

FORT HILL INTEGRATED COLLEGE



Attendance and Punctuality **Policy and Procedures** **(including student exit procedures)**

Issued 2019
Reviewed: Aug 2024
To be Reviewed: Aug 2025

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.

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

This policy is written with cognisance of all relevant EA guidance and is linked to a number of other policies, including but not limited to:

- Positive behaviour policy
- Safeguarding policy

Rationale

It is a legal requirement that registered students of compulsory school age attend regularly and punctually. Regular school attendance and punctuality are essential if students are to achieve continuity of learning and develop the good habits valued by potential employers after they leave school. Irregular attendance undermines their educational progress and can lead to underachievement and low attainment. The school's expectation is that every student should aim for 100% punctuality and an attendance level of 95% and above, although it is sensitive to difficulties created by serious illness or special family circumstances. The monitoring of attendance and punctuality is an integral part of the school's Pastoral Care.

Aims

1. To raise awareness among students, parents and staff of the importance of regular attendance and punctuality and to promote and reinforce the values of excellent levels of attendance and punctuality.
2. To monitor, improve and maintain student attendance and punctuality.
3. To combat truancy and reduce unauthorised absence.
4. To develop a framework which defines agreed roles and responsibilities and promotes consistency in carrying out designated tasks.
5. To develop a systematic approach to gathering and analysing attendance related data.
6. To provide support, advice and guidance to parents/guardians and students.
7. To promote home/school liaison to ensure that parents are aware of their legal requirements regarding attendance and are actively involved in ensuring that their children attend regularly.
8. To implement a system of rewards and sanctions.
9. To recognise the needs of the individual student when planning reintegration following significant periods of absence.
10. To maintain regular contact and promote good relationships with the EWS and other outside agencies to support students and parents/guardians.

Roles of the school

The Principal of Fort Hill Integrated College has overall responsibility for school attendance. The Senior Leadership Team, Heads of School and Pastoral Leaders should bring any concerns regarding school attendance to the attention of the Principal.

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 each morning registration and lesson, populating the PM session from the lesson 6 register.

To accurately record and monitor attendance in a consistent way we will adhere to the guidance provided in the DENI Circular 2021/16, which can be found at the following link:

<https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/circular-202116-attendance-guidance-and-absence-recording-by-schools>

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

Role of Parent/Guardian

Parents/guardians have a legal duty to ensure their child of compulsory school age shall receive fulltime 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/guardian has a legal duty to ensure that they regularly attend that school.

It is a parent's/guardian's responsibility to inform the school 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 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.

Students are expected to be in school by 8:55am, ready for registration and the beginning of classes at 9:00am. It is the responsibility of parents/guardians to ensure that your child is punctual. Lateness is recorded at registration and on your child's attendance record.

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

Role of Students

Each student at Fort Hill Integrated College must attend school punctually and regularly. If you have been absent from school, a written note from a parent/guardian must be provided when you return.

Role of Education Welfare Service

The Education Authority through the Education Welfare Service (EWS) have a legal duty to make sure that parents/guardians meet their responsibility towards their children's education.

If a student'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 in developing and implementing strategies to address or improve school attendance.

Family holidays during Term Time

Fort Hill Integrated College discourages holidays during term time due to the impact they have on students' learning. Family holidays taken during term time will be categorised as an unauthorised absence. Only in exceptional circumstances will a holiday be authorised.

A school holiday list for following the year will be circulated as soon as confirmed to all parents/guardians to assist with holiday forward planning.

