

# **INTEGRATED COLLEGE DUNGANNON**



## **ATTENDANCE POLICY FOR STUDENTS**

**Reviewed by the Vice Principal for Pastoral Care, April 2024**

**Agreed by Governors: 1<sup>st</sup> May 2024**

# **ATTENDANCE POLICY**

This policy reflects the guidance as given in the latest Department of Education Circular 2021/16.

## **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. Integrated College Dungannon will strive to promote an ethos and culture which encourages good attendance and where each student will feel valued and secure.

## **Aims**

1. To improve/maintain the overall attendance of students at Integrated College Dungannon.
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 students.
4. To promote good relationships with the Education Welfare Service.

## **Roles and Responsibilities of the College**

- The Principal at Integrated College Dungannon has overall responsibility for school attendance; The Vice-Principal should bring any concerns regarding school attendance to his attention.
- The Board of Governors provide support by reviewing school attendance figures and targets and ensuring it is placed as an agenda item at each meeting.
- Teaching staff regularly monitor the attendance and punctuality of students by ensuring that attendance is recorded at the beginning of morning and afternoon registration sessions.
- To accurately record and monitor attendance in a consistent way we will adhere to the guidance provided in the most recent Department of Education Circular 2023/11.

Integrated College Dungannon is committed to working with parents to encourage regular and punctual attendance.

## **Roles and Responsibilities of the Parent**

- Parents have a legal duty (under 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 a parent's responsibility to inform the college by telephone or the School Gateway App of the reason for a student's absence on the first day of absence. This should be confirmed with a written note when the student returns to the college. If the absence is likely to be prolonged, this information should be provided to enable the college to assist with homework or any other necessary arrangements which may be required.
- Students are expected to be in Integrated College Dungannon prior to and ready for registration which starts at 9.05am. It is the responsibility of parents to ensure that their child is punctual. Lateness is recorded at registration and on a student's attendance record.
- If a child appears reluctant to attend school a parent should discuss the matter promptly with the Form Tutor, Head of Achievement or Vice-Principal to ensure that both the parent and the child receive maximum support.
- A student should only be absent for an unavoidable reason which would usually mean ill-health or family bereavement.
- Medical and dental appointments etc. should not be made during College hours. For emergency appointments parents/guardians should provide a detailed signed and dated note along with an appointment card for their child to show to their Form Tutor and Office Staff. This note should be signed and dated by the Form Tutor during registration and returned to the student. This note must also be shown at the college office when signing out.
- Other appointments such as hair and beauty appointments are not permitted during the College day.
- Following a period of absence, parent/guardian must inform the College of reason for absence. This can be done via the 'School Gateway' App. They can also monitor attendance via the App. Reasons for absence can also be provided by telephoning the College office, emailing the College info account or a written note provided to Form Teacher. It is a parent/guardian responsibility to ensure valid reasons are provided for all absences from College (including lateness after 9.05am).
- The practice of parents withdrawing students during term time to go on holiday is strongly discouraged due to the negative impact this has on students' learning. Work will not be provided for students during unscheduled term-time holidays. Family holidays taken during term time categorised as an unauthorised absence. Although unauthorised, we still strongly encourage parents to inform the College before going on an unauthorised holiday. Only in exceptional circumstances will a holiday be authorised.

### **Roles and Responsibilities of the Student**

- To value education and attend all classes required by his/her timetable.
- To be punctual for college. Students must be in by 9.05am at the latest to ensure that they are in their registration rooms/assembly by 9.05am. A student arriving between 9.05 and 9.20am should still report to Form Tutor/Assembly. Students who arrive after 9.20am must report to

reception, where they should record the time and reason for lateness in the late book. Any student who is late for a valid reason must provide a note from a parent/guardian. A student who is late without a valid reason will receive an after-college detention on every fifth occurrence. A text is sent home if a student is late with or without a valid reason to inform parents. Each time a student is late, the number of minutes late is recorded on SIMS and parents updated.

