



Ashfield Girls' High School



“Each different. Each talented. All valued.”

Attendance Policy

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Adopted Date:	October 2021
Review Date:	October 2023





Ashfield Girls' High School

Attendance Policy

Mission Statement

Attend today: Achieve tomorrow.

The aim of our school is to provide pupils with a secure and appropriate learning environment for a programme which meets their individual needs and brings them success and fulfilment in their school life and prepares them for the life beyond school.

School Ethos / Culture

Ashfield Girls' High School believes that every pupil is capable of reaching their potential and can only do this by contributing fully, and achieving enjoyment from their involvement, in the life of the school.

The school recognises that this can only be achieved by creating an atmosphere where every pupil wishes to attend school and does attend school because they feel valued and secure.

This policy is one of a number of interrelated policies which are concerned with pupils' welfare, including our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

We at Ashfield are committed to working with parents, carers, pupils, the Education Welfare Service and other outside agencies to support and encourage the attendance of pupils at school. We believe that through engagement with parents and encouraging them to play an active part in their daughter's education that this will have a major role in improving attendance and punctuality and in reducing absenteeism.

Ashfield Girls' High School will promote an ethos which encourages good attendance and punctuality and where each pupil feels valued and secure. This will include the rights of pupils to be protected from harm and to do what is reasonably possible to safeguard and promote their physical and emotional well-being.



Aims

The aim of this policy is to ensure an effective system for recording attendance, recording reasons for non-attendance and efficient systems in place to respond to issues related to attendance.

- to strive to achieve the Northern Ireland average for attendance for non-selective post primary schools, as set out by the Department of Education
- to improve attendance by actively involving parents, carers, pupils and outside agencies through advice, support and guidance
- to provide advice, support and guidance to parents/carers and pupils
- to improve attendance to help impact positively on achievement of all pupils
- to improve attendance and punctuality which will enhance the pupil's sense of belonging to the school community
- to develop a framework that defines roles and responsibilities in relation to attendance and punctuality
- to ensure compliance with all statutory requirements as laid down by the Department of Education
- to promote good relationships with the Educational Welfare Service
- to instil good habits and values for adult and working life
- to raise pupils' awareness of the importance of regular attendance
- to develop an attendance reward schemes which recognises pupils' attendance achievements

Role of the school

The Principal at Ashfield Girls' High School has overall responsibility for school attendance; the Head of Pastoral Care should bring any concerns regarding school attendance to her attention.

The Board of Governors provide support by reviewing school attendance figures and targets and ensuring it is placed as an agenda item at meetings on a regular basis.

Teaching staff regularly monitor the attendance and punctuality of pupils 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 Department of Education Circular 2018/12.

Ashfield Girls' High School is committed to working with parents/carers to encourage regular and punctual attendance.



Principal will:

- set attendance targets in accordance with the School's Development Plan
- monitor the progress of attendance
- liaise with the Board of Governors in relation to attendance
- ensure that strategies to promote and implement the policy in school are in place
- determine whether to authorise any requests by parents to take their daughter out of school for an extended period of time
- approve decisions on alternative school provision for pupils to AEP/ EOTAS

Head of Pastoral Care will:

- monitor attendance and punctuality
- support the work of the Heads of Progress in the monitoring of attendance and punctuality
- manage the Heads of Progress, Head of Sixth Form and Home School Liaison Officer in relation to attendance
- regularly review the pupils who are being supported by the Education Welfare Service
- meet regularly with the Education Welfare Officer to update and monitor pupil attendance below 85% and pupils whose attendance has dropped significantly due to medical, social, emotional or disengagement issues
- monitor the academic progress of pupils and pastoral issues through the tracking system (Years 11 and 12 and support for Sixth Form tracking)
- liaise with external agencies and feed back to Heads of Progress and other relevant staff
- feedback information to Senior Leadership Team and Principal in relation to attendance and punctuality
- seek approval from the Principal on alternative school provision for pupils with medical or disengagement issues
- monitor provision for pupils in alternative educational settings e.g. attendance, progress and visits to placements
- arrange regular attendance meetings for Heads of Progress
- make use of attendance data to monitor the progress, identify trends and set targets for improvement
- co-ordinate the work of the Home Liaison Officer
- adhere to any guidance provided in the Department of Education Circulars in relation to attendance



