



Victoria College Preparatory School Attendance Policy

November 2022

Policy Date – 07/11/22

Agreed by Governors – 22/11/22

Review Date – 07/11/24

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Rationale

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. At Victoria College Preparatory School, we will strive to promote an ethos and culture which encourages good attendance, and where each pupil will feel valued and secure.

The Preparatory School provides the children in our care with a quality education that caters for their individual needs, supported by highly professional and motivated staff in pleasant and well-resourced surroundings. We believe that all the members of our school community are unique and special individuals. Our school will nurture all these individuals in their life-long journey to achieve their full and unique potential. The members of our school community will be empowered to take ownership of their role as citizens of the local and global communities. We will celebrate our self-worth, appreciate our individual talents and achievements, and strive to understand and empathise with others. We will embrace diversity and individual difference and demonstrate, through our daily practice and procedures, respect for all. We will accept our responsibility to ensure that our vision is transparent in all we do.

Aims

1. To improve/maintain the overall attendance of pupils in the Preparatory School.
2. To develop a framework that defines roles and responsibilities in relation to attendance.
3. To provide advice, support and guidance to parents/guardians and pupils.
4. To promote good relationships with the Education Welfare Service (EWS).

Role of the School

The Head of the Preparatory School has overall responsibility for school attendance; teachers should bring any concerns regarding school attendance to her attention. She meets with the Education Welfare Officer termly to keep him/her informed of attendance figures within school and discuss any concerns related to attendance.

The Board of Governors provides 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 each day. The class teacher will ensure that pupils are registered accurately and that reasons for absence are received from a parent and passed on to the Prep School clerical officer for recording on SIMS. Teaching staff will follow up cases of unaccounted for absence and will keep the Head of Preparatory School informed of any possible underlying problems which might account for absences.

To enable our school to record and monitor attendance in a consistent way, we will adhere to the guidance provided in the Department of Education Circular 2022/07 which can be found at: <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/attendance-guidance-absence-recording-by-schools-circular-202207>

Victoria College Preparatory School is committed to working with parents to encourage regular and punctual attendance.

Parents

Parents have a legal duty¹ to ensure their child/children of compulsory school age receive efficient full-time education suitable to their age, ability and aptitude and appropriate to address 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 school of the reason for a pupil's absence on the first day of absence. This may be done by emailing the school reception: prep@victoriacollege.org.uk or telephoning the reception desk between 8-9.30am at 028 90386490. 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.

Pupils are expected to be in school for registration and the beginning of classes. It is the responsibility of parents to ensure that children are punctual. Lateness is recorded at registration and recorded on the pupil's attendance record.

Pupils

Each pupil at Victoria College Preparatory 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 must be provided to the class teacher upon return.

Family holidays during Term Time

Victoria College Preparatory School *actively discourages* holidays from being taken during term time due to the impact the incurred absence has on pupils' learning. Family holidays taken during term time will be categorised as an unauthorised absence. Teachers will not provide work for the children to complete while on holiday. Only in exceptional circumstances will absence for the purpose of holiday be authorised.

Procedures for Managing Non-Attendance

At Victoria College Preparatory School we take pupil absences seriously. The Head of the Preparatory School will review whole school and individual pupil attendance rates on a regular basis.

If a child's attendance falls below an acceptable level, the Head of the Preparatory School will:

- discuss absences with the class teacher(s) to determine if there are any extenuating circumstances; and
- send a letter to the parents (Appendix 1) informing them of the current percentage of attendance of the pupil and indicating the potential impact this might have on the pupil if absence continues at this level or falls further. Parents will also be informed that if attendance continues to fall their child will be referred to the EWS.

¹Article 45 (1) of the Education and Libraries (NI) Order 1986

The Head of the Preparatory School may also contact the parent by phone and request a meeting to discuss the pupil's attendance, if appropriate.

If there is no improvement, then the child will be referred to the EWS with parents being informed by letter (Appendix 2).

Education Welfare Service

The Education Authority through the Education Welfare Service has a legal responsibility to make sure that parents meet their duty 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 EWS will support staff and parents in developing and implementing strategies to address or improve school attendance.

Links to other policies

Pastoral Care Policy
Positive Behaviour Policy
Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
Anti-Bullying Policy

Appendix 1

Attendance <90%

Date (To be added)

Dear (name)

Having reviewed our attendance reports for the (insert) term up to an including Friday (insert date), I note that your daughter's attendance has fallen below 90% due to (insert reasons) – a copy of her pupil report is attached.

From experience, a minimum of 95% attendance is necessary for each pupil to fulfil her maximum potential and I would encourage regular attendance when possible. Parental involvement contributes significantly to a child's education, and I would like to thank you in advance for your active support in ensuring your child attends school and understands the significance of good attendance in ensuring the best levels of attainment.

Should you wish to speak with me further about this matter, please do not hesitate to contact school.

Yours sincerely,

Head of Preparatory School

Appendix 2

Date (To be added)

Dear (name)

Since our previous communication it has been noted that your child's attendance has not improved. As you will be aware, attendance at school is linked to academic performance and pastoral wellbeing. The College wishes to ensure all the support available is in place for your child and to achieve this we will be referring this matter to the Education Welfare Officer.

The Education Welfare Officer will be able to offer support to you and your child to encourage improved attendance.

Please do not hesitate to contact me to discuss this matter.

Yours sincerely,

Head of Preparatory School