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a good reason like illness or other unavoidable cause.

Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been given. This includes:

- Parents/carers keeping pupils off school unnecessarily
- Truancy before or during the school day
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Children who arrive at school late when registration has closed

It is hoped that parents/carers, school staff and statutory authorities can work closely to overcome any problems which may affect a pupil's attendance.

Why every School day counts?

Poor attendance can seriously affect each child's:

- Attainment in school
- Relationships with other children and their ability to form lasting friendships
- Confidence to attempt new work and work alongside others

Attendance percentages can be misleading

Every single day a child is absent from school equates to a day of lost learning. 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.

Attendance is summarised in the following categories:

Percentage % Attendance	Number of Days missed	Assessment of Attendance
100%	0 days missed	Excellent
95%	9 days of absence 1 week and 4 days of learning missed	Satisfactory
90%	19 days of absence 3 weeks and 4 days of learning missed	Poor
85%	28 days of absence 3 weeks and 4 days of learning missed	Very Poor
80%	38 days of absence 7 weeks and 3 days of learning missed	Unacceptable
75%	46 days of absence 9 weeks and 1 day of learning missed	Unacceptable

“Every child of compulsory school age shall receive efficient full time education suitable to age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs he may have, either by regular school attendance or otherwise.”

(Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986

Role of the School

- The Principal at Phoenix Integrated has overall responsibility for management of the policy.
- Teaching Staff will record and monitor punctuality attendance in class folder and follow up any absence notes and punctuality issues directly with parents.
- Teaching Staff will bring any concerns to the Principal/Vice Principal's attention.
- Office Staff will record attendance in SIMS and monitor attendance regularly with Principal/Vice Principal
- Office Staff will monitor punctuality and ensure record late arrivals and early pick ups are recorded in book at reception.
- Vice Principal, Teachers and office staff should bring any concerns regarding school attendance to his/her attention.
- The Board of Governors provide support by reviewing school attendance figures and targets and ensuring it is placed as an agenda item at meetings on a regular basis.
- To enable our school to record and monitor attendance in a consistent way we will adhere to the guidance provided in the Department of Education Circular 2018/12

[Circular 2018/12 Attendance Guidance and Recording for Schools](#)

Role of Parents

- Ensure their child attends daily and on time.
- Keep the school fully informed on all matters that might affect attendance and their child in school.
- If attendance becomes a problem – work with the school to improve matters.
- Give serious consideration to whether it is appropriate or necessary to request term time absence.

Procedures for parents to support managing attendance

Morning Registration

It is the responsibility of parents to ensure that your child is punctual. The school day starts at 9.00 am promptly and all children should be in school and ready for the school

day by this time. Any child who arrives after 9.00 am will be marked late and must be recorded in the Attendance book at the reception. Registration closes at 9.30 am after which absence will be recorded as unauthorised absence for the morning session. Those pupils who are persistently late will be referred to the Principal.

Absence from school

It is a parent/guardian's responsibility to inform the school (eg by telephone) 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. The note should include the following:

- Child's name and class
- Date(s) of absence
- As full an explanation as possible for the absence
- The name of the parent/carer in block capitals along with their signature.

If your child appears reluctant to attend school, please discuss the matter promptly with the class teacher or Principal to ensure that both you and your child receive maximum support.

To assist in this matter a new proforma "absence note" has been devised (see attached) Additional copies available from school office and class teachers.

Absence for Medical Reasons

Parents/carers are asked, whenever possible, to make appointments outside school hours. If an appointment has to be made during school's hours a written explanation must be provided stating clearly the time of the appointment. If there are frequent absences for medical reasons, parents/carers may be asked to provide medical evidence in the form of a doctor's certificate.

A proforma has been devised for this and is available from the school office and class teachers. (please see attached)

A note to request absence for a medical appointment must be signed by the class teacher at morning registration and presented at the school office when the pupil is signing out of school for their appointment. Pupils are expected to return to school following their appointment whenever possible.

