

Holy Trinity
Primary School



Attendance Policy
March 2019

Rationale

In Holy Trinity Primary School we are committed to maintaining high levels of attendance and punctuality. Regular school attendance and good punctuality are vital components in helping pupils to have full access to the Northern Ireland Curriculum and fulfil their potential. Holy Trinity PS will strive to promote an ethos and culture which encourages good attendance and punctuality and where each pupil will feel valued and secure.

Aims

- To improve the overall attendance and punctuality of pupils at Holy Trinity Primary School.
- To develop a framework that defines roles and responsibilities in relation to pupil attendance and punctuality.
- To work in partnership with parents/carers to establish good patterns of punctuality and attendance.
- To encourage parents/carers to ensure their children are at school on time every day the school is open, unless the reason for the absence is unavoidable.
- To keep parents/carers informed about their child's attendance and punctuality.
- To encourage children to be independent and come to school every day, on time and with the correct resources.
- To develop a positive reward system that encourages good pupil attendance and punctuality.
- To liaise closely with the Educational Welfare Officer with regard to attendance.

The Importance of Good Attendance and Punctuality

A good pattern of attendance and punctuality is important because it helps children:

- To learn.
- To have fun.
- To make new friends.
- To experience new things in life.
- To develop awareness of other cultures, religion, ethnicity and gender differences.
- To achieve.
- To develop new skills.

- To build confidence and self-esteem.
 - To develop the confidence to attempt new work and to learn alongside others.
 - To develop good habits in readiness that will last throughout their lives.
 - To have the best possible start in life.
- Young people who regularly miss school without good reason are more likely to become isolated from their friends, to underachieve in their education and are at risk of becoming involved in anti-social behaviour and becoming victims of crime or abuse.
- Source: (Adapted from) *School Attendance Matters – A Parent’s Guide*.

Role of the School

Roles and Responsibilities of the Principal / Vice-Principal

- The Vice-Principal is responsible for managing pupil attendance.
- The Vice-Principal will liaise with the Assistant Co-Ordinator of Attendance.
- To organise incentives to promote good attendance and punctuality.
- To analyse attendance trends and to correspond with parents/carers/pupils if a problem is identified.
- To provide guidance and support to parents/carers who are having difficulty getting their child to attend school each day.
- To design and send a letter/pamphlet to parents/carers (based on ‘*School Attendance Matters – A Parent’s Guide*’ supplied by DENI, 2014) at the beginning of each year to remind them of the importance of having a good pattern of attendance (See Appendix A).
- To design and send a letter to all parents/carers at the end of Terms 1 and 2 informing them of their child’s attendance record and what this means (see Appendix B).
- To design and send a letter to the parents/carers of Primary 7 pupils at the beginning of Term Two to remind them of the importance of maintaining a good attendance pattern for the rest of the year (See Appendix C).
- To send initial letters (see Appendix D and E) to parents/carers whose children are showing signs of concern with regard to absence and/or punctuality.
- To complete a referral to the EWO if pupil attendance falls below 85% with no acceptable explanation (See Appendix F).
- Provide an attendance figure on each school report in June.
- Provide an annual attendance figure for the whole school to be included in the annual school report.
- Monitor punctuality.

Roles and Responsibilities of the Board of Governors

- To consider the Principal's report on school attendance each year.

Roles and Responsibilities of Staff

- To make daily accurate records of attendance and lateness on the 'Sims Optical Reader' and to return the registers to the office each Friday.
- To report any concerning patterns of absence to the Vice-Principal/Assistant Attendance Co-Ordinator.

Roles and Responsibilities of Parents/Carers

- Under Article 45 of the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986 ("the 1986 Order"), it is the duty of parents/carers who have a child of compulsory school age to ensure their child receives efficient, full time education suitable to their age, aptitude, ability and to any special educational needs they may have.
 - *Source: School Attendance Matters – A Parent's Guide.*
- Paragraph 3 of Schedule 13 to the 1986 Order states that it is the duty of a parent of a registered pupil of a school to secure their regular attendance at school. This applies to all children of compulsory school age who are on the roll of a school. As a parent you are legally responsible for making this happen.
 - *Source: School Attendance Matters – A Parent's Guide.*
- It is a parent'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.
- Pupils are expected to be in school at 9:00am for registration and the beginning of classes. It is the responsibility of parents/carers to ensure punctuality. Lateness is recorded at registration and on each child's attendance record.
- If a child appears reluctant to attend school it is the responsibility of the parent to inform the class teacher and/or Vice-Principal to ensure that support can be offered.
- If a child needs to miss school, eg religious festival, sporting event or some other special occasion, the parent should seek the school's agreement well in advance and give full details.
- Parents/carers are requested to make routine medical or dental appointments outside of school hours.

Family Holidays During Term Time

- Holy Trinity 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.

