

# GAELSCOIL NEACHTAIN



## **POLASAÍ FREASTAL do PHÁISTÍ** **ATTENDANCE POLICY for CHILDREN**

## **Attendance Policy**

### **Introduction**

Regular and punctual school attendance is important. Pupils need to attend school regularly if they are to take full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them by law. Gaelscoil Neachtain fully recognises its responsibilities to ensure pupils are in school and on time, therefore having access to learning for the maximum number of days and hours. 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.

Our policy applies to all children registered at Gaelscoil Neachtain and this policy is made available to all parents/carers of pupils who are registered at the Gaelscoil.

Although parents/carers have the legal responsibility for ensuring their child's good attendance, the Gaelscoil Principal and Governors work together with other professionals and agencies to ensure that all pupils are encouraged and supported to develop good attendance habits. Procedures in this policy are followed to ensure this happens.

Children who are persistently late or absent soon fall behind with their learning. Children who are absent from school frequently develop large gaps in their learning which will impact on their progress and their ability to meet age related learning expectations. **A child whose attendance drops to 90% each year has missed 3 weeks and 4 days of learning. (See Appendix 1)**

### **Aims and Objectives**

This attendance policy ensures that all Gaelscoil Neachtain staff and governors are fully aware of and clear about the actions necessary to promote good attendance.

Through this Policy we aim to:

- Improve pupils' achievement by ensuring high levels of attendance and punctuality.
- **Achieve a minimum of 95% attendance for all children, apart from those with chronic health issues.**
- Create an ethos in which good attendance and punctuality are recognised as the norm and seen to be valued by the Gaelscoil.
- 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.

- Promote a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure, and valued, and encourage in pupils a sense of their own responsibility.
- Establish a pattern of monitoring attendance and ensure consistency in recognising achievement and dealing with difficulties.
- Recognise the key role of all staff, but especially class teachers, in promoting good attendance.
- To promote good relationships with the Education Welfare Service.

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 and development.
- 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 at school which are preventing good attendance.
- Developing and implementing procedures to follow up non-attendance at school.

## **Definitions**

### **Authorised absence**

- An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason. For example, if a child has been unwell and the parent telephones the school to explain the absence.
- Only the school can make an absence authorised. Parents do not have this authority. Consequently, not all absences supported by parents will be classified as authorised.

### **Unauthorised absence**

- An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the school.
- Therefore, the absence is unauthorised if a child is away from school without good reason, even with the support of a parent.

## **Procedures**

Gaelscoil Neachtain will undertake to follow the following procedures to support good attendance:

- To maintain appropriate registration processes.
- To maintain appropriate attendance data.
- To communicate clearly the attendance procedures and expectations to all staff, governors, parents and pupils.
- To have consistent and systematic daily records which give detail of any absence and lateness.
- To follow up absences and persistent lateness if parents/carers have not communicated with the school.
- To inform parents/carers what constitutes authorised and unauthorised absence.
- To strongly discourage unnecessary absence through holidays taken during term time.
- To work with parents to improve individual pupils' attendance and punctuality.
- To refer to the Educational Welfare Service any child whose attendance causes concern and where parents/carers have not responded to school initiatives to improve.
- To report attendance statistics to Education Authority – Western Region where requested.
- All staff should be aware that they must raise any attendance or punctuality concerns with the Principal.

## **Responsibilities**

All members of school staff have a responsibility for identifying trends in attendance and punctuality. The following includes a more specific list of the kinds of responsibilities which individuals might have.

### **Class teacher**

Class teachers are responsible for:

- Keeping an overview of class and individual attendance looking particularly for either poor overall attendance, anomalies in patterns of attendance and/ or unusual explanations for attendance offered by children and their parents/ carers.
- Informing the Principal where there are concerns and acting upon them.
- Providing background information to support referrals.
- Monitoring follow-up once actions have been taken to correct attendance concerns.
- Emphasising with their class the importance of good attendance and promptness.

- Following up absences with immediate requests for explanation which should be noted inside the register
- Contacting parents of children on the third day of absence to enquire about their well-being.
- Recording details of children who arrive late or go home early.
- Discussing attendance issues at Parent / Teacher meetings where necessary.

## **Principal**

The Principal is responsible for:

- Overall monitoring of school attendance.
- Trends in authorised and unauthorised absence.
- Contacting families where concerns are raised about absence including arranging meetings to discuss attendance issues.
- Monitoring individual attendance where concerns have been raised.
- Making referrals to the EWO.
- Providing reports and background information to inform discussion with the school's EWO.
- Liaising with other professionals to determine potential sources of difficulties and reasons for absence.

## **Administration staff**

Staff in the School Office are responsible for:

- Where a child is absent from school and we have not received any verbal or written communication from the parent, contact the parent.
- Collating and recording registration and attendance information.
- Taking and recording messages from parents regarding absence.
- Ensuring that each child's attendance is recorded daily in SIMs.
- Ensuring that explanations for each child's absence is recorded and updated weekly in SIMs.

## **Parents**

Parents/Carers are responsible for:

- Ensuring that their child attends school regularly and punctually unless prevented from doing so by illness or attendance at a medical appointment.
- Contacting the school office on the first morning of absence.

- All absences should be confirmed with a written note when the pupil returns to school. Alternatively, parents may write to the class teacher via *Class Dojo*.
- Informing the school in advance of any medical appointments in school time. For the absence to be recorded as a medical absence we do require evidence from the doctor or dentist. (Appointment card/letter)
- Making requests for authorised absence in term time, only if absolutely necessary as these are not automatically authorised.
- Talking to the school as soon as possible about any child's reluctance to come to school so that problems can be quickly identified and dealt with.

