



Mintlaw Academy

# **Registration and Attendance Policy and Procedures**

August 2011

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## Preface

Attendance is defined by the Scottish Government (2007) as “**participation in a programme of educational activities arranged and agreed by the school**”. The Scottish Government aims to promote good attendance at school. Absence from school, for whatever reason, disrupts learning. It is therefore important for Mintlaw Academy to have a good system for recording and monitoring attendance, in order that any instances of non-attendance are detected, and dealt with, promptly.

The Scottish Government (2007) states that **authorised absence** may be recorded when schools “**are satisfied by a legitimate reason, provided usually by the parent or self-certified (via a note, email or phone call) or may be provided by another service provider (via a note, appointment card or phone call)**.” Authorised absence may relate to:

- Illness (where no learning provision is made)
- Meetings prior to, and in, court
- Religious observance
- Bereavement
- Weddings or funerals of those close to the family
- Lack of transport due to inclement weather
- Family holidays (agreed by the school to be taken in exceptional circumstances)
- Arranged absence in relation to children in Gypsy/Traveller families.

The Scottish Government (2007) states that **unauthorised absence** may be recorded when schools receive “**no satisfactory reason for absence**”. This may include:

- Most family holidays
- Truancy, with or without the knowledge of the parent
- Parent-condoned absence where the school does not agree there is a satisfactory reason for absence
- All other unexplained absence is recorded as unauthorised absence unless a satisfactory explanation is subsequently provided.

**Non-attendance** is a complex issue with many contributing factors. Regardless of cause, it is important to minimise non-attendance, as this significantly increases the likelihood of young people leaving school and not going on to further education, employment or training.

Non-attendance can often highlight a pupil’s need for support (e.g. truancy may indicate an underlying concern about school, or a young carer may be regularly late in arriving to school after having taken care of the needs of the family at home). There are also concerns about the safety and wellbeing of children who are not attending school. **Child protection** is of paramount importance, and non-attendance may indicate a child is at risk. These possibilities highlight the importance of **analysing patterns of attendance, and non-attendance**, and discussing these patterns with the pupil and their family to find **ways of addressing** any underlying concerns or issues, thus **promoting attendance**. It

is everyone's responsibility to Get It Right For Every Child (**GIRFEC**), and this includes ensuring that solutions are built with and around families and young people.

The promotion of good attendance is of paramount importance in Mintlaw Academy. It is the **RESPONSIBILITY OF ALL STAFF** to communicate this to pupils, and inform relevant persons (i.e. Guidance teachers, year head) of any concerns they may have surrounding an individual pupil.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

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This policy provides guidance and essential information for all staff on the school's procedures for recording and monitoring the attendance of pupils. The Department for Children, Schools and Families (2008), noted that schools can make the biggest direct influence on raising levels of attendance, and Ofsted (2001) found that schools who have improved attendance consistently implemented an agreed whole school policy.

It is important that all teaching and office support staff are fully familiar with the content of this policy.

This policy outlines the procedure for daily registration, deals with monitoring attendance at individual lessons, and explains what to do in emergency situations. It also explains the roles and responsibilities of relevant members of staff and strategies for promoting attendance and responding to non-attendance.

Staff who currently do not have a Registration class should ensure they are familiar with this policy, as it may be necessary for them to occasionally cover for an absent colleague.

The accurate recording of attendance is an essential school routine that depends on teamwork. This teamwork involves - all Teaching Staff, Office Support Staff, Principal Teachers of Guidance and SMT.

The school must have accurate attendance information for the following reasons:

- Attendance at school is an important determinant of individual academic progress and social development.
- Schools have a legal duty to record attendance of pupils and to establish the reasons for any absences from school. Attendance information is collected by the authority and Scottish Government and is published nationally.
- Parents must be contacted if they do not provide a valid reason for all any absence from school that their child may have. Parents must also be contacted if we have any other concerns about a child's attendance at school.

- In the event of any emergency situations (e.g. fire evacuation or snowstorm closure) it is important that accurate information on pupil attendance is available. Safety considerations mean that we must be able to account for all pupils quickly and efficiently.

Consequences of inaccurate information:

If an error is made and a child is marked absent but is present

- Text messages are sent out automatically;
- Parents may be alarmed and justifiably upset
- Angry or annoyed parents telephone the School Office
- Valuable administration and clerical time is wasted
- There may well be legal implications

If an error is made and a child is marked present but is absent

- A child may be in danger and no one is aware
- There may be legal implications
- There may be possible child protection issues
- Inaccurate information is included in reports

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## **2. GUIDELINES FOR REGISTER TEACHERS**

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The daily registration process that takes place between 8.40 – 8.50 establishes core information on attendance for the day. This information is entered into the SEEMIS system and results in the production of the 'Daily Absence Sheet'. The daily registration process involves close collaboration between register teachers and office support staff.

The core tasks for register teachers are –

### **A. Daily tasks**

- Daily check and recording of attendance and late arrivals.
- Collection and chasing up of absence notes. Notes are put into the registration pack for return to the office.
- Communicating information to pupils by reading relevant notices from the daily bulletin to the class.

