

St. Joseph's
Carryduff



School Attendance Policy
(Pupil Attendance)

2014

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 its Mission Statement, St Joseph's will strive to promote an ethos and culture which encourages good attendance and where each pupil will feel valued and secure.

Mission Statement

In St Joseph's a culture of achievement, improvement and ambition exists with clear expectations that all pupils can and will achieve to the very best of their ability.

We aim to provide an inclusive, caring and safe environment in which all children can grow in self-esteem, independence and confidence. Our care for the children enables their holistic development; spiritually, physically, intellectually, morally, emotionally and socially.

Integral to this is the recognition of the self worth and value of every child, the fostering of the key values of Catholic education and the promotion of mutual understanding and respect for others.

In order to accomplish this we seek to create a learning community where children, parents, staff and governors demonstrate a commitment to achieving high standards, mutual care and support of each other.

Aims of the School Attendance Policy

1. To improve/maintain the overall attendance of pupils at St Joseph's.
2. To develop a framework that defines roles and responsibilities in relation to attendance.
3. To provide advice, support and guidance to parents/guardians and pupils.
4. To promote good relationships with Education Welfare Service.

Role of the School

The Principal has overall responsibility for school attendance; teachers should bring any concerns regarding school attendance to his attention.

The Board of Governors provide support by reviewing school attendance figures and targets and ensuring it is placed as an agenda item at meetings on a regular basis.

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 the 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

St Joseph's is committed to working with parents to encourage regular and punctual 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, through a personal contact with the class teacher, a telephone call or an email to the school account 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 9:00am for registration and the beginning of classes. It is the responsibility of parents to ensure that children are punctual. Lateness is recorded at registration and noted on each child's attendance record.

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

Role of Pupils

Each pupil at St Joseph's has a duty to ensure that they attend school punctually and regularly. If a pupil has been absent from school an explanation of the absence must be provided by the parent/guardian by way of a written note, an email to the school, a telephone call or by a personal contact with the class teacher/school.

Absence Procedures

A record of each child's attendance will be retained using the Attendance Codes and the guidance set out in DE Circular 2013/13. 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 the school's account or telephoning the school office. 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. The class teacher should be given as much advance notice as possible of any appointments arranged for during the school day.

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 Joseph's 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.

Procedures for Managing Non-attendance

Class teachers will raise the issue of attendance with parents of any child who has a low percentage attendance resulting from an intermittent attendance pattern. The class teacher will focus on the impact that poor attendance is having on the child's learning. This will be done at the Parent Teacher consultations which are held on two occasions during the year (usually October and February).

The Principal will monitor the whole school attendance rates and the attendance percentage for each class on a monthly basis. Individual pupil records will be reviewed for any pupil falling below a percentage attendance rate of 85%.

Where there is a cause for concern about a child's attendance, the Principal will issue correspondence advising the parents that their child's attendance rate is unacceptable.

The parents will also be advised that a referral to the Education Welfare Service will ensue if there is not an improvement.

The Principal will meet with the Education Welfare Officer each term and together they will review the attendance of any child falling below 85%. At the Review the Principal and EWO will determine the next steps which should be taken which could include making a referral to the Education Welfare Service for any child about whom there is a significant concern.

After a referral has been made, the Education Welfare Service will engage with the family in a supportive way in order to improve the child's attendance.

The Principal and the Education Welfare Service will keep the case under review and will continue to work in partnership to secure improvement in the child's attendance.

Education Welfare Service

Education and Library Boards through the Education Welfare Service have 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.