

# ***St. Patrick's Primary School***



## **PUPIL ATTENDANCE POLICY**

2021-22 (Amended policy in the context of NI Executives' Coronavirus (COVID-19) regulations and the associated Department's (DENI) Guidance for Schools and Educational Settings in Northern Ireland)

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# ST. PATRICK'S PRIMARY SCHOOL

## **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.

St. Patrick's Primary School strives to promote an ethos and culture which encourages good attendance and where each pupil will feel valued and secure.

## **Vision Statement:**

"We Care, We Share, We Learn."

## **School Mission Statement:**

"In St. Patrick's Primary School, we provide a welcoming, attractive and stimulating environment which supports pupils' learning and which celebrates their academic and non-academic achievements. We provide a broad and balanced curriculum, which develops the skills, concepts and knowledge necessary for future learning and living. To assist us in our efforts, we work in close partnership with our parents. Our staff, through their enthusiasm, dedication and hard work, support the pupils in all aspects of their learning."

## **Attendance Aims:**

1. To improve/maintain the overall attendance of pupils at St. Patrick's Primary School;
2. To develop a framework that defines roles and responsibilities in relation to attendance, its recording and reporting;
3. To provide advice, support and guidance to parents/guardians and pupils in relation to the promotion of high levels of pupil attendance;
4. To promote and maintain good relationships with Education Welfare Service;
5. To endorse the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child and work towards the implementation of policies and practices which reflect the Convention;
6. To involve the parents, Board of Governors and wider community in the life of the school, and in the holistic development of the children in our care.

## **Role of the School:**

The Principal at St. Patrick's Primary School has overall responsibility for school attendance; each teacher has responsibility of monitoring pupils' daily attendance and bringing any concerns regarding school attendance to the Principal's/Vice-Principal's attention. Attendance is monitored on a daily basis.

The Board of Governors has a key role in providing support to the Principal and staff by regularly and systematically reviewing school attendance figures and targets, and ensuring attendance is placed as an agenda item at termly meetings.

Our school has systems in place where 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; 2015/02;](#)

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

St. Patrick's Primary School is committed to working with all our parents to encourage regular and punctual attendance and to use our systems of recording to establish early contact with parents if pupil attendance percentages give concern. Our school is also committed to working closely with our Education Welfare Officer to provide assistance to parents to help with issues regarding 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 our 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.

Our school day **starts at 8.45am** and pupils are expected to be in school at this time and to be in class before **registration closes at 9.00am.** (***Due to the Covid-19 health context, school is operating staggered arrival and exit times at present***)

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 contact school promptly and discuss the matter, initially, with the class teacher. In more difficult cases, parents should contact the Principal/Vice-Principal to ensure that both you and your child receive maximum support.

Parents should also seek to limit to the minimum the number of times a child is removed from school during a normal school day. Parents are advised that medical/dental appointments should, as far as possible, be arranged for out-of-school hours.

### **Role of Pupils:**

Each pupil at St. Patrick's Primary School has a duty to ensure that they attend school punctually and regularly. If you have been absent from school, a written note from a parent/guardian must be provided to your teacher when you return.

### **Absence Procedures:**

If a pupil is to be removed from class during the course of a normal school day, parents should:

- Initially inform the class teacher through the secretary in writing/by telephone of this fact in advance;
- Proceed to the school office (9.00am-3.00pm) where the school secretary will make arrangements for the child to be obtained from his/her class;
- Ensure they sign the Attendance Record Book in the office;
- Return their child to school, if feasible, following an appointment.

### **Pupil Sickness:**

School staff seek to work closely with children to ensure attendance rates are kept high. However, if a child is sick, parents **should not send** the child to school as this can result in cross infection and other children having to subsequently take days off themselves.

If a child has certain specific illnesses/infections, there are recommended periods of time where the child should not attend or return to school. Parents should consult with their GP or contact school for advice in any case.

