

St. Malachy's Primary School Armagh



Attendance Policy

Attendance Policy Summary:

This policy is written specifically for our parents as it is our belief that they are the key influence in securing the best possible attendance level for their child.

St Malachy's Primary School recognises that punctual and regular attendance alongside high standards of behaviour are essential prerequisites to effective learning and therefore we are committed to maintaining high levels of attendance, punctuality and positive behaviour.

When we consider our school aims --to help all develop:

- A sense of how precious we are and of God's great love for us.
- The social skills and moral attributes required to contribute positively to our community.
- A true love for learning that will help each of us achieve our full potential.

We realise that in relation to the first aim, God has provided our children with the gift of education that many children in the world do not have, therefore isn't it our responsibility as parents to ensure that we avail of it fully by sending them to school each day?

Re the second aim, when our pupils grow up they will need to have good attendance levels when they get a job if they wish to enjoy long term employment. Bad habits re poor attendance which start in childhood can be very hard to break.

In relation to the third aim, we have built up significant data within our school that shows how pupil attainment suffers very badly and unsurprisingly as a result of poor attendance. Your child cannot cover the curriculum if he/ she is repeatedly absent and as such will never achieve his/her potential.

To this end, we in St Malachy's actively promote a teaching and learning ethos which encourages all pupils to have high attendance levels. In accordance with other school policies, all members of the school community should be able to thrive, feel respected, safe and secure. The teacher responsible for Pastoral Care (Mrs Kearney) liaises with the Education Welfare Officer assigned to our school with a view to referrals being made to their service for pupils with poor attendance rates.

Mr Duggan will be the point of contact for families who receive correspondence re attendance concerns. See appendices;

1. Initial notification of Attendance Letter (sent when attendance hits 85%.) (Appendix 1)
2. Letter notifying that a referral has been made (Appendix 2)

Schools have a legal responsibility to report any pupil whose absence falls below 85% or where there has been an absence of more than 10 days and where it has been impossible to make contact with a parent or carer.

Schools are required to take an attendance register twice a day, and this shows whether the pupil is present, engaged in an approved activity off site, or absent. If a pupil is absent, every half-day absence has to be classified by the school as either authorised or unauthorised. Only the school can authorise the absence, not parents/ carers. This is why information about the cause of each absence is required in writing.

Authorised absences are mornings or afternoons away from school for a robust reason such as illness or other unavoidable cause. Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'leave' has been given. This includes:

- parents/carers keeping pupils off school unnecessarily
- truancy before or during the school day
- absences which have never been properly explained
- children who arrive at school too late to get a registration mark

It is hoped that parents/carers, school staff and statutory authorities can work closely to overcome any problems which may affect a pupil's attendance. If a pupil is reluctant to attend, it is never a good idea to cover up their absence or to give in to pressure to excuse them from attending. This will only give the impression that attendance does not matter, and may make matters worse.

Procedures:

Registration:

Morning registration begins at 9.00 a.m. promptly and will be taken by the Class Teacher. Pupils who are late will be recorded as such in the register.

Absence:

Parents must phone the school on morning of their child's absence to report their child's absence. Or pupils must bring a written explanation of the absence from his/her parent/carer on returning to school.

If the school is not informed of a reason for absence the child will be marked as an unauthorised absence.

Absence for Medical reasons:

Parents/carers are asked, whenever possible, to make appointments outside school hours. If an appointment has to be made during school hours a written

explanation or phone call must be provided stating clearly the time of the appointment. If there are frequent absences for medical reasons, parents/carers may be asked to provide medical evidence in the form of a doctor's certificate.

Pupils are expected to return to school following their appointment whenever possible. If a pupil has a medical condition that may affect attendance and punctuality parents/carers are asked to contact the school to discuss possible arrangements with their child's class teacher.

Family Holidays during Term Time:

St. Malachy's Primary School Primary School strongly discourages holidays during term time due to the impact that they have on pupils' learning. The Educational Welfare Officer monitors all pupils' attendance weekly and if a pupil's attendance falls below 85% parents will be contacted and held accountable. Term time holidays can lead to attendance lower than 85% very easily.

Additionally we actively promote all DENI initiatives related to attendance by incorporating the message into our parents' sessions and publicising it on our website and school app. (Appendix 3)

This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis but attendance as a whole will be monitored on a termly basis in consultation with EWO.

