



# **PARKGATE**

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## **PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Version	Date	Revision Author	Summary of Changes
2	JUNE 2020	Mrs. V Ferguson	Update of policy to include new Principal.
3	August 2020	Mrs. V Ferguson	Addendum for COVID 19 attendance.

## Rationale

Parkgate Primary School recognises that punctual and regular attendance are crucial in raising standards in education. Optimum attendance and pupils appropriately prepared for the school day, ensures that every pupil can have full access to the school curriculum. We are therefore committed to maintaining high levels of attendance, punctuality and positive behaviour. To this end, we actively promote a teaching and learning ethos which encourages all pupils to attend whatever their level of ability or need. In accordance with other school policies, all members of our school community should be able to thrive, feel respected, safe and secure.

## Aims

- Improve pupils' achievement by ensuring high levels of attendance and punctuality.
- Achieve a minimum of 95% attendance for all pupils, apart from those with chronic health issues.
- Create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm and seen to be valued by the school.
- Raise awareness of parents / carers and pupils of the importance of uninterrupted attendance and punctuality at every stage of a pupil's education.
- Work in partnership with pupils, parents, staff and the Education Welfare Service so that all pupils realise their potential, unhindered by unnecessary absence.
- Promote a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure, and valued, and encourage in pupils a sense of their own responsibility.
- Establish a pattern of monitoring attendance and ensure consistency in recognising achievement and dealing with difficulties.
- Recognise the key role of all staff, but especially class teachers, in promoting good attendance.

## Procedures for Managing Non-Attendance / Latecomers

Where the class teacher has concerns regarding the level or pattern of a pupil's attendance/punctuality these concerns will be discussed with the Principal. When deemed appropriate the Principal will arrange a meeting with the parents/carers to discuss the issue in order to agree a strategy for improving attendance or punctuality.

Schools have a legal responsibility to report to the Education Welfare Service any pupil whose attendance falls below 85% or where there has been an absence of more than 10 days and where it has proven impossible to make contact with a parent or carer. It is the Education Welfare Service's responsibility to ensure that parents/carers meet their responsibility regarding their child's/children's education.

The Education Welfare Service will use their expertise to support staff and parents in developing and implementing strategies to improve their child's/children's school attendance.

## Board of Governors Responsibilities

The Board of Governors has a responsibility to monitor school attendance but on a day-to-day basis this is delegated to the Principal. The Principal will report to the Board of Governors on the effectiveness of the school's Attendance Policy and procedures.

## Absence

Schools are required to complete a daily Attendance Register which records whether a pupil is present or absent. If a pupil is absent, this has to be classified by the school as either authorised or unauthorised. Only the school can authorise the absence, not parents/ carers.

Information regarding the cause of each absence is required in writing. Authorised absences are accepted for illness or other unavoidable causes. Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable.

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.

An annual summary of each pupil's attendance will be included in the pupils' Annual Pupil Profile in June.

## PROCEDURES

### Registration

School begins at 9:00 a.m. and registration will be taken immediately after this time by the class teacher. Pupils who are late will be recorded as such in the register. This information is then recorded electronically onto the Department of Education's system. The data facilitates the monitoring of individual and whole school attendance. Where a pattern of lateness is noted, parents will be contacted and asked to ensure that pupils are in school ready to start at 9:00am, so as not to disrupt their child's learning, the learning of their peers and the teacher's teaching.

### Absence

Parents should contact the school on the first day of an absence and provide a written explanatory note immediately on return to school. If it is known in advance that an absence is unavoidable these details should be given in writing.

This note should include:

- the pupil's full name and registration class.
- the date(s) of the absence.
- a concise explanation for the absence.
- signature of the parent/carer

If a pupil fails to bring a note, a reminder will be sent home in the pupil's Reading Record Book (Foundation Stage) or Homework Diary (Key Stages 1 and 2.) If no note is provided, following two reminders, the school will issue a late absence note to be completed by the parent.

If a pupil is reluctant to attend school this matter should be discussed promptly with the Principal to ensure parents/carers and the pupil receive swift and optimum support.

### 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 hours a written explanation must be provided for the class teacher clearly stating the time of the appointment. If there are frequent absences for medical reasons, parents/carers will be asked to provide formal written medical documentation pertaining to their child. Pupils are expected to return to school promptly 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 Principal to discuss any necessary arrangements which may be required.

## Family Holidays During Term Time

Parkgate Primary School strongly discourages family holidays during term time due to the negative impact they have on pupils' learning. Parents/carers must contact the school, prior to booking any holiday, to explain the removal of a pupil/s from school during term time. This contact should be in the form of a letter addressed to the Principal.

## Review Timescale

In order to ensure that this policy is meeting the needs of our school community positively and effectively, its content and implementation will be reviewed annually and revised when necessary.

Legislative changes may require that revision is necessary before the scheduled time. If this is the case, it will be overseen by the Principal, in consultation with the relevant parties.

Mrs V Ferguson  
Principal

May 2020

To be reviewed: September 2020

This policy has been ratified by the Board of Governors of Parkgate Primary School, signed by the Chair of the Board of Governors and the Principal and is now accepted as school policy.

## 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.



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

### APPENDIX 1