- Students must remain on the College premises at all times throughout the school day. The exceptions to this rule are as follows:
  - (i) In the case of an unavoidable medical or dental appointment (note required from parent/guardian), a student, having first obtained the permission of his/her Form Tutor, must sign out at the college office, and sign back in on his/her return;
  - (ii) Collaborative students who leave to attend lessons with other educational providers.
- A student can bring a note from his/her parent/guardian on the day of return from any period of absence and give this to his/her Form Tutor. However, it is advised that parent/guardian will update the reason for absence on the 'School Gateway' App. Failure to provide a valid reason for absence will result in further investigation via the Form Tutor.
- Post-16 students whose attendance rates fall below 85% will be closely monitored by Head of Achievement/Form Tutor with interventions put in place to support. Students entitled to EMA payment will not receive their payment as per the conditions of their signed Learning Agreement unless they have full attendance in all classes.
- Students, when ill, must follow College procedure, i.e., report to the office with a note from their teacher, who will refer students to First Aid, where illness will be verified and arrangements made for the student to go home if required. Students must then sign out at the office along with parent/guardian.
- Collaboration students may attend other education providers during the school day. Students at Post-16 level must sign in and out at the sixth form Study Centre. As is our legal obligation, we must have an up-to-date and accurate record at all times of all who is (and is not) on the College premises.

### **Roles and Responsibilities of Teaching staff**

- To record student attendance, where possible within the first 10 minutes of the lesson, in every class using Lesson Monitor on a daily basis.
- To take a class register of each lesson and inform the office of suspicious absences/discrepancies within the first 10 minutes.
- Welcome students on their return after being absent sending a clear message that they have been missed.
- Provide advice and support so that students can catch up on their work.
- Monitor student punctuality – use the Positive Behaviour for Learning policy procedures for those who are persistently late for class.

- To provide the names of students absent during registration but engaged in an authorised activity to the member of the staff responsible for attendance, so that students can be marked present for the duration.

### **Roles and Responsibilities of Attendance Officer**

- Keep a register of daily absences/attendance and update it throughout the day.
- Inform relevant Teachers/Form Tutors/Heads of Achievement regarding students who are continually late to College.
- Use missing registration notifications on SIMS to ensure all electronic AM and PM registers have been taken.
- Inform Vice Principal for Pastoral Care and Student Wellbeing of those students known to be truanting.
- Provide on request, monthly, half termly and termly absence summaries for Form Tutors/Heads of Achievement/Vice Principal for Pastoral Care and assist with relevant paperwork.

### **Roles and Responsibilities of Form Tutors**

- Mark the register daily using Lesson Monitor.
- Ensure your form class, are on time for registration to begin promptly at 9.05am
- All students who are not present at registration should be recorded as absent by the Form Tutor (even if they are engaged in an authorised activity e.g. work experience, educational visit etc.)
- Monitor student attendance, checking with the Attendance Officer to ensure reasons are supplied for absence. Speak to individual students in relation to periods of absence and to speak to all students regularly about attendance.
- Pass any absence notes to the Attendance Officer via the form registration folders.
- Monitor student absence patterns weekly (including classes missed for appointments etc and pass on relevant concerns to Heads of Achievement).
- Offer counselling and pastoral support for those who give cause for concern.
- Sign and date appointment cards from students.
- Remind students that reasons for absence should be provided via the 'School Gateway' App by parent/guardian. (See Appendix III).

### **Roles and Responsibilities of Heads of Achievement**

Identify and monitor all students with attendance figures below 95% in year group and monitor individual absence patterns.

- Liaise with Form Teachers to clarify reasons for absence to review term targets for individuals. (Set at meetings).

- Interview students giving cause for concerns and set targets for improvement.
- Communicate with parents: where lateness/absence is persistent, present the parent/guardian with a copy of the total numbers of hours/periods lost and discuss the implication for the student's education, integration into college life etc.
- Include a review of attendance/late patterns on the agenda for each Form Teacher meeting.
- Monitor the production of absence notes and ensure, working through the Form Teachers, that such notes are produced.
- Monitor students late to school and oversee relevant sanctions.
- Meet with VP monthly and prepare written report on Year attendance for EWO monthly audit meeting.
- Send Absence letters home. (See Appendix I, Letter 1).

NB: If parents/guardians do not supply reasons for absence after Letter 1 has been sent and a student's attendance rate falls below 85%, Heads of Achievement should speak to the Vice Principal for Pastoral Care to recommend an immediate referral to EWO (see Appendix II), and inform home of this step, using Appendix 1, Letter 2.

#### **Where a student is persistently late:**

Establish the reason(s) for being late e.g. if because of domestic/family situations, initiate school support mechanisms to talk through their difficulties/interview parents/refer to External Agencies. Each time a student is late without a valid reason, it is recorded on the college's SIMS Behaviour Management system and a text sent home to parents/guardians. This information is then collated, and every fifth late results in an after-college detention. Heads of Achievement are responsible for this.

