

PORTLAND HIGH SCHOOL

'Care, Support and Respect'



Attendance Policy

Mission Statement

At Portland High School, we are committed to the principle that all children have a right to an education which recognises their learning, emotional and social needs.

We aim to establish and develop the foundations for each pupil's life beyond school, through maximising attainment and celebrating achievement.

We aim to do so through an ethos of care support and respect.

Introduction

Portland High School is committed to providing a full and efficient educational experience to all its pupils. We believe that if pupils are to benefit from education, good attendance is crucial. This mirrors the opinion of the Scottish Government: “Attending and taking part in learning – wherever learning takes place – is fundamental to making sure that our young people become successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens.”

We give a high priority to making sure that parents, carers and pupils understand the importance of regular attendance. It is made clear during admission procedures and meetings and is reinforced throughout the school year through tracking attendance and quickly addressing any concerns we may have.

We will organise and do all we can to ensure maximum attendance for all pupils.

This policy document builds on our statements on Attendance that you may have read in our School Handbook.

School Attendance and the Law¹

It is important to remember that:

- We accept it is our responsibility to provide our pupils with as much support as we can to help them get to school and to ensure that when they are there they are happy, safe and learning.
- Parents and carers are legally responsible for making sure that their child is educated. Once enrolled in a school, the law says the child must attend that school unless the parent or carer has permission from the education authority to withdraw your child.
- If a parent or carer finds that every effort has been made to resolve things with their child's school but that efforts have been unsuccessful at agreeing a way forward, they can contact the Director of Education at your Local Authority who will be best placed to respond.

For many of our pupils, problems in mainstream education often manifest in a decline in attendance and we are generally very successful in redressing this in considering our pupils' situations and needs.

We do this in many ways, and these are outlined in this document.

¹ Information taken from 'A guide for parents about school attendance', Scottish Government, 2010

Encouraging Attendance

At Portland we actively encourage attendance, and aim to pre-empt absence in the following ways:

- **Individual Attendance Targets** – these targets are made in discussion with pupils, and will be made in collaboration with an appropriate member of staff who may be a Mentor Teacher or a member of the Management Team.
- **Greater Parental Involvement** – when there are concerns, it is our preferred option to engage with parents/carers to share and discuss these. This will often include home visits.
- **Home Visits** (where appropriate) – when one of our young people is finding it difficult to attend, a home visit – arranged or informal – may take place. This allows Mentor Teachers and/or members of the Management Team to engage with parent/carer and pupil to discuss returning to school. Such visits are often fruitful.
- **Mentor Time Activities** – Reflection Logs are often completed during Mentor Time and as well as calling for self-evaluation of curricular engagement and success, attendance is also a focus and is recorded there.
- **Incentives** – in encouraging young people to attend school, we have introduced a number of practices and rewards that promote their engagement. These include Fab Friday Awards, Mentor Trips and Lunchtime Arrangements that support social holism.
- **Bespoke Timetabling** – in providing curricular and vocational experiences tailored to pupils' individual aspirations and skills we hope that our young people will want to engage with us. We offer off-campus learning experiences at Coatbridge High School, various college courses, LAGTA training, work experience in a local nursery for Child Care and in-house vocational experiences as they arise.

Permitted Absences

Children are permitted to be off school if:

- They are ill.
- They are attending a doctor or hospital appointment.
- They are going to a meeting about a Children's Hearing or court, or if they are going to a Children's Hearing, care review or court.
- If they are involved in an activity and the school agrees in advance.
- Someone close to the child has died.
- There is a crisis or serious difficulty at home or in the family.
- They are going to a religious ceremony or a wedding of someone very close to them.
- They are from a Gypsy/Traveller family and while you go travelling contact is maintained with the child's teacher.
- Their family is returning to a country of origin for cultural reasons or to care for a relative. As long as the school has been informed of the reason and is satisfied that this is a valid reason, these would be called authorised absences.

If it is known that a child will be off school, for example if they have an appointment or important meeting to attend, it is important to inform the school in advance.

Family Holidays

Schools will not normally give a family permission to take pupils out of school for holidays during term-time. This means that if your child is off school because you are away on holiday the school will record this as an unauthorised absence

There are some circumstances where permission might be given for a holiday during term-time. This would include when:

- A family needs time together to recover from distress.
- A family holiday is restricted to term-time because of the parent's job (for example a parent is in the armed services or emergency services).
- There are other circumstances considered to be exceptional.

