



# **Attendance Policy**

## **Olderfleet Primary**

### **School**

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

At Olderfleet Primary School we value, nurture and develop all of our pupils to reach their individual potential and provide a welcoming atmosphere which creates a sense of belonging amongst families.

We encourage challenges and opportunities to equip our children with resilience and determination in a safe environment of respect, tolerance and inclusivity.

## **VISION STATEMENT**

To enable every individual regardless of ability to achieve their full potential, to prepare for future life and to become lifelong learners, developing a thirst for learning and to become good citizens.

We believe that every child should enjoy their education and be happy, healthy and safe at school. We will value our children for their individuality, culture and diversity. We are committed to providing a place of high quality learning experiences and maintaining educational standards.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Regular attendance is crucial in raising standards in education and ensuring that every child can have full access to the school curriculum and reach their full potential. Olderfleet Primary School will strive to promote an ethos and culture which encourages good attendance and where each pupil will feel valued and secure.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that as a school, we do all that we can to ensure maximum attendance for all pupils. Any problems that prevent full attendance will be identified and addressed as speedily as possible in line with the procedures identified in this policy.

This policy is based on the Department of Education's Circular: 2017/15: Attendance Guidance and Absence Recording by Schools.

## **OBJECTIVES OF THIS POLICY**

- To improve/maintain the overall attendance and punctuality of pupils at Olderfleet Primary School.
- To develop a framework that defines roles and responsibilities in relation to attendance.
- To provide advice, support and guidance to parents/carers and pupils in relation to attendance.
- To record and monitor attendance and absenteeism and apply appropriate strategies.
- To promote good relationships with the Education Welfare Service.
- To ensure a consistent approach throughout the school.

## **WHY IS SCHOOL ATTENDANCE IMPORTANT?**

- It is required by law.
- Children need to attend school regularly to allow them to fulfil their potential and promote social development.
- A good education will give children 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.

## **ROLE OF THE SCHOOL**

The Principal has overall responsibility for school attendance; the teachers should bring any concerns regarding school attendance to his attention.

Pupil attendance is regularly mentioned in Board of Governors' meetings. The governors provide support for managing good pupil attendance including the review of the school's monthly and annual attendance figures.

A governor is tasked with the role of reviewing pupil attendance and how the school is promoting good pupil attendance and addressing low pupil attendance.

Teaching staff regularly monitor the attendance and punctuality of pupils by ensuring that attendance is recorded on a daily basis.

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.

Olderfleet Primary School is committed to working with parents/carers to encourage regular and punctual attendance.

## **ROLE OF THE PARENT/CARER**

Parents/carers 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/carer has a legal duty to ensure that they regularly attend that school.

It is important that everyone works together to help children obtain the best possible start in life with a good education. Parents/carers are therefore encouraged to work in partnership with the school, notifying the school of the reason for any of their child's absences and highlighting any areas of concern they may have so they can be addressed promptly.

It is a parent's/carer's responsibility to inform the school of the reason for their child's non-attendance at school on the first day of absence - this should be confirmed in writing, however an email or Seesaw message is also acceptable. 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 8.55a.m. for registration and the beginning of classes. It is the responsibility of parents/carers to ensure that their child is punctual. Lateness is recorded at registration and on a child's attendance record.

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If a child appears reluctant to attend school, the parent/carer should discuss this with the class teacher or Principal to ensure that both the child and parent/carer receive maximum support.

If a parent/carer wants their child to miss school, for example for a religious festival or some other special occasion, they should seek the school's agreement well in advance and give full details.

### **ROLE OF PUPILS**

Each pupil at Olderfleet Primary School must attend school punctually and regularly.

### **NOTIFYING THE SCHOOL OF PUPIL ABSENCE**

All parents/carers are required to notify the school of pupil absence including the reason. This can be done via a phone-call to the school office (028 28276524) or contact the child's teacher via the Seesaw app.

Alternatively, parents/carers can email to notify of pupil absence the school using the following email address:

[info@olderfleetps.larne.ni.sch.uk](mailto:info@olderfleetps.larne.ni.sch.uk) or [amontgomery187@olderfleetps.larne.ni.sch.uk](mailto:amontgomery187@olderfleetps.larne.ni.sch.uk)

### **FAMILY HOLIDAYS DURING TERM TIME**

The Department of Education for Northern Ireland and Olderfleet 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. Only in exceptional circumstances will a holiday be authorised.