Heads of Progress will:

- manage the work of the form tutors in their house in the monitoring of attendance and punctuality
- ensure the accuracy of attendance records on SIMS of pupils within their house
- regularly review the attendance of pupils in their house who are being supported by the Education Welfare Service
- meet regularly with the Head of Pastoral to update and monitor pupil attendance
- when required, complete Education Welfare Service referrals for pupils
- provide information to support the tracking system
- liaise with the Home Liaison Officer in relation to pupils in their year who may require a home visit
- issue correspondence in relation to pupils attendance / punctuality to parents
- facilitate meetings with pupils / and or parents in relation to attendance and punctuality
- make use of attendance data to monitor the progress, identify trends and set targets for improvement for pupils in their year
- co-ordinate the provision of work for pupils who are unable to attend school due to exceptional circumstances
- use a variety of interventions / strategies to overcome poor attendance, lack of engagement and underachievement for pupils in their year

Home School Liaison Officer will:

- develop relationships with parents and students and to act as a resource person to both
- work with Heads of Progress and link with parents of identified pupils on a weekly basis
- work with pupils and address barriers which prevent them from attending school
- liaise with the Pastoral Care team in order to identify pupils with unsatisfactory attendance
- use a variety of interventions to overcome poor attendance, lack of engagement and underachievement at school
- link in with the school's Education Welfare Officer to assist with home visits of pupils who have been referred
- monitor the changes in attendance of pupils who have been supported by the Home School Liaison Officer
- provide regular feedback to the Head of Pastoral Care



Form Tutors will:

- accurately record pupil attendance each morning and afternoon
- check that contact has been made on (via SIMS Parent App / Truancy Call) on the first day of pupil absence. By day 3 a follow up phone call home should be made if no response from the parent/carers on the reason for absence
- follow up with pupils and parents in relation to reasons for absence
- make use of attendance data to monitor the progress and identify trends in their form class
- ensure that N codes are changed within 5 days to the reason for absence. D codes should only be used in exceptional circumstances
- collect absence notes, question reasons and record in SIMS the reason for pupil absence
- retain absence notes in the pastoral filing system. These should be filed in the pupil's school folder in the school office at the end of each year
- print twice monthly attendance figures and make necessary adjustments to pupils SIMS records
- inform the Head of Progress of attendance and punctuality concerns in their form class
- informally meet with pupils whose attendance is of concern and discuss strategies to improve attendance / punctuality

Classroom Teachers will:

- register pupils using SIMS lesson monitor for each class
- if concerned or suspicious regarding the absence of a pupil, inform the Head of Progress or a designated teacher without delay.

Office Administrator (Attendance) will:

- complete the monthly attendance returns to Education Authority
- liaise with the Pastoral Team on issues relating to attendance records eg non-marking of rolls
- complete daily checks to ensure AM and PM roles are marked
- be responsible for the removal of pupils names from the SIMS register, as requested by the Principal
- transfer the pupils SIMS record to their new school, when required

Role of The Education Welfare Service

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



If a pupil's absence causes concern, and/or if their attendance falls below 85% and there is also a concern, 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.

