

St. John the Baptist Primary School

Bunscoil Eoin Baiste



Attendance Policy

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Introduction

Regular and punctual school attendance is crucial in raising standards in education and ensuring that every child can have full access to the school curriculum available to them by law in order to reach their full potential.

St. John the Baptist Primary School will strive to promote an ethos and culture which encourages good attendance, where each pupil will feel valued and secure and have access to learning for the maximum number of days and hours.

This policy has been written to adhere to the relevant Children's Acts, Education Acts, Regulations and Guidance from the Department for Education Northern Ireland (DENI).

Our School Mission Statement:

It is our mission at St. John the Baptist Primary School to serve our community and enhance its social and educational well-being through the provision of a warm, caring, secure and effective Catholic school.

We believe this will enable our children to maximise their individual potential for academic, spiritual, personal and social development and help prepare them for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life.

Aims and Objectives

St. John the Baptist Primary School aims to ensure that every child will want to attend school.

In order to promote good attendance, behaviour and discipline, we aim to:

- Provide a positive, welcoming environment which promotes respect for others and where pupils feel safe, secure and valued.
- Provide a stimulating learning environment with an accessible curriculum for all children.
- Provide opportunities to celebrate pupils' success and achievements.
- Improve pupil's achievement by ensuring high levels of attendance and punctuality.
- Achieve a minimum of 95% attendance for all children, apart from those with chronic health conditions.
- Create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm and are seen to be valued by the school.
- Raise awareness of parents, carers and pupils of the importance of uninterrupted attendance and punctuality at every stage of a child's education.

- Work in partnership with pupils, parents, staff and the Education Welfare Service so that all pupils realise their potential, unhindered by unnecessary absence.
- Establish a pattern of monitoring attendance and class consistency in recognising achievement and dealing with difficulties.
- Recognising the key role of all staff, but especially class teachers, in promoting good attendance.

We maintain and promote good attendance and punctuality through:

- Raising awareness of attendance and punctuality issues among all staff, parents and pupils.
- Ensuring that parents have an understanding of the responsibility placed on them for making sure their child attends regularly and punctually.
- Equipping children with the life skills needed to take responsibility for good school attendance and punctuality appropriate to the child's age.
- Maintaining effective means of communication with parents, pupils, staff and governors on school attendance matters.
- Developing and implementing procedures for identifying, reporting and reviewing cases of poor attendance and persistent lateness.
- Supporting pupils who have been experiencing any difficulties at home or school which are preventing good attendance.
- Developing and implementing procedures to follow up non- attendance at school.

Responsibilities

Role of Parent

Parents have a legal duty under (Article 45(1) of The Education and Libraries (NI) Order 1986):

‘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, their parent has a legal duty to ensure that they regularly attend that school.

It is **ESSENTIAL** that all contact details for pupils are correct and up to date. Parents must inform the school office of any changes.

Parents are asked to phone St. John the Baptist Primary School on the first day of absence and to inform the school of the reason and expected length of absence. If a phone call has not been made, please confirm this with a written note when your child returns to school.

Role of the School

All members of school have a responsibility for identifying trends in attendance and punctuality. The Principal of St. John the Baptist Primary School, Miss McCooe, has overall responsibility for attendance in our school.

Role of the Class Teacher

Effective practice in relation to managing individual pupil attendance depends on the class teacher. In St. John the Baptist Primary School, the class teacher is responsible for:

- Monitoring attendance, e.g. marking register, collecting absence notes and identifying pupils with irregular attendance patterns.
- **It is essential that registers are marked in the morning and afternoon for health and safety reasons. Registration times must be adhered to. In the morning registration closes at 9.15am and in the afternoon P1-P3 closes at 12.45pm and P4-7 closes at 1.25pm. After these times attendance is recorded as U.**
- Following up pupil absence if notes/phone calls are not received.
- Sending a letter to parents of pupils who are absent from school on a regular basis without an explanation.
- Talking to individual pupils about their attendance.
- Promoting class attendance through the curriculum.
- Referring pupils to the Vice Principal or Principal.
- Providing support to pupils after a long absence from school.
- Monitoring attendance on SIMs and weekly attendance sheets.
- Speak with parents of children who are persistently late. If this continues, a letter should be sent. These are available from the office.

Role of Pupils

Each pupil at St. John the Baptist Primary School must attend school punctually and regularly. If a pupil has been absent from school, a written note from a parent/guardian should be provided to the child's teacher on return, even if the parent/guardian has already made contact by telephone to explain the absence.

Roles of the Board of Governors

Overall responsibility for attendance on a day-to-day basis lies with the Principal. The Principal has the role, along with the Board of Governors, for determining resources and staffing to deal with attendance issues, ensuring statistical information is provided as required by government.

The Vice Principal will meet with the Education Welfare Officer on a regular basis to discuss pupil attendance issues. The Vice Principal will keep the Principal informed.

The Principal and Vice Principal will:

- Make contact with parents if attendance falls towards 90%.
- Liaise with class teachers and the Education Welfare Service about individual pupils.
- In liaison with class teachers, talk to pupils with poor attendance and set targets.
- Make a referral to the Education Welfare Service if improvement in attendance is not made.
- Collate and report attendance information.
- Take responsibility for overall monitoring of attendance.
- Promote good attendance by awarding Best Class Attendance each month at the Principal's assembly and stickers for full attendance at the end of each half term. Each term we will also have an Attendance Week. A Presentation Ceremony for Primary 7 will also be held in term 3 for 100% attendance. All other pupils will receive 100% attendance awards at assembly in September each year.