If a parent/carer takes his/her child out of school during term time for a family holiday, it is the policy of the school that the teachers will not provide work that the child has missed as a result of this time out of school.

### **PROCEDURES FOR MANAGING NON-ATTENDANCE**

At Olderfleet Primary School, we promote a culture and ethos in which children enjoy coming to school, and do not want to miss out. We aim to provide sensitive and appropriate guidance to parents/carers concerning pupil attendance, taking into account guidance from the Department of Education.

- We give a high priority to conveying to parents/carers and pupils the importance of regular and punctual attendance.
- Parents/carers are provided at the beginning of each year with a copy of the DE booklets, 'School Attendance Matters – A Parent's Guide' and 'Miss School – Miss Out'. These documents are also available to view on our school website.
- We recognise that parents/carers have a vital role to play and that there is a need to have strong home-school links and communication systems that can be utilised whenever there is concern about attendance.
- We will work towards ensuring that all pupils feel supported and valued.
- We will send a clear message that if a pupil is absent, she/he will be missed.

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- We will ensure that all staff are aware of the requirements of the registration process and that they receive training on Registration Regulations and the Law relating to attendance.
- All staff mark their class register using the same system of appropriate Department of Education categorisation of absence.
- We give high priority to attendance and punctuality. Registration begins at 8.55 a.m. and the register is closed at 9.00a.m. A child who arrives at school after registration closes will be registered as late.
- We recognise the importance of early intervention and ask parents/carers for explanations of pupil absence. The school will work closely with parents/carers to help in improving a pupil's attendance.
- If there are problems which affect a pupil's attendance we will investigate, identify and strive in partnership with parents/carers, pupils and if necessary work with the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) to resolve attendance problems as quickly and efficiently as possible.
- We work closely with the school's Educational Welfare Officer (EWO) to regularly monitor and review absences and punctuality.
- If a pupil's absence is causing concern the parent/carer is notified by the Principal that their child's attendance is being monitored and that hopefully an improvement will be recorded.
- If a pupil's attendance is below falls below **85%**, the school is required to make a referral to the Educational Welfare Service (EWS). A referral will also be made to the EWS if a pupil's pattern of attendance gives cause for concern e.g. an unusually high number of Fridays off school.
- Any concerns about individual pupils are reported directly to the Principal who decides on the appropriate action and monitors the results.
- Information relating to attendance is included in the Governors' Annual Report to parents/carers and the school prospectus.
- A weekly newsletter keeps parents/carers in touch with school events and helps to foster the sense of community.
- A copy of this 'Attendance Policy' is available from the school office. It is also available to view on the school's website.
- If a child has to be away from school, the parent/carer should notify the school as soon as possible.
- If a parent/carer knows in advance of the absence, they should ask permission from the school giving as much notice as possible and full details.
- To promote a positive pupil view of attendance the pupils are presented with a full attendance certificate if they have achieved 100% in any school year. Full attendance over a child's seven years' in primary school is also celebrated by the school.

### **THE ROLE OF THE EDUCATION WELFARE SERVICE**

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

EWS will support staff and parents/carers in developing and implementing strategies to address or improve school attendance. The Education Welfare Officer (EWO) can put parents/carers in touch with other agencies that may be able to offer further advice and help. If the problem is of a practical nature, the EWO can also offer advice about free school meals, uniform grants and transport to school.

Parents/carers are legally responsible for ensuring that a child of compulsory school age attends school regularly.

A child with 90% attendance will have missed 19 school days in one academic year.

A child with 85% attendance will have missed 28.5 school days in one academic year.

### **WHEN A CHILD CAN BE ABSENT FROM SCHOOL**

When he or she:

- is ill;
- has an unavoidable medical or dental appointment;
- is taking part in a religious event;
- has an exceptional family circumstance, e.g. wedding or a funeral;
- artistic endeavor e.g. sitting a music examination, participating in a sporting event.

### **SOME UNACCEPTABLE REASONS FOR ABSENCE**

- Birthdays;
- Term time holidays;
- Visiting relatives;
- Looking after other members of the family.

### **CONCLUSION**

This attendance policy will be reviewed by the Board of Governors of Olderfleet Primary School every three years or as appropriate as a result of new guidance or changes in legislation by the Department of Education N.I.