



# **Attendance Policy**

**September 2016**

## **Aims**

At Carrickmannon Primary School we aim to ensure that every child will want to attend school. This will be achieved by creating a warm, welcoming and secure atmosphere where our pupils feel valued and by delivering a stimulating and accessible curriculum in a physically bright and engaging environment.

Our school has an excellent record of attendance, which we aim to maintain. The school and parent body have high expectations and appreciate the link between attendance and high achievement. An overall level of 96% is our target for attendance in the School Development Plan.

## **Ethos**

At Carrickmannon the culture has always been one of partnership and the Principal and staff are committed to working in cooperation with pupils, parents and the Education Welfare Service to ensure good attendance at our school.

The partnership we wish to promote is based on trust, good communication, access to information, high expectations, clearly defined roles and responsibilities and transparent procedures.

## **Registration Procedures**

- Class teachers complete a registration form on a daily basis, noting any child that is absent and recording lateness.
- Subject to receiving an explanation for the absence, teachers will complete the register with the appropriate Department of Education code, which categories the reason for the absence.
- Teachers send completed registers to the secretary at the end of the week.
- Teachers should retain all absence notes with their register for the duration of the week, before handing them over to the secretary.

## **Role and Responsibilities of Principal**

- Overall responsibility for school attendance on a day-to-day basis rests with the Principal. The Principal has the role, along with the Board of Governors for determining staff and resources to deal with attendance issues, ensuring the Board of Governors are informed about attendance issues and ensuring statistical information is provided as required by the government.
- The Principal will meet with the local Education Welfare Officer, twice a term to discuss pupil attendance issues.
- The Principal ensures that dates of the school holidays are regularly given to parents with a reminder that holidays should be booked when the children are off school and not during term time.
- Department of Education guidance on attendance is made available to parents.(Appendix 1)

## **Roles and Responsibilities of Parents**

Parents are responsible for ensuring that:

- Their child/ren attend/s school unless prevented from doing so by illness or any other justifiable reason.
- They inform the school by phoning on the first day of absence (before 10 am) providing the reason for and expected length of absence. This should be confirmed with a written note when the child returns to school.
- Their child/ren arrive on time for lessons and are picked up promptly when school finishes.
- They try to arrange medical/dental appointments etc. outside of school time.
- They sign their children out at the school office when they need to take children out of school for medical/dental appointments etc.
- They should inform the Principal in writing when parents wish to apply to take their children out of school in respect of foreign travel.
- They should talk to their child about school and take an interest in their school work (including homework).
- They should attend parent meetings and school events.
- They should praise and reward their child's achievements at school.
- They should always support school staff in their efforts to control difficult or challenging behaviour.
- They should discuss any problems or difficulties with the school – staff are there to help and will be supportive.

### **Roles and Responsibilities of Pupils - Pupil input**

Pupils are responsible for ensuring that:

- They get up early.
- They use an alarm clock.
- Shower in the morning to wake them up if they feel tired.
- Ask their parents to splash water on their face if they refuse to get out of bed.
- Don't play games or watch TV until they are dressed and ready to leave for school.
- Don't stay up late – go to bed nice and early.

### **Roles and Responsibilities of Class Teachers**

Effective practice in relation to managing individual pupil attendance depends on the class teacher. At Carrickmannon the role of the class teacher will include the following:-

- Developing trusting relationships with all pupils.
- Providing a positive ethos within the classroom where children feel welcomed and are motivated to want to learn.
- Ensure that children will want to come to school.
- Monitoring attendance, e.g. marking the 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 pupil attendance at Parent Teacher meetings and through the curriculum.

- Teaching staff are aware of the link between attendance and a pupil's educational attainment and this is emphasised at Parent Teacher meetings.
- During the Parent Teacher meetings teachers will draw parents' attention to patterns of attendance and punctuality when they are having an impact on their child's learning.
- Referring pupils to the Head of Key Stage.
- Liaising with the Education Welfare Officer.
- Providing support to pupils after a long absence from school.
- Reporting annual attendance to parents on school reports.