### **B. Weekly tasks**

- Act on information supplied by school office re unexplained absences: registration teachers should remind pupils to bring in absence notes from parents
- Attend assembly with Registration class.

### C. Occasional tasks

- Distribution of information to pupils e.g. parental letters, newsletters, medical forms, etc.
- Collection of returns from parents and/or from pupils e.g. Report Card acknowledgement slips, consent slips, etc. These are put into the registration pack for return to the office.
- Enabling Student Forum representatives to consult the class and to provide feedback following Forum meetings.

### Procedure for Daily Registration

#### Registration Procedures using SEEMIS

To record any absentees

- Click on *Applications*
- Click on *Attendance*
- Click on *Registration*
- Ensure the correct date is shown at top left hand corner and that the period is *Reg*
- Click on *Display Register* at top of screen
- Click on *TBC* at bottom of screen (and only TBC)
- Click on name/s of pupil/s absent
- If you find that you have marked the wrong pupil absent, click on *present* at the bottom of the screen and then on the relevant pupil's name
- **Wait until the end of registration and then click on *complete***
- Once completed, the reason for absence changes to capital letters.
- Log-out so that information added elsewhere can be viewed.

If a pupils is out of school on a visit/excursion, the office will put this information into Seemis prior to the event, if possible.

#### Registration Procedures on Assembly Days

- Paper copies of the class attendance sheet will be made available in the daily registration packs and delivered to the Assembly Room
- Pupils who are absent should be marked with a cross(x)
- The check sheet should be returned to the pack, which will be returned to the school office.

## **Absence note procedure**

- a) Parents should notify the school by 8.30am on the day of the absence by telephone, thereafter a text message will be sent to parents/carers of all children with unexplained absence. Office staff will update the attendance record as soon as possible after a telephone call or response to text message is received.
- b) If an explanation has not been provided on the day of absence the parents are expected to provide a note explaining the non-attendance. These notes should be collected by registration teachers and placed in the register pack
- c) Should a pupil fail to bring an absence note on return to school after absence they should be reminded by the tutor to bring one the next day.
- d) Every week, register teachers will be given a checksheet highlighting any unexplained absences from the previous week. Register teachers will remind pupils again to bring in an explanation note. At the end of the week, any unexplained absences from the previous week, will be forwarded by the office to the PTG for follow-up.
- e) Register teachers who have particular concerns about a pupil's absence notes or attendance pattern should raise these with the relevant PTG through OTB (Pastoral – General Concern)
- f) S6 pupils are expected to complete a self-notification of absence form, available from the school office, and hand it back to the office.

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## **3. GUIDELINES FOR ALL TEACHING STAFF**

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### **a) Checking attendance at individual class lessons and recording discrepancies**

- As good practice, class teachers must keep their own records for their classes. Absent pupils should be noted on the teacher's own record sheet. Record Sheets should be readily available for cover staff.
- Class teachers should check attendance against SEEMIS at the beginning of each lesson, and especially periods 4 and 6. No entries should be made on SEEMIS.
- The names of pupils who are absent, but not noted on SEEMIS, or who are present, but marked absent on SEEMIS, should be sent immediately via a pupil to the School Office using the 'Absence Discrepancy' form, stored in the holder at the door of each room. Communication with the school office should be as soon as possible after the discrepancy is noted and no later than the end of each lesson.
- If there are no discrepancy sheets to hand, the information can be relayed to the office by phone.

- Discrepancy slips are needed to keep an accurate record of attendance and to identify possible truancy.
- An absence sheet is produced each day and posted in the News section of OTB. Paper copies are available in the staffroom.
- Class teachers should use OTB referral if they have concerns about pupil's absences or lates.
- Should class teachers become aware that there might be a serious concern about a missing pupil they should alert the PT Guidance or the School office as soon as possible.

#### **b) Planned Absences, Appointments and Pupils on Reduce Timetables**

- Lists of pupils on school trips will be recorded on OTB.
- Pupil appointments are listed on the OTB bulletin with the code PER. If a pupil is missing after the time noted then a discrepancy slip should be sent to the School Office.
- Pupils who are on a reduced curriculum and who may not be at registration as they are not timetabled to start at the beginning of the day (marked with SCH code) will be noted in the bulletin alongside pupil appointments. Copies of timetables for pupils on reduced curriculum will be held by the school office, PTG, PT SFL and year head.

#### **c) Lateness at the start of the school day**

- Pupils who arrive at school after registration must report to the office to sign in late. Their lateness will be recorded in the Late Book and they will be given a Late Arrival Slip (see example – Appendix). Pupils should show this Late Slip to each teacher they have during the day. Teachers should sign the Late Slip in the space for the appropriate period.
- The office staff will record the late arrival in SEEMIS
- Pupils must hand the late slip into the office at the end of the school day or first thing the next morning at the latest
- PTGs will monitor lateness and contact home if a pattern emerges or if lateness is a problem.

