



Attendance Policy

ATTEND TODAY
ACHIEVE TOMORROW



October 2019

Vision Statement:

In our school:

'We work together, We play together, We pray together.'

Mission Statement

In St Patrick's we aim to provide an education rooted in the Catholic Faith that helps everyone reach their full potential. We endeavour to provide our pupils with the opportunity to obtain the skills necessary for their futures. We will provide them with a safe, caring and happy school in which they are all valued as individuals and where their academic, emotional, physical and spiritual needs are nurtured in a family atmosphere.

Aims:

- A broad and balanced curriculum which will provide learning opportunities for each young person to develop as:
 1. an individual
 2. a contributor to society; and
 3. a contributor to the economy and the environment.
- An awareness of his/her own talents, skills and abilities
- A lively and enquiring mind, the ability to question and make informed decisions
- A love of learning, a knowledge of how to learn and the motivation to produce his/her best
- Effective communication between all members of the school community
- An awareness of the immediate environment and an attitude which leads to self-discipline, independence, courtesy, good manners and respect for everyone
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- A knowledge and understanding of the wider world in which we live, of the interdependence of individuals, groups and nations and a tolerance of other religions and ways of life.

The staff, pupils, parents and governors are fully committed to the aims of St Patrick's and have a strong sense of loyalty to the school. Parents and staff work well together in partnership in the children's education. Parents are welcome in school and are given clear information about their children's progress, the school's curriculum and the day-to-day organisation of the school. Parents' views are taken into account in the School Development Plan.

PUPIL ATTENDANCE POLICY

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 can reach their potential.

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

Aims

1. To improve/maintain the overall attendance of pupils at St Patrick's Primary School.
2. To develop a framework that defines roles and responsibilities in relation to attendance.
3. To provide advice, support and guidance to parents/guardians and pupils.
4. To promote good relationships with the Education Welfare Service.

Role of the School

The school Principal has overall responsibility for school attendance. Staff members should bring any concerns regarding school attendance to his/her attention.

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

Teaching staff regularly monitor the attendance and punctuality of pupils by ensuring that attendance is accurately recorded each morning. This information is passed to school secretary who ensures data is recorded using SIMS.

St Patrick's Primary School is committed to working with parents/guardians to encourage regular and punctual attendance. It is the school's responsibility to:

- ✓ Regularly, efficiently and accurately record attendance
- ✓ Make contact with parents/guardians when a pupil fails to attend school without good reason
- ✓ Act upon any problem that is affecting attendance within school
- ✓ Recognise and reward good attendance
- ✓ Produce an annual summary of school attendance data

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's Circular 2015/02, which can be found at the following link:
<http://www.deni.gov.uk/index/support-and-development-2/school-attendance/recording-pupil-absences.htm>

Role of Parents and Guardians

Parents and guardians have a legal duty to ensure their child of compulsory school age shall receive efficient full time education suitable to age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs they may have, either by regular school attendance or otherwise.

If a child is registered in school, the parent/guardian has a legal duty to ensure that they regularly attend that school.

It is a parent's/guardian's responsibility to inform the school of the reason for a pupil's absence on the first day of absence. **This should be confirmed with a written note when the pupil returns to school.** If the absence is likely to be prolonged, this information should be provided to enable the school to assist with homework or any other necessary arrangements which may be required.

Pupils are expected to be in school by 9.00am for registration and the beginning of class. It is the responsibility of parents/guardians to ensure that their child is punctual. Lateness is recorded at registration and on the child's attendance record.

If a child appears reluctant to attend school the parents/guardians are asked to discuss the matter promptly with the class teacher or Principal to ensure that both the parents/guardians and the child receive maximum support to ensure attendance is not affected.

Role of Pupils

All pupils at St Patrick's must attend school punctually and regularly. If a child is absent from school, the parents/guardians are asked to provide information to the school to explain the absence.

We expect the following from our pupils:

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

Absence Procedures

All parents/guardians are required to inform the school staff about reasons for absence, including short term absences.

A record of each child's attendance will be retained using the Attendance Codes and the guidance set out in **DE Circular 2015/02**. Each child's overall attendance percentage will be included on end of year reports to Parents.

Parents are required to advise the school on the first morning of a child's absence by telephoning the school office. Parents should, as far as possible, provide an estimate of the likely duration of absence. If an absence is likely to be prolonged, parents should maintain regular contact with the school throughout the duration of the absence so that the school can assist with homework or any other necessary arrangements which may be required.

