

# MULLAVILLY PRIMARY SCHOOL

'Inspiring, Believing Achieving'

## Attendance Policy

September 2023

Review Date  
September 2026

## **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 full potential. All children of compulsory school age have the right to an efficient full-time education, regardless of age, aptitude, ability and any special needs he or she may have.

Mullavilly Primary School will strive to promote an ethos and culture which encourages good attendance and where each pupil will feel valued and secure. It takes seriously its responsibility to monitor and promote the regular attendance of all its pupils. It acknowledges that irregular attendance seriously disrupts continuity of learning, undermines educational progress, can lead to underachievement and low attainment and impedes the child's ability to develop friendship groups within school.

This policy has been developed in consultation with Governors, Teachers, Education Welfare Services and Parents. It seeks to ensure that all parties involved in the practicalities of school attendance are aware and informed of attendance matters in school and to outline the schools commitment to attendance matters. It details the responsibilities of individuals and groups involved and the procedures in place to promote and monitor pupil attendance. This policy has links with other school policies such as Child Protection, Pastoral Care, Anti-Bullying, Assessment and Positive Behaviour.

## **AIM**

1. To improve/maintain the overall attendance of pupils at Mullavilly 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 the Education Welfare Service.
5. To raise levels of achievement by ensuring the highest possible levels of attendance, punctuality and involvement in the school.

## **OBJECTIVES**

- To promote a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure and valued
- To promote opportunities to celebrate and reward pupil's successes and achievements
- To raise awareness of the importance of good attendance
- To keep an accurate and up to date record of attendance.
- To ensure that attendance is monitored effectively and reasons for absences are recorded promptly and consistently
- To inform parents of attendance and punctuality issues.
- To identify causes of non-attendance and take action.
- To improve attendance of individuals, groups and the school.

## **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **Roles and Responsibilities of Pupils**

- To respect themselves and others.
- To do all they can to attend school regularly and punctually.
- To inform a trusted adult if they feel that they are being bullied.
- To encourage friendship and a sense of belonging.
- To be happy and encourage others to feel happy.

*\*Each Pupil at Mullavilly Primary school must 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.*

### **Roles and Responsibilities of Parents**

- Parents 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 by regular school attendance.
- To keep requests for their child to be absent to a minimum.
- To inform the school of the reason for a pupil's absence on the first day of absence. This is a safeguarding issue so that all parties know that your child is safe. This should be confirmed with a written note when the pupil returns to school.
- To ensure that their child arrives at school on time, properly dressed, with the right equipment and in a condition to learn. A reason should be offered for any lateness. Lateness is recorded at registration and on your child's attendance record.
- To work closely with the school and Education Welfare Officer (EWO) to resolve any problems that may impede a child's attendance.
- To take family holidays during school holiday periods and be aware that requests for holidays during term time are unauthorised absences and will be recorded as such.
- To be aware of curriculum requirements and be especially vigilant with regards to attendance during important academic times such as assessment periods.
- To support their child and recognise their successes and achievements.
- 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.

### **Roles and Responsibilities of the Board of Governors**

- Implement Attendance Policy and inform parents.
- Monitor and review Attendance Policy annually.
- Set and monitor attendance targets.
- Ensure attendance is placed as an agenda item at each meeting.

## **Roles and Responsibilities of the Principal (In Conjunction with Attendance Coordinator)**

- Give attendance a high profile at assemblies, school events and in the school newsletter.
- Report on attendance to Governors.
- Look for patterns of absences and send a letter to parents of pupils who are absent from school on a regular basis without explanation
- Meet with parents to discuss attendance problems as soon as they are identified.
- Meet with the Education Welfare Officer regularly to review attendance.
- Make referrals to the Education Welfare Service.

## **Roles and Responsibilities of the Class Teacher**

- Give attendance a high profile. Praise students for arriving on time and take prompt action where students are late or absent without explanation.
- Keep an accurate register.
- Return register to the Office promptly on a Friday morning.
- Monitor attendance, e.g. marking register, collecting absence notes and identifying pupils with irregular attendance patterns
- Follow up pupil absence if notes are not produced.
- Talk to individual pupils about their attendance.
- Inform the Attendance Coordinator when absence is causing concern.
- Provide support to pupils after a long absence from school.

## **Roles and Responsibilities of the Office Staff**

- Oversee administration of the SIMS Register system.
- Collate registration data.
- Take phone messages from parents when pupils are absent.
- Provide regular attendance reports to the Attendance Coordinator.
- Liaise with Teaching Staff to monitor accuracy of record keeping.

## **Roles and Responsibilities of the Education Welfare Officer**

- Work closely with school and families to resolve attendance issues.
- Visit school for meetings at agreed times.
- Identify, with school, cases of unauthorised absence which necessitate action and advise on responses.
- Provide written reports to school in the form of consultation sheets.
- Complete regular register checks.
- On receipt of a written referral, take appropriate action.