Appendices:

Appendix 1: Initial notification of Attendance Letter Attendance Letter.



St. Malachy's Primary School

Bunscoil Naomh Maeleachlainn

Chapel Lane • Armagh • BT61 7EG • Tel: 028 3752 3847 • Fax: 028 3752 8830 • Principal: Mr Paul Duggan

www.stmalachysprimary.org

DATE:

NOTIFICATION OF ATTENDANCE

RE: _____ **DOB:** _____

Dear Parent/Guardian

This is a letter informing you of your child's attendance. To date, the above named child has an attendance of ____%. This is below what St. Malachy's would expect and we would ask that you make every effort to ensure that your child attends school regularly and on time. The Education Authority has set targets for school attendance (at 95%) and your child falls below that target. If your child's attendance is 85% or less a referral must be made to the School's Education Welfare Officer.

We appreciate that absences from school may be due to very valid reasons, and it is our duty to help children who are experiencing difficulty with attendance. We cannot stress enough how important regular attendance is to the academic and social well-being of each and every one of our pupils. We hope that through our combined efforts we can improve your child's attendance and effectively nurture and support your child's development.

In addition, it is very important that you inform St. Malachy's if your child is absent from school for any reason. Please ring the school on the first day of absence.

Over the next number of weeks, the School will be monitoring your child's attendance and hope to see an improvement.

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

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul Duggan". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

PAUL DUGGAN

Principal

Appendix 2: Letter to state that a referral has been made to the EWO



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www.stmalachysprimary.org

DATE:

Dear Parent/Guardian

I am writing to inform you that the continued poor attendance of _____ in School has resulted in a referral being made to the Education Authority Educational Welfare Officer.

The EWO will contact you in the near future to explain the implications of non-attendance at school.

Should you wish to contact me regarding this matter, please feel free to call school to discuss this.

Yours sincerely

PAUL DUGGAN

Principal

Appendix 2:



MISS SCHOOL = MISS OUT

WHY ATTENDANCE AT SCHOOL IS SO IMPORTANT

If a child of compulsory school age is registered at a school it is essential that they attend their school regularly and maintain a pattern of good attendance throughout their school career.

Excellent attendance at school is important to allow a child or young person to fulfil their potential.

Below are just some of the key reasons why it is so important children attend school:

- To learn.
- To make new friends.
- To experience new things in life.
- To gain qualifications.
- To develop new skills.
- To build confidence and self-esteem.
- To have the best possible start in life.



Key Point

Young people who regularly miss school without good reason are more likely to become isolated from their friends, to underachieve in examinations and/or become involved in anti-social behaviour.

CAN ATTENDANCE MAKE A DIFFERENCE TO EXAM RESULTS?

Greater than
95% Attendance



80% of pupils achieved at least 5 GCSEs including English and Maths when they attended more than 95%

80%

Less than
90% Attendance



52% of pupils achieved at least 5 GCSEs including English and Maths when they attended less than 90%

52%

Less than
80% Attendance



39% of pupils achieved at least 5 GCSEs including English and Maths when they attended less than 80%

39%

Source: School Leavers 2016/17

HOW PARENTS CAN HELP

- Establish a good routine in the mornings and evenings so your child is prepared for the school day ahead.
- Make sure your child goes to school regularly and follows the school rules.
- Ensure your child arrives at school on time - not late.
- Arrange dental and medical appointments outside school hours when possible.
- Always inform the school if your child is absent due to illness - this should be followed up with a written note when your child returns to school.
- If your child is not attending school as you expect they may be putting themselves at risk - Who are they with? What are they doing?
- Do not take family holidays during term time.
- Talk to your child about school and take an interest in their school work (including homeworks).
- Attend parents evenings and school events.
- Praise and reward your child's achievements at school.
- Always support school staff in their efforts to control difficult or challenging behaviour.

Key Point

Parents of children aged 4-16 who are enrolled in school are legally required to make sure they attend.

EVERY SCHOOL DAY COUNTS

Every single day a child is absent from school equates to a day of lost learning.

100% Attendance	0 Days Missed
95% Attendance	9 Days of Absence 1 Week and 4 Days of Learning Missed
90% Attendance	19 Days of Absence 3 Weeks and 4 Days of Learning Missed
85% Attendance	28 Days of Absence 5 Weeks and 3 Days of Learning Missed