Absence Procedures / Appointments / Exit requests

- A student should only be absent for an unavoidable reason which would usually mean ill-health or a family bereavement.
- Medical and dental appointments etc. should only be made during school hours if unavoidable. Parents/guardians should inform the Pastoral Leader/Form Teacher in writing (accompanied by an appointment card if possible) on the day the exit is required. The letter should indicate the date, the time of leaving and the arrangements for returning to school following the appointment.
- It is important that, in the event of a student exit, the school has confidence in the safety of all students. This includes ensuring they are in the care of an appropriate adult. This should be a parent, or an alternative adult as directed by the parent. The responsibility for the safeguarding, health and safety of the student will transfer to this adult at the point of collection.
- Only in exceptional circumstances will a student be granted an exit following a parental phone call. These requests will be considered individually by a member of the Senior Leadership Team. In such cases the parent/guardian will be expected to collect the student from reception. Students in years 8-12 will not be permitted to leave the school premises unless accompanied by an appropriate adult.
- Multiple grouped exits may be agreed in advance via a single request in writing. Examples include Medical treatment, Counselling, Orthodontic treatment....
- Requests for Student exits for the sole purpose of alternative Breaktime provision will not be considered, all students must remain on site.
- Requests for student exits for the sole purpose of alternative Lunchtime provision (at family home) will be considered individually. In exceptional circumstances these may be granted. See Appendix 7.
- Sixth form students are permitted to leave site and return promptly at Lunch time.
- Students absent for the register marking each session, e.g. AM = Morning Registration, PM = lesson 6, will be marked absent for that session, unless they arrive late. Absences will be marked according to the codes outlined and explained in <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/circular-202413-attendance-guidance-absence-recording-schools> Students who leave for an appointment, and miss the lesson 6 register will be marked absent for the PM session unless they return to school before the end of the school day.

- Any student who arrives after the registers close at 9:55am (end of lesson 1) without a note to explain their lateness will be marked absent for the session in line with the Department of Education circular 2021/16. Likewise arriving in the afternoon after 2:30pm.
- Parents must provide the school with a written note of explanation on the first day of return following an absence. This should indicate the dates of absence and the reason. In line with DENI guidelines, a pro forma is supplied to parents for completion.
- A letter of explanation from home or an appointment card should be sent with students who arrive late into school.
- Parents should inform school if they become aware of their child having left school without permission or if having been alerted by school that their child has not turned up for class, they subsequently discover their whereabouts.

Expectations of Students

The school expects that all students will:

- Value education and the importance of developing good habits of regular attendance and punctuality.
- Attend all classes as indicated on their timetable and arrive punctually.
- Be punctual for school. Students should arrive in time for registration starting with Form teachers at 8:55am. Students who arrive after registration/morning assembly i.e. after 9:15am, must report to Reception where the time and reason for lateness will be recorded. Any student, who is late for a valid reason e.g. a prearranged medical/dental appointment, must provide a note from their parent/guardian.
- In the case of an unavoidable medical or dental appointment, students should bring their request for an exit to the relevant daily exit Pastoral Leader during registration. An exit slip will be issued, the exit recorded in the exit book and on SIMS.
- Following any period of absence from school, bring in a letter of explanation from their parent/guardian. Failure to bring in an absence note will result in sanctions being given.
- Catch up on any work missed during absence.
- Catch up on work missed if he/she truants from school/class – students leaving school without permission will be addressed by Pastoral Staff and the issue recorded in Behaviour Management on SIMS. Repeat offences may result in a suspension.
- Ensure that the teacher is informed if they will not be in class or registration due to a class activity e.g. a music lesson or sporting activity.

Post 16 students whose attendance falls below 85% will be interviewed by the Head of 6th Form/Key Stage 5 co-ordinator. Students entitled to EMA payment will not receive their payment unless they have a full attendance record in all classes except in exceptional circumstances.

Expectations on Teaching staff

Teachers will be given clear guidelines and expectations of their role in monitoring attendance/lates and supporting students to work towards an improvement – Attendance and Punctuality Expectations/Rewards and Support Pathways posters will be displayed around the College (**Appendix 8**).