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/publications/circular-201502-attendance-guidance-and-absence-recording-by-schools](http://www.deni.gov.uk/publications/circular-201502-attendance-guidance-and-absence-recording-by-schools)

## **What the Law Says**

Under article 45 of the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986 (“the 1986 Order”), it is the duty of parents 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. Such education may be provided by regular attendance at school or otherwise, for example home education.

Paragraph 3 (1) 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. A parent is legally responsible for making this happen.

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 can receive a fine not exceeding £1,000 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.

## **SCHOOL PROCEDURES FOR RECORDING AND MONITORING ATTENDANCE**

### **Recording**

The class teacher will take a register recording who is present and absent from school at **9.00am**.

Reasons for absence may be offered verbally by phone but **must** be followed by a letter on the child’s return to school. The school may then decide if it wishes to authorise the absence or record it as an unauthorised absence. This will be made within the guidance set out in the 1996 Education Order. A reason for a period of absence is always required. The school will contact parents who have not offered a reason and after a three-week process will mark the absence as unauthorised if no reason is provided.

### **Lateness**

Any child arriving after **9.00am** will receive a late mark for that day. Any pupil arriving after registration closes at **9.15am** will receive a ‘u’ mark and be considered absent for the morning session of that day. If any pupil arrives after registration has closed, he or she **MUST** register at the office, with a parent or guardian, where a reason for lateness will be recorded. A written note for the lateness will need to be provided and a decision made by the Principal (Or Attendance coordinator) to mark it as an authorised or unauthorised absence.

***Parent’s will receive a letter from the Attendance co-ordinator should a child be frequently late for school.***

The Department of Education has issued a set of standard codes which are used to record absence. These codes are input into the electronic register as required and are used to give depth of meaning to the register and provide statistical meaning to the absences.

***\*Please see Appendix 5 below for a summary of the attendance codes used***

### **Authorised Absences**

The following types of absence will be classified as authorized:

- Illness (when a note is provided by a parent)
- Hospital / dental appointments (when prior notification of absence has been given)
- Family bereavement
- Representing the school/ county/ country at an approved event
- Taking music/ ballet/ drama examinations
- Religious holidays (when prior notification of absence is given)
- **Unauthorised Absences**

The following types of absence will be classified as unauthorized:

- Birthday
- Staying at home with an ill parent/ sibling
- A shopping trip with a parent
- Term time holiday

### **Monitoring**

The Principal, attendance coordinator and the EWO will review the attendance of all the schools pupils on a termly basis and any pupils identified as cause for concern (Under 90%) or less than 85% attendance on a more regular basis. A letter will be sent to the parents of any pupil identified as having attendance problems informing them of the school's concerns and will detail the attendance percentage and the number of days absence (Appendix 1). The pupil's attendance will be closely monitored and if after a four-week period there appears to be no improvement the parents of the pupil will be invited to a meeting with the Attendance Coordinator to discuss the issue and hopefully resolve any issues preventing the pupil from attending. If the parent/s do not attend the meeting or after such meeting the attendance of the pupil does not improve a formal referral to the EWO will be made. The electronic registration system provides many reports and information that assist the school to monitor attendance. These reports will be accessed when relevant and provide information to assist the school strategically manage attendance issues. The EWO will also have access to this information and will use the reports to support her role.

### **Removal of a child during school hours**

If a children needs to leave school during school hours a written letter to the class teacher needs to be provided in advance. Children must always be collected from inside the school building. Parents / Guardians should report to the school office and complete the 'signing out' form. This procedure is also necessary if your child is sent home from school ill.

## **Requests for leave of absence**

If a parent wishes to request a period of leave they are required to write to the Principal. If the request is denied the school will inform the parent of the reason by letter and the request will be noted in the electronic register. Leave of absence will **not** be offered to pupils for family holidays except under special / exceptional circumstances.

## **Official Register**

A copy of the electronic register will be printed monthly providing a paper version of the electronically stored information for the previous term. The register will also have an audit trail of changes printed with it to provide a 'history of change' for the registration period printed. The monthly printouts will be bound together to form a years record and stored for a period of 3 years in a secure location.

## **STRATEGIES USED TO PROMOTE GOOD ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY**

- Class teacher will ensure that the curriculum is delivered within a culture of inclusion and in such a way that pupils feel that they have and can succeed.
- Individual pupils whose attendance has been a cause for concern will be encouraged to set and achieve personal attendance goals.
- Pupil attendance figures will be published with the annual academic reports alongside School Attendance Matters: A Parents Guide.
- Figures of the overall attendance of the school will be published annually in the Board of Governors' Report.
- Certificates are presented at the end of each half term for those pupils who achieve 100% attendance. At the final Assembly of the year certificates are presented to those pupils who achieve full attendance for the whole academic year. (\*Discretion can be used for a pupil who misses 100% for regular medical appointments e.g. diabetic clinic. This will be decided by Principal and Attendance coordinator).
- An overall Target attendance will be set at the start of each academic year for the overall attendance of the whole school. (Above previous year and Northern Ireland targets).
- Each class will aim to meet this target and at the end of each month in assembly the class with the highest average attendance will receive a reward. E.g. trip to park, fun afternoon, night of homework.
- Availability of Breakfast Club from 8.00 – 8.45am every morning.