Role of Parent/Carer

Parents have a legal duty to ensure:

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

(Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986)

- if a child is registered in school, their parent/carers has a legal duty to ensure that they regularly attend that school
- it is the responsibility of parents/carers 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 your daughter's Form Tutor or Head of Progress to ensure that both you and your child receive maximum support

Parents should:

- encourage excellent attendance (98% and above)
- make medical appointments outside school hours where possible
- avoid booking holidays during term time
- inform school of the reason for a pupil's absence by phone (including using Truancy Call system), no later than the third day of absence. This should be confirmed with a written note when the pupil returns to school
- inform school if the absence is likely to be prolonged, in order to enable the school to assist with homework or any other necessary arrangements which may be required
- send a letter of request with the pupil to her form tutor at least one day in advance where an absence is anticipated

Role of Pupil

Each pupil at Ashfield Girls' High School has a duty to ensure that they attend school punctually and regularly. If a pupil has been absent from school a written note from a parent/carers must be provided to their teacher when they return to school. If a pupil falls ill during the school day, she must report to the School Nurse who will contact the parent where necessary.



Department of Education: ‘Miss School, Miss Out’ Strategy

The Department of Education’s Attendance Strategy ‘Miss School, Miss Out’ was published in December 2016 and outlines the support for improving pupil attendance under four key themes:

1. School leadership;
2. Early intervention;
3. Tailored support; and
4. Collaboration and Engagement.

The roles and responsibilities of parents, pupils and school, within each of these themes, are outlined on the following pages.

1. School Leadership - Roles and Responsibilities Parents/Pupils Schools

Parents/Pupils	Schools
Parents/carers should be aware of their legal responsibilities for ensuring their child’s regular and punctual attendance.	Schools should ensure a Pupil Attendance Policy is in place, approved by their Board of Governors.
Parents/carers should read and adhere to the school’s Pupil Attendance Policy and procedures and support their children to understand and follow the rules.	Schools should ensure that all pupils and parents/carers are aware of and understand their school’s Pupil Attendance Policy and what it means to them.
Parents/carers should support the efforts of school leaders to prioritise school attendance.	Schools should include school attendance targets in the school development plan and ensure pupil attendance is on the agenda at all Board of Governors’ meetings.
Parents/carers should co- operate with and support school leaders if they recommend actions to address their child’s poor attendance.	Schools should promote the importance of school attendance and its link with attainment.
Parents/carers should be aware of the link between pupil attendance levels and their subsequent academic attainment.	Schools should engage with pupils in relation to potential barriers to attending such as the appropriateness of the curriculum.
	Schools should enhance the capacity of teachers and support staff to understand and support pupils with attendance problems.



2. Early Intervention - Roles and Responsibilities

Parents/Pupils	Schools
<p>Parents/carers should be aware of the aim of schools in preventing the establishment of long-term patterns of poor attendance through early intervention.</p> <p>Parents/carers should let the school know of any issues that may impact upon attendance as early as possible.</p> <p>Parents/carers of young children should recognise the role that can be played in helping their children to shape a constructive attitude towards school attendance.</p> <p>Parents/carers should be supportive of the school's efforts to develop positive patterns of attendance amongst pupils from an early age.</p> <p>Parents/carers should understand the need for a positive mind-set on attendance to be developed in pupils from an early age.</p>	<p>Schools should robustly follow up on all pupil absences and lateness. Monitor post-registration pupil absence and advise parents/carers of issues by, for example, a phone call or text message.</p> <p>Schools should ensure there are systems in place to monitor and analyse attendance patterns at an individual pupil, pupil group and whole school level prior to their entrenchment.</p> <p>Schools should have an attendance policy that documents how the school will apply the principles of early intervention into their work to promote and support the maximisation of pupil attendance.</p> <p>Schools should have flexible processes in place to enable support to be provided to pupils with poor levels of attendance at an early enough stage.</p> <p>Schools should proactively promote the value of school attendance to pupils in their earliest years, particularly in order to establish good attendance practices.</p> <p>Schools should take action to react, where appropriate, to changes in a pupil's circumstances that may impact upon their attendance such as a domestic crisis.</p>



