



St. Ronan's Primary and Nursery School

Attendance Policy

Signed _____ (Chair, BoG)

Date _____

Review January 2022

Context

All children of compulsory school age have the right to an efficient full-time education, regardless of age, aptitude, ability and any special needs s/he may have. Regular school attendance is essential if a child is to make the most of the educational opportunity available to them.

St. Ronan's Primary and Nursery School takes seriously its responsibility to monitor and promote the regular attendance of all its pupils. It acknowledges that irregular attendance seriously disrupts continuity of learning, undermines educational progress, can lead to underachievement and low attainment and impedes the child's ability to develop friendship groups within school.

Mission Statement

We are an inclusive Catholic Community where we inspire, nurture and respect each other.

Aims

- We aim to follow God's command to love, nurture, care and respect one another in everything we do.
- We aim to recognise the uniqueness of each person and to develop their self-worth and value by providing a fair, inspiring and enriching community.
- We aim to promote the full development of each person.
- We aim to inspire a caring inclusive environment where all are valued and respected within our school and wider community.
- We aim to celebrate individuality and the unique qualities of everyone.
- We aim to recognise the needs that are rooted in the Gospel values, to nurture and to help participate in building a better society.

This policy seeks to ensure that all parties involved in the practicalities of school attendance are aware and informed of attendance matters in school and to outline the school's commitment to attendance matters. It details the responsibilities of individuals and groups involved and the procedures in place to promote and monitor pupil attendance.

The policy will aim to raise and maintain levels of attendance by:

- Promoting a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure and valued
- Raising the awareness of the importance of a differentiated and relevant curriculum

- Promoting opportunities to celebrate and reward pupil's successes and achievements
- Raising awareness of the importance of good attendance
- Ensuring that attendance is monitored effectively and reasons for absences are recorded promptly and consistently
- Liaising with EA Education Welfare Officer as appropriate
- Liaising with other external agencies, such as Social Services, as appropriate.

Statements of Expectations;

Pupils have a responsibility to themselves and others to play a positive role in the life of the school and to make the most of the educational opportunities available.

What is expected of the Pupils:

- To respect themselves and others
- To do all they can to attend school regularly and punctually
- To inform a trusted adult if they feel that they are being bullied
- To encourage friendship and a sense of belonging
- To be happy and encourage others to feel happy

Parents have the prime responsibility for ensuring that their child attends school regularly and punctually. They have a legal responsibility to ensure that their children attend school regularly, and stay in school for every lesson after they have registered. Parents should also make sure that the children arrive on time, properly dressed, with the right equipment and in a fit state to benefit from the education offered to them. Parents may be referred to the Education Welfare Service if a child does not attend school regularly and punctually. This consequence is to ensure that parents carry out their duty to secure suitable education for their children.

If a child is in the care of foster parents or in a residential home, it is important that the carers recognise their parenting role where attendance to school is concerned. They will be supported by close co-operation between the school, Education Welfare Services and the Social Services where such a child's attendance is irregular.

What is Expected of the Parents;

- To keep requests for their child to be absent to a minimum

- To offer a reason for any period of absence, preferably before the absence or on the first day of absence
- To ensure that their child arrives at school on time, properly dressed, with the right equipment and in a condition to learn. A reason should be offered for any lateness
- To work closely with the school and Education Welfare Officer (EWO) to resolve any problems that may impede a child's attendance
- To take family holidays during school holiday periods and be aware that requests for holidays during term time will be refused except in special / exceptional circumstances.
- To be aware of curriculum requirements and be especially vigilant with regards to attendance during important academic periods.
- To support their child and recognise their successes and achievements.

The school will endeavour to provide an environment that is conducive to educating every individual pupil. School attendance will be positively supported, wherever possible, and the promotion of good communication and co-operation between all parties involved will be paramount. The school has a statutory responsibility to record and monitor the punctuality and attendance of pupils for both the morning and afternoon sessions. A register of attendance has to be taken once at the start of the morning session. The register has to record whether a pupil is present, engaged in an approved educational activity off site or absent. If a pupil is absent the register must record whether the absence was authorised or unauthorised.

What is Expected of the School:

- To create a school ethos that pupils want to be part of
- To meet the legal requirements set out by Government
- To give a high priority to punctuality and attendance. Target attendance on the School Development Plan.
- To develop procedures that enable the school to identify, follow up and record unauthorised absence, patterns of absence and parent condoned absence with effective monitoring and intervention
- To consistently record authorised and unauthorised absences
- To develop a range of effective strategies to follow up intermittent and long-term absenteeism and promote good attendance

- To encourage open communication channels between home and school
- To develop procedures for the reintegration of long-term absentees
- To develop procedures leading to a formal referral to the EWO
- To adequately provide for pupils with difficulties, within the bounds of resources available, and ensure the appropriate delivery of the curriculum

What is expected of the Board of Governors

- Have a robust Attendance Policy in place and reviewed regularly
- Attendance is a standing item on the agenda of Board of Governor meetings
- Update BoG at each meeting on attendance rates and steps taken to address attendance which is consistently poor
- Support the principal and staff in promoting attendance through positive strategies

The Education Authority (EA) has a responsibility to provide education and promote regular attendance of all statutory school age children. Through the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) the Education Authority provides support to schools and parents to fulfil their legal duty.

If a pupil's absence causes concern, and/or if their attendance falls below 85% and there is also a concern, they will be referred to the EWS, if appropriate. EWS will support staff and parents in developing and implementing strategies to address or improve school attendance.