#### **Roles and Responsibilities of Vice-Principal**

- Ensure that all reasons for absence are recorded in computer by Attendance Officer.
- Liaise with the member of office staff responsible for attendance, to identify those students with attendance figures at 85% and below.
- Meet with the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) regarding truancy, condoned absence or recurring short absences at monthly meetings and make referral to EWO. (See Appendix II).
- Contact parent/guardian by letter outlining concerns and informing them of the EWO.
- Liaise daily/weekly/monthly with Heads of Achievement regarding students with poor attendance/late patterns.
- Interview student alongside parents/guardians (where necessary) in school with EWO and set targets for improvement.
- Conduct a monthly attendance audit (as part of monthly report) and forward to the Principal.
- Vice Principal will analyse attendance data using absence tiers;

*Tier 1a 'Regular Attendance' missing 0-4.9% (95-100% attendance)*

*Tier 1b 'At Risk Attendance' missing 5- 9.9% (90-95% attendance)*

*Tier 2 'Chronic Attendance' missing 10-19.9% (80-90% attendance)*

*Tier 3 'Severe Chronic Attendance' missing 20% or more (less than 80% attendance)*

[Department of Education: Guidance for Schools Monitoring and Reporting Pupil Attendance using Attendance Tiers \(Appendix 6\)](#)

This data will be shared with Heads of Achievement and agreed strategies put in place and targets for improvement. The analysis of tiers will be shared at discussed at Board of Governors level.

- Award students with 100% attendance record at annual Prize Days.
- Present a report on attendance at each Board of Governor's meeting.
- Set attendance targets annually and prepare, deliver and review relevant action plans.

### **Roles and Responsibilities of Education Welfare Service**

The Education Welfare Service will strive to provide a service that recognises the uniqueness of the school and the community it serves.

EWS can support schools in a variety of ways:

- Liaise with identified school staff.
- Where a referral is accepted, undertake home visits, either pre-arranged or without notice as considered necessary.
- Work with identified groups of pupils.
- Where necessary will instigate legal proceedings on behalf of the ELB including parental prosecutions in the Court.
- Accept referrals that meet the EWS referral criteria, initiate contact with parents or carers and undertake assessments.
- Plan and review casework.
- Provide feedback to schools.
- Offer strategic/policy advice and support in relation to matters of attendance.
- Support schools in the establishment and management of school attendance panels.

### **Extended Leave**

A new code "J" has been developed for "Extended Leave", to allow International students, for a limited period only (agreed with the college), to travel outside the UK without their attendance levels being adversely affected. Family holidays, either agreed or not agreed, are not to be coded using this code. The code may be used for the following purposes:

- Short-term parental placement/employment outside the UK
- A need to leave the UK for a specific complex family need such as:
  - death of a relative;
  - care for a sick relative;
  - sibling or parent receiving medical treatment outside NI; or
  - attend to immigration matters.

For this code to be used, the family concerned must make an application to the college, outlining the reasons for the request and the proposed period of extended leave. Each request should be considered on an individual basis, taking into account the circumstances for which leave is sought, the student's attendance (and attainment) to date, previous similar requests and whether or not the student's specific needs will be met (both personally and academically) during the proposed absence.

The college will ensure that it is content with the information provided by the child's parent(s)/carer(s) before the template is completed (see Appendix IV) and the absence is recorded in SIMS. All approved applications must be sent to the Department of Education at [attendance@education-ni.gov.uk](mailto:attendance@education-ni.gov.uk).

### **International Students**

When applying this policy to those students who have joined the college from other countries, correspondence with parents will be sent in the student's home language, whenever possible and/or necessary.

### **Study Leave**

Study leave is granted only to Year 11-14 public examination candidates during the examination timetable. Public examinations are those which are authenticated or awarded by an outside person or organisation, and not internally by the college. The main examples of such examinations include GCSEs, A Levels and equivalent qualifications. Study leave is not used for internal examinations. Decisions on who is eligible for study leave are made by senior management. A written policy on Study Leave is being developed and will be included as an appendix.

