Pupil Attendance Policy

1. Purpose

At Portavogie Primary School, we want every child to feel safe, welcome and able to enjoy school. Regular attendance helps children settle into routines, build friendships and make progress in their learning. Our school motto, “Nurturing Each Child’s Unique Potential”, is reflected in the way we encourage attendance and support families when difficulties arise.

We recognise that absence may be linked to illness, family circumstances, additional needs or emotional distress. Our approach is to identify concerns early, listen carefully and work with parents and children to find a way forward. This policy applies to pupils in P1 to P7. We also encourage good attendance in Nursery, while recognising that compulsory school attendance duties depend on a child’s age.

2. Responsibilities

The principal has overall responsibility for monitoring attendance and responding to concerns. Class teachers record attendance at the start of the morning and afternoon sessions and share concerns about absence or punctuality with the principal. The executive officer will assist with attendance records, communication and follow-up.

The Board of Governors receives regular attendance information, considers patterns and supports the school in promoting attendance and addressing barriers. Information about individual children is handled confidentially.

Parents and carers are expected to ensure that children of compulsory school age attend regularly, arrive on time and are ready for school. They should tell the school promptly about absence or any difficulty that may be affecting attendance. Children will be encouraged, in an age-appropriate way, to speak to an adult if something is making school difficult for them.

3. Recording attendance and reporting absence

The school day begins at 9.00 am. Attendance is recorded twice daily using Bromcom and the attendance and absence codes set out in the current Department of Education guidance, including Circular 2026/15 and the guidance for schools using Bromcom. Lateness is recorded accurately according to whether registration is still open and the circumstances of the late arrival.

- Parents should contact the school on the first morning of absence, explaining the reason and, where possible, how long the child is likely to be absent.
- Parents should keep the school informed during a prolonged absence and give advance notice of medical or dental appointments where possible.
- Where no reason has been received, the school will seek clarification promptly. Unexplained absence may be followed up that day, particularly where there is a safeguarding concern.

- Reasons for absence will be established and recorded as soon as possible and followed up within five school days, as required by Department of Education guidance. A written explanation or absence form may be requested.

If a child needs to leave during the school day, a parent or authorised adult must report to the school office and follow the school's collection arrangements. Attendance records will be updated promptly and checked for accuracy.

4. Monitoring and responding to concerns

The principal reviews attendance information regularly, including overall levels, repeated absence, patterns of missed days and punctuality. Concerns may be raised at any stage; the school will not wait for attendance to fall below a particular percentage before offering support.

When attendance becomes a concern, the class teacher and Principal will consider the circumstances and, where appropriate, contact parents to discuss what may be preventing the child from attending. We will listen to the child's views, agree practical next steps, keep a brief record of support offered and review whether it is helping.

The principal will seek advice from the school's link Education Welfare Officer (EWO) when there is a concerning pattern of absence or attendance falls below 85%. Support may be offered before a formal referral, including contact with families, meetings with parents and pupils, attendance clinics, advice on coding and help to agree an attendance support plan. The SENCO or other services may also be involved where appropriate. All potential referrals to the Education Welfare Service (EWS) will be discussed with the link EWO before they are submitted, and parents will be informed if a referral is made.

5. Emotionally Based School Non-Attendance (EBSNA)

EBSNA describes difficulty attending school linked to emotional distress. It is not a medical diagnosis. A child may experience anxiety, upset at separation, physical symptoms, or increasing difficulty coming to school. Sometimes there is a clear cause; sometimes the difficulties develop gradually.

Where EBSNA may be a factor, we will work sensitively with the child and parents to understand the barriers to attendance. We will consider relationships, friendships, bullying concerns, the classroom environment, sensory needs, additional learning needs, changes at home and other relevant factors. The SENCO and appropriate support services may be involved.

Support will be planned around the individual child. Depending on the circumstances, this could include a trusted adult at arrival, a quieter start to the day, reassurance and regular check-ins, adjustments to routines, or a carefully planned return to school. We will agree manageable steps with parents, review progress and keep the child's sense of safety and belonging at the centre of the plan.

Absence will continue to be recorded accurately. Where appropriate, the current EBSNA attendance code (I4) will be used and brief, factual notes kept to support planning. The Department of Education recommends that schools provide their EWO with monthly

information about the number of pupils recorded with I4; this is for information and is not itself a referral. Significant attendance or safeguarding concerns will still be followed up.

6. Exceptional short-term flexible timetables

In exceptional circumstances, a temporary flexible timetable may be considered for a pupil with EBSNA, welfare needs or a long-term health condition, in line with DE Circular 2026/15. This will not be used as a response to misbehaviour or as a routine alternative to full-time education.

Any arrangement will be agreed with parents and, where appropriate, relevant professionals. It will have a clear reason, start and review dates, agreed targets and a plan towards returning to full-time attendance. The principal will keep the Board of Governors informed as required. The appropriate attendance code will be used for sessions not attended.

7. Term-time absence and safeguarding

Parents should arrange appointments outside school hours where possible. Family holidays during term time are discouraged and will be recorded as unauthorised absence in accordance with Department of Education guidance. Other absences will be considered and coded according to the circumstances and the current guidance.

Attendance is also a safeguarding matter. If a child's whereabouts or welfare cannot be established, or if there are concerns about their safety, the school will follow its safeguarding and child protection procedures without delay. Children will not be removed from the school register except in accordance with the proper statutory process, including use of the SA1 form where required.

8. Review and approval

This policy will be shared with staff and parents, considered by the Board of Governors and reviewed regularly, or sooner if Department of Education or EA guidance changes.