

St. Colman's Primary School/ Annaclone



All Saints' Nursery Unit

Attendance Policy

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Vision Statement

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To be an inclusive, caring School where childhood and community are valued; one, which inspires learning for life and develops the personal qualities needed to succeed in a rapidly changing World. This vision will be best realised as we undergo a continual journey of collaboration and progress through partnership, leading to excellence.

Mission Statement

We believe that each child will succeed through experiencing quality in:

- ❑ A broad and challenging curriculum
- ❑ Innovative teaching and an investigative approach to learning
- ❑ A stimulating learning environment
- ❑ An enriching programme of extra-curricular activities and visits
- ❑ A rich, varied and up-to-date range of learning resources
- ❑ An ethos of support, challenge and encouragement to succeed
- ❑ Learning partnerships between the school, home and parish community

We demonstrate our commitment to working as a learning community by:

- ❑ Striving for continuous improvement in all that we do
- ❑ Working collaboratively towards common goals

Aims for the Pupils

St. Colman's Primary School and All Saints' Nursery Unit (Annaclone), promote high achievement and learning for life by working with the staff and children to:

- ❑ Develop enquiring minds and a spirit of curiosity
- ❑ Promote well-being and the importance of a healthy work/life balance
- ❑ Encourage excellence and the development of new skills
- ❑ Ensure the children in our school are immersed in their community but are also forward facing and expansive in outlook
- ❑ Achieve their highest standards in all areas of the curriculum

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- ❑ Have high self-esteem - respecting themselves, others and the environment by our positive approach to behaviour thus ensuring that each individual is motivated to do his/her best
- ❑ Utilise and provide opportunities to develop their thinking skills enabling them to work independently or collaboratively
- ❑ Be an integral part of the Parish community - one which fosters a faith commitment to Christ and prepares pupils for a fuller participation in the life of the Church
- ❑ Seek to extend themselves in mind, body and spirit
- ❑ Become highly motivated life-long learners
- ❑ Gain advanced technological skills and an awareness of Global Issues
- ❑ Be flexible and adaptable for the modern world

Our School Values:

- Happiness and enjoyment
- Effort, attitude and perseverance
- Team, school and community spirit
- Honesty, fairness and trustworthiness
- Respect and tolerance
- Politeness, kindness and caring
- High standards of behaviour
- Partnerships and collaboration
- Resilience



Ethos of the School

St Colman's Primary School and All Saints' Nursery Unit sets out to create a caring and supportive environment, where all children can develop intellectually, emotionally, physically, socially, morally and spiritually.

In addition, the delivery of the curriculum is designed to develop interest and motivation in children using enthusiastic teaching and interesting and relevant learning activities.

- Children are encouraged to achieve high standards and are given as much help as they may need in order to achieve success.
- There are many extra-curricular activities that encourage co-operation and discipline through team games. Children are further encouraged through a variety of musical/dramatic productions to develop self-discipline.
- Within this context there is a code of discipline that is consistently enforced to ensure that the education of children takes place in an orderly and caring environment.
- Through continual monitoring of individual children's achievements, class teachers provide work pitched at a level that challenges each child yet does not frustrate.
- Good relationships within the School are vital. The staff set an example by working well together with a harmony of purpose and providing an interesting and caring environment within their classrooms.
- As part of the pastoral dimension of the School, children are taught how to care for others, to respect other people's points of view and to respect property. Children are encouraged to contribute to charity and to help people who are less fortunate than themselves.

School/Class Attendance target: 95% or above

Rationale:

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. Colman's Primary School and All Saints' Nursery Unit** 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.

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.

What the Law says about Attendance at School

Under Article 45 of the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986 ("the 1986 Order"), it is the duty of parents who have a child of compulsory school age to ensure their child receives efficient, full time education suitable to their age, aptitude, ability and to any special educational needs they may have. Such education may be provided by regular attendance at school or otherwise, for example home education.

Paragraph 3 (1) of Schedule 13 to the 1986 Order states that it is the duty of a parent of a registered pupil of a school to secure their regular attendance at school. This applies to all children of compulsory school age who are on the roll of a school. As a parent you are legally responsible for making this happen.

Under Part III of Schedule 13 to the 1986 Order, if a child or young person who is registered at a school does not attend regularly, a parent can receive a fine not exceeding £1,000 in court (for each child). An Education Supervision Order (ESO) could also be made by a court under Article 55 of the Children (NI) Order 1995.

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Introduction

Attendance patterns are set from the very first days at school. Regular attendance at school is essential to ensure uninterrupted progress and to enable children to extend their potential. The attendance pattern for all children is monitored weekly and monthly with the school seeking to work actively with parents to ensure a regular pattern is maintained. We expect all children on roll to attend every day, when the school is in session as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so. We do all we can to encourage the children to attend, and to put in place appropriate procedures to support this. We believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is development of positive attitudes towards school and learning.