Teachers will:

- Be given training and guidance material to enable them to mark the electronic register and record student lateness during morning registration and during each lesson.
- Report to a Senior member of staff any student who has not turned up for class and who has been recorded as present or is not out of school on an approved absence. AWOL procedures will be enacted by relevant staff.
- Monitor patterns of absence in their own subject area and inform the student's Form Teacher if necessary.
- Provide support and advice so that students can catch up on work missed when they return from a period of absence.
- Monitor students' punctuality and inform their Form Teacher if they are persistently late for class.
- Inform other staff via e mail of planned absences of students from normal timetable e.g. school trip, matches, music tuition etc.

Expectations on Form Teachers

Form teachers are in a unique position as they meet with the students in their form class for 15mins each day for Registration. During this time, they can monitor attendance and punctuality taking the first intervention steps to support those who are showing signs of their attendance falling to an unacceptable level. They are also responsible for:

- Marking the electronic register and record lateness during registration i.e. after 9.00am and before 9.15am.
- Ensuring that students requiring an exit are sent to the exit Pastoral Leader during Registration.
- Noting irregular attendance, persistent lateness or an absence of more than 3 days without contact from home and contacting home by phone– especially important for students on the Child Protection register/LAC students and statemented students.
- Collecting absence notes and electronically recording reasons for absence.
- Giving out reminders for outstanding absence notes using the homework diary initially and the pre prepared letter **Appendix 1** if not forthcoming. Issue a sanction if notes are not brought in after a week.
- Monitoring attendance/punctuality of students in their Form class, setting targets and supporting them to work towards an improvement.
- Maintain SIMS homepage tiles to monitor lates and attendance.

- Work with Pastoral Leaders to follow the agreed Rewards and Support Pathways for both attendance and punctuality.
- Informing the office if a mistake in a student's attendance record is noted so that it can be amended.
- Informing the office if it is known that a student will be absent or late the following day for a valid reason.
- Rewarding students with Achievement points for full attendance and/or punctuality each month/term/annually following information sent from the Pastoral Leader.
- Liaising with the Pastoral Leader to check information regards full attendance at the end of Term 1 and at the end of the school year for Celebration Assemblies.
- Highlighting and praising very good levels of attendance/punctuality in a student's report and drawing to a parent's attention any cause for concern about poor attendance/punctuality.

Expectations on Pastoral Leaders

Pastoral Leaders will receive information from their Form Teachers and from the senior leadership team, which will keep them up to date and give them an overview of the attendance and punctuality of students in their Year group. Following intervention and support from the Form teacher, the Pastoral Leader will provide further support should there continue to be a concern using the Attendance and Punctuality Expectations/Rewards and Support Pathways. Pastoral Leaders will:

- Make attendance and punctuality the first point for discussion at the regular Form Teacher meetings.
- Circulate the names of students with full attendance and punctuality to Form Teachers each month so that Achievement points can be given.
- Display an attendance report/positive information re attendance and punctuality in their Pastoral Leader's notice board.
- Maintain SIMS homepage tiles to monitor lates and attendance.
- Maintain all relevant attendance marksheets in SIMS.
- Praise and encourage high levels of attendance and punctuality regularly at Year assemblies.
- Liaise with Form Teachers regards students with a poor attendance/punctuality record.
- Work with the students and home to improve this, developing and putting into place strategies as necessary.
- Use the pre-prepared letters to keep parents informed of their child's poor attendance (<85% without a valid reason e.g. hospitalisation) and the need, if continued, for possible EWO involvement. Parents will be contacted by phone to discuss the issue and will be invited to contact school and/or make an appointment to meet with the Pastoral Leader and decide on a way forward.

