

# Our Lady's & St Mochua's PS

## Attendance Policy

Reaching for the future...A voice today...

## 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.

Our Lady's & St Mochua's Primary School will strive to promote an ethos and culture which encourages good attendance and where each pupil will feel valued and secure.

### Aims

1. To improve/maintain the overall attendance of pupils at Our Lady's & St Mochua's Primary School.
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 at Our Lady's & St Mochua's Primary School 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.
- 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
- The school nominated the Principal as a link teacher who will meet with the Education Welfare Service on a regular basis.
- The school aims to undertake initial intervention as requested.
- The school will, when necessary, make referrals to the Education Welfare Service.
- The school will monitor absences on a monthly basis.
- The school will enter into a Service Level Agreement with the Education Welfare Service.

## Role of the Principal

- Liaise with the education welfare service about individual pupils
- Talk to pupils with irregular attendance
- Send letter to parents of pupils who are absent from school on a regular basis
- Meet with parents whose children's attendance falls below the expected level to plan and discuss a way forward
- Make a referral to the Education Welfare Service if improvement in attendance is not made
- Collate and report attendance information
- Take responsibility for overall monitoring of attendance

## Role of Parent/Guardian

Our Lady's & St Mochua's Primary School is committed to working with parents to encourage regular and punctual attendance.

However, 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 the 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.

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 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 discuss the matter promptly with the class teacher or Principal to ensure that both you and your child receive maximum support.

Policy formally adopted in March 2018

### **Role of Class Teacher**

Effective practice in relation to managing individual pupil attendance depends on the class teacher. In Our Lady's & St Mochua's Primary School the class teacher is responsible for:

- Developing trusting relationships with all pupils
- Monitoring attendance e.g. marking register, collecting absence notes and identifying pupils with irregular attendance patterns
- Following up pupil absence if notes are not produced
- Talking to individual pupils about their attendance
- Promoting class attendance through the curriculum
- Referring pupils to the principal
- Providing support to pupils who may be off long term or returning after a long absence from school

### **Role and Responsibility of Non-Teaching Staff**

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

- Operating the SIMS Attendance System
- Taking phone messages from parents when pupils are absent
- Maintaining the late register
- Compiling lists of absentees
- Collating registration data

### **Role of Pupils**

Each pupil at Our Lady's & St Mochua'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**

- On the first day of an absence the parent/guardian should inform the school of the reason for the absence. This may be done in person, by telephone, via email or with a message, e.g. sibling
- On return to school the parent/guardian should supply a written note explaining the circumstances of the absence.
- Absence notes shall be held on file until the end of the school year. When, in most instances, they will be shredded.
- In certain circumstances for example where an attendance is being monitored, absence notes may be carried forward to the next school year.

## **Authorised Absences**

In normal circumstances the following types of absences will be classified as authorised:

- Illness (When note is provided by parent)
- Hospital/dental appointments (when prior notice is given)
- Family bereavement
- Representing the school/county/country at an approved event
- Taking music/ballet/drama examinations

## **Unauthorised Absences**

In normal circumstances the following types of absence will be classified as unauthorised:

- Birthday
- On a shopping trip with parents
- Staying at home with ill parent or sibling
- Holiday

## **Family holidays during Term Time**

Our Lady's & St Mochua's Primary School will comply with the directive from the Department of Education to discourage holidays during term time due to the impact they have on pupils' learning. Family holidays during term time will be categorised as unauthorised absences.

However, in very exceptional circumstances we may authorize a family holiday during term time. Such circumstances may include:

- A family holiday judged to be important to the wellbeing and cohesion of the family, following serious or terminal illness, bereavement or other traumatic events.

## **Late Arrival to School**

In Our Lady's & St Mochua's Primary School lateness is strongly discouraged. Pupils are expected to be in school between 9.00am and 9.15am. The teacher will mark the class register at 9.15am. A child not present for class registration will be marked absent and if late must go to the office to be registered.

If a pupil arrives to school after 9.15 parents must come to the school office to sign the Late Register.

The Principal will review the late marks on a weekly basis:

- When a child is late on a regular basis, the principal will contact the parents to discuss the matter with the view to ensuring their child is in school for 9.15am.

## **Procedures for Managing Non-Attendance**

- The school will monitor pupil attendance on a monthly basis.
- The school will review all pupils with a percentage attendance of less than 95%
- Where an attendance falls below 90% the school will make contact with the home to offer support and advice in the first instance.
- Where attendance persists at below 85% the school will invite the parent/guardian to meet re the issue.
- At all times the school aims to work in partnership with the home and the Education Welfare Service to promote regular school attendance.

## **Rewarding Good Attendance and Punctuality**

Our Lady's & St Mochua's Primary School believe that good attendance and punctuality are to be encouraged at every opportunity. Parents are responsible for ensuring that their children attend regularly and are punctual. However, the school currently has a whole school reward/award system to encourage regular attendance and punctuality.

Full attendance certificates are given to all pupils who receive 100% attendance

### **Education Welfare Service**

The Education Authority has 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 will support staff and parents in developing and implementing strategies to address or improve school attendance.

### **Monitoring and Review**

The Principal and Vice/Principal have worked in partnership with the school's Education Welfare Officer to develop a policy which ensures consistency. The policy will be reviewed on an annual basis to determine the success or otherwise of the attendance strategies employed with the school.

Signature

\_\_\_\_\_ Principal

Signature

\_\_\_\_\_ Chair, Board of Governors