If a pupil has a medical condition that may affect attendance and punctuality parents/carers are asked to contact the school to discuss possible arrangements with their child's class teacher. Persistent lateness will be referred to the Principal and discussed with parents.

Family holidays during term time

Phoenix Integrated Primary School strongly discourages holidays during term time due to the impact that they have on pupils' learning. If you plan to take your child out of school during term time you must contact the school to discuss with the Principal. In addition, any requests for leave during term time must be put in writing to the Principal. Family holidays taken during term time will be categorised as an unauthorised absence.

Role of Pupils

Each pupil at Phoenix Integrated Primary School has a duty to ensure that they attend school punctually and regularly. If you have been absent from school a written note from a parent/guardian must be provided to your teacher when you return.

Your parents must telephone the school to inform us that you will be absent on the first day you miss. We want you to return to school as soon as you are able to ensure you do not miss out on any learning.

Absence Procedures

- Parents must inform the school promptly on the first day of absence.
- A written absence note should be returned to the school on the child's return.
- Parents will be informed of their child's attendance through the school year.
- Any missed absence notes will be followed up by the class teacher and school office.

Procedures for Managing Non-attendance

Pupil attendance is continually monitored at Phoenix IPS.

Where the class teacher has concerns about the level or pattern of a pupil's attendance they are discussed with the Principal. Where deemed appropriate the Principal will manage the absenteeism using the following procedures:

1. Contact the family and arrange an appointment to discuss the issue in order to agree a strategy for improving attendance.
2. Should such contact fail to resolve the issue the school may refer the matter to the Educational Welfare Service for additional direction and support.

Education Welfare Service

Education and Library Boards through the Education Welfare Service have a legal responsibility to make sure that parents meet their responsibility towards their children's education

Regular attendance is an essential requirement for educational results and where attendance difficulties exist or a pupil's attendance falls below 85%, Education Welfare Service (EWS) will support staff and parents in developing and implementing strategies to address or improve school attendance.

A failure by parents to ensure their child's attendance can ultimately lead to prosecution.

Evaluation

The effectiveness of this policy and our procedures in monitoring and improving attendance levels is evaluated in a number of ways:

- Parents are kept informed of their child's attendance during the school year.
- Parents are given a summary of their child's attendance as part of the End of Year Report.
- The Governing Body monitor the effectiveness of this policy through Principal's reports on attendance at Governing Body meetings.
- The annual attendance figures are published in the Governors Annual Report to Parents.
- An officer from the Education Welfare Service regularly monitors attendance levels on a whole school and individual basis.
- SELB receive information on pupil attendance as part of the annual audit.
- The Department of Education monitor the school's attendance statistics as part of the Annual School Census.

ANNEX TO ATTENDANCE POLICY – COVID-19 2020/21

During the reopening period it is vitally important that parents/carers following the guidance set out by the school in respect of illness and absence. Please refer to Reopening Guidance for Schools 13.8.20 below.

Section 7 - Pupil Attendance

Pupil Attendance

- We will follow the guidance on attendance for pupils who have health conditions and those who live with people with health conditions or are pregnant. It is the parents responsibility to contact the school and inform them of any medical needs /shielding and seek advice from their medical consultants to ensure it is safe to return to school.

Schools should follow latest guidance on attendance for children and young people who have health conditions, who live with people with health conditions or who are pregnant.