Letters available include:

- Absence Level 1 – to alert parents to their child's attendance being <85%. (Parental involvement is encouraged) **Appendix 2**

- Absence Level 2 – to inform a parent that attendance is still <85%, request a meeting to discuss the concern and inform them that EWO involvement will be the next step should there be no improvement. (Parental involvement is encouraged) **Appendix 3**
 - Absence Level 3 – to inform a parent that as no improvement has been noted and attendance is still below 85%, an EWO referral is being made. (Parental involvement is again encouraged) **Appendix 4.**
 - A letter informing parents of the subjects being missed by repeated poor attendance on similar days. **Appendix 5**
 - A letter informing a parent of their child's persistent lateness. **Appendix 6**
 - Initiate an EWO referral for students whose attendance continually falls below 85% after the Level 3 letter has been sent and if improvement is not evident. This must include evidence of contact with the student and home which has taken place already to try to improve the attendance and/or punctuality.
- Liaise with Education Authority EWOs and keep them informed via e mail of any developments regarding referred students, truancy, and condoned absence or recurring short absences.
 - Keep the Head of Pastoral (Attendance) informed of any concerns regarding attendance/lateness and of the strategies in place for students who each month have an attendance record of <85%.
 - Attend a monthly meeting with the EWOs to discuss students with <85% attendance and strategies used to attempt to bring about an improvement.
 - Prepare a monthly audit throughout the year to inform EWOs re: strategies used to support all students in the Year group with <85% attendance and unacceptable levels of lateness.
 - Work with parents/the student/Form Teacher and subject teachers to help and support a student to reintegrate back into school after a lengthy period of absence.
 - Work with home and subject teachers to possibly provide work to be completed at home after a 2-week period of absence due to sickness. Work will not be arranged for a student taking a holiday during term time.
 - Liaise with Form Teachers/Home and work with students who continue to be persistently late. If late because of domestic/family situations initiate school support mechanisms, work with parents and if necessary, discuss with the Head of Pastoral Care (Attendance) possible support from Outside Agencies.
 - Liaise with the SENCo re: Statemented students/LAC students/students on the Child Protection register with an attendance/punctuality concern.
 - Liaise with DT / DDT Social Services if a student on the Child Protection Register/LAC student is absent for more than 3 days without contact from home or if there is a concern about attendance and/or punctuality.
 - Liaise with Form Teachers to check information re: students with 100% attendance for accuracy. Forward names for the Year Group to the office to prepare certificates.
 - Arrange relevant celebration opportunities linked to attendance.

Expectations on School Office.

The member of the office staff responsible for attendance will:

- Update the online register throughout the day by recording information from the exit book, the late book and exits from the Nurse or Senior Staff in cases of illness. (Indicate the time, reason for a student arriving late including if a letter/appointment card was brought)
- Make amendments if there is a mistake in a student's attendance record.
- Update the online registration when a parent contacts school with a reason for absence.
- Inform Pastoral Leaders and/or the SLT of any information received from parents via phone calls which may be of concern – usually via e mail.
- Support the Pastoral Leaders and Form Teachers in providing attendance and punctuality information for school reports.
- Prepare certificates for students with 100% attendance – for 100% at the end of Term 1 and for 100% at the end of the school year – Terms 1, 2 and 3.

Expectations on Senior Leaders

The Principal, along with the Senior Leadership team will have overall responsibility for overseeing the monitoring and evaluation of the school's Attendance and Punctuality Policy and procedures. They will also:

- Liaise with Pastoral Leaders to work towards keeping the overall school attendance figures above the N.I. average.
- Support the Pastoral Leaders and the EWO in their work with students and home.
- Support Pastoral Leaders in accessing attendance information from Sims.
- Use as many opportunities as possible to promote the advantages of high levels of attendance and punctuality – Assemblies, publicity streams, information displays around the school etc.
- Promote and arrange the rewards for high levels of attendance and punctuality.
- Prepare any additional communication with home to promote high levels of attendance and punctuality.
- Liaise with the Pastoral Leaders re additional letters/support material to promote high levels of attendance and punctuality. (copies of all support material are in the Pastoral Leader's Support pack)
- Prepare any monitoring and evaluation surveys among students and parents.
- Liaise with staff and students to evaluate the expectations/rewards and support pathways in place.
- Review, evaluate and update this policy as required.