**Some recommended periods of exclusion are:**

<b>CONDITION</b>	<b>RECOMMENDED PERIOD TO BE KEPT OFF SCHOOL:</b>
<b>RASHES/SKIN INFECTIONS</b>	
Chicken pox *	5 days from onset of rash (Vulnerable children and expectant mothers **)
Measles *	5 days from onset of rash (Vulnerable children and expectant mothers **)
Scarlet fever *	24 hours after commencing antibiotic treatment
Slapped Cheek	None (Vulnerable children and expectant mothers **)
Shingles	Exclude if rash is open/weeping and cannot be covered
<b>DIARRHOEA / VOMITING</b>	Child should be kept off school for 48 hours (2 days) following the last episode
<b>RESPIRATORY INFECTIONS</b>	
Flu	Until recovered
Whooping cough *	5 days from starting of antibiotic treatment or 21 days from onset of illness
<b>OTHER CONDITIONS</b>	
Glandular fever	None
Head lice	None
Tonsillitis	None

\*Denotes a notifiable disease which should be reported to GP and school.

\*\* Some medical conditions make children/expectant mothers vulnerable to infection. School should be notified if a child has had a diagnosis of any of the above.

**Family holidays during Term Time:**

St. Patrick's Primary School strongly discourages and cannot sanction holidays taken by families during term time due to the impact they have on pupils' learning. Family holidays taken during term time, in accordance with DE Attendance Policy, will be categorised as **unauthorised absence**.

If any family believes there are 'exceptional circumstances' as to why they would wish to plan a family holiday during term time, they should make initial contact with the Principal to discuss this matter.

### **Procedures for Recording Attendance/Non-attendance:**

If a child is absent from school and no written confirmation has been received, an **ABSENCE NOTIFICATION FORM (ANF 1)** is sent home in the days following the child's absence. If this attendance form is not completed and returned, the pupil's absence will be recorded as an unauthorised absence.

### **Procedures for Recording Pupil Non-attendance:**

Pupil attendance is regularly monitored in our school with Attendance Reports generated at the end of each half-term. If any child's attendance **falls below 90%** or otherwise **gives cause for concern**, the school will send home an initial letter informing parents of the child's current % attendance rate and the opportunity to discuss any problems.

If a pupil's attendance rate subsequently continues to drop or fails to improve over a period of time, the child's case is referred to the Education Welfare Officer during one of their regular school visits.

On any occasion where a child's attendance **rate falls below 85%**, the Education Welfare Officer is notified.

If a child is absent from school and parents **consistently fail** to notify school in writing of the reason for their absence, a copy of this policy will be sent home, as well as Education Welfare Services being notified.

### **Education Welfare Service:**

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

### **Annual Reporting to Parents:**

As part of their Annual Pupil Profile, each parent receives notification of their child's individual actual year's attendance through their End of Year Report. This attendance is also classified against the guidance in DE's School Attendance Matters Guide to Parents:

ATTENDANCE RATE	DAYS MISSED	CATERGORISATION
100%	0	Excellent
95%	9	Satisfactory
90%	19	Poor
85%	28	Very Poor
Less than 80%	38 or more	Unacceptable
Less than 75%	46 or more	Unacceptable

**School Attendance Matters:**

The Department of Education has produced recent correspondence under their framework – School Attendance Matters – ‘MISS SCHOOL, MISS OUT’.

The leaflet entitled School Attendance Matters: A Parent’s Guide, is a useful resource and can be found at:

[http://www.deni.gov.uk/a\\_parents\\_guide\\_individual\\_pages.pdf](http://www.deni.gov.uk/a_parents_guide_individual_pages.pdf)

These publications lay out for parents a rationale for ensuring high levels of school attendance; what the law says; what parents should do if their child’s attendance is a cause for concern; and attendance statistics.

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

**Monitoring & Evaluation:**

This policy will be monitored and reviewed annually, taking account of any recommendations/advice originating from DENI.

..... Date:

Signature – Chair, Board of Governors

..... Date:

Signature – Principal

Appendix 1:

ANF 1



**ST. PATRICK'S PRIMARY SCHOOL  
ABSENCE NOTIFICATION FORM**

**Please Note – This form must be completed for each period of pupil absence and returned to the school immediately.**

**Name of Pupil:** .....

**Class/Teacher Name:** .....

**Date(s) of Absence:** .....

**Reason for Absence:**

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**Signed (Parent / Guardian):** .....

**Date:** .....