School Procedures for Recording and Monitoring Attendance

Recording

The class teacher will take a register within SIMS, recording who is present and absent from school at **9.15am**. After 9.15am, any pupil who arrives late this will be recorded on the attendance sheet.

Absences will be recorded onto the attendance section of SIMS and all the present pupils marked present. The offered reasons for any 'lates' or 'absences' will be assessed and the appropriate code entered into the system.

Reasons for absence may be offered verbally by phone but **must** be followed by a letter on the child's return to school. The school may then decide if it wishes to authorise the absence or record it as an unauthorised absence.

The following reasons are deemed as acceptable reasons for an authorised absence.

- The child is ill or is prevented from attending by unavoidable cause
- The child is absent on days exclusively set apart for religious observance in their particular faith

- The child is absent 'with leave'. This refers to leave being granted by the school, not by the parent, and would normally relate to no more than 10 school days in any 1 year.

A reason for a period of absence is always required. The school will contact parents who have not offered a reason and after a three-week process will mark the absence as 'unauthorised' if no reason is provided.

Attendance codes

A set of standard codes are used consistently within the register. These codes are input into the electronic register (SIMS) as required and are used to give depth of meaning to the register and provide statistical meaning to the absences. A list of Codes is available at Appendix 1.

Monitoring

The Principal/VP and the EWO will review the attendance of all the school's pupils on a monthly basis and any pupils identified as 'cause for concern', or less than 90% attendance on a more regular basis. A letter will be sent to the parents of any pupil identified as having attendance problems informing them of the school's concerns and offering support to resolve any problems that may be impeding a child from attending. The pupil's attendance will be closely monitored and if after a two-week period there appears to be no improvement the parents of the pupil will be invited to a meeting with the Principal to discuss the issue and hopefully resolve any issues preventing the pupil from attending. If the parent/s do not attend the meeting, or after such meeting the attendance of the pupil does not improve a formal referral to the EWO will be made.

The SIMS attendance module provides many reports and information that assist the school to monitor attendance. These reports will be accessed when relevant and provide information to assist the school strategically manage attendance issues. The EWO will also have access to this information and will use the reports to support their role.

Reduced Timetable for a pupil

Pupils will only be excepted from the statutory curriculum (reduced timetable) and assessment requirements on a temporary basis if the school has carried out the appropriate procedures outline in the Education (Curriculum) (Temporary Exemptions) Regulations (NI) 1990.

Requests for leave of absence

If a parent wishes to request a period of leave, they are required to write to the Principal and complete a generic form detailing the reason for absence and how the child will be supported while away and on his / her return to school.

The school can not approve of family holidays taken during term time, unless this is due to exceptional circumstances.

The school will NOT provide any work for children who are absent from school due to a family holiday. Work will only be provided in the case of long-term sickness, bereavement or other exceptional circumstance at the discretion of the Principal.

Extended Leave

An "Extended Leave" code allows pupils, for a limited period only (ideally no more than three weeks), to travel outside the UK without their attendance levels being adversely affected. The code may be used for the following purposes:

- Short-term parental placement/employment outside the UK
- A need to leave the UK for a specific complex family need such as:
death of a relative;
care for a sick relative;
sibling or parent receiving medical treatment outside NI; or
attend to immigration matters.

The family concerned must make an application to the school (Appendix 3), outlining the reasons for the request and the proposed period of extended leave. Each request will be considered on an individual basis, taking into account the circumstances for which leave is sought, the pupil's attendance (and attainment) to date, previous similar requests and whether or not the pupil's specific needs will be met (both personally and academically) during the proposed absence.

Strategies used to promote good attendance and punctuality

- Class teacher will ensure that the curriculum is delivered within a culture of inclusion and in such a way that pupils feel that they have and can succeed.
- Individual pupils whose attendance has been a cause for concern will be encouraged to set and achieve personal attendance goals.
- Pupil attendance figures will be published with the annual academic reports.

- Positive verbal reinforcement is given to pupils who have been absent from school for a period of time.
- Termly and annual attendance certificates awarded at school assembly for children who have 100% attendance
- Distribution of leaflet from DE 'Miss School = Miss Out' campaign. This is available in several languages and distributed to Newcomer families in their native language (where available)

Monitoring and Review

The Board of Governors will review this policy every 2 years or when DE issues further guidance / circulars.

St Ronan's Nursery & Primary School

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<insert date>

Dear Parent/Guardian,

Re: Attendance at school of: **<insert child's name>**

As part of our monitoring of attendance we are required to highlight to parents our concern about high level of school absence.

In particular, we have to closely monitor all children with attendance which drops below 90% as set out in our attendance policy. All children for whom attendance drops below 85% will be discussed at our termly meeting with the Education Welfare Service and where improvements are not made the Education Welfare Officer will undertake home visits to discuss with the parents the reason for the poor school attendance.

Our review of attendance shows that up to **<insert date>** your child has had;

Days of Absence from school: **<no of> days**

Percentage attendance at school: **<insert %>**

Can you please ensure that your child is present in school on every possible occasion. They should only be absent from school in circumstances of illness or where they need to attend medical or other appointments that cannot be scheduled outside school time. I have attached a print out of your child's attendance to date. If there are any days where DD is used this indicates that you have not provided a reason for your child's absence on these dates. Can you please do so as soon as possible.

We will continue to monitor this situation and hope that the attendance will significantly improve in the coming weeks.

Thank you for your co-operation with this matter.

Yours faithfully,

E Shannon