Promoting the importance of high levels of attendance and punctuality

The following strategies will be used: -

- Inclusion of attendance and punctuality on the Agenda of Board of Governors meetings
- Inclusion of attendance and punctuality on the Agenda at monthly Pastoral Team meetings
- Inclusion of attendance and punctuality on the Agenda of Pastoral Leader/Form Teacher meetings
- Inclusion of attendance and punctuality information on each student's school report sent home twice a year.
- Inclusion of attendance and punctuality information on the SIMS Parent App.
- Inclusion of an attendance summary for each student which form Teachers can discuss at Parents' meetings.
- Inclusion of attendance and punctuality in College SDP and relevant action plans.
- Emphasis on attendance during the transition and induction of new students
- Using PD, Employability classes, citizenship, LLW, Form time and assemblies to reinforce the need for good attendance and punctuality.
- Recognition of students with full attendance at various points over the year.
- Liaise with Primary schools regards students with consecutive years of full attendance in Primary school to be added to full attendance at Fort Hill.
- Positive publicity linked to student attendance achievements.

Reward System

- Monthly – Achievement points for 100% attendance and 100% punctuality
- Monthly – All students with 100% in each Key Stage entered into a prize draw for a reward.
- Monthly – Improved attendance recognition system.
- Biannually – Individual Full Attendance Certificates for Term 1 and a full year of 100% attendance in Term 3
- Presentation of Education Authority Full Attendance Awards for 3+ years of full attendance at Prize Distribution
- Nomination of students with 12/14 years of full attendance at Primary and Post Primary level for special Education Authority Awards.

Monitoring and Evaluation

This policy and procedures document will be reviewed annually by the Pastoral Team, including the Vice Principal, or earlier should the need arise.

Appendix 1

Date: _____

Dear Parent/Guardian

Your Son/daughter _____ Form _____ has been absent on the following occasions and has failed to bring in notes to explain the reasons for these absences. Please indicate the reason beside each period of absence listed below.

<u>Dates</u>	<u>Reasons</u>
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Please remember that an absence note should be brought into school by your son/daughter on the day that he/she returns to school.

Yours sincerely

Form Teacher

Pastoral Leader

Appendix 2

Level 1

Date: _____

Dear _____

The Northern Ireland average school attendance is around 90%. When a child's attendance falls below 85% it gives cause for concern.

To date _____ (student's name) in _____ (form) has an attendance level of _____ %

Please discuss this with him/her and look and look at ways in which this could be improved. If you would like to discuss the matter with me, I am available at the following times:

--

Please contact school to make an appointment or leave a message/contact number and I will call you back.

Working together, hopefully we can make an improvement.

Yours sincerely

Pastoral Leader

Appendix 3

Level 2

Date: _____

Dear _____

Our records show that your son/daughter _____ has continued to have a pattern of poor attendance since I was last in contact with you. It now stands at ____%. Should it continue at this level, or deteriorate further, I will be obliged to refer the matter to the Education Welfare Officer.

Should you wish to discuss the matter with me please phone school leaving your name and contact number, and I will be in touch. Alternatively, I am available at the following times. Please phone school to make an appointment.

--

Working together, hopefully we can make an improvement.

Yours sincerely

Pastoral Leader

Appendix 4

Date: _____

Dear: _____

Unfortunately, _____ attendance level has still not improved and to date stands at _____. As there has been no significant improvement since we last spoke/met and it now stands below 85%. I am left with no alternative other than to make a referral to the Education Welfare Officer, who will be in contact in due course.

Should you wish to discuss the matter with me. Please contact school to make an appointment. I am available at the following times:

--

Yours sincerely

Pastoral Leader

Appendix 5

Dear Parent/Guardian

When a child's attendance falls below 85% it gives cause for concern. To date _____ (student name) in Form _____ has an attendance level of _____%.

I also note from his/her records that most of his/her absences tend to be on _____ with only _____% attendance, and / or _____ with only _____% attendance.

On these days he/she has 1/2/3 periods of _____, 1/2/3 periods of _____, 1/2/3 periods of _____, and 1/2/3 periods of _____ (subjects) and so is missing out on a lot of work - this will no doubt impact negatively on his/her progress in this/these area(s) in particular.

