



Pupil Attendance Policy

St. John's Primary School, Coleraine

Principal: Mrs H. McDonnell

Designated Teacher of Child Protection: Miss A. McNicholl

Chair of the Board of Governors: Mr L. McQuillan

Child Protection Governor: Mr H. McGill

Work hard



Give everything a try



Enjoy the rewards

Introduction

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.

St. John's Primary School strive to promote an ethos and culture which encourages good attendance and where each pupil will feel valued and secure.

This policy applies to all children registered in St. John's Primary School and is made available to all parents/carers and relevant professionals through the school website or a hard copy can be obtained from the school office.

This Pupil Attendance Policy has been written to adhere to the relevant legislation and best practice advice; Education & Libraries Order 1986, Children's Order 1995, Latest DE Circular 2018/02 – Attendance Guidance and Absence Recording by Schools.

Parents/Carers have legal responsibility for ensuring their child's good attendance. The Principal and Governors in St. John's work in partnership with parents and other professionals and agencies to support pupils and their families to achieve good attendance. Procedures within this policy are followed to ensure good attendance.

Aims

1. To improve and maintain the overall attendance of pupils at St. John's Primary School through the provision of a warm and welcoming atmosphere where pupils feel safe, secure and valued. The positive ethos ensures that good attendance and punctuality are expected as the norm and valued by school.
2. To develop a framework that defines roles and responsibilities in relation to attendance, ensuring that all staff, Governors, parents and pupils know the clear actions required to promote good attendance and how to promptly address poor punctuality and absences.
3. To provide advice, support and guidance to parents/guardians and pupils.
4. To promote good relationships with the Education Welfare Service and other relevant outside agencies.

Definitions

Authorised absence

- An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or carer. For example, if a child has been unwell and the parent telephones the school to explain the absence and a note of explanation provided.
- Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents do not have this authority. Consequently, not all absences supported by parents will be classified as authorised.

Unauthorised absence

- An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the school.
- Therefore, the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent.

Absence Procedures

To support good attendance, our school will comply with the following measures:

- To maintain appropriate registration processes.
- To maintain appropriate attendance data.
- To communicate clearly the attendance procedures and expectations to all staff, governors, parents and pupils.
- To have consistent and systematic daily records which give detail of any absence and lateness.
- To follow up absences and persistent lateness if parents/carers have not communicated with the school.
 - Attendance falls below 90% - Parents will be informed that the school is monitoring the attendance and parents will be made aware that if attendance falls below 85%, the Principal has a statutory obligation to inform the Education Welfare Officer
 - Attendance is below 85% - Principal will make a referral to the EWO and send a letter home.
- To strongly discourage unnecessary absence through holidays taken during term time.
- To work with parents to improve individual pupil attendance and punctuality
- To refer to the Educational Welfare Service, any child whose attendance causes concern and where parents/carers have not responded to school initiatives to improve.
- To report attendance statistics to Education Authority and Department of Education when requested.
- All staff should be aware that they must raise any attendance or punctuality concerns with the Principal.
- Establish a pattern of monitoring attendance and ensure consistency in recognising achievement and dealing with difficulties.
- Recognise the key role of all staff, but especially class teachers, in promoting good attendance.
- Holiday lists for the next academic year communicated to parents at the school's earliest convenience.
 - To enable our school to accurately record and monitor attendance in a consistent way we will adhere to the guidance provided in the Department of Education Circular 2018/02, which can be found online.

Roles and Responsibilities

Role of Governors

The Board of Governors provide support by reviewing school attendance figures and targets and ensuring it is placed as an agenda item at each meeting.

Further information on the role of Governors in monitoring attendance can be viewed at:

<http://www.esags.tv/governor-support/pupil-attendance/>

Role of Principal

- Overall monitoring of school attendance
- Monitor trends in authorised and unauthorised absence
- To contact families where concerns are raised about absence, including arranging meetings to discuss attendance issues
- Monitor individual attendance where concerns have been raised
- Issue standard letters regarding attendance
- Make referrals to Education Welfare Service in line with DE guidelines (attendance below 85% should always be referred)
- Provide reports and background discussion with the school's Education Welfare Officer
- Liaise with other professionals to determine potential sources of difficulties and reasons for absence

Role of Class Teacher

- Keep an overview of class and individual attendance looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/carers
- Inform relevant staff where there are concerns and act upon them by providing background information to support referrals
- Monitor follow-up, once actions have been initiated to correct attendance concerns
- Emphasise with their class, the importance of good attendance and promptness
- Follow up absence with immediate requests for explanation which should be noted within the register
- Discuss attendance issues with parents when required

- On the third day of a pupil absence with no explanation, make a phone call to seek a reason for the child's absence

Role of Senior Clerical Officer

- Collate and record registration and attendance information.
- Take and record messages from parents regarding absence and communicate the information to the class teacher
- Ensure the Absence/Late is recorded on SIMS
- In conjunction with the Principal/ class teacher, contact parents of absent children where no contact has been made within three days.
- Record details of children who arrive late or go home early. Ensure parents complete the 'Early collection note' when collecting a child early from school.