3. Tailored Support - Roles and Responsibilities Parents/Pupils Schools

Parents/Pupils	Schools
<p>Parents/carers should be aware of their legal responsibilities in respect of their child attending school regularly.</p> <p>Parents/carers and pupils should engage openly and constructively with the school and/or the EWS as they provide support and advice to improve attendance.</p> <p>Parents/carers should understand that the EA will take legal action, where appropriate, to ensure that a child receives an appropriate education.</p>	<p>Schools should ensure that their pupil attendance policy includes timely supports to be made available to target attendance issues either on an individual pupil or group basis.</p> <p>Schools should take account of the challenges or barriers to learning that may affect a pupil's attendance and offer appropriate support that takes account of their individual circumstances.</p> <p>Schools should be sensitive to personal issues that may impact upon a pupil's attendance, and offer effective pastoral support.</p> <p>Schools should refer a pupil to the EWS in line with the guidelines in the Department's Attendance Circular.</p> <p>Schools should co-operate with the EA support services in their working with referred pupils</p>



4. Collaboration and engagement

Parents/Pupils	Schools
<p>Pupils should talk to a teacher or trusted adult about any worries they have about school which may affect their attendance in order that the school can take action if necessary.</p> <p>Parents/carers should provide a reason immediately each time their child does not attend school and advise the school on issues such as medical appointments.</p> <p>Parents/carers should attend all parent/teacher interviews and be willing to address poor attendance patterns.</p> <p>Parents/carers should take an active interest in their child’s education, the life of the school and promote the benefits of regular attendance.</p> <p>Parents/carers should support school staff in their efforts to manage difficult or challenging behaviour.</p>	<p>Schools should work to build positive relationships with the local community that will help to promote closer engagement with the education system.</p> <p>Schools should try to promote closer parental engagement in their child’s education by maximising their involvement in the life of the school.</p> <p>Schools should seek to share good practice through co-operation with local schools, with the EA and the ETI.</p> <p>Schools should consult with their pupils about the appropriateness of the curriculum and the effectiveness of the teaching in engaging the learner.</p> <p>Schools should have in place forms of pupil participation to help pupils be involved in making decisions that affect them such as curriculum choices.</p> <p>Schools should ensure all parents/carers are aware of what information is required in respect of their child’s non- attendance and when it should be provided.</p> <p>Schools should seek to explore the opportunities for sharing of good practice offered through C2k and ESaGS.tv</p>



Procedures

Punctuality

The school day begins at 8.40am and finishes at 3.20pm with the exception of a Friday when pupils finish at 1.30pm. Pupils are expected to remain in school throughout this time.

Registration takes place at 8.45am in the pupil's form room. Anyone arriving after this time must sign in late at the school office and inform their form tutor that they have arrived into school. If a pupil is late, they will be detained for 15 minutes at the end of the same school day, without parental notice. Pupils will be given the opportunity to inform their parents of this. Six lates in a term will result in a 30-minute Pastoral Detention after school, with 24-hour notice. Continued lateness will result in a 60-minute Study Support with a member of the Senior Leadership Team. If the situation does not improve the Head of Progress will arrange a meeting with parents at school to discuss the situation.

Medical attention requiring being sent home

If a pupil is ill during the school day, she should indicate this to her class teacher who will complete a Nurse Referral form and send it with the pupil to the Pupil Welfare Auxiliary's Office. The pupil must also bring her Student Planner with her. No pupil may go home without following this procedure and obtaining the necessary permission from the Pupil Welfare Auxiliary or other relevant members of staff.

Absence

Missing school at any time is detrimental to a child's education, therefore family holidays or other appointments (e.g. doctor or dentist) should be arranged, where possible, outside school hours.

The School Office will send a Truancy Call notification each morning, which the parent should respond to with a reason for absence.

Form Tutors must ensure that SIMS registers are completed accurately.

A pupil who has returned to school after absence must bring a note signed by the parent/carer stating the period of absence and the reason. The school office will also notify parents of absence daily through the 'Truancy Call' messaging service. Parents can respond to provide reasons for absence.