Please discuss this with him/her and look at ways in which this could be improved. If you would like to discuss the matter with me, I am available at the following times.

--

Please contact school to make an appointment or leave a message/contact number and I will call you back.

Working together, hopefully we can make an improvement.

Yours sincerely

Pastoral Leader

Appendix 6

Dear Parent/Guardian

The attendance figures would indicate that between _____
(date) and _____ (date) , _____
(student's name) arrived late to school _____ times. This is not acceptable,
please discuss this with him/her with a view to encouraging punctual arrival at school
– 8.50am for registration at 8.55am.

Should you wish to discuss the matter with me, please phone school leaving your
name and contact number, and I will be in touch. Alternatively, I am available at the
following times should you wish to phone school and make an appointment.

--

Yours sincerely

Pastoral Leader

Appendix 7

Agreed exits: Lunchtimes - Attend family home for alternative provision

The following document should be signed by the parent / guardian before the commencement of an agreed lunchtime-only exit. This agreement will be supplied to the parent on official headed paper and will commence on return of a signed copy.

Following your recent communication, your request for an arranged lunchtime exit for <<student name>> has been considered and agreed in principle.

Before the arrangement can be put in place you're required to read, acknowledge & sign the following.

I, _____ (parent name) have requested that
_____ (student name) be allowed to exit school at lunchtime each day in order to attend the family home. Once agreed this arrangement will run until the end of the academic year, if I wish to alter this timescale, I understand that I must contact the college.

In signing this agreement, I understand and acknowledge the following:

1. I will ensure that an appropriate adult picks up and returns <<student name>> on each occasion of exit (this may be at the school gates if desired).
2. Responsibility for the safeguarding of <<student name>> will pass to this adult for the duration of the exit.
3. Responsibility for the health and safety of <<student name>> will pass to this adult for the duration of the exit.
4. Responsibility for the behaviour and conduct of <<student name>> will pass to this adult for the duration of the exit.
5. The College is no longer responsible in any way for <<student name>> during the time of this exit.
6. The College child protection procedures still apply in all circumstances and will be enacted if required, regardless of this agreement.

As part of this agreement <<student name>> is required to be supervised by an appropriate adult. If this adult is someone other than those listed within the school's SIMS system we would request you provide their details in writing along with this signed agreement.

You have the right to terminate this agreement at any time, with the understanding that <<student name>> will no longer be able to leave site as part of it. Our normal exit procedures continue to apply.

I understand and agree to the above in relation to my request for an arranged lunchtime-only exit regards <<student name>>.

Signed:

(Only an individual whose details are already held by the College may sign this document)

Dated:

Print Name:

FORT HILL INTEGRATED COLLEGE

Late to school procedures

- School begins at 8.55.
- Students arriving after this time are to be marked in late by Form Teacher and given **1 Behaviour point**.
- Students arriving in after registration **must** go to Reception to be marked and complete a late slip.
- Reception will record student as late on the system, stating reason and record **2 Behaviour points**.
- Class teachers must ensure attendance is recorded on SIMS at beginning of each lesson and that any student marked absent on system but who is present in the class, has actually signed in with reception.
- Form Teachers will have overview of lates to school in their form classes on SIMS homepage and when they do daily / weekly reporting.
- Any patterns/concerns should be addressed by Form Teachers in the first instance and passed to Pastoral Leaders if no improvement is noted.



FORT HILL INTEGRATED COLLEGE

Attendance and Punctuality: Policy and Procedures (including student exit procedures)

Consultation – feedback

- Student
- Parent/Guardian
- Staff Teaching
- Staff Non-Teaching
- Senior Management
- Board of Governors
- External Stakeholders

Please read through this draft Attendance and Punctuality Policy and Procedures and comment on its contents.

Return to the College by, _____

General Comments

Strengths

Recommendations

Thank you.

Mr A. Tate
(Vice Principal)

Signed _____