

# St. John's Primary School Gilford



## Attendance Policy

**Policy Adopted: Autumn 2023**  
**Next Review Date: Autumn 2027**

**Signed: \_\_\_\_\_**  
**(Chair of Governors)**

**Date: \_\_\_\_\_**

## **Mission Statement**

At St. John's the child is at the heart of our school and the wider Catholic faith community. As a school, we aim to provide a high standard of child centred education in a safe, supportive, learning environment, where respect and Catholic values are promoted.

### **School/Class Attendance target: 95% or above**

## **Introduction**

The importance of regular school attendance and good punctuality cannot be overestimated. Regular attendance is a pre requisite to a good education and securing it is a high priority for our school. St. John's Primary School seeks to ensure that all children, regardless of age, aptitude, ability and any special needs, receive a full-time education which maximises opportunities for each pupil to realise his/her true potential. We will strive to promote an ethos and culture which encourages good attendance and where each pupil will feel valued and secure.

By failing to attend school regularly, pupils diminish the value of education provided for them. It affects their ability to achieve their full potential and of developing social skills. Frequent lateness also has a dramatic effect on a child's education. A child, who is late for school, finds it more difficult to settle that day and they miss vital work, which then has to be caught up. It also disrupts lessons for the teacher and the rest of the children in the class. Children of compulsory school age who fail to attend regularly are very likely to underachieve and may become victims of anti-social or criminal behaviour. Ensuring regular school attendance at an early age promotes positive patterns and therefore decreases the risk of disaffection and anti-social behaviour in later years.

As a school we will strive to provide a welcoming, caring environment, whereby each member of the school community feels secure. The school staff will work with pupils and their families to ensure each pupil attends school regularly and punctually.

The school will seek to establish effective systems of incentives and rewards which acknowledge the efforts of pupils to attend regularly and punctually. The school will challenge the behaviour of those pupils and parents who give low priority to attendance and punctuality. To meet these objectives, we will establish an effective system of communication with pupils, parents and appropriate agencies to provide mutual information, advice and support.

## **Role of the School**

The Principal, Mrs Lyness has overall responsibility for school attendance here at St. John's. She will monitor attendance regularly by:

- Reviewing attendance registers each month and identifying any patterns of attendance that are of concern (SIMS - attendance management)
- Working closely with the EWO to monitor attendance through SIMS.
- Sending initial letters home to parents whose children are beginning to show signs of frequent absenteeism (below 90%) for no apparent or justifiable reason.
- Referring children to the EWO if there is a pattern of non-attendance or if their attendance falls below 85%, with no justifiable reason for absence.
- Reporting on school attendance to the Board of Governors.

All teachers should bring any concerns regarding school attendance to her attention.

The Board of Governors provide support and will review school attendance figures and targets at each termly 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.

To enable our school to record and monitor attendance in a consistent way we will adhere to the guidance provided in the Department of Education Circular 2013/13

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

At St. John's we are committed to working with parents to encourage regular and punctual attendance by:

- Encouraging parents to ensure that their child(ren) is/are at school, on time, every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.
- Working in partnership with parents to establish good attendance patterns.
- Keeping parents informed about their child's attendance and punctuality.
- Encouraging children to become independent and come to school every day, on time and with the correct resources.
- Liaising with the Education Welfare Officer with regard to attendance.

### **Role of Parent/Guardian**

Parents have a legal duty to ensure:

*Every child of compulsory school age shall receive efficient full time education suitable to age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs he may have, either by regular school attendance or otherwise.*

(Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) 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 8.45am for registration and the beginning of class. It is the responsibility of parents to ensure that your child is punctual. Lateness is recorded at registration and recorded on your child's attendance record.

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

### **Role of Pupils**

Each pupil at St. John's has a duty to attend school every day, arriving on time and ready for work. If you have been absent from school a written note from a parent/guardian must be provided to your teacher when you return.

Children may come into school from 8.50am. School starts at 9.00am.

The class teacher inserts the attendance on to the SIMS system every day (at registration). Each month the Secretary gives a print off of each class's figures to the class teacher for verification and a summary to the Principal.

## **Absence Procedures**

### **Illness and Medical Appointments**

- a) When a child is unwell, parents should contact the school before 9.30am on the first day of absence informing the school of the reason for absence. When a child is absent, the class teacher will record the absence in the register.
- b) If your child is absent due to vomiting, then they should not return to school for **the next 24 hours** after the last time that the child is sick. This is to reduce the risk of infection to other children and adults at the school.
- c) Every effort should be made to make medical appointments outside school hours.
- d) If it is necessary for a child to be out of school for this reason, the child should be returned to school directly after the appointment.

### **Absence notes**

On return to school after an absence, parents are requested to make a written note of the reason for absence and send into the class teacher. If no such explanation is provided the school will issue an Attendance Regulation letter (see Appendix A).

### **Attendance Letters**

A child whose attendance falls below 90% consistently for a period of time without explanation or a valid reason will have an attendance letter sent home to their parents. If there is no improvement in attendance the attendance continues to decline to below 85% the EWO will be notified and action taken (see Appendix A - sample letter to parents).

### **When can children be absent from school?**

Reasonable reasons for absence can include when s/he:

- is ill
- has an unavoidable medical or dental appointment, for which an appointment cannot be made for after school
- is taking part in a religious event
- is representing their county/country in an event
- has an exceptional family circumstance, e.g. wedding or a funeral
- has had an authorised absence by the Principal
- inclement weather

### **Some unacceptable reasons for absence** (see Appendix C - Absence Codes)

- birthdays
- visiting relatives
- shopping
- hair appointment
- looking after other members of the family
- long weekend breaks
- truancy

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

We in St. John's discourage 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.

