

St. Joseph's Primary School Killough



Attendance Policy

September 2020

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. Joseph's P.S, Killough will strive to promote an ethos and culture which encourages good attendance and where each pupil will feel valued and secure.

Mission Statement

St. Joseph's strives to create a culture of achievement with clear expectations that all pupils can and will achieve to the very best of their ability.

We aim to provide an inclusive, caring and safe environment in which all children can grow in self-esteem, independence and confidence. Our care for the children enables their holistic development; spiritually, physically, intellectually, morally, emotionally and socially.

Integral to this is the fostering of the key values of Catholic education where we recognise the self-worth of every child and promote mutual understanding and respect for others.

In order to achieve this, we will seek to create a learning community where pupils, parents, staff and governors demonstrate a commitment to achieving high standards, mutual respect and support of each other.

Aims

1. To improve/maintain the overall attendance of pupils at St. Joseph's 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 Principal at St. Joseph's P.S has overall responsibility for school attendance; teachers should bring any concerns regarding school attendance to her attention.

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.

Teaching staff regularly monitor the attendance and punctuality of pupils by ensuring that attendance is recorded at the beginning of morning and afternoon registration sessions.

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 2017/15, which can be found at the following link:

www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/circular-201715-attendance-guidance-and-absence-recording-by-schools

St. Joseph's is committed to working with parents/guardians to encourage regular and punctual attendance.

Responsibilities of Parents/Guardians

The legal duty of a parent/guardian in relation to the education of their child is found in the Education and Libraries NI 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” (Article 45(1) of The Education and Libraries (NI) Order 1986).

It is a parent/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 at 9.00am for registration and the beginning of classes. It is the responsibility of parents to ensure that children are punctual. Lateness is recorded at registration and noted on each child's attendance record.

If a child appears reluctant to attend school, please discuss the matter promptly with the class teacher or Principal to ensure that both parent and child receive maximum support.

Responsibilities of Pupils

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

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 of staff about any problem or reason that may prevent them from attending school.

Responsibilities of the School

- Regular, efficient and accurate recording of attendance
- Early contact with parents/guardians when a pupil fails to attend school without good reason
- Immediate and confidential action on any problem notified to us.
- Recognition and reward for good attendance
- An annual summary of every child's attendance

Responsibilities of Governors

The Board of Governors has the ultimate responsibility for school attendance; however, 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.

Absence Procedures

A record of each child's attendance will be retained using the Attendance Codes and the guidance set out in **DE Circular 2017/15**. Each child's overall attendance percentage will be recorded on the Annual Report 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.

All Parents/Guardians are required to complete the attached absence notification form which provides a clear reason for any absence. Further copies are available upon request from the school office.

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 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.

Family holidays during Term Time

St. Joseph's P.S 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.**

Procedures for Managing 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. At this time attendance levels are also monitored on an individual and a whole school basis.

Where a child's attendance falls below 88%

Rewarding Good Attendance and Punctuality

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

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

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. 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.

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.

Education Welfare Service

The Education Authority through the Education Welfare Service have a legal responsibility to make sure that parent/guardians meet their responsibility towards their children's education.

Regular attendance is an essential requirement for educational results and where attendance difficulties exist or a pupil's attendance falls below 85%, Education Welfare Service (EWS) will support staff and parents in developing and implementing strategies to address or improve school attendance.

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

This policy was adopted a Board of Governors meeting held on

Signed: _____ Principal

Signed: _____ Chairperson

Date: _____

Review date: Autumn Tem 2021

Copy to Governors, Staff, Parents and Carers

Enc: Attendance Matters, DENI
Blank Absence Notes



Department of
Education
www.education-ni.gov.uk

ABSENCE NOTIFICATION FORM

Please Note – This form must be completed for each period of pupil absence and returned to the school immediately.

Name of Pupil _____

Class / Teacher Name _____

Date(s) of Absence _____

Reason _____

Signed (Parent / Guardian) _____

Date _____