In the event of a parent requesting an anticipated absence, they should send the pupil with a written request to her form tutor at least one day in advance.



Family holidays during term time

Ashfield Girls' High School discourages holidays during term time due to the impact they have on pupils' learning. Family holidays can only be authorised by the Principal in exceptional circumstances.

Extended Leave for pupils who need to temporarily move to another country

The Department of Education aim to meet the needs of our increasingly diverse population. Extended Leave allows pupils, for a limited period only (ideally no more than three weeks), to travel outside the UK without their attendance levels being adversely affected. This does not apply to family holidays but does refer to:

- 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
 - to attend to immigration matters

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

The Department of Education requires the following documentation (which should be submitted to school who will forward the documentation on) to be provided in support of applications where appropriate:

- An email or letter from the parent's employer confirming the dates and location of placement/employment outside the UK
- An email or letter from the hospital or clinic confirming appointment details for the individual receiving medical treatment outside Northern Ireland
- An email or letter confirming appointment details at either a passport office or a UK visa application centre in a country outside the UK – alternatively a photocopy of the renewed documentation will suffice

Procedures for managing non-attendance

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



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

- Below 92% Letter A
- Below 85% Letter 1
- Letter 2, after minor or no improvement
- Referral to the Education Welfare Service

Strategies used to support and encourage excellent attendance / punctuality

Pupils	Parents	Staff	Additional Support
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular review of pupil's own attendance Area to record attendance in pupil planner Assemblies on the importance of attendance Reward Scheme – Gold, Silver, Bronze Awards High expectations of how pupils should behave in school Attendance focus at Student Council Principal's Awards Revision Programmes Secondary Pupil Support Service: Social Skills group work Secondary Pupil Support Service: LINK support House points for excellent attendance Year 8 Mentor programme Year 12 Mentor/Exam Support Exceptional Teaching Arrangements (ETA) – ETA criteria must be met Education Other Than at School (EOTAS) placements – EOTAS criteria must be met Attendance Improvers congratulations postcards and rewards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parental engagement through events such as Meet the Form Teacher for new parents, e-Safety nights, Parenting classes, Parents' Induction Programme – Blast-off Study Skills Night, My Maths Parents' night and Junior and Senior School Prize Days Phone calls home to parents Year 8 Induction Programme Parents' Booklet informing new parents of attendance procedures SIMS Parent App and Truancy Call to inform parents of attendance / punctuality issues Support from Parents and Friends of Ashfield Meetings with parents in relation to attendance / punctuality Parent Consultations Attendance advice leaflets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff presence at front door when pupils are arriving into school at the beginning of each day to greet pupils and also to stop pupils who have arrived late into school after registration has started Member of Senior Leadership Team present in Atrium each morning Head of Progress meetings with parents in relation to attendance / punctuality Parent Consultations House and Form noticeboards – information on House and Form class attendance One to one interview with pupils in relation to attendance / punctuality Pastoral support – helping to resolve friendship issues High expectations of pupil behaviour in school Secondary Pupil Support Service Outside agency support Exceptional Teaching Arrangements Education Other Than at School placements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pastoral support Homework Club Extra support for Maths and English Engage Programmes Year 12 Mentor/Exam Support Catch up Clinics Exam Revision Programme Phased return to school Reduced timetable – in relation to medical needs Counselling Service including drop-in lunchtime sessions Friendship Ambassadors programme Lunch club Time-out cards – to support emotional needs of pupils Secondary Pupil Support Service: LINK support



Covid-19 Addendum: Attendance Policy

PHA Advice (sourced 06/10/2021) <https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/covid-19-coronavirus/information-schools-colleges-universities-and-parents/contact-tracing-0#what-should-i-do-if-my-child-has-symptoms-of-covid-19>

