

**St. Canice Primary School  
and  
Nursery Unit  
Dungiven**



**Attendance Policy**

Reviewed November 2019

Due for review June 2021

Signed by Chair of BOG Mr T Nelis

Date November 2019

As a UNICEF Rights Respecting School our school Attendance Policy is underpinned by the United Nations Convention of the Rights of The Child and every one of the 54 articles. We point especially to the following article :

### **Article Twenty- eight**

Every child has the right to an education.

### **Rationale**

In St Canice Primary School and Nursery Unit, we are committed to maintaining high levels of attendance and punctuality. Regular school attendance and good punctuality are vital components in helping pupils to have full access to the Northern Ireland Curriculum and fulfil their potential.

St Canice Primary School and Nursery Unit will strive to promote an ethos and culture which encourages good attendance and punctuality and where each pupil will feel valued and secure. We will strive to work with parents at all times to maintain and improve attendance of every child.

### **Aims**

- To develop a framework that defines roles and responsibilities in relation to pupil attendance and punctuality.
- To work in partnership with parents/carers to establish good patterns of punctuality and attendance.
- To encourage parents/carers to ensure their children are at school on time every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.
- To keep parents/carers informed about their child's attendance and punctuality.
- To encourage children to be independent and come to school every day, on time and with the correct resources.
- To develop a positive reward system that encourages good pupil attendance and punctuality.
- To liaise closely with the Educational Welfare Officer with regard to attendance.

## **The Importance of Good Attendance and Punctuality**

A good pattern of attendance and punctuality is important because it helps children:

- To learn.
- To have fun.
- To make new friends.
- To experience new things in life.
- To develop awareness of other cultures, religion, ethnicity and gender differences.
- To achieve.
- To develop new skills.
- To build confidence and self-esteem.
- To develop the confidence to attempt new work and to learn alongside others.
- To develop good habits in readiness that will last throughout their lives.
- To have the best possible start in life.

***“ Young people who regularly miss school without good reason are more likely to become isolated from their friends, to underachieve in their education and are at risk of becoming involved in anti-social behaviour and becoming victims of crime or abuse. “***

- Source: (Adapted from) *School Attendance Matters – A Parent’s Guide*.

## **Role of the School**

The school management is responsible for managing pupil attendance.

### **Roles and Responsibilities of the Principal / Vice-Principal are**

- To organise incentives to promote good attendance and punctuality.
- To analyse attendance trends and to correspond with parents/carers/pupils if a problem is identified.
- To provide guidance and support to parents/carers who are having difficulty getting their child to attend school each day.
- To send initial letters to parents/carers whose children are showing signs of concern with regard to absence and/or punctuality.
- To complete a referral to the EWO if pupil attendance falls below 85% with no acceptable explanation.
- Provide an attendance figure on each school report in June.
- Provide an annual attendance figure for the whole school to be included in the annual school report.
- Monitor punctuality.

### **Roles and Responsibilities of the Board of Governors**

- To consider the Principal's report on school attendance each year.
- For BOG appointed member to discuss attendance regularly with Principal at board meetings.

### **Roles and Responsibilities of Staff**

- To make daily accurate records of attendance and lateness on the 'SIMS Optical Reader' and to return the registers to the office each Friday.
- To report any concerning patterns of absence to the Principal.
- The school office staff make phone calls to the parents of absent children and help with the administration of attendance procedures.
- Latecomers and absences informed by phone are recorded in a diary in the school office.

### **Roles and Responsibilities of Parents/Carers**

- Under Article 45 of the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986 ("the 1986 Order"), it is the duty of parents/carers who have a child of compulsory school age to ensure their child receives efficient, full time education suitable to their age, aptitude, ability and to any special educational needs they may have.
  - *Source: School Attendance Matters – A Parent's Guide.*
- Paragraph 3 of Schedule 13 to the 1986 Order states **that it is the duty of a parent of a registered pupil of a school to secure their regular attendance at school.** This applies to all children of compulsory school age who are on the roll of a school. As a parent you are legally responsible for making this happen.
  - *Source: School Attendance Matters – A Parent's Guide.*
- It is a parent'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/carers to ensure punctuality. Lateness is recorded at registration and on each child's attendance record.
- If a child appears reluctant to attend school it is the responsibility of the parent to inform the class teacher or Principal to ensure that support can be offered.
- If a child needs to miss school, eg religious festival, sporting event or some other special occasion, the parent should seek the school's agreement well in advance and give full details.
- Parents/carers are requested to make routine medical or dental appointments outside of school.

