

St Brigid's Primary School

Pupil Attendance Policy



Learning and Growing Together

Policy reviewed by staff—January 2023

Reviewed and ratified by Governors- April 2023

Signature of Chair

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'B. J. Smyth', is written over a dotted line.

INTRODUCTION

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.

In keeping with our Mission Statement, St Brigid's Primary School will strive to promote an ethos and culture which encourages good attendance and where each pupil will feel valued and secure.

MISSION STATEMENT

St Brigid's Primary School seeks to provide a safe, caring, inclusive and stimulating environment in which all children have an equal opportunity to fulfil their potential. Our Catholic values of respect, honesty and tolerance enables everyone to learn and grow together.

We aim to provide high quality learning experiences for all our children, working in partnership with parents, the parish and wider community.

PRINCIPLES OF ATTENDANCE POLICY

We believe that high levels of attendance are directly linked to pupil attainment and fulfilling potential. We will encourage parents/carers to ensure that their child achieves maximum possible attendance and that any problems which prevent this are identified and addressed quickly. The staff of St Brigid's Primary School recognise their responsibility in monitoring and promoting the regular attendance of all pupils. We acknowledge that irregular attendance seriously disrupts continuity of teaching and learning and impedes the child's ability to develop and maintain friendships within school.

This policy has been developed in consultation with the Board of Governors, teachers, Educational Welfare Services, parents and children. It seeks to ensure that all parties involved are aware of attendance matters in the school and to outline the school's commitment to attendance matters detailing procedures monitoring and promoting pupil attendance.

AIMS

- To continue to improve/ maintain the overall attendance of pupils at St Brigid's Primary School.
- To promote a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure and valued.
- To promote opportunities to celebrate and reward pupil's successes and achievements.
- To develop a framework that defines roles and responsibilities in relation to attendance.

- To ensure that attendance is monitored effectively and reasons for absences are recorded promptly and consistently.
- To provide advice, support and guidance to parents/guardians and pupils.
- To implement strategies to improve poor attendance.
- To instil in parents and pupils the importance of establishing a good routine which will stand by children in their post primary education and into the adult work place.
- To promote good relationships with the Education Welfare Service.

ROLE OF THE SCHOOL

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS

The Board of Governors has the ultimate responsibility for school attendance, however, this is delegated on a daily basis to the Principal. The Board of Governors has the responsibility to monitor school attendance and the effectiveness of the school's policy and practice by ensuring it is placed as an agenda item at each meeting. The Board of Governors will annually review school attendance figures.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PRINCIPAL

(In absence of Principal, VP will assume this responsibility)

The Principal, Mrs Dolores Miller, is responsible for attendance. The Principal will:

- Take responsibility for attendance and ensure statistical information is provided as required by DE.
- Ensure that parents and pupils are aware of their responsibilities regarding attendance and punctuality at the point of admission.
- Provide attendance statistics in the Principal's Reports for the Board of Governors and ensure the Board of Governors is informed of any attendance issues.
- Meet with the Education Welfare Officer termly to discuss pupil attendance issues.
- Liaise with the school administrative staff each month to ensure all attendance is up to date and that termly reports are completed for the EWO meeting.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF CLASS TEACHER

Teaching staff regularly monitor the attendance and punctuality of pupils by ensuring that attendance is recorded at the beginning of morning and afternoon registration sessions.

The class teacher will:

- Monitor daily attendance by marking registers, collecting absence notes and assisting the Principal in identifying irregular attendance patterns
- Follow-up any unexplained absence by contacting parents

- Ring parents on day 3 of an absence to inquire about the wellbeing of a child and if parents require any assistance or support from the school
- Maintain ongoing communication with a family during a period of long term absence
- Provide support to children whilst on long term absence and upon their return to school
- Promote class attendance
- Refer any concerns about a child's absence to the Principal
- Inform the Principal/Vice Principals immediately if a child is off due to:
 - an injury sustained in school or at home,
 - a family bereavement or illness.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

The Administrative staff will:

- Operate the SIMS system
- Log all phone calls from parents when pupils are absent from school and inform class teachers
- Collate registration data
- Assist with awards for full attendance
- Each week check that class attendance is up to date and provide any technical support to new/sub teachers in the use of SIMS attendance
- Print off class attendance summaries at end of each month and forward to the Principal
- Provide termly attendance summaries of absences for the Principal.

SCHOOL ROUTINES

In St Brigid's Primary School, we believe that every child should have a positive start to their school day. Maintaining excellent attendance and coming to school on time helps to ensure morning routines are well established and our pupils are in a good place to engage fully with the learning experiences throughout the day.

To ensure the above we have a clear set of school routines which we expect all parents and pupils to follow:

- Pupils may enter the school from 8.45am- at this time members of staff are on duty and can ensure appropriate supervision.
- The school day starts at 9.00am- we expect all children to be in class at this time.
- Any child arriving to school after 9.00 am is late.
- A child arriving to school after 9.00 am will need to come to the main school entrance. The Secretary will give the child access to the school building.

In St Brigid's Primary School, we will...