If parents do decide to take their child on holiday they should contact the Principal prior to booking the holiday to seek authorisation. They should ensure on their return that the child tries to catch up on all work missed. Work missed cannot be sent home ahead of time.

### **Procedures for Managing Non-attendance**

#### **What may happen if a child does not attend regularly?**

The law states that parents are responsible for ensuring their children's regular and punctual attendance at school. The staff at St. John's Primary School will work with parents, providing support to assist them in getting their child to school each day and on time but if this is unsuccessful a referral will have to be made to the Education Welfare Officer. Home visits will be made by the EWO to any pupils causing concern.

The EWO will try to resolve the situation by agreement but if the child's attendance fails to improve, these Officers can fine parents up to £1000 for each child who fails to attend regularly.

The Local Education and Library Board also has the option of applying for an Education Supervision Order in respect of the child. It is important that parents cooperate with the school and the Education Welfare Officer in order to resolve any difficulties early before any legal action becomes necessary.

#### **Incentives at St. John's Primary School to improve attendance and punctuality**

- Visits by the Principal who will talk in general to the children about attendance and punctuality and will talk to individual pupils when required
- Attendance letters to Parents/Guardians
- A phone call by the Principal to the parents if they have a concern about a child's attendance
- Children who have 100% attendance will receive a certificate at the end of the year and this effort recognised
- Posters about attendance may be displayed

Attendance will be reported on the child's Annual Report.

#### **Attendance Reports to the BoG**

Whole School attendance will be reported to the BoG on a termly basis.

This policy will be made available for parents and will be reviewed regularly by the Board of Governors.

**Ratified at a Board of Governors Meeting Nov 2023**

**Appendix A**  
**Attendance Regulations Letter**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

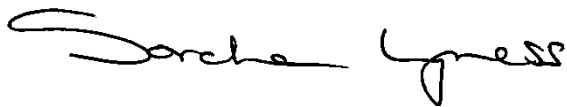
Dear Parent/Guardian,

Our records show that \_\_\_\_\_ was absent from school on \_\_\_\_\_ . As yet, the school has received no explanation as to why the absence occurred.

Regulations state, the school must be informed of the reason for a pupil's absence from school and such details are recorded on computer.

Please fill in the form below and send it to your child's teacher by return.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sorcha Lyness". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'S'.

Mrs Sorcha Lyness  
Principal

**Appendix B**  
**Sample letter to Parents**

To the Parents of \_\_\_\_\_

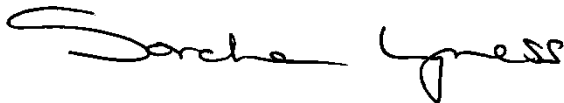
Dear Parent/Guardian,

We have recently analysed the attendance register and have noted that your child's attendance has dropped to .....% which means that he/she has missed .....days of school.

While 100% attendance is clearly the ideal, in many cases legitimate illnesses or other factors can prevent it. When attendance falls below a certain level we become concerned, as our aim is to help your child reach his/her full potential. This is difficult to achieve if a lot of days are missed from school.

Should you have concerns you wish to raise regarding your child's attendance, please contact the school office to make an appointment to discuss the matter with me.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sorcha Lyness". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial 'S'.

Mrs Sorcha Lyness  
Principal

## Appendix C

### **ATTENDANCE CODES, DESCRIPTIONS AND MEANINGS**

<b>CODE</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>MEANING</b>
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/ \ Present: / = (AM); \ = (PM) Present

**A\*** Artistic Endeavour Authorised Absence

**B\*** Bereavement Authorised Absence

**C** Suspended Authorised Absence

**D** No reason provided for absence Unauthorised Absence

**F\*** Family Holiday (agreed) Authorised Absence

**G\*** Family Holiday (not agreed) Unauthorised Absence

**H\*** Other Absence Unauthorised Absence

**I** Illness (not medical or dental appointments) Authorised Absence

**J\*** Extended Leave Attendance not required New

**L\*** Late (before registration closed) Present

**M** Medical/Dental Appointments Authorised Absence

**N** No reason yet provided for absence (temporary code only) Unauthorised Absence

**O\*** Other Exceptional Circumstances Authorised Absence

**P\*** Approved Activity Approved Educational Activity

**R\*** Religious Observance Authorised Absence

**S\*** Study Leave Approved Educational Activity

**U\*** Late (after registration closed) Unauthorised Absence

**V\*** Educational Visit/Examination Approved Educational Activity

**W\*** Work Experience Approved Educational Activity

**X** Only staff should attend Attendance not required

**Y\*** Exceptional Closure Attendance not required

**#** Holiday for all Attendance not required

**!\*** No attendance required Attendance not required

**1** Community Providers / EOTAS (organised by the EA) Approved Educational Activity

**2** Exceptional Teaching Arrangement/hospital tuition (organised by the EA) Approved Educational Activity

**3** Elective Home Education Attendance Not Required

**4** Pupil Referral Unit Approved Educational Activity

**5** Another mainstream school (under Entitlement Framework - EF) Approved Educational Activity

**6** Training Organisation (under EF) Approved Educational Activity

**7** FE College (under EF) Approved Educational Activity

**8** Intensive Support Learning Unit Approved Educational Activity

**9** CAMHS / Mental Health Support Approved Educational Activity

**\* The use of this code is at the discretion of the school\***