What to do if...	Action needed
My child has coronavirus symptoms	<p>The symptoms of COVID-19 are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a high temperature – this means you feel hot to touch on your chest or back (you do not need to measure your temperature); OR • a new, continuous cough – this means coughing a lot for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours (if you usually have a cough, it may be worse than usual); OR • a loss of or change in sense of smell or taste. <p>If your child has any of these symptoms it is very important that they do NOT attend school and should also self-isolate at home. (Please keep school informed).</p> <p>You should arrange for them to get tested as soon as possible. They should continue to isolate until the result of the test is available.</p> <p><i>*Please note that if a child becomes unwell in school with coronavirus symptoms, you will be contacted to collect them.</i></p>
My child tests positive for coronavirus	<p>If your child tests positive for COVID-19, they should self-isolate for 10 days and not attend school during this time.</p> <p>The Public Health Agency Contact Tracing Service (PHA CTS) will be in touch to determine who your child’s close contacts are, and will ask for contact details for them so they can be advised appropriately.</p> <p>Cases will initially receive a text to inform them of the PCR result – it takes a number of hours for these positive results to be transferred to the CTS. The text will be followed by a telephone call by the CTS, this can happen in the 48 hours after you have received the text to inform you of your positive PCR result.</p> <p>Parents can help by familiarising themselves with the process; if their child tests positive for COVID-19 – expect to be contacted by the CTC, recognise our number (028 9536 8888) by adding it to your phone’s contacts, and please answer when we do call. Parents and guardians will be primarily responsible for informing the school of their child’s positive result.</p>
My child tests negative for coronavirus	<p>If your child tests negative for COVID-19 they can return to school as normal, provided they feel well enough to do so.</p>



<p>What do I do if my child's friend tests positive?</p>	<p>If you do not hear from the PHA CTS, then there is no requirement for you or your child to self-isolate.</p> <p>The PHA CTS will identify all close contacts, and follow them up directly. If your child has been identified as a close contact, then the PHA CTS will make contact with you or your child and provide advice.</p> <p>However, if your child develops symptoms, then they must self-isolate and not attend school, until they have had a negative test.</p>
<p>What is a close contact?</p>	<p>Within a school or other structured or supervised setting, your child would only be identified as a contact if they have had prolonged close contact with the case (someone who tests positive for COVID-19). This could mean a child in the same household or someone who has stayed overnight. It will also include intimate contact for example, kissing and where a child has received help with personal care in a school. It does not include all children in the same class or all those who sit next to each other, because the risk of COVID spreading in the school setting is much lower than in a household.</p>
<p>What will now happen if there is a case of Covid-19 in a school setting?</p>	<p>Whole classes ('bubbles') will no longer be asked to self-isolate if someone in a school or other structured and supervised setting tests positive for COVID-19. There will be no requirement for you or your child to self-isolate unless your child develops symptoms or you are contacted by the PHA CTS.</p> <p>All close contacts of the case who need to take specific actions will be identified, contacted and advised by the PHA CTS to follow the latest guidance on self-isolation and testing. Usually the following will not need to isolate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • adults who are fully vaccinated, where 14 days has passed since the second vaccination, who do not have symptoms and who do not develop symptoms and who have not tested positive; and • children and young people aged under 18 who do not have symptoms and who do not develop symptoms and who have not tested positive.
<p>Why has the approach to schools changed?</p>	<p>Children have missed a large amount of school in the past year. There is a growing body of evidence documenting the damaging impact this has had on the health and wellbeing of children and young people. School is incredibly important for the health and wellbeing of children as well as for their educational attainment.</p> <p>We now have evidence which shows that the vast majority of those identified as school close contacts and sent home to isolate during the 2020/21 school year did not go on to develop COVID-19.</p> <p>Additionally, the vaccination programme has now reached 90% of adults and approaching 88% are fully vaccinated. The vaccine is highly effective at preventing serious illness and hospitalisation.</p> <p>At this stage in the pandemic the best place for children is in school. Our schools are safe. Closures and isolation of children have primarily been to help control community transmission to protect the adult population.</p>