- Pupils who are clinically vulnerable are those with pre-existing conditions who have been advised to stringently follow the social distancing guidelines and should learn from home where possible. A small minority of pupils will fall into this category. **Parents should contact the school to discuss.**
- Pupils who live with someone who is clinically vulnerable (but not clinically extremely vulnerable), including those who are pregnant, can attend their education or childcare setting. **No risk assessment necessary.**
- Pupils who were previously shielding (clinically extremely vulnerable people). These restrictions eased over time and as of 1 August 2020 'shielding' has been paused. Pupils should follow the guidance of their hospital consultant or General Practitioner (GP) if in doubt and **should have an individual risk assessment** conducted.
- Pupils living with someone who was previously shielding. These restrictions eased over time and as if 1 August 2020 'shielding' has been paused. Such pupils **should have an individual risk assessment conducted.**

Pupils Who Are Clinically Vulnerable

- All schools should follow the latest guidance on attendance for children and young people who have health conditions or who live with individuals who have health conditions or are pregnant. Current guidance on these categories is published on NI Direct and by PHA here. If in doubt, specific advice should be sought from a Hospital Consultant or GP.
- In light of the Minister's statement 6th August, clarifying "that having taken account of the scientific and medical evidence, it is now appropriate for all pupils to return to school during the week commencing 31 August" we would consider attendance to be mandatory.
- There will be a small number of children where medical guidance would be to refrain from school. The school should satisfy themselves, through evidence provided by the family that the pupil is shielding due to underlying medical conditions. If evidence is not received then an unauthorised absence should be recorded.

Pupils Who Live with Someone Who is Clinically Vulnerable

- If a child or young person lives with someone who is clinically vulnerable (but not clinically extremely vulnerable as above), including those who are pregnant, they can attend their education or childcare setting. If in doubt, advice should be sought from the Hospital Consultant or GP of the clinically vulnerable person.

Pupils Who Were Shielding (clinically extremely vulnerable people)

- Advice with regard to shielding eased over time and as of 1 August 2020 'shielding' has been paused. Pupil should follow the guidance of their hospital consultant or GP if in doubt about school attendance.
- When planning for the return of pupils, education settings should consider the distance learning and support the needs of any pupils who are unable to return to school either all or some of the time.
- The most up-to-date guidance and list of underlying health conditions that necessitate shielding should be checked on the NI Direct website under the shielding section.

Pupils Who Are Living with Someone Who Was Shielding

- Pupils who have household members who were considered clinically extremely vulnerable (at high risk of severe illness and requiring 'shielding'). These restrictions eased over time and from 1 August 2020 'shielding' has been paused. Such children should have an individual **risk assessment conducted before the most appropriate place of care is determined.**

Pupil Who Develop Symptoms on Site

- If a pupil develops symptoms of COVID-19 while at school follow the procedures set out in the flow chart in appendix 1.
- Enhanced cleaning should be carried out within any classroom in which an individual who has developed COVID-19 has been to minimise risk of the spread of the virus. This should be clearly communicated to staff, parents and pupils to provide assurance that the environment is safe.
- It is essential that all staff follow this guidance, as by doing so staff will not only protect themselves but limit the spread of the virus to educational settings and the wider population.

Recording Attendance

- Specific guidance in respect of pupil attendance whether at school or at home will be issued separately see Circular DE2020/08 on the DE website.
- Decisions regarding the recording of pupil attendance will be down to schools and the individual circumstances of each child. It may be possible for some children to continue to learn from home due to being clinically vulnerable if they are able to provide evidence of an underlying medical condition as well as learning at home. If evidence cannot be provided in terms of either the specific medical condition or that learning is not being completed then school should record attendance as an unauthorised absence (Codes D, H or N) where appropriate.