## **Registration**

Each class teacher has the responsibility for keeping an accurate record of attendance. Any pupil who is absent must be recorded at the beginning of the morning and afternoon session. The attendance register must be completed by the class teacher by 9.30am and 1.20pm. **HOWEVER, IF A CHILD LEAVES SCHOOL BEFORE 2.30pm ON ANY GIVEN DAY, HE / SHE WILL BE MARKED ABSENT FROM THE AFTERNOON SESSION.**

All attendance records are documented using SIMs software. Attendance registers are legal documents and these must be kept secure and preserved for a period of three years after the date they were last used.

## **Lateness**

The school day begins at 8.50a.m. Children arriving after 9.15am will be marked late. Children travelling on Benedy bus are exempt from this cut-off time. Records are kept of those pupils who are late. This is documented on the electronic register for each pupil (Attendance code L). Any child who arrives for school later than 9.30am will be marked as having been absent for the morning. (Attendance code U).

Children who have attended a dentist or doctor's appointment and subsequently come to school later will have the absence recorded as a medical absence (Attendance code M).

## **Children who are persistently late miss a significant amount of learning at Assembly.**

Where there have been persistent incidents of lateness, parents/carers will be contacted and the Gaelscoil will provide opportunities for parents/carers to seek support and advice to address these issues.

## **ABSENCES**

**Parents/carers should contact the school on the first day of their child's absence. When parents/carers notify us of their child's absence it is important that they provide us with details of the reason for their absence.**

All absences are recorded as either authorised or unauthorised absences on the computer. It is important that we receive accurate information from parents with reasons for the child's absence. This information is used to determine whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised. The Principal has the responsibility to determine whether absences are authorised or unauthorised.

### **First Day Contact**

Where a child is absent from school and we have not received any verbal or written communication from the parent, then we initiate a first day contact process. The Gaelscoil secretary checks all of the registers from 9.30am on a daily basis, to identify those pupils who are absent. There are occasions when we are unaware why the child is absent and we will contact the parent to check the reasons for the child's absence.

### **Illness**

When children have an illness that is likely to continue for an extended period, or be a repetitive absence, the school will contact the support services to see if arrangements can be made for the child to be given some home tuition outside school.

### **Family holidays during Term Time**

**Gaelscoil Neachtain 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.**

### **Addressing Attendance Concerns**

**Gaelscoil Neachtain expects attendance of at least 95%.**

It is important for children to establish good attendance habits early on in their primary school career. It is the responsibility of the Principal and the governors to support good attendance and to identify and address attendance concerns promptly. In Gaelscoil Neachtain, we rely upon parents to ensure their child attends school regularly and punctually and, therefore, where there are concerns regarding attendance, parents are always informed of our concerns. There will be opportunities for the parent/carer to

discuss reasons for absence and support to be given by the school with the aim to improve attendance. Where a child's attendance record does not improve over a period of time, the Education Welfare Officer will be consulted.

## **COMMUNICATION WITH PARENTS**

**Every child's attendance is monitored on an ongoing basis. If a child's attendance falls to 90%, the Principal will inform the parent in writing (See Appendix 2) and advise accordingly.**

### **Education Welfare Officer**

The Education Welfare Officer visits once a term to check and monitor attendance. She carries out regular register checks on all children's attendance and looks to identify children with low attendance (usually below 85%). She works with the school and parents to improve attendance.

### **Monitoring Attendance**

The Gaelscoil secretary has the responsibility for ensuring that all of the attendance data is accurately recorded on the SIMs attendance software and is up to date. Children's attendance is a standing item on the agenda of staff meetings. Appropriate action is taken as necessary.

## Appendix 1

100% Attendance	0 Days Missed	Excellent
95% Attendance	9 Days of Absence 1 Week and 4 Days of Learning Missed	Satisfactory
90% Attendance	19 Days of Absence 3 Weeks and 4 Days of Learning Missed	Poor
85% Attendance	28 Days of Absence 5 Weeks and 3 Days of Learning Missed	Very Poor
80% Attendance	38 Days of Absence 7 Weeks and 3 Days of Learning Missed	Unacceptable
75% Attendance	46 Days of Absence 9 Weeks and 1 Day of Learning Missed	Unacceptable

## Appendix 2

8 Bóthar an tSeipéil,  
Dún Geimhin,  
Co. Dhoire.  
BT47 4RS

Guthán: 028 777 42529

8 Chapel Road,  
Dungiven,  
Co. Derry.  
BT47 4RS

Tel: 028 777 42529



Dáta:

A Thuismitheoir / A Chaomhnóir,

Re: **Name:** xxxx      **DoB:** xxxx      **Rang:** x

I am writing to advise you that «forename»'s school attendance is causing concern as it has fallen to «percentage\_attendance»% and as a result we are becoming concerned that «forename» is missing a significant part of learning.

Regular attendance is extremely important as missing school can have an impact on learning. The Education Welfare Officer visits once a term to check and monitor attendance. She looks to identify children with low attendance, usually 85%, or below, and may contact you regarding this.

The Gaelscoil will continue to monitor «forename»'s attendance and look forward to seeing an improvement. If the absence is due to a medical reason, please ensure that we have been informed.

If there are any particular circumstances that the school may not be aware of which is having an influence on «forename» attending school regularly, or if you are concerned about your child's attendance, please do not hesitate to contact me. Support can also be offered through the Education Welfare Service. Go raibh maith agat.

Is Mise le Meas,

Máirín Uí Cheallaigh,  
Príomhoide.