Role of Parents

Parents have a legal responsibility to ensure that their child attends school (Article 45(1) of The Education and Libraries (NI) Order 1986)

- Ensure that their child attends regularly and punctually unless prevented from doing so by illness.
- Contact the school office on the first morning of absence and provide a written note on return to school providing an explanation of the absence (attached proforma to be used).
- Complete an 'Early Collection Note' when collecting a child early from school.
- As much as possible plan medical appointments outside of school times. Otherwise inform the school in advance of any medical appointments that will take place during the school day. The explanation will enable absence to be recorded as a medical absence.
- Talk to the school as soon as possible about any child's reluctance to come to school so that problems can be quickly identified and dealt with.
- Promote positive bedtime and morning routines, enabling their child to get sufficient sleep and a breakfast before coming to school to provide their body with enough energy to learn.
- Arrive promptly to school each morning (between 8.50-9am)

Role of Pupils

Each pupil at St. John's Primary School must attend school punctually and regularly. If you have been absent from school, a written note from a parent/guardian must be provided to your teacher when you return.

Family holidays during Term Time

St. John's Primary School discourages holidays during term time due to the impact they have on pupils' learning. Family holidays taken during term time will be categorised as an unauthorised absence. Only in exceptional circumstances will a holiday be authorised.

Procedure for Addressing Attendance Concerns

Initially concerns about attendance are raised with parents via verbal communication by either the class teacher or the Principal. In the case of persistent unexplained absences or where the child's absence falls below 90%, a letter will be sent home. There will be opportunities for the parent/carer to discuss reasons for absence and support to be given by the school with the aim to improve attendance. Where a child's attendance record does not improve over a period of time then the school has a statutory duty to make a referral to the Educational Welfare Service. This must happen when the child's attendance falls below 85%

The EWS is a statutory service within the Education Authority. They carry out audits of attendance, necessitating absences to be explained by parents to the school. The EWS is governed by the Education and Libraries Order 1986 where by

Every child of 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.

The Education Welfare Service (EWS) may conduct a home visit and complete an initial assessment. Subsequent intervention will depend on the individual assessment of each case. Intervention may include a referral to outside agencies to support the pupil and/or family. Additionally, individual pieces of work may be completed with the pupil. The EWS will regularly meet with parents and pupil individually or at meetings until attendance is improved and sustained.

Early intervention

Early intervention is the best way; therefore, it is crucial when any of the following signs emerge you approach the school;

- Refusal to get out of the taxi/car/bus/bed
- Anxious
- Scared
- Feeling overwhelmed socially or academically
- Low mood/self- esteem.
- Any complaints about not being able to do the work (at home or school).
- Friendship issues
- Anti-social behaviour impacting on school life.
- Any issue at home can be shared confidentially to enable school to understand any temporary emotional response to this change, this may include diagnosis of an illness (mentally or physically), parental separation etc.

By sharing this intervention with the appropriate staff member, it will enable a non-delayed supportive response and help to minimise effect on the pupil's school career.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Miss School = Miss Out (breakdown of %)

Appendix 2: Absence Note & Early Collection Note

Monitoring and Reviewing the Implementation of this policy.

Responsibility rests with the Governors to ensure that this policy is reviewed on a regular basis and delivered by the Principal to staff on an annual basis.

Ratified by Governors – May 2019

Every Day Counts

Help reach you full potential by raising your attendance.

Did you know that every single day you are absent from school equals a day of learning lost?

What does my attendance mean?

100%	0 days missed	Excellent
95%	9 Days absence 1 week & 4 days of learning missed	Satisfactory
90%	19 Days absence 3 weeks & 4 days of learning missed	Poor
85%	28 days of absence 5 weeks & 3 days of learning missed	Very Poor
80%	38 days of absence 7 weeks and 3 days of learning missed	Unacceptable
75%	46 days of absence	Unacceptable

	9 weeks & 1 day of learning missed	
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*MISS SCHOOL = MISS OUT (DE, December 2016)

APPENDIX 1

	ABSENCE NOTE
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin: 10px auto; width: 80%;"> <p>To be given to your child's teacher on the day your child returns to school following any absence.</p> </div>	
<p>Pupil's Name: _____ Class: _____</p>	
<p>Date of Absence: From _____ to _____ No. of days _____</p>	
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p>REASON FOR ABSENCE:</p> </div>	
<p>Signed Parent/Guardian: _____ Date: _____</p>	

	EARLY COLLECTION NOTE
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin: 10px auto; width: 80%;"> <p>To be completed in advance of child being collected early from school.</p> </div>	
<p>Pupil's Name: _____ Class: _____</p>	
<p>Date: _____ Time: _____</p>	
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> <p>REASON FOR EARLY COLLECTION:</p> </div>	
<p>Signed Parent/Guardian: _____ Date: _____</p>	

APPENDIX 2