

# St Dallan's Primary School



## Attendance Policy

September 2017

# Vision Statement

The vision of St Dallan's Primary School is one where each child and staff member feels valued, respected and loved; where talents and abilities are nurtured to enable all to reach their potential, in an inclusive environment committed to our shared Christian values.

## Aims of the School

St Dallan's Primary School is a place where both staff and students work in the pursuit of all aspects of spiritual, educational, inclusiveness and personal excellence.

To achieve this we have the following aims:

1. To foster a love of learning where children will be stimulated, motivated and challenged to become independent thinkers and learners.
2. To provide an ethos with Pastoral Care at the heart ensuring every child feels valued and respected in all that they do and achieve.
3. To develop an awareness in each child of their skills, talents and abilities and to give children the confidence to try new things and pursue the many windows of opportunity available.
4. To develop a school community which respects the rights and beliefs of others and where good discipline, courtesy and good manners are the very foundation of our relationship with others.
5. To provide a broad and balanced curriculum appropriate to the needs of each child, where high expectations are set and children have the desire and determination to work to the best of their ability.
6. To establish effective relationships between school home, and community utilizing the many skills and talents that exist to enrich the provision for all our pupils.



## **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 Dallan's Primary School seek 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. Ensuring regular school attendance at an early age promotes positive patterns and therefore decreases the risk of disaffection 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. 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.

## 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 effecting attainment and progress and is disrupting your child's learning.

The school contact 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.**

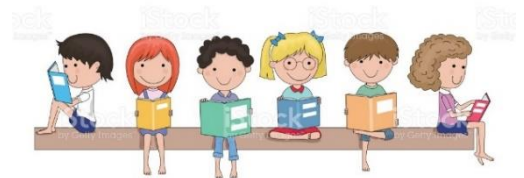


Non-attendance is an important issue that is treated seriously. However, each case is different and the school acknowledges that no one standard response will be appropriate in every case. Consideration is given to all factors affecting attendance before deciding what intervention strategies to apply.

**a)** In every case, early intervention is essential to prevent the problem from developing. 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 must contact parents clearly defining the concerns within school regarding a pupils' absence (this is done by the class teacher in the first instance and then passed onto senior management if attendance does not improve). 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.



### **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 School Values and Aims.

### **The School Aims:**

- To encourage parents/carers 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 may 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 attendance throughout the year, with pupils taking part in a whole school incentive e.g. Ice-cream Treat
- Review 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.
- Follow up contact with parents whose children are beginning to show signs of frequent absenteeism (below 90%) for no apparent or justifiable reason and whose teacher has already highlighted concern.
- 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 receive 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 lengthy absence.

The school will –

- Raise awareness of the importance of regular school attendance by highlighting expectations in newsletters, the school prospectus, assemblies, notice boards and parents' meetings.
- 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 each term at a 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 1 for Registration Codes]
- Ensure a note is received following a child being absent – (if no note is sent in from home then send home a school note [See Appendix 2 for School Note])
- Contact parents/guardians if you have any concerns about their child's attendance. If attendance does not improve pass this onto Principal/Vice-Principal who will follow up contact and refer to EWO as necessary.
- Establish high expectations of attendance and punctuality in the classroom and promote the whole school ethos and incentives towards good punctuality and attendance.

**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, the annual attendance information leaflet and at parents' information meetings.
- Attendance is discussed with each parent at parent/teacher meetings, with the current percentage attendance being reported.
- Parents MUST send in a note if their child is absent giving a reason for the absence. If a parent knows that their child is going to be off due to illness etc then to inform the school as soon as possible and keep in contact with the school regarding their child's return.
- Parents are responsible for getting their children to school at the correct time i.e. 9.00am. Punctuality is also stressed as lateness impacts on learning not only for the individual, but the class as a whole.

**What Schools Expect from Parents/Carers**

Parents/carers 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.
- Contact the 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 MUST be provided.
- Contact the school straight away if their child starts avoiding school and work with staff to sort things out.
- Seek the school's agreement well in advance if a child needs to miss school, for example for a religious festival or some other special occasion, giving full details.
- Make routine medical or dental appointments outside school hours.
- Avoid taking holidays during term-time.

**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 9.00am. 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 follow up if necessary.

**Illness and Medical Appointments**

- a) When a child is unwell, parents should contact the school before 9.00am 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/guardians are required to make a written note of the reason for absence and send into the class teacher.

The school will contact parents if a child's attendance falls below 90% consistently for a period of time without explanation or a valid reason. If there is no improvement in attendance and it 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:

- sickness
- an unavoidable medical or dental appointment, for which an appointment cannot be made for after school
- taking part in a religious event
- representing their country/county in an event
- an exceptional family circumstance, e.g. wedding or a funeral
- 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
- holidays

### **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 by law. At St Dallan's Primary School 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.

### **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 Dallan's Primary School 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 proceedings move onto court where parents can be fined 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 Dallan's 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.
- A phone call by the Principal/Vice Principal to the parents if they have a concern about a child's attendance.
- Children will be part of a whole school incentive, eg, Ice-Cream Treat
- Posters about attendance are displayed in school and on a display board on the corridor.

### **Attendance Reports to the Board of Governors**

Whole School attendance will be reported to the Board of Governors on a termly basis.

## **Appendix 1**

### **ATTENDANCE CODES, DESCRIPTIONS AND MEANINGS**

#### **CODE DESCRIPTION MEANING**

/ Present (AM) Present

\ Present (PM) Present

A Artistic Endeavour

B Bereavement

C Suspended

D Did not provide a reason for absence

F Extended family holiday (agreed) Authorised absence

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

H Other absence

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

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

U Late (after registration closed) Unauthorised absence

V Educational visit or trip Approved Education Activity

W Work Experience Approved Education Activity

! No attendance required

1 AEP (ELB)

2 Home/hospital tuition

3 Elective Home Education

4 Pupil Referral Unit

5 Another mainstream school (EF)

6 Training Organisation (EF)

7 FE College

8 Intensive Support Learning Unit

9 CAMHS

## **Appendix 2**

### ***SCHOOL ABSENCE SLIP***

Dear Parent/Guardian,

Please complete our **School Absence Slip** and return to your child's class teacher as soon as possible.

**PUPIL NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_

**CLASS TEACHER:** \_\_\_\_\_

**DATE OF ABSENCE:** \_\_\_\_\_

Please indicate below the reason for this absence:

<b>Illness</b> <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Sporting Activity (<u>Please specify</u>):</b> <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Doctor/Dentist Appointment</b> <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Bereavement</b> <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Family Wedding</b> <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Feis/Music Exam</b> <input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Other (Please specify):</b>	

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_ Parent/Guardian

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

*In order to keep Attendance Records accurate, it is important that the school is informed in writing of the reason for a pupil being absent from school. In special circumstances where the absence is due to a very sensitive or personal matter it is appropriate to discuss the absence with the relevant class teacher.*

*Guidance from the Department of Education states that children should not be withdrawn from school to facilitate family holidays during term time.*

*If a child is recorded as absent for any of the above reasons this will count as an absent mark.*

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