Roles and Responsibilities of Pupils

It is the responsibility of pupils to:

- Attend school regularly.
- Arrive at school on time.
- Be organised and ready for work.
- Inform the teacher/VP about any problem that may prevent them from attending school regularly and on time.
- Supply a written note to explain any absence when they return to school.

School Timetable

P1-2 9:00 – 1:45 Monday
9:00 – 2:00 Tuesday-Friday

P3-7 9:00 – 1:45 Monday
9:00 – 2:45 Tuesday-Friday

Procedures to Record Attendance and Punctuality

Arrival and Registration

- Pupils should not arrive at school before 8:45 am as there is no supervision available before this time.
- Primary 1 and 2 pupils will go straight to their classes on arrival from 8:45 – 9:00 am.
- Primary 3 – 7 pupils will line up in their respective yards and will be brought to the class by their teacher.
- Registration is taken at 9:00 am by the class teacher. Any child who arrives after 9:00 am will be marked as late.

Categorising Absence

Authorised Absence

Examples include:

- Illness
- Unavoidable medical appointments
- Taking part in a religious event
- Exceptional family circumstance (Eg: wedding or funeral)
- Representing their club/school/county/country in a particular event Eg sport, music etc.

Unauthorised Absence

- Birthdays.
- Visiting relatives.
- Looking after other members of the family.
- A pupil is unnecessarily kept off school.
- Shopping.
- Family holiday/ long weekend break.
- No written reason is provided on return to school after absence.

Monitoring Absence

- Each month an audit is printed out from SIMS which identifies pupils whose attendance is showing signs of concern (under 90%).
- These names are circulated to their class teachers by the Assistant Attendance Co-Ordinator and the teacher records reasons for pupil absence and if the parents/carers should be sent a letter.
- Where a teacher believes there is a concern regarding a pupil's attendance and there is not a sufficient reason to explain this, a "Letter 1" (See Appendix D) will be sent to the parent/carer advising of the schools concern.
- If attendance remains a concern a second letter, 'Letter 2' (See Appendix E) will be sent to the parent/carer and the parent/carer will be asked to contact the school to arrange a meeting with the Vice-Principal.
- If attendance does not improve and falls below 85% then a referral form may be sent to the EWO(See Appendix F). Parent/Carers will be informed of this decision.

Monitoring Lateness

- If a pupil has been recorded as coming late to school on five or more occasions in a two month period, his/her name will be forwarded to the Vice-Principal.
- A letter will be sent to the parent/carer by the Vice-Principal.
- If there is no improvement the Vice-Principal will contact the parent/carer and request a person-to-person meeting to discuss the issue of punctuality and explain why good punctuality is so important.

Educational Welfare Service

The Education Authority, through the Educational Welfare Service (EWS) has a legal duty to make sure that parents/carers 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/carers in developing and implementing strategies to address or improve school attendance.

- Under Part III of Schedule 13 to the 1986 Order, if a child or young person who is registered at a school does not attend regularly a parent/carer can receive a fine not exceeding £1000 in court (for each child). An Education Supervision Order (ESO) could also be made by a court under Article 55 of the Children (NI) Order 1995.

- Source: School Attendance Matters – A Parent's Guide

Incentives to Improve Attendance and Punctuality

- Weekly visits by the Vice-Principal who will talk to the pupils about the importance of good attendance and punctuality.
- The Vice-Principal will talk to individual pupils when necessary.
- The Vice-Principal will present a trophy to the class in each year group with the best attendance record for the week.
- At each Key Stage Assembly the Principal will present an attendance trophy to the class from the key stage with the best attendance. A photograph of the class with their trophy will be placed in the entrance foyer.
- Children with 100% attendance will receive a book prize and a certificate at the prize-giving ceremony.
- Posters advertising the importance of attendance will be placed on the main entrance areas of the school.

Truantiing

If any pupil is caught truantiing we will first of all talk to the pupil in the company of the parent and explain the dangers of this action. We will also use the opportunity to point out the important role that education plays in their lives and how education can help their opportunities for the future.

We will maintain a register of truantiing pupils and parents/carers will be telephoned immediately if any pupil on this register is absent.

Monitoring of the Policy

The Co-ordinator will review the policy every two years and present any changes to the Principal, Governors and staff. The policy will be available for parents to view.

Date Approved by Board of Governors: _____



EVERY SCHOOL DAY COUNTS –

Every single day a child is absent from school equates to a day of lost learning.

Attendance percentages can be misleading.

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

For some parents, 90% may seem like an acceptable level of attendance, but the reality is that 90% attendance means that your child will miss half a school day each week or 19 days of school during the school year – that's nearly 4 school weeks.



Key Point Give your child the best start in life – every school day counts.



