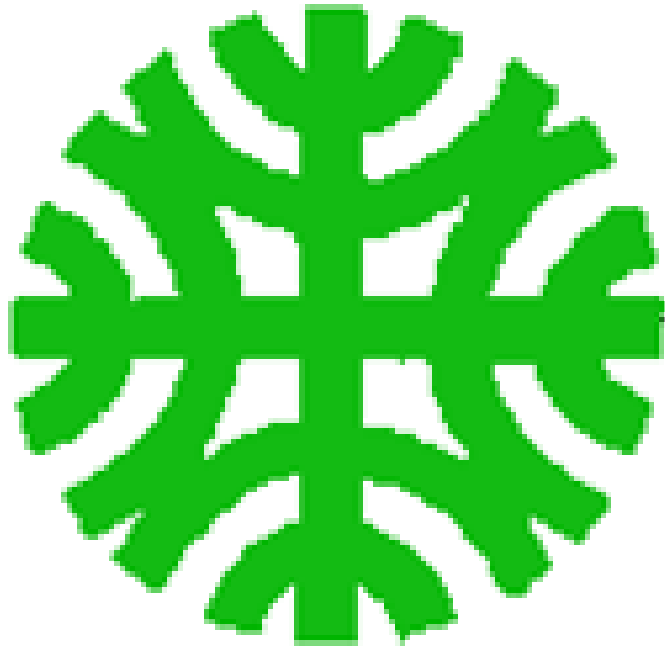


St Finian's Primary School



Pupil Attendance Policy

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Introduction

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 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.

One of our basic principles is to celebrate success. Good attendance is fundamental to a successful and fulfilling school experience. We actively promote 100% attendance for all our pupils. We encourage 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 to learn alongside others

The Governors and Headteacher, in partnership with parents have a duty to promote full attendance at school.

Parental Responsibility

Parents have a legal duty to ensure that their child attends school regularly and arrives on time. Full attendance is essential to the all-round development of a child and they should be allowed to take full advantage of educational opportunities available to them by law. Poor attendance undermines their education and sometimes, puts pupils at risk. The school share the attendance percentage with parents at the end of each school year and more frequently where there are concerns.

It is the parents' responsibility to contact the school on the first day their child is absent.
This is a safeguarding matter so that all parties know that your child is safe.

Arrival at School

Pupils are expected to arrive between 8.45 and 9:00am, supervision begins at 8:45am. Children may attend the breakfast club from 7:45am in the morning.

The school does not accept legal responsibility for pupils until 8:45am or until they are in the breakfast club.

All pupils who arrive late must report to the school office where they are registered, their meal requirements noted and the reason for lateness is recorded.

Illness and Medical Appointments

When a child is unwell, parents should contact the school before 9.15am 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.

- a) Every effort should be made to arrange medical appointments outside school hours.
- b) An appointment card or verification by the doctor/ dentist/hospital may be required.
- c) 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.
- d) In the case of absence the school require a written explanation of why the child was absent. The school office will request this if it is not produced.
- e) Medical certificates may be required and should be provided if requested.

The Role of the School Staff

Class teachers complete a register at the beginning of each morning and afternoon session. Marking the attendance registers twice daily is a legal requirement.

Teachers mark pupils present, absent or late. Pupil attendance is monitored to highlight and take action where the attendance of individual children is causing concern.

It is the responsibility of the school to ensure attendance and lateness records are up to date. If no reason for absence has been provided, parents are contacted at the soonest opportunity and a reason obtained.

Where it is not possible to make contact, letters are sent to parents requesting reasons for absence. If none is provided then the absence will be recorded as such.

The appropriate attendance code is entered into the register in accordance with DE Circular guidelines updated annually.

Action for Low Attendance

Pupil attendance is monitored intermittently throughout the year. In cases where lateness or absence is causing concern parents will be contacted formally by written letter and requested to take appropriate steps. When children's attendance drops below 90%, the school will write to them making them aware of their child's attendance and the consequences of it falling below 85%.

85% Cut-Off

In cases when a child's attendance falls below 85% the school is legally obliged to report this to the Educational Welfare Officer (EWO). In many cases an explanation can be provided by the school (such as long-term medical condition etc) however if this is not possible then the EWO may choose to investigate.

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.

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.

Lateness

The class register is taken between 9:00am – 9:05am. Pupils arriving after these times must enter school by the main entrance and report to class, the pupil will be marked as 'Late before registration has closed'.

The register will close at 9.20am. Pupils arriving after the register has closed will be marked as 'Late after registration'. This code counts as an unauthorised absence.

Frequent lateness is disruptive to learning, both for the child concerned and the class. This will be discussed with parents at open evenings and may be referred to the Family Liaison Officer (FLO) and/or the Education Welfare Officer (EWO).

Frequent or regular lateness can provide grounds for prosecution.

Authorised Absence

An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or carer. For example, if a child has been unwell and the parent writes a note or telephones the school to explain the absence.

Other examples may include a family bereavement or a relevant sporting/musical examination.

Unauthorised Absence

An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the Headteacher. Unauthorised absences are those, which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no 'authorisation has been given.

This includes:

- Parents keeping children off school unnecessarily.
- Truancy during the school day.
- Absences that have never been properly explained.
- Holidays not agreed.

Authorising Absence

Only the Headteacher can authorise absence for approved reasons. The absence must be unavoidable or be clearly in the pastoral interests of the child/family. The Headteacher is not obliged to accept a parent's explanation and if the absence is not authorised, parents will be notified. Authorised absence codes will only be used after there has been some

communication between the parent and school. The following reasons are examples (but not an exhaustive list) of the kinds of absence that **will not be authorised**:

- Persistent non-specific illness e.g. poorly/unwell
- Absence of siblings if one child is ill
- Parental illness [alternative arrangements should be made to get children to school – emergencies excepted]
- Oversleeping
- Inadequate clothing/uniform
- Confusion over school dates
- Medical/dental appointments of more than half a day without very good reasons
- Child's/family birthday
- Shopping trip
- Family holiday during term-time

Leave of Absence/Holiday Absence

Time off school for family holidays cannot be authorised. Schools have the discretion, in exceptional circumstances to authorise leave absence:

- For service personnel and other employees who are prevented from taking holidays outside term-time **if the holiday will have minimal disruption to the pupil's education;**
- When a family needs to spend time together to support each other during or after a crisis.

Applications for Leave of Absence where dates can be known ahead, **MUST** be made in advance of the requested date. Consideration is given to each request before a decision is reached on behalf of the Board of Governors.

Each case will be judged on its merits in line with the criteria outlined above. The decision is final and once the decision to not authorise the leave is taken, it cannot be authorised retrospectively.

Review

This policy will be reviewed according to the schedule for policy review.

Signed: _____ Date:
Chair of Governors