#### **d) Lateness for individual lessons**

- Pupils who arrive late for class should be warned that this is not acceptable. They should be reminded that pupils are expected to arrive on time.
- Should a pupil be frequently late for class, the teacher should make a referral on OTB to the PT Guidance. Persistent lateness may lead to the issuing of a Pupil Report focusing on Attendance



#### **e) Late Explanation Sheet (Blue Slip)**

- Pupils should normally leave a class in time to reach their next lesson. However in some exceptional circumstances it may be necessary for a teacher to talk to a pupil at the end of a lesson and this may cause the pupil to be late for their next class. In such circumstances the pupil should be given a blue slip to explain the lateness to the next class teacher.
- All staff should aim to avoid such situations in order to minimise disruption to the work of a colleague's class. However there may be circumstances where this is unavoidable or necessary.

#### **e) Excused Lateness**

- Pupils who have an injury, or certain medical conditions, or are experiencing some social difficulties may be issued with a lift pass by their guidance teacher. Such pupils may leave the class a few minutes early but depending on their disability may arrive late. Pupils should produce a lift pass on request.

#### **f) Truancy**

- Pupils who are not in class but marked present at registration may be truanting from school. When discrepancy slips are sent to the office, the office will check with the relevant PTG, year head, Pupil Support (B19), and time-out cover teacher to ensure the pupils is not elsewhere. When it has been established that the pupil is missing without explanation, a truancy referral will be made on OTB
- After checking with PTG and year head, office staff will telephone parents
- PTG will investigate and, if truancy is confirmed, will forward the referral to the year head. If the absence is genuine, PTG will request deletion of the referral
- The pupil will be put on lunchtime detention on return to school and PTG will either telephone home, noting this on OTB, or issue a detention letter through OTB.

#### **g) Emergency situations**

- Pupils who become unwell during the school day or require First Aid treatment should be sent to the nursing assistant, with a pink slip, signed by the teacher. The nursing assistant will also sign the pink slip when the pupil is returned to class. This should be checked by the class teacher.

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#### **4 RESPONSE TO NON-ATTENDANCE**

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- PT Guidance will send an Absence enquiry letter (1) to the parent/carer should there be unexplained or ill-explained absences
- Office staff will produce up-to date percentage attendance sheets for a year group on weekly rota. These will be distributed to Guidance staff a week ahead for discussion at the weekly Guidance meeting. A request will be made to the School Office for individual absence reports for those pupils whose absences cause concern. Appropriate action will follow.
- Guidance staff and DHT will scrutinise the SEEMIS percentage attendance sheets. They will identify pupils with less than 90% attendance.
- Strategies will be discussed and actions agreed.

##### **a) Contact with parents/carers**

- If attendance is 90% or less, PT Guidance telephones the parent/carer about concerns and/or sends Unexplained Absence Letter 1
- If there is no improvement PT Guidance will alert the HoY to send Unexplained Absence Letter (2) along with the summary of attendance inviting the parent/carer to discuss and explain the absences and create an action plan to address the concerns.
- In the case of 30 or more absences, a letter must be sent to the QIO, to alert him/her to the issue
- If there is no improvement, PT Guidance and HoY will alert the Rector and Letter (3) is sent which invites the parent/carer to the school to discuss attendance. The parent/carer is informed that a referral will be made to the QIO to request intervention. An attendance summary and contact details of the parent/carer will be attached to the letter sent to the QIO.
- The QIO will send a statutory warning letter to the parent and interview the parent.
- All actions should be noted in the Pupil profile on OTB including no action.

##### **b) Strategies/ Support mechanisms to respond to attendance problems**

The following interventions may be used:

1. Referral to Home/School link worker.
2. Referral to Pupil Support worker/Family Support worker.
3. Informal consultation with Educational Psychologist.
4. Referral to Health, Social Work or other partner agencies.
5. Request IAF discussion.
6. Referral to the Reporter to the Children's Panel.
7. Referral to the Quality Improvement Officer (QIO)

For sporadic truancy, lunch time detention may be applied where pupils may be asked to catch up with work missed. Parents will be informed of the truancy as soon as it is identified.

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## **5 PROMOTING POSITIVE ATTENDANCE**

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The school needs to encourage pupils and parents that attendance in school is important for learning and that lack of continuity disrupts learning for the pupil, the rest of the class and the teacher.

Possible strategies:

- Reaffirming expectations. Share policies and procedures with parents, pupils and staff
- Informing partner agencies and other service providers of policies and procedures
- Requesting Parent Council help in trying to engage 'hard to reach' parents and in reaffirming positive attendance
- Parents should be encouraged to arrange appointments for their children outwith school hours whenever possible
- Encouraging parents to take holidays at the appropriate time but if it is necessary during term time to inform them of the need to write to the Rector requesting permission
- Raising the profile of good attendance – rewards for improving attendance through OTB points/letters home praising pupils and parents. At the end of each term pupils may receive praise for improved or very good attendance through the positive referral system. A child's attendance may be acknowledged by the Head of Year or Guidance Teacher with information sent to parents
- Setting up 'Action Plans' for those with poor attendance with targets which are realistic, and weekly attendance reports.