### **Reduced Timetable for a student**

Integrated College may reduce the time students are in attendance for various reasons such as emotional, behavioural and welfare reasons under SEN or phased return after a long illness. Students will only be excepted from the statutory curriculum (reduced timetable) and assessment requirements on a temporary basis and after the college has carried out the appropriate procedures as outlined in the Education (Curriculum) (Temporary Exemptions) Regulations (NI) 1990 - Temporary Exemptions from the Statutory Curriculum and Assessments provisions for Individual Pupils

### **Dual Registration**

The college will follow the guidance provided in Circular Number: 2016/22 - Guidance on the Enrolment Status of Pupils, including those subject to SEN and EOTAS Referrals, using Dual Registration (Date of Issue:17/11/2016), to ensure that the attendance of ICD students being educated in EOTAS or in collaborative schools through Entitlement Framework, is accurately taken, recorded, shared and monitored.



### **Profiling high attendance**

- School holidays should be planned to minimise disruption – thereby avoiding the wrong message.
- Attendance and medical appointments should be made outside school hours, where possible.
- There is an emphasis on attendance to parents regularly i.e. letters/parents nights etc.
- During the transition and induction for new students, there is an emphasis on attendance.
- Rewards System:
  - Annually: individual Achievement certificates for 100% attendance at Prize Day.
- Should unforeseen events result in it being necessary to close the college, or that of other educational providers (re collaboration), prior written confirmation will be provided to parents/guardians (where possible).

### **Monitoring and Evaluation**

This policy and the procedures outlined within it, will be the subject of on-going review by staff at the college, along with EWOs. The Heads of Achievement and the Vice-Principal in charge of attendance will review the targets for improvement and the success of the strategies for profiling high attendance on a daily/ weekly/ monthly/ termly and annual basis. Feedback will also be encouraged from students and parents.

**Appendix I**

**Absence Letter No: 1**

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

Dear (Insert Name of Parent/Guardian)

Re: Attendance

\_\_\_\_\_ has had \_\_\_\_\_% attendance from the \_\_\_\_\_ to the \_\_\_\_\_ and so is a cause for concern. Please encourage him/her to attend college regularly and, if he/she is absent, please provide a note explaining the reason for absence/s.

I have attached an attendance print out and reasons are still needed for absence on those days marked with a *N* or *D*. If you can give any reasons please do so on the reverse of this sheet and return it to \_\_\_\_\_ at the College.

Prolonged absence for medical reasons will require a doctor's note or medical certificate. When your child has a dentist or doctor's appointment, please, if possible, give a copy of the appointment card to the office when your child is signing in late or out early.

Year Heads and the Educational Welfare Officer monitor all attendance at the College and if improvement is not evident soon, further investigation will have to follow.

Yours sincerely

\_\_\_\_\_  
Year Head

**Absence Letter No: 2**

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

Dear (Insert Name of Parent/Guardian)

Re: Attendance

\_\_\_\_\_ has had \_\_\_\_\_% attendance from the  
\_\_\_\_\_ to the \_\_\_\_\_ and so is a cause for concern.

This case is now being referred to Imelda Mc Veigh, Educational Welfare Officer, who monitors all attendance at the College. Imelda will be in contact with you in the next few weeks.

Please encourage your son/daughter to attend college regularly and, if he/she is absent, please provide a note explaining the absence/s.

Yours sincerely

\_\_\_\_\_  
Year Head

**EDUCATION WELFARE SERVICE REFERRAL FORM**

Before making the referral to the Education Welfare Service please ensure that you have discussed the referral with the link Education Welfare Officer for the school or the Senior Education Welfare Officer for the area.

Have you read the Partnership Working Agreement and guidance prior to making this referral Yes/No

Is this a re-referral: Yes/No

Is this child Looked After (subject to care proceedings): Yes/No

Referred by:                School                Parent/Carer                Other (details)

School Name:				Year Group:	
Childs Name:			SEN: Y/N	Date of Birth:	
Gender:		Ethnicity:		Language:	
Address:				Postcode:	

Name of those with parental responsibility including relationship of the child	Name	Relationship
	Name	Relationship
Details of main contact	Mobile	Email
	Home	
Known communication difficulties (ie language) Is a translator required and which language?		

Please provide details of any other services or agencies involved with the pupil. This includes statutory, voluntary and support services as well as other Education Authority services such as Education Psychology or pupil support services, including GP details

Agency	Contact Name	Address/contact details	Length of involvement

**Parent must be notified that referral is being made.**

Please note that referrals will not be accepted without the family having been informed.

How/when was parent notified?

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Letter Phone call Other please specify:

For this referral to be accepted by the Education Welfare Service you must have exhausted all procedures to address concerns regarding attendance, this is in line with the school's attendance policy.

