



Policy & Procedures For Management of Pupil Attendance

AIMS

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.

We aim to ensure that all our pupils will want to attend school.

We believe that this is best achieved by providing a happy, caring atmosphere, in which children can grow, mature and realise their full potential.

We also believe that encouraging good attendance will help children to develop self-confidence, independence, self-discipline and a sense of responsibility for themselves.

Good attendance habits established at a young age will prepare our pupils for the future opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life.

This policy aims to:

- Maintain and improve the overall attendance of pupils at St. Mary's Primary school;
- Develop a framework that defines roles and responsibilities in relation to attendance;
- Provide advice, support and guidance to parents/guardians and pupils;
- Promote good relationships with the Education Welfare Service.

THE MANAGEMENT OF ATTENDANCE

Responsibilities of the School

The Principal has overall responsibility for school attendance.

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.

Parents and pupils can expect the following from school:

- Regular, efficient and accurate recording of attendance.
- Early contact with parents when a pupil fails to attend school without providing good reason.
- Immediate and confidential action on any problem notified to us. (Confidential means that the member of staff notified will not disclose that information to

anybody, other than the principal, without the consent of the student or their parent).

- Recognition and reward for good attendance.
- An annual summary of the child's attendance

Responsibilities of Parents

The duty of a parent, in relation to the education of their children, is found in the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986 and says:

"The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him/her to receive efficient full-time education suitable to his/her age ability and aptitude, and to any special educational needs he/she may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise."

If a child is reluctant to attend, the school should be contacted to allow any issues to be quickly addressed. A reluctance to attend, leading to an absence supported by a parent, can give the impression that attendance does not matter and may lead to the development of a poor pattern of attendance.

We expect the following from parents:

- To ensure their children attend school regularly and punctually.
- To ensure that their children arrive in school well prepared for the school day, with all necessary items and to check that homework has been completed.
- To contact the school on the first day of their child's absence giving the reasons and expected duration of the absence.
- To provide us with a written note or email explaining the absence on the day that the pupil returns to school. (A note does not automatically ensure an authorised absence.)
- To contact the school in confidence whenever any problem occurs that may affect their child's performance in school.

Authorised Absence – where the school has been consulted and can approve the absence.

Examples include:

- Illness;
- Unavoidable medical/dental appointments during school hours;
- Bereavement
- Exceptional family circumstances

Unauthorised Absence – where the school cannot approve the absence.

Examples might include:

- Family holiday (except in exceptional circumstances)
- Pupil is kept off school unnecessarily
- When no written reason is provided
- Pupils who arrive at school after the morning register has been closed and are too late to get a mark for the morning session (9.30am)

Punctuality

The school opens at 8:45am and lessons begin at 9am. Pupils who are frequently late disrupt their own education and that of others in their class. The morning register remains open until 9.30am. Pupils who come to school after this time without prior arrangement or without approved reason will be marked absent for the morning session and this will appear as an unauthorised absence on their school record.

Responsibilities of Pupils

At St. Mary's Primary School, we encourage children to take increasing responsibility for themselves.

We expect the following from all our pupils:

- That they attend school regularly.
- That they will arrive on time and be appropriately prepared for the day.
- That they will tell a member of staff about any problem or reason that may prevent them from attending school.

Responsibilities of Governors

The Board of Governors has the ultimate responsibility for school attendance but on a day-to-day basis this is delegated to the Principal.

The Board of Governors has a responsibility to monitor school attendance and the effectiveness of the school's Attendance Policy and Procedures.

The Principal reports to Governors on these matters.

MONITORING ATTENDANCE

The daily register is completed by the class teacher at the beginning of morning and afternoon sessions.

This information is then recorded electronically on the Department of Education's system. Attendance levels are also monitored on an individual and a whole school basis.

Rewarding Good Attendance & Punctuality

We believe that it is important that pupils realise that good attendance and punctuality is acknowledged.

All pupils who have 100% attendance in a term will receive a certificate of attendance which can form part of their Record of Achievement.

Procedures for Dealing with Poor Attendance of Punctuality

Where the class teacher has concerns about the level or pattern of a pupil's attendance they are discussed with the Principal.

Where deemed appropriate the Principal will manage the absenteeism using the following procedures:

1. Contact the family and arrange an appointment to discuss the issue in order to agree a strategy for improving attendance.
2. Should such contact fail to resolve the issue the school may refer the matter to the Educational Welfare Service for additional direction and support.
3. As a normal rule any pupil whose attendance falls below 85% during the school year will be investigated by the Educational Welfare Service.

Parents may also seek advice and direction from the Educational Welfare Service.

The local Education Welfare Office is at:

Sandelford Special School,
4 Rugby Avenue
Coleraine
BT52 1HJ
Tel. 02870357290

A failure by parents to ensure their child's attendance can ultimately lead to prosecution.

EVALUATION

The effectiveness of this policy and our procedures in monitoring and improving attendance levels is evaluated in a number of ways:

- Parents are given a summary of their child's attendance as part of the End of Year Report.
- The Governing Body monitor the effectiveness of this policy through Principal's reports on attendance at Governing Body meetings.

- The annual attendance figures are published in the Governors Annual Report.
- An officer from the Education Welfare Service regularly monitors attendance levels on a whole school and individual basis.
- The Education Authority receives information on pupil attendance as part of the annual audit.
- The Department of Education monitor the school's attendance statistics as part of the Annual School Census.

SPECIFIC RESPONSIBILITY

It is the responsibility of the Principal to:

- Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of this policy as part of the annual review;
- Ensure that each member of staff receives the necessary training and support to enable them to carry out their responsibilities at induction and as part of ongoing INSET.

This Attendance Policy has been prepared in consultation with school staff.

Adopted by the Board of Governors of St. Mary's Primary School at a meeting held on

6th February 2023

Signed:  Reviewed: November 2024

(Chair of governors)

Signed:  Reviewed: November 2026

(Chair of governors)

Signed: Next Review: November 2028

I/We have read and agree with the Attendance Policy of St. Mary's Primary School.

Signed

Print Name..... Date.....

Signed

Print Name.....Date.....