Roles and Responsibility of Office Staff

Office staff have an important role to play in monitoring attendance in school. The following are some of the roles they may undertake:

- Operating the SIMS.NET system
- Taking phone messages from parents when pupils are absent and informing the class teacher
- Maintaining the late register
- Compiling lists of 100% attendance
- Collating registration data

The Recording of Attendance – see Appendix 1

The Department of Education has issued guidelines about categorising absence as authorised or unauthorised. See appendix 1 for codes.

To ensure the school's Attendance Policy operates in an appropriate manner, the Board of Governors has delegated authority to the Principal who will decide whether an absence should be classified as authorised/unauthorised.

Authorised Absences

In normal circumstances the following types of absences will be classified as authorised:

- Illness (when note/phone call is provided by parent)
- Hospital/dental appointments (when prior notice is given)
- Family bereavement
- Family wedding
- Representing the school/county/country at an approved event
- Taking music/dance/drama examinations by approved examining boards

- Religious holidays (when prior notification of absence is given)

In special circumstances parents may apply for a leave of absence of their child. The authorisation of the absence is at the Principal's discretion and must be requested in writing, prior to the absence. In exceptional circumstances, when a written request is impractical, parents should contact the Principal, in person, to discuss the matter in confidence.

Unauthorised Absences

In normal circumstances the following types of absence will be classified as unauthorised:

- Birthday
- On a shopping trip with parents
- Staying at home with ill parent or sibling
- Term time holiday

When a pupil is absent on a regular basis, the teacher will make contact with the parent initially. If this continues the teacher, in liaison with the Vice Principal, will make contact with the parents to highlight the school's concerns. This may be done by a phone call/letter and/or appointment. Letters sent will detail the attendance percentage and the number of days of absence. Please see (Appendix 2) for sample of the letter. If attendance does not improve after the letter has been received, a referral will be made to Education and Welfare.

Lateness

In St. John the Baptist Primary School lateness is strongly discouraged. Pupils are expected to arrive at school from 8.45am. The school day begins at 8.55am. The teacher will mark the class register on arriving to his or her classroom via SIMS. If a pupil arrives after registration has closed the pupil must go to the office directly, where the secretary will mark him/her 'L' on the register, unless a valid reason is provided. (e.g. SEN Taxi)

The Principal/Vice Principal will review the late marks on a termly basis:

- When a child is late on a regular basis, the class teacher will contact the parents initially to discuss the matter. If lateness continues this will be followed up with a letter and then if necessary, referred to the Vice Principal in partnership with the class teacher.
- Whenever it is deemed appropriate a parent/school contract may be drawn up.

Family holidays during Term Time

St. John the Baptist Primary 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 and it must be prearranged with the principal.

Education Welfare Service

The Education Authority through the Education Welfare Service (EWS) has a legal duty to make sure that parents meet their responsibility towards their children's education. If a

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

Appendix 1

The Recording of Absence - Department of Education Guidelines

Categorisation of Absence

Key to codes

/ Present (AM) M Medical/Dental Appointments # Holiday for all

\ Present (PM) N No reason yet provided for absence * Not on roll

A Artistic Endeavour

O Other Exceptional Circumstances - All should attend / No mark recorded

B Bereavement

P Approved Sporting Activity

C Suspended

R Religious Observance

D Did not provide a reason for absence

S Study Leave

F Family holiday (agreed)

U Late (after registers closed)

G Family Holiday (Not Agreed)

V Educational Visit

H Other Absence

W Work Experience

I Illness(not medical/dental etc. appointments)

X Only staff should attend

J Extended Leave with Consent

Y Exceptional closure

L Late (before reg closed)

! No Attendance Required

1 AEP (ELB)

2 Home/hospital tuition (ELB)

3 Elective Home Education

4 Pupil Referral Unit

5 Another mainstream school (EF)

6 Training Organisation (EF)

7 FE College (EF)

8 Intensive Support Learning Unit

9 CAMHS

Appendix 2

Sample letter to parents

**St. John the Baptist P.S.
250 Garvaghy Road
Portadown
BT62 1EB
Tel. (028) 3833 6211
Fax. (028) 3836 2051**



**Principal:
Miss C McCooe**

**e-mail: info@stjohnthebaptist.portadown.ni.sch.uk
Web site: www.stjohnthebaptist.org.uk**

Date

Dear Parent/Guardian,

I have recently analysed the register and feel it is necessary to draw your attention to the level of absence _____ has had since _____.

Your child's attendance is _____% which equates to _____ days of school absence.

While 100% attendance is clearly the ideal, in many cases legitimate illnesses or other factors can prevent this. However, when attendance falls below a certain level we become concerned.

Hopefully we can work together to improve your child's attendance in order to help him/her achieve his/her full potential. This is difficult when a lot of days are missed from school.

If you feel that you wish to discuss the situation, please contact the school office to make an appointment.

Yours sincerely

C. McCooe
Principal