This attendance policy is part of broader suite of Safeguarding policies including the school's Child Protection Policy.

## **POLICY REVIEW**

This policy will be reviewed annually along with the procedural operations for monitoring and managing pupil attendance and punctuality.

*P.Ritchie*  
*Attendance Coordinator*

Adopted and signed on behalf of the Board of Governors	September 2023
Signature of Governor	
Signature of Subject Coordinator / Principal	
Review Date	September 2025



## Appendix 1

EDUCATION AUTHORITY SOUTHERN REGION

### MULLAVILLY PRIMARY SCHOOL



46 Mullavilly Road  
Tandragee  
Co Armagh  
BT62 2LX

Principal: Mrs L McClimonds, B.Ed, PG CET, PQH

Tel/Fax: 028 38840911  
E-mail: [lmcclimonds066@c2kni.net](mailto:lmcclimonds066@c2kni.net)  
Website: [www.mullavillyps.co.uk](http://www.mullavillyps.co.uk)

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 Mullavilly 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.

- To date \_\_\_\_\_'s current attendance is \_\_\_\_\_ %.
- 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

L A McClimonds  
Principal

P Ritchie  
Attendance Coordinator

## Appendix 2

EDUCATION AUTHORITY SOUTHERN REGION  
MULLAVILLY PRIMARY SCHOOL



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Website: [www.mullavillyps.co.uk](http://www.mullavillyps.co.uk)

Principal: Mrs L McClimonds, B.Ed, PG CET, PQH

01 August 2023

Dear Parent/Guardian

### Persistent Lateness

I am concerned to note that your child, \_\_\_\_\_ has been arriving late for school recently. Accordingly to our records your child has been late \_\_\_\_ times between \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ without satisfactory explanation. As outlined in our attendance policy, arriving at school after 9.00am is considered to be a late arrival. Arriving after 9.15am is considered to be an absence for the morning session.

When pupils arrive late, they miss out on essential instructions given at the beginning of the lesson. This can significantly reduce achievement, regardless of academic ability. Your child may also feel awkward arriving to the classroom when everyone else is settled. Furthermore, when one pupil arrives late, it disrupts the entire class and the teacher – everyone's education is compromised.

Our school Attendance Policy outlines that for health and safety reasons your child must report to the school office, with an adult. A written note explaining lateness must be provided for our school records.

Please make every effort to ensure that your child arrives at school promptly everyday. If anything can be done to support \_\_\_\_\_ getting to school on time, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

L A McClimonds (Mrs)  
Principal

P Ritchie (Mr)  
Attendance Coordinator

## Appendix 3



### ATTENDANCE MATTERS

#### EVERY DAY AT SCHOOL COUNTS

Attendance percentages can be misleading. The table below gives a clear understanding of what the Attendance Percentages mean.

For some parents, 90% may seem like an acceptable level of attendance, but the reality is that 90% attendance means that you child will miss 19 days of school during the school year – that is nearly 4 school weeks.

<b>100%</b>	<b>0 days missed</b>	<b>Excellent</b>
<b>96% - 99%</b>	<b>Less than 9 days absent</b>	<b>Very Good</b>
<b>91% - 95%</b>	<b>Up to 9 days absent - 1 week and 4 days of learning missed</b>	<b>Satisfactory</b>
<b>86% - 90%</b>	<b>Up to 19 days absent 3 weeks and 4 days of learning missed</b>	<b>Poor</b>
<b>81% - 85%</b>	<b>Up to 28 days absent 5 weeks and 3 days of learning missed</b>	<b>Very Poor</b>
<b>80% and below</b>	<b>More than 38 days absent 7 weeks and 3 days of learning missed</b>	<b>Unacceptable</b>

Appendix 4

EDUCATION AUTHORITY SOUTHERN REGION

**MULLAVILLY PRIMARY SCHOOL**



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**Principal:** Mrs L McClimonds, B.Ed, PGCET, PQH

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Dear Parent/Guardian

It has been noted that your child \_\_\_\_\_ was absent from school on \_\_\_\_\_.

As outlined in the School Attendance Policy and to facilitate our computer records an absent note should always been brought to school when your child returns from a period of leave.

I should be grateful if you would send in a note or complete the slip below and return it to school as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely

L A McClimonds  
Principal

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**ABSENCE NOTE**

My child \_\_\_\_\_ was absent from school from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ as he/she \_\_\_\_\_  
(Please give reason for absence)

Signature of Parent/Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 5

CODE	DESCRIPTION	CODE	DESCRIPTION
/ \	Present: / = (AM): \ =(PM)	X	Only staff should attend
A*	Artistic Endeavour	Y*	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 2022/07</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>			
		Present / Approved Educational Activity /	
		Authorised Absence	
		Unauthorised Absence	
		Attendance not required	