<p>Do you have evidence that this new approach is safe, even with the Delta variant now dominant?</p>	<p>Yes. A study published in England during the summer found that, across all the post primary schools taking part, only 1.6% of those identified as close contacts went on to become confirmed cases within 14 days. This study was carried out in schools during the summer term in 2021 when the Delta variant was becoming dominant.</p> <p>A report covering the whole 2020/21 school year published by Public Health Scotland on September 1 2021 reported that only 7.9% of close contacts in primary school and 2.3% of close contacts in post-primary schools went on to become cases.</p> <p>The proportion of close contacts that went on to become cases was highest in the third term when the Delta variant had emerged and there was routine testing of close contacts. However, the vast majority of school close contacts (89.5% in primary school and 96.5% in post primary schools) did not become cases.</p>
<p>How will you (PHA) get close contact information from parents and children?</p>	<p>Parents can help by familiarising themselves with the process - if your child tests positive for COVID-19 you should expect to be contacted by the PHA CTS, recognise our number (028 9536 8888) by adding it to your phone's contacts, and please answer when we do call. We are confident we will be able to get sufficient information from cases in the vast majority of cases.</p> <p>There may be occasions when we will need to contact school principals for further information such as names and contact details. However, these will be kept to a minimum and will be much less than the requirements placed on schools at present. PHA CTS has a protocol for when to contact schools based on the risk assessment of each case. PHA CTS will also ask questions about close contact with staff – for example if a child receives support from a special needs or classroom assistant – similarly contact will have to be made in those circumstances.</p> <p>As with of any new measure, implementation of these new arrangements will be kept under review and will be refined and enhanced if necessary.</p>
<p>Will you inform the school of positive cases?</p>	<p>No. the PHA CTS will advise that parents should inform the school if their child tests positive for COVID-19.</p> <p>Under the new arrangements, identification of close contacts is now the responsibility of PHA CTS and, even upon receipt of such information from parents, schools/principals do not need to take any action.</p> <p>Where parents do inform schools, PHA have made available to schools a 'warn and inform' letter that schools may wish to use to inform parents of cases in the school and to remind everyone of the steps we should all be taking to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission in school and beyond.</p> <p>PHA will continue to keep positive cases number at all schools under review and will provide public health advice and assistance where necessary.</p>



Will the close contact definition apply for all school-aged children now even outside of school and other structured and supervised settings?	No. Outside of school and other structured and supervised settings, children will use the same close contact definition as the general population. These definitions are solely for use within school and other structured and supervised settings.
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Additional Information can be found at:

<https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/covid-19-coronavirus>

<https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/landing-pages/education-restart>



Registration / SIMS Data

As per DE Guidance (Circular 2021/16) issued to Principals 31/08/2021.

Code	SIMS description	Code description	Statistical Meaning
(Left Open Bracket	Authorised Absence	COVID-19 Illness Confirmed – to be used when child is sick and COVID-19 is confirmed.
)	Right Closed Bracket	Authorised Absence	COVID-19 Illness Suspected / Unconfirmed – to be used when child is sick and COVID-19 is suspected but unconfirmed.
{	Left Open Curly Bracket	Unauthorised Absence	COVID-19 Self-Isolating – Vulnerable Pupil or Household Member. 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.
}	Right Closed Curly Bracket	Unauthorised Absence	COVID-19 Self-Isolating - No evidence of learning from home Pupil required to self-isolate but not learning from home / evidence not provided.
[Left Open Square Bracket	Approved Activity	COVID-19 Self-Isolating & Learning from Home Pupil required to self-isolate and learning from home” – does not discount from attendance record.
]	Right Closed Square Bracket	Approved Activity	COVID-19 Learning from Home - Social Distancing 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.





Challenging girls today; creating women of value in the future



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