

Attendance Policy

Carryduff Primary School

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.

Carryduff Primary School will strive to promote an ethos and culture which encourages good attendance and where each pupil will feel valued and secure.

At Carryduff Primary School, we value each individual child and support them in reaching their potential. We provide a diverse, inclusive, and nurturing environment where children feel safe to be themselves, enjoy learning, and can make mistakes and learn from them. Each child is encouraged to develop respect, resilience, kindness, and a love of learning.

Aims

1. To maintain the overall attendance of pupils at Carryduff 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 the Education Welfare Service.

Role of the School

The Principal at Carryduff Primary School has overall responsibility for school attendance; members of staff should bring any concerns regarding school attendance to her attention.

The Board of Governors provide support by reviewing school attendance figures and targets and ensuring it is placed as an agenda item at each meeting.

The school sets a target, each year, to have our annual attendance figure above that of the national average. This target is written into the School Development Plan.

Teaching staff regularly monitor the attendance and punctuality of pupils by ensuring that attendance is recorded at the beginning of morning and afternoon registration sessions.

To enable our school to accurately record and monitor attendance in a consistent way we will adhere to the guidance provided in the Department of Education Circular 2017/15, which can be found at the following link:

www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/circular-201715-attendance-guidance-and-absence-recording-by-schools

Carryduff Primary School is committed to working with parents/guardians to encourage regular and punctual attendance.

Role of Parent/Guardian

Parents/guardians have a legal duty* to ensure their child of compulsory school age shall receive efficient full time education suitable to age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs they may have, either by regular school attendance or otherwise.

If a child is registered in school, their parent/guardian has a legal duty to ensure that they regularly attend that school.

It is a parent's/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 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. This information can be relayed by telephone conversation or in person.

Pupils are expected to be in school at 8.55 am for registration and the beginning of classes. It is the responsibility of parents/guardians to ensure that your child is punctual. Lateness is recorded at registration and 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.

Role of Pupils

Each pupil at Carryduff Primary School must 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.

If any pupil has anxieties surrounding school attendance, they should be discussed with parents/guardians and/or a member of school staff, who will support you.

Absence Procedures

Pupils must bring a written explanation of the absence from his/her parent/carer to the first registration on returning to school. This note should include:

- the pupil's full name and class
- the date(s) of the absence
- as full an explanation as possible for the absence
- signature of the parent/carer

A template for notification of absence may be found attached to this policy and on our school website.

** Article 45(1) of The Education and Libraries (NI) Order 1986*

School staff will use the appropriate code to explain absence on the blue registration sheets. These sheets shall be sent to the school office no later than Tuesday morning of the following week.

If a pupil fails to bring a note within two days of returning to school, they will be reminded about the importance of bringing it in. If no note is forthcoming, the school office will issue a letter seeking reason for absence.

Pupils, who persistently fail to bring absence notes, will be brought to the attention of the Principal and contact will be made with the home.

All parents/guardians are required to complete the attached absence notification form which provides a clear reason for any absence.

Absence for Medical reasons

Parents/guardians are asked, whenever possible, to make appointments outside school hours. If an appointment has to be made during school hours a written explanation must be provided stating clearly the time of the appointment. If there are frequent absences for medical reasons, parents/guardians may be asked to provide medical evidence in the form of a doctor's certificate.

Pupils are expected to attend school prior to/following their appointment whenever possible.

If a pupil has a medical condition that may affect attendance and punctuality parents/guardians are asked to contact the school to discuss possible arrangements with their child's class teacher.

Low attendance

Parents/carers are advised, informally, when the attendance falls below 87%.

A letter is sent when attendance falls below 85%. If a pattern of absence continues, or there is cause for concern, referral is made to the Education Welfare Service.

The school facilitates meetings between parents/guardians and the EWO when possible.

When attendance improves, a letter is sent to parents/guardians.

This policy and links to relevant DENI documents are available on the school website.

Family holidays during Term Time

Carryduff Primary School 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.

Education Welfare Service

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

If a pupil's absence causes concern, or if their attendance falls below 85% and there is also a concern, 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.

Promoting Good Attendance

The school actively promotes good attendance using a variety of strategies:

- Parents/carers of P1 pupils receive a copy of the current DENI attendance leaflet each September – 'School Attendance Matters'
- At the P1 Induction meeting, the importance of punctuality and attendance is clearly explained to parents/carers.
- A transition programme for starting P1 is used, working closely with Carryduff Community Playgroup.
- Pupils achieve full attendance certificates, awarded at the end of the year.
- All parents/carers receive DENI leaflets in circulation - 'Miss School = Miss Out' being the most recent.
- The school works closely with parents/carers of pupils who are reluctant to attend school, signposting to external agencies for support.
- The school provides a school counsellor service.
- Education Authority transition programmes for the move to post primary are offered to parents/carers of pupils with ASD.
- A transition programme for pupils identified as potentially having difficulty with the move to post primary, is offered in school through FamilyWorks Counselling service.
- All P6 and P7 pupils have opportunity to visit post primary schools for taster days in order to prepare for transition.

References:

Attendance Guidance and Absence Recording By Schools, circular 2017/15, DENI publication

Miss School = Miss Out, DENI publication

School Attendance Matters – A Parent's Guide, DENI publication