If children are to be absent from school for a portion of the day after registration parents/guardians should report to the school office/Principal to request that their child is released from class into their care. The class teacher should be given as much advance notice as possible of any appointments arranged for during the school day.

If children are attending appointments in the morning and consequently miss registration, their parents/carers should return them to school after the appointment. The class teacher should be given as much notice of these appointments as possible so that the appropriate code is used in the attendance register.

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

Punctuality

The school day begins promptly at 9am. Pupils who are frequently late disrupt their own education and that of others in their class. Pupils who are late for school (after 9:15am) 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. This can have a severe impact upon a child's overall attendance record.

Family holidays during Term Time

St Patrick's Primary School discourages holidays during term time due to the detrimental impact they have on pupils' learning. Family holidays taken during term time will be categorised as an unauthorised absence.

Procedures for Managing Attendance

The daily register is completed by the class teacher at the beginning of each morning session.

This information is then recorded electronically on the School Information Management System (SIMS). At this time attendance levels are also monitored on an individual and a whole school basis.

Where a child's attendance falls below 90% letters will be sent home to parents highlighting the need for better attendance.

Rewarding Good Attendance and Punctuality

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

All pupils who have 98% attendance will receive a certificate of attendance.

Good attendance each month will also be recognised at school assemblies.

Where pupils make a significant improvement in these areas, or achieve individual targets as agreed by the school and family, they will receive a certificate of achievement as part of our reward system.

Procedures for dealing with Poor Attendance or 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. Letter to family with attendance details for that term in comparison to overall school attendance percentage (Appendix 1)
2. Contact the family and arrange an appointment to discuss the issue in order to agree a strategy for improving attendance.
3. Should such contact fail to resolve the issue the school may refer the matter to the Educational Welfare Service for additional direction and support.

Parents will be advised if a referral to the Education Welfare Service will ensue if no improvement has been made.

The Principal will meet with the Education Welfare Officer each term and together they will review the attendance of any child falling below 88%. At the review the Principal and the EWO will determine the next steps which should be taken which could include making a referral to the Education Welfare Service for any child about whom there is a significant concern.

After a referral has been made, the Education Welfare Service will engage with the family in a supportive way in order to improve the child's attendance.

This Attendance Policy has been prepared in consultation with school staff, Governors and parents.

This policy was adopted a Board of Governors meeting held on
Tuesday 3rd December 2019

Signed: M McGrath Principal

Signed: D Higgins Chairperson

Date: 03-12-2019

Review date: Autumn Term 2020/2021

Appendix 1

Dear Parents

Each term we are visited by the local Education & Welfare Officer (EWO). They analyse our attendance figures and then take a list of those children with lower than normal attendance. We are then obliged to write out to the parents of those children asking for an improvement.

There are a number of valid reasons that can affect attendance such as illness, external music/speech & drama exams, performances and medical appointments. There are also a number of reasons that are not valid and unfortunately affect not only the attendance rates of individual pupils, but also our overall school figures. These include:

- No written explanation – if a child does not return a note to explain an absence, we must record this as an unexplained absence.
- Late – registers are kept open until 9:10am even though school begins at 9am. If a child arrives after 9:15am they are recorded as, 'Late after registration,' which is absent in our registers. This can have a dramatic effect on their attendance figures.
- Holidays – these must be recorded as Unauthorised absence.

While we appreciate there may be times when notes are forgotten, or people may be running late, there are procedures we must follow in school regarding attendance. As part of our school's attendance procedures we send letters out after the end of each term to anyone who has an attendance rate below 90%.

According to our records, ** has an attendance rate of **. **% for the first term. Our school attendance rate for the same period is **%. This includes lateness after registration closes in the morning.***

The attendance percentages contained below show the number of days a pupil will be absent from school during a full academic year. One day missed can have an impact upon a child's progress as the dynamics of a classroom, the direction of the teacher, or the discussion with peers cannot be easily replicated when 'catching up.' If your child has 90% or below attendance during the last term, it is important that their attendance improves during the rest of the school year.

95% = 9 school days absent, or nearly 2 full weeks

90% = 18 school days absent, or nearly a full month

85% = 28 school days absent

80% = 37 school days absent

75% = 47 school days absent

70% = 56 school days absent, almost one third of the academic year

If you have any queries about your child's attendance, please contact me and we can double check our records.

Regards