Absence Monitoring

Within Portland high the monitoring of pupil attendance is carried out collaboratively by Mentor Teachers, the Principal Teacher (Health & Wellbeing), with support from the Depute Head Teacher and the Head Teacher.

Parents/carers are expected to contact the school to explain any absence or circumstances leading to non-attendance. (Note: acceptable reasons for absence can be found below.)

A daily register is kept, and is taken during Breakfast/Nurture Time every morning.

Mentor Teachers discuss absences with pupils on their return from school, unless there are reasons that demand sensitivity when raising the subject. Mentor Teachers (and colleagues, middle and senior management) are mindful to watch for patterns in absence.

In the event of repeated, prolonged or unexplained absences, school staff will contact parents/carers to discuss any situations or problems that have led to non-attendance.

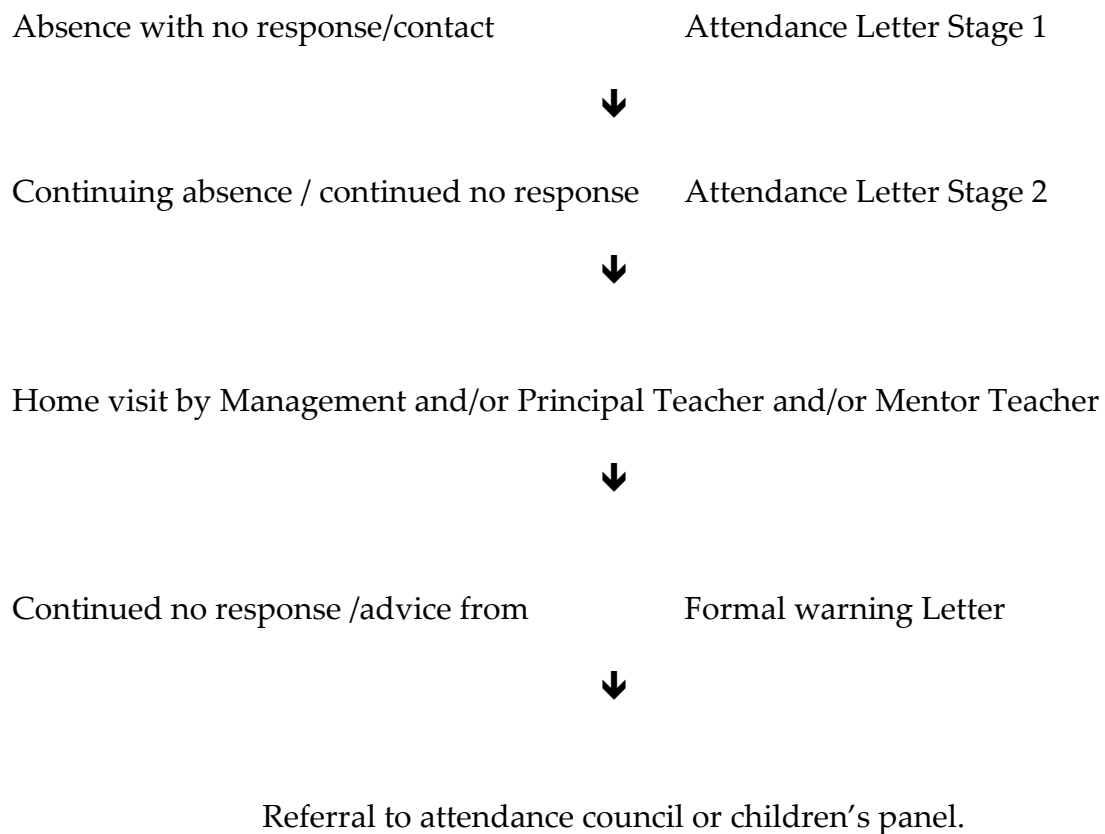
If matters regarding attendance at school cause serious concerns, the school may make one or more of several responses including: contacting the Attendance Officer; issuing a formal warning Letter; referral to Attendance Council or Children's Panel Attendance officer.

At each stage progress will be noted on Pastoral notes and discussion will take place at management team meeting in the morning, at teachers' meetings or both.

It is always our intention to act quickly in attendance matters, and most preferably in maintaining supportive dialogue between school and home.

This outlines our protocol for addressing attendance concerns, in the event of unexplained absence(s).

Failure to respond or an unsatisfactory response will be highlighted at Management Meeting (and, if appropriate, with Mentor Teacher) before the following process is initiated:



At each stage PT's will note progress on Pastoral notes and discussion will take place at management team meeting in the morning.