Poor attendance can seriously affect each child's: -

- attainment in school
- relationships with other children and their ability to form lasting friendships
- confidence to attempt new work and work alongside others

Each child's attendance can be summarised as:

96%+ Excellent - This will help all aspects of a child's progress and life in school. This will give them a good start in life and supports a positive work ethic.

94 - 95% Average - strive to build on this and make every effort to reach the 96% target.

90 - 93% Poor - absence is now beginning to affect attainment and progress at school. Work with the school urgently to improve the situation.

Below 90% Unacceptable - Absence **IS** causing **SERIOUS CONCERN**. It **IS** affecting attainment and progress and is disrupting your child's learning. School will write to parents notifying them once their child hits this level. The school will work with you and the Education Welfare Officer [EWO] to improve your child's attendance. Continued absence below 85% will automatically mean a referral to the EWO service.

Non-attendance is an important issue that is treated seriously. However each case is different and the school acknowledges that no one standard response will be appropriate in every case. Consideration is given to all factors affecting attendance before deciding what intervention strategies to apply.

a) In every case, early intervention is essential to prevent the problem from worsening. It is essential that parents keep the school fully informed of any matters that may affect their child's attendance; they are reminded of this duty in the school prospectus.

b) Prior to the engagement of the EWO, the school may issue letters to parents clearly defining the concerns within school regarding a pupils' absence. It is hoped that a quick response and change in levels of absence will prevent the need for EWO involvement.

As a school we will endeavour to provide an environment where all pupils feel valued and welcome. For a child to reach their full educational achievement a high level of school attendance is essential. We will consistently work towards a goal of 100% for all children. The school will review

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its systems for improving attendance at regular intervals to ensure that it is achieving its set goals.

Aims:

We aim to ensure that all our pupils will want to attend school. We believe that this is best achieved by providing a happy, caring atmosphere, in which children can grow, mature and realise their full potential. We also believe that encouraging good attendance will help children to develop self-confidence, independence, self-discipline and a sense of responsibility for themselves. Good attendance habits established at a young age will prepare our pupils for the future opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life. In these ways this policy and our procedures for the management of pupil attendance support our

The School Aims:

- To encourage 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.
- To work in partnership with parents to establish good attendance patterns.
- To develop a positive reward system to encourage good attendance.
- To keep parents informed about their child's attendance and punctuality.
- To encourage children to become independent and come to school every day, on time and with the correct resources.
- To liaise with the Education Welfare Officer with regard to attendance.
- To improve rates of attendance for all pupils in school

Why is school attendance and punctuality important?

School attendance and punctuality are important because:

- It is required by law.
- Children need to attend school regularly to keep up with their work and to promote social development.
- A good education will give a child the best possible start in life and
- Enable him or her to make the best of the opportunities available.
- Children need to develop good habits in readiness for later life.
- Employers of school leavers will take into account the young person's school attendance and punctuality record before making a job offer.
- Young people who are away from school without good reason are at risk of becoming victims of crime or abuse.
- Regular attendance and educational attainment are inextricably linked, regular attendance ensures pupils get the best possible outcomes from their school career.

Young people who regularly miss school without good reason are more likely to become isolated from their friends, to underachieve in examinations and/or become involved in anti-social behaviour.

Roles and Responsibilities

Roles and responsibilities of the Principal/Pastoral Co-ordinator:

- Managing pupil attendance within school, benchmarking etc
- Reward 100% attendance at the end of each year, with pupils presented with a certificate for full attendance
- Reviews attendance registers each month and identify any patterns of attendance that are of concern (SIMS - attendance management)
- Work closely with the EWO to monitor attendance through SIMS.
- Send initial letters home to parents whose children are beginning to show signs of frequent absenteeism (below 90%) for no apparent or justifiable reason.
- Refer 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.
- Report on school attendance to the Board of Governors.
- Support parents who are having difficulty getting their child to attend each day
- Use appropriate resources and advise parents on accessing support to aid their child's social, emotional and behavioural development.
- Ensure that staff receives training regarding supporting pupils with school attendance difficulties.
- Consider individual circumstances and discuss strategies with parents and pupils in the event of a child returning to school after a length absence.

The school will -

- Raise awareness of the importance of regular school attendance by highlighting expectations in the school prospectus, assemblies and parents' meetings, etc.
- Encourage a welcoming and positive atmosphere in which pupils feel safe and their presence is valued.
- Discuss appropriate strategies with pupils and parents to support those with attendance difficulties.

Roles and responsibilities of the Board of Governors:

- Consider the Principal's report on school attendance at each Board of Governors meeting.