- Keep regular and accurate attendance and punctuality records and monitor each individual child's attendance and punctuality
- Promote good attendance and punctuality and reduce absence through a system of reward and recognition
- Regularly inform parents/carers of the % attendance of all pupils
- Where appropriate, inform parents/carers via school letters regarding their child's/children's poor attendance and punctuality
- Act to address patterns of absence
- Ensure that every pupil has access to education to which they are entitled
- Endeavour to keep in contact with a parent where there is a prolonged absence

PROMOTING AND CELEBRATING GOOD ATTENDANCE

To promote an ethos and culture which encourages good attendance and where each pupil will feel valued and secure we believe that it is important to celebrate our achievements and successes. We will do this by:

- Monthly Class Attendance- each month the class with the highest % attendance is recognised and rewarded- Attendance cup presented in Assembly
- Monthly Most Improved Class Attendance
- Monthly Individual Attendance- each month any child achieving 100% attendance will receive (dojo points)
- At the end of the academic year 100% Attendance Certificates will be presented.
- The Leavers' Assembly also celebrates attendance, and awards are presented for a years' full attendance.
- The names of pupils who achieve 7 years of 100% attendance will be passed to the Education Authority for their annual prize giving celebration.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PARENTS

St Brigid's is committed to working with parents/guardians to encourage regular and punctual attendance. Parents/guardians have a legal duty (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/guardian has a legal duty to ensure that they regularly attend that school.

Parents / guardians can help the school to manage attendance by:

- Contacting the school by phone call or email info@stbrigidps.downpatrick.ni.sch.uk on the first day of a child's absence. They should state the reason for the absence and also the date on which the child is expected to return to school. This should be followed by a written note of explanation on the child's return 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
- Maintain good communication with the class teacher throughout a period of prolonged absence
- Liaising with the Principal if the family needs any support or assistance during the child's period of prolonged absence
- Discuss with the class teacher or Principal promptly if your child appears reluctant to attend school to ensure that both you and your child receive maximum support.
- Ensuring children arrive in school on time, well prepared for the school day.
- Taking family holidays during school holiday periods and be aware that requests for holidays during term time will be discouraged.
- Working closely with the Educational Welfare Officer(EWO) to resolve any problems that may impede a child's attendance
- Endeavour to make medical appointments outside school time.
- Parents/carers should be willing to address poor attendance patterns.
- Parents/carers should take an active interest in their child's education and promote the benefits of regular attendance.

Pupils are expected to be in school at 9.00am for registration and the beginning of classes. It is the responsibility of parents/guardians to ensure that your child is punctual. Lateness is recorded at registration and on your child's attendance record.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PUPILS

It is expected that the pupils will:

- Attend school regularly.
- Arrive on time and be appropriately prepared for the day.
- Tell a member of staff about any problem or reason that may prevent them from attending school.
- Bring a written note from a parent/guardian to your teacher when you return from school

THE RECORDING OF ATTENDANCE

To accurately record and monitor attendance in a consistent way we will adhere to the guidance provided in the Department of Education Circular 2021/16, The following links provide detailed guidance on attendance and absences.

<https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/education/Update%20to%202021%2016%20-%20Attendance%20Guidance%20%26%20Absence%20Recording%20By%20Schools.pdf>

ABSENCE PROCEDURES

A record of each child's attendance is retained using the Attendance Codes and the guidance set out in DE Circular 2021/16. Each child's overall percentage attendance will be recorded on the Annual Report to Parents. Parents are required to advise the school on the first morning of a child's absence by speaking with the class teacher, sending an email to info@stbrigidps.downpatrick.ni.sch.uk or telephoning the school office from 8:30am. Parents should, as far as possible, provide an estimate of the likely duration of the absence. If an absence is likely to be prolonged, parents should maintain contact with the school throughout the duration of the absence so that the school can assist with homework or any other necessary arrangements which may be required. If children are to be absent from school for a portion of the day after registration closes parents/guardians should report to the school office to request that their child is released from class into their care. If children are attending appointments in the morning and consequently miss registration, their parents/cares should return them to school after the appointment. The class teacher should be given as much notice of these appointments as possible so that the appropriate code is used in the attendance register.

FAMILY HOLIDAYS DURING TERM TIME

St Brigid's 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.

PROCEDURES FOR MANAGING NON ATTENDANCE

The school values good communication with parents and the importance of working together to resolve any matter which is affecting a child's attendance. Parents and pupils should inform the school promptly of any matter that is affecting their child's attendance or their health and wellbeing.

The school will continually monitor the attendance of all pupils. In St Brigid's Primary we follow a two stage process to support pupils who are persistently absent for any reason: Each month the Principal will review all absences and the reasons given for those children who fall below 85% as a cumulative percentage since the beginning of the academic year. Trends in absenteeism is looked for such as improving or declining attendance from the previous month or if there are certain days of the week where individuals are absent more often. Following this analysis a range of actions may result:

- School may phone parents to discuss the matter and offer support with a view of attendance increasing. Very often interventions at this early stage can have a positive impact on pupil attendance and no further action is required.
- Following from the first stage if no improvement is evident the list of children whose attendance which is below 85% is discussed with the Education Welfare Officer and a referral will be discussed or agreed. The Principal will liaise with the class teacher, SENCO and other professionals if the need for support is identified.

The Board of Governors will be kept informed at its termly meetings about the school's overall attendance rate and the actions being taken to address the attendance of those pupils whose attendance has dropped to an unacceptable level.

EDUCATION WELFARE SERVICE

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

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

REVIEW

This policy will be kept under review as part of the school's procedure for monitoring the implementation of its policies and procedures. The policy will be amended to take account of any changes in the legislation and/or the guidance issued by the Education Authority/Department of Education.