### **Roles and Responsibilities of the Secretary**

The school secretary has an important role to play in monitoring attendance in school. Her role will include the following:

- Operating the SIMS system.
- Taking phone messages from parents when pupils are absent from school.
- Compiling lists of absentees/lateness.
- Collating registration data.
- Generating reminder letters to those parents who failed to send in an absence note.

### **Informing Substitute Teachers**

Class teachers will inform substitute teachers, where possible, on Carrickmannon's procedures for recording attendance and lateness. Where this is not possible, the school secretary or Principal will advise.

### **Recording Attendance**

The Department of Education has issued guidelines about categorising absence. The codes used in our school are as follows:-

/	Present	L	Late
B	Bereavement	M	Medical/Dental
C	Suspended	O	Other Exceptional Circumstance
E	Educated Off Site.	P	Approved sporting activity
F	Family holiday (agreed)	R	Religious Observance
G	Family holiday (Not agreed)		
I	Ill		

It is the school's responsibility to authorise absence. The school does not have to accept a parent's offered explanation as a valid reason for absence and in such circumstances may record an absence as **unauthorised**.

### **What happens in cases of unexplained absence?**

If a child fails to appear for school without explanation, it is the class teacher's responsibility in the first instance to follow up. If the child has a sibling in school, this should be the first route of enquiry.

If this fails to shed light, or if this course is not an option, teachers should try to contact parents to clarify the situation.

The reasoning for following up on unexplained absence is based on ruling out truancy or a more sinister cause such as abduction.

### **Lateness**

The school encourages all children to arrive on time for the beginning of morning lessons at 9.00 a.m.

In the case of an unforeseen or 'one-off' lateness, parents should either phone school or send an explanatory note or give the Secretary a message that can be passed onto the class teacher.

However in cases where children are habitually late, class teachers should contact parents to ascertain if there is a particular problem and if necessary remind parents of the school's expectations. If this does not resolve the issue, the matter should be passed on to the Principal.

### **The Role of the Education Welfare Officer.**

Education Authority through the Education Welfare Service (EWS) has a legal duty to make sure that parents meet their responsibility towards their children's education.

If a pupil's absence causes concern, or if their attendance falls below 85%, they will be referred to the EWS, if appropriate. EWS will support staff and parents in developing and implementing strategies to address or improve school attendance.

The EWO visits school regularly to check attendance and can be called in by the school following a referral. As regards referral, the school will involve the EWO, if we are unable to resolve an attendance or welfare issue on our own. This decision will be made by class teachers in consultation with the Principal, who will complete the necessary paperwork.

### **Rewarding Good Attendance and Punctuality**

During the final assembly of the first term, all the pupils with 99%-100% attendance receive a "Star Attender Award".

In the final assembly before Easter, those pupils with 99% - 100% attendance in the first two terms receive a "Star Attender Award".

In the final assembly of the school year, those pupils who have achieved 99%-100% attendance across the three terms receive a small gift.

### **After School Clubs**

Clubs run by outside coaches and staff require a registration sheet to ensure that children who are enrolled in the Club are in attendance. The coach or staff member has to ensure that children not in attendance have been absent all day and clarify with the class teacher that a child has been collected early by a parent/ guardian.

### **Monitoring, Evaluation and Review**

	Carrickmannon IPS % Attendance	NI Average % Attendance
2011-2012	97.4%	95.2
2012-2013	95.5%	94.9
2013-2014	97%	95.6
2014-2015	97%	95.4
2015-2016	96.6%	<i>Not yet available</i>

### **School Target**

The annual pupil attendance for Carrickmannon will be above the NI Average and greater than 96%.

**This Attendance Policy will be reviewed in 2017-8.**

## Appendix 1

### Department of Education: equivalences

100% Attendance	0 Days Missed	Excellent
95% Attendance	9 Days of Absence 1 Week and 4 Days of Learning Missed	Satisfactory
90% Attendance	19 Days of Absence 3 Weeks and 4 Days of Learning Missed	Poor
85% Attendance	28 Days of Absence 5 Weeks and 3 Days of Learning Missed	Very Poor
80% Attendance	38 Days of Absence 7 Weeks and 3 Days of Learning Missed	Unacceptable
75% Attendance	46 Days of Absence 9 Weeks and 1 Day of Learning Missed	Unacceptable