Roles and responsibilities of Staff:

- Ensure the register is maintained accurately at the commencement of each school session. Registers are legal documents and can form an evidence base in court cases. [See Appendix A for Registration Codes]
- Report any notable and concerning patterns of absence to the Principal.
- Establish good habits of attendance from as early an age as possible

Roles and responsibilities of Parents and Guardians:

Parental Responsibility

Throughout this policy the term 'parent' represents one parent, both parents and/or carer with whom the child resides or for anyone who shares parental responsibility for the child.

Parents are informed of their responsibility to ensure their children attend regularly, in the school prospectus and at parents' information meetings. Punctuality is also stressed as lateness impacts on learning not only for the individual, but the class as a whole.

Attendance is discussed with each parent at consultation evenings, with the current percentage attendance being reported.

What the School Expects from Parents

Parents need to:

- be aware that they are ultimately legally responsible for the regular school attendance of their children.
- Ensure child(ren) attend school regularly, on time and in a condition to learn.
- Attend parents' meetings and school events, supporting the school
- If their child is genuinely unable to attend school the parents/Guardians are expected to contact school at the start of each day of absence to provide a reason for absence or alternatively on the child's return to school, a letter signed by the Parent/Guardian or a phone call, explaining absence should be provided or a note in the child's homework diary.
- If a child starts avoiding school, parents/guardians should contact the school straightaway and work with staff to sort things out.
- If a child needs to miss school, for example for a religious festival or some other special occasion, the parent/guardian should seek the school's agreement well in advance and give full details.
- Make routine medical or dental appointments outside school hours.
- Parents/guardians are discouraged from taking holidays during term-time. However, if this is a necessity, parents/guardians are required to apply to the Principal for authorised holiday absence prior to booking the holiday.

Roles and responsibilities of Pupils:

- To attend school every day, arriving on time and ready for work.

Procedures to record attendance and punctuality

Children may come into school from 8.30am. School starts at 9am. If a child is absent for half a day this will also be noted.

The class teacher inserts the attendance on to the SIMS system every day (e 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.

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.

Attendance Letters

A child who's 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.

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 country/county in an event.
- has an exceptional family circumstance, e.g. wedding or a funeral
- has had an authorised absence by the Principal or in their absence the Vice Principal.
- inclement weather

Some unacceptable reasons for absence.

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

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Holidays during term time

The Governors recognise that pupil absence during term time can seriously disrupt a pupil's continuity of learning. **Parents are therefore strongly urged to avoid booking a family holiday in term time.** Parents do not have an automatic right to withdraw pupils from school for a holiday and in law, have to apply for permission in advance. Such permission is granted in accordance with arrangements made by the governing body and no more than one period of holiday of no more than ten school days in any academic year can be authorised. **Holidays are not authorised in September or May.** At St. Colman's Primary School and All Saints' Nursery Unit, we actively discourage parents from taking a child on holiday during term time. It causes disruption to the child's education and means that the child is missing out on essential work, which the rest of the class is doing. In some cases, the child may find it very difficult to catch up on this work.

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.

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. Colman's Primary School and All Saints' Nursery Unit 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 Education Authority 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. Ronan'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

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Reporting of Attendance on Pupil Reports/Acceptable Levels of Attendance

Attendance will be reported on the child's Annual Report using the following codes:

- 96% - 100% - good
- 90% - 95% - pupil and parent needs to give this consideration - academic progress could be impeded
- Below 90% - this level of attendance could seriously impede progress. Attendance will be closely monitored unless school has written/verbal notification for reason of absence.

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 in a shortened format and will be reviewed regularly by the Board of Governors.

Appendix A

ATTENDANCE CODES, DESCRIPTIONS AND MEANINGS

CODE DESCRIPTION MEANING

/ Present (AM) Present

\ Present (PM) Present

B Educated off site (NOT Dual registration) Approved Education Activity

C Other Authorised Circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code/description) Authorised absence

D Dual registration (i.e. pupil attending other establishment) Approved Education Activity

E Excluded (no alternative provision made) Authorised absence

F Extended family holiday (agreed) Authorised absence

G Family holiday (NOT agreed or days in excess of agreement)
Unauthorised absence

H Family holiday (agreed) Authorised absence

I Illness (NOT medical or dental etc. appointments) Authorised absence

J Interview Approved Education Activity

L Late (before registers closed) Present

M Medical/Dental appointments Authorised absence

N No reason yet provided for absence Unauthorised absence

O Unauthorised absence (not covered by any other code/description)
Unauthorised absence

P Approved sporting activity Approved Education Activity

R Religious Observance Authorised absence

S Study leave Authorised absence

T Traveller Absence Authorised absence

U Late (after registration closed) Unauthorised absence

V Educational visit or trip Approved Education Activity

W Work Experience Approved Education Activity

X Untimetabled sessions for non-compulsory school-age pupils Not counted
in possible attendances

Y Enforced closure - Not counted in possible attendances

Z Pupil not on roll - Not counted in possible
attendances

School closed to pupils - Not counted in possible attendances

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