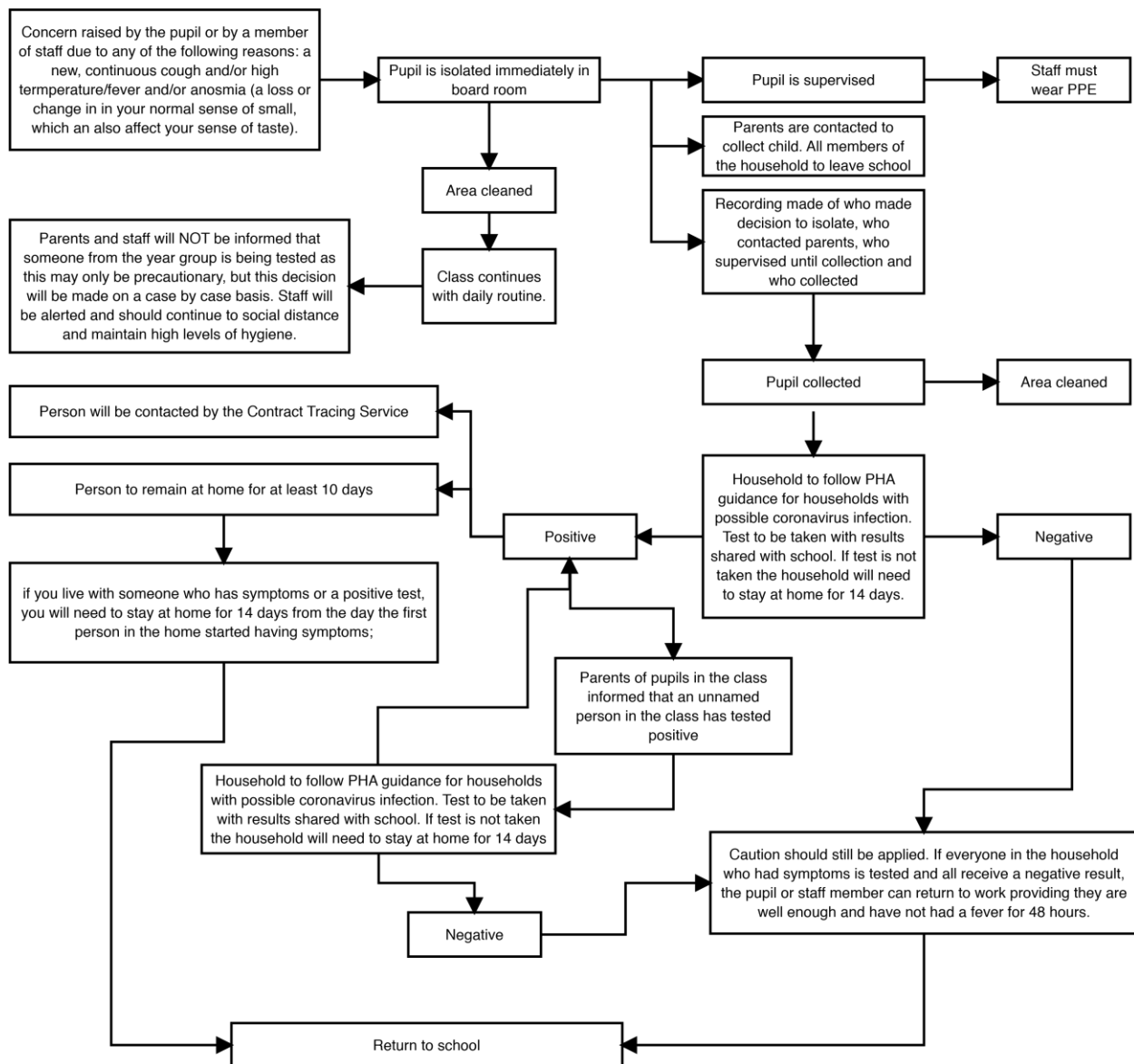
- We would suggest that registration of pupils working from home would happen once a day (rather than twice a day) for example provided that work was being completed as required. We appreciate that for some schools, this may be very challenging therefore schools may have to rely on a combination of their professional judgement and pupil's work on whether or not pupils have engaged with learning at home.



PHOENIX INTEGRATED PRIMARY AND NURSERY SCHOOL

Response Should a Child or a Member of Staff Displaying Covid-19 Symptoms During the School Day

APPENDIX 1



Procedures are taken from the Department of Education's Re-Opening Schools Guidance, New School Day, 13th August 2020.