Please provide evidence below of the engagement (or attempts to engage) with parents/carers and work that has been carried out to address the pupils attendance. Registration certificates must be up to date and accurate.

<p><b>Please give details of the contact the school has had with the parents regarding the current low attendance.</b> (dates of meetings, letters sent attempts to telephone)</p>
<p><b>Please identify the concerns you have regarding the poor school attendance.</b> (Welfare concerns, bullying, transition, social and emotional, school age mother etc.)</p>
<p><b>Please provide any additional information you feel is useful.</b> (Identify any special needs, known to SENCO or Education Psychologist, code of practice, social difficulties or child protection concerns etc.)</p>

If the majority of the absence has been recorded as illness has the school asked for medical evidence:  
Yes/No

**Checklist.**

- |   |        |
|---|--------|
| Registration certificates                   | Yes/No |
| Evidence of interventions                   | Yes/No |
| Letter/contact informing parent of referral | Yes/No |
| Referrals to other agencies                 | Yes/No |
| Medical evidence                            | Yes/No |

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Print Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Designation:

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

Date received: \_\_\_\_\_ Date Allocated: \_\_\_\_\_

EWO: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 4

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 2021/16 (page numbers listed)</b>								
P*	Approved Activity	(	<b>COVID-19 Illness Confirmed</b> – to be used when child is sick and COVID-19 is confirmed. – Page 23								
R*	Religious Observance	)	<b>COVID-19 Illness Suspected / Unconfirmed</b> – to be used when child is sick and COVID-19 is suspected but unconfirmed. – Page 23								
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. – Page 25								
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. – Page 25								
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. – Page 17								
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. – Page 17								
<b>COLOUR CODE</b>											
			<table border="1" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <tr> <td style="background-color: #90EE90;"></td> <td>Present / Approved Educational Activity /</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="background-color: #FFFF00;"></td> <td>Authorised Absence</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="background-color: #FF0000;"></td> <td>Unauthorised Absence</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="background-color: #ADD8E6;"></td> <td>Attendance not required</td> </tr> </table>		Present / Approved Educational Activity /		Authorised Absence		Unauthorised Absence		Attendance not required
	Present / Approved Educational Activity /										
	Authorised Absence										
	Unauthorised Absence										
	Attendance not required										

## Appendix 5

All approved applications must be sent to the Department of Education at [attendance@education-ni.gov.uk](mailto:attendance@education-ni.gov.uk).

### **Extended Leave Application \*NEW\***

DENI Ref:	
School Name:	
Pupil(s) Name:	
Proposed start date of Extended Leave	
Proposed end date of Extended Leave	
Reason for Extended Leave	

Have you given due consideration to the following:  
*(Please ensure all considerations have been documented and kept)*

**Please select all that apply:**

Safeguarding concerns/child protection issues	yes / not applicable
Any SEN issues	yes / not applicable
EA Services involved	yes / not applicable
Provision of education whilst away	yes / not applicable
Previous requests for extended leave	yes / not applicable
(if so, provide date of last approval)	

Name of parent / guardian:	
Relationship to pupil(s):	
Mobile:	
Email address:	

Approval granted:	Yes / No
Extended Leave Start Date:	
Extended Leave End Date:	
Reason for decision:	

Signature of Principal/SLT	
Signature of Parent:	
Designated staff contact:	
Phone:	
Email address:	

**Please ensure a copy of this form is provided to the pupil's parent / guardian and a copy is kept on the pupil's file** *(All data contained on this form will be stored in accordance with GDPR)*

**Letter of Absence**

Student Name \_\_\_\_\_ Class \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_

Note \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Teacher \_\_\_\_\_ Signature of Parent \_\_\_\_\_

**Letter of Absence**

Student Name \_\_\_\_\_ Class \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_

Note \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Teacher \_\_\_\_\_ Signature of Parent \_\_\_\_\_

**Letter of Absence**

Student Name \_\_\_\_\_ Class \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_

Note \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Teacher \_\_\_\_\_ Signature of Parent \_\_\_\_\_

**Letter of Absence**

Student Name \_\_\_\_\_ Class \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_

Note \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Teacher \_\_\_\_\_ Signature of Parent \_\_\_\_\_

**Letter of Absence**

Student Name \_\_\_\_\_ Class \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_

Note \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Teacher \_\_\_\_\_ Signature of Parent \_\_\_\_\_