### **Family Holidays During Term Time**

- Our 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.

### **Roles and Responsibilities of Pupils**

It is the responsibility of pupils to:

- Attend school regularly.
- Arrive at school on time.
- Be organised and ready for work.
- Inform the teacher/VP about any problem that may prevent them from attending school regularly and on time.
- Supply a written note to explain any absence when they return to school.

### **Procedures to Record Attendance and Punctuality**

Arrival and Registration

- Pupils should not arrive at school before 8.50 am as there is no supervision available before this time. Pupils attending the Breakfast Club will be supervised by EA staff.
- Primary 1 – 7 pupils will line up in their respective yards and will be brought to the class by their teacher or classroom assistant.
- Registration is taken at 9:00 am by the class teacher. Any child who arrives after 9:30 am will be marked as late.

### **Categorising Absence**

#### **Authorised Absence**

Examples include:

- Illness.
- Unavoidable medical appointments.
- Taking part in a religious event.
- Exceptional family circumstance (Eg: wedding, bereavement or funeral).
- Representing their club/school/county/country in a particular event Eg sport, music etc.

#### **Unauthorised Absence**

- Birthdays.
- Visiting relatives.
- Looking after other members of the family.
- A pupil is unnecessarily kept off school.
- Shopping.
- Family holiday/ long weekend break.
- No written reason is provided on return to school after absence.

## **Monitoring Absence**

- Each month an audit is printed out from SIMS which identifies pupils whose attendance is showing signs of concern (under 85%).
- These names are circulated to their class teachers by the Principal and the teacher records reasons for pupil absence and if the parents/carers should be sent a letter.
- Where a teacher believes there is a concern regarding a pupil's attendance and there is not a sufficient reason to explain this, a "Letter 1" (See Appendix D) will be sent to the parent/carer advising of the schools concern.
- If attendance remains a concern a second letter, 'Letter 2' (See Appendix E) will be sent to the parent/carer and the parent/carer will be asked to contact the school to arrange a meeting with the Vice-Principal.
- If attendance does not improve and falls below 85% then a referral form may be sent to the EWO. Parent/Carers will be informed of this decision.

## **Monitoring Lateness**

- If a pupil has been recorded as coming late to school on five or more occasions in a two month period, his/her name will be forwarded to the Principal.
- A letter will be sent to the parent/carer by the Principal.
- If there is no improvement the Principal will contact the parent/carer and request a person-to-person meeting to discuss the issue of punctuality and explain why good punctuality is so important.

## **Educational Welfare Service**

The Education Authority, through the Educational Welfare Service (EWS) has a legal duty to make sure that parents/carers meet their responsibility towards their children's education. If a pupil's absence causes concern, or if their attendance falls below 85%, they will be referred to the EWS if appropriate. EWS will support staff and parents/carers in developing and implementing strategies to address or improve school attendance.

- Under Part III of Schedule 13 to the 1986 Order, if a child or young person who is registered at a school does not attend regularly a parent/carer can receive a fine not exceeding £1000 in court (for each child). An Education Supervision Order (ESO) could also be made by a court under Article 55 of the Children (NI) Order 1995.

- *Source:*

*School Attendance Matters – A Parent's Guide 8*

### **Incentives to Improve Attendance and Punctuality**

- Sticker charts and reward systems will act as incentives to pupils who have concerning attendance. The Principal will talk to individual pupils when necessary.
- Children with 100% attendance will receive a certificate at the end of the school year
- Posters advertising the importance of attendance will be placed on the main areas of the school.

### **Truantiing**

If any pupil is caught truantiing we will first of all talk to the pupil in the company of the Parent/Guardian and explain the dangers of this action. We will also use the opportunity to point out the important role that education plays in their lives and how education can help their opportunities for the future.

We will maintain a register of truantiing pupils and parents/carers will be telephoned immediately if any pupil on this register is absent.

### **Monitoring of the Policy**

The Principal will review the policy every two years and present any changes to the to the Governors and staff. The policy will be available for parents to view.

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 2015/02 which can be found at the following link:

<http://www.deni.gov.uk/index/support-and-development-2/school-attendance/attendance/recording-pupil-absences.htm>