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# HOLY FAMILY PRIMARY AND NURSERY SCHOOL

## ATTENDANCE POLICY

### INTRODUCTION

Raising 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.

Holy Family Primary and Nursery School will strive to promote an ethos and culture that encourages good attendance and where each pupil will feel valued and secure.

### AIMS AND ETHOS

Our school aims to ensure that every child will want to attend school. This will be achieved by creating a warm, welcoming, secure and inclusive atmosphere where the pupils feel valued, and there is a suitable and accessible curriculum delivered in a bright, attractive environment. We have a good record of attendance that we wish to maintain. Currently, an overall attendance level of 94% is our target.

### THE MANAGEMENT OF ATTENDANCE

#### Role of the Pupils

All pupils at Holy Family Primary and Nursery School have a duty to ensure that they attend school punctually and regularly. If they have been absent from school, a written note or verbal communication from a parent/guardian must be provided to their teacher before or when they return.

#### Role of the Parents

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's / 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 that may be required.

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

If the child appears reluctant to attend school, please discuss the matter promptly with the class teacher or principal to ensure that both parent/guardian and child receive maximum support.



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## **The Board of Governors**

The Board of Governors has the ultimate responsibility for school attendance, but this is delegated to the principal on a day-to-day basis. The Board of Governors has a responsibility to monitor school attendance and the effectiveness of the school's attendance policy and practice and will be provided with regular reports about attendance issues.

## **The Principal**

Overall responsibility for attendance on a day-to-day basis lies with the principal who has the role along with the Board of Governors for determining resources and staffing to deal with attendance issues, ensuring the Board of Governors are informed about attendance issues and ensuring statistical information is provided as requested by government. In Holy Family, designated responsibility for attendance lies with the vice principal, who will liaise on a monthly basis with the Education Welfare Officer, regarding pupils whose attendance is below 85% to date. Prior to this meeting, a whole school attendance list with restriction of below 85% is circulated to all staff so they may indicate reasons for, or concerns about, children's absence.

The vice principal cross-references this to the previous month's figures to check for improvement, deterioration or additions to the list. This document is the basis for discussion between the vice principal and the EWO. The vice principal takes minutes of the meeting, information is shared, outcomes of home visits discussed and plans made for further referrals. Copies of monthly lists are given to the principal and EWO.

## **The Senior Leadership Team**

The senior leadership team has input with attendance matters. This includes:-

- Talking to pupils about their irregular attendance
- Supporting policy development
- Helping devise action plans where necessary and monitoring their effectiveness

## **The Class Teacher**

Effective practice in relation to managing individual pupil attendance depends on the class teacher.

The class teacher will:

- Endeavour to develop trusting relationships with all pupils
- Monitor attendance - mark daily registers, check absence notes, notify administration staff early about absentees and identify pupils with irregular attendance patterns
- Follow up pupil absence if notes are not forthcoming
- Talk to individual pupils about their attendance
- Talk to parents about their child's irregular attendance eg at parent interviews (Teachers will be provided with their class attendance percentages for referral during interviews)
- Promote good attendance through the curriculum
- Provide support to pupils after a long absence from school
- If necessary, meet with the EWO
- Provide and mark work for pupils who are absent from school



## **The Administration Staff**

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

- Compiling the class registers
- Taking phone messages from parents of pupils who are absent and entering these on to SIMS
- Phoning parents of pupils who are absent from school without explanation
- Compiling monthly whole school absence lists, restriction below 94% / 85%
- Assisting with reward/award system
- Creating a warm and inviting first point of contact for all pupils and parents

## **The Education Welfare Service**

Education Authority through the Education Welfare Service has a legal responsibility to make sure that parents meet their responsibility towards their children's education.

Regular attendance is an essential requirement for educational results and where attendance difficulties exist or a pupil's attendance falls below 85%, Education Welfare Service (EWS) will support staff and parents in developing and implementing strategies to address or improve school attendance.

## **THE RECORDING OF ATTENDANCE**

The Department of Education has issued guidelines about categorising absence as authorised. The coding mechanism used is outlined in DENI Circular 2019/14 'Attendance Guidance and Absence Recording by Schools'.

It is the responsibility of the school to authorise absence.

## **DAILY REGISTRATION PROCEDURES**

- The class register is marked in the morning and amended as necessary by the class teacher
- Children who arrive late will be marked thus by the class teacher with a relevant comment added
- Substitute teachers will be informed about attendance procedures by the vice principal in charge and via the attendance policy

## **FAMILY HOLIDAYS DURING TERM TIME**

Holy Family Primary and Nursery 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.

## **PUNCTUALITY**

When pupils arrive at school after 9.45am they will receive a late registration mark.

The importance of good punctuality habits will be discussed at Nursery and P1 Induction Meetings, key stage assemblies, year group assemblies and in class.



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Children will be encouraged to cultivate good punctuality habits and be supported to improve when necessary. Where possible, parents may be contacted also to enlist their support to help children improve punctuality. Where the problem is chronic, referral may be made to the EWO.

### **Specific strategies to promote excellent attendance and punctuality**

In order to promote excellent attendance and punctuality various strategies may be used. These will include:

- "Excellent Attendance" certificates.
- Special assemblies with the focus on attendance and punctuality.
- The award of house points or pupil of the month awards.
- Specific curriculum teaching associated with attendance and punctuality.
- Prizes for 100% attendance each calendar month / termly.
- Participation in the Key Stage Two Star Award system
- Utilisation of "Golden Time" for the attainment of punctuality and/or attendance targets.

The range and type of promotion strategies will be kept under constant review.

### **PROCEDURES FOR MANAGING NON-ATTENDANCE**

1. If attendance falls below 94% it will be monitored by the VP and notification of how many days a child has been absent for that month will be sent to parents.
2. If attendance falls below 85% the case will be discussed by the VP and the EWO. This triggers the following stepped procedure:
  - i. Monitoring by school: VP checks with teacher.
  - ii. If necessary, teacher speaks to parent.
  - iii. Letter 1 sent to parent highlighting attendance issue if there is no improvement.
  - iv. If necessary, VP speaks to parent (formal school meeting).
  - v. Letter 2 sent to parent to inform them of referral to EWS: if there is no improvement.
  - vi. Referral to EWS is made by the VP.
  - vii. EWO contacts/visits parent.

### **REVIEW**

This attendance policy will be kept under review. The date for the next review is September 2026. Responsibility for the overall review of the policy lies with Mrs Parke, Vice Principal.