SCHOOL ATTENDANCE MATTERS A Parent's Guide





HOW PARENTS CAN HELP –

- Establish a good routine in the mornings and evenings so your child is prepared for the school day ahead.
- Make sure your child goes to school regularly and follows the school rules.
- Ensure your child arrives at school on time – not late.
- Arrange dental and medical appointments outside school hours when possible.
- Always inform the school if your child is absent due to illness – this should be followed up with a written note when your child returns to school.
- Take truancy seriously – if your child is not attending school as you expect they may be putting themselves at risk – Who are they with? What are they doing?
- Take family holidays outside term time.
- Talk to your child about school and take an interest in their school work (including homeworks).
- Attend parent evenings and school events.
- Praise and reward your child's achievements at school.
- Always support school staff in their efforts to control difficult or challenging behaviour.
- Discuss any problems or difficulties with the school – staff are there to help and will be supportive.

Key Point

Young people who regularly miss school without good reason are more likely to become isolated from their friends, to underachieve in examinations and/or become involved in anti-social behaviour.

Key Point

Do not be afraid to ask for help if a problem arises.



WHAT THE LAW SAYS –

Under Article 45 of the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986 (‘the 1986 Order’), it is the duty of parents who have a child of compulsory school age¹ to ensure their child receives efficient, full time education suitable to their age, aptitude, ability and to any special educational needs they may have. Such education may be provided by regular attendance at school or otherwise, for example home education. Paragraph 3 (1) of Schedule 13 to the 1986 Order states that it is the duty of a parent of a registered pupil of a school to secure their regular attendance at school. This applies to all children of compulsory school age who are on the roll of a school. As a parent you are legally responsible for making this happen.

Under Part III of Schedule 13 to the 1986 Order, if a child or young person who is registered at a school does not attend regularly, a parent can receive a fine not exceeding £1,000 in court (for each child). An Education Supervision Order (ESO) could also be made by a court under Article 55 of the Children (NI) Order 1995.

Key Point

Education is not an option – it’s compulsory.

FAMILY HOLIDAYS –



You can demonstrate your commitment to your child’s education by not taking holidays during term time. Any child or young person who is absent from school due to a holiday will miss out on important learning and will fall behind with their school work.

In each Academic Year there are only a maximum of 190 statutory school days – this allows plenty of time for holidays to be arranged outside term time.

Holidays taken during term time will be categorised as an unauthorised absence.

Key Point

Avoid taking family holidays during the school term.

¹ www.deni.gov.uk/norw/schools-and-infrastructure/2/absenteeism-and-transport/pupils-and-classroom/compulsory-school-age.htm



School Attendance

Dear Parent/Carer

In September we distributed to all parents a leaflet supplied by the Department of Education entitled 'School Attendance Matters – A Parent's Guide'. This leaflet makes the point, **“For some parents, 90% attendance may seem acceptable but the reality is that your child misses 19 days in the school year – that’s nearly 4 school weeks”**. When a pupil's attendance falls below 85% the Education Welfare Officer becomes involved. At Holy Trinity we have very high standards and take great pride in seeing our children achieve their potential. In order for us to continue to achieve our goals we need our pupils to have a pattern of good attendance throughout their school career.

- To date _____'s current attendance is _____ %.
- This equates to _____ weeks and _____ days of learning opportunities missed.

We understand that in some cases there are extenuating circumstances, in many cases medical or bereavement issues. It is important that the teacher is made aware of this so that the correct codes are used when filling out the attendance record.

We thank our parents for their continued support of the school and wish to work in partnership with you to give your child the best possible start in life.

Yours sincerely

Principal

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For some parent/carers, 90% may seem like an acceptable level of attendance, but the reality is that 90% attendance means your child will miss half a school day each week or 19 days of school during the school year – that is nearly 4 school weeks.

Appendix C



To: Parents/Carers of P7 pupils

RE: The Importance of Attendance

Thank you very much for your support over the last year and we look forward to seeing you at the transfer interviews and of course at Confirmation.

The purpose of this letter is to inform you of the upcoming assessments and their importance in your child's education. Children will be doing End of Key Stage 2 Assessments in English and Maths. There are 4 assessments activities in English and three in Maths to be done. These assessments are done by all pupils and these results are sent to the Department of Education. Later in the year pupils will be doing their standardised exams (Progress in English 11; Progress in Maths 11).

The results of all these assessments will be included in the end of year pupil report and will also be sent on to the new school your child will be attending in September.

Therefore, we are writing to the parents/carers of all P7 pupils to explain the importance of the work coming up over the next few months and in particular of the importance of attendance. In order for pupils to do their best and to be fully prepared for entering post primary education it is vital that pupils maintain a good attendance record in Primary 7.

Thank you for your continued support.

Principal

Appendix D



Dear Parent/Carer,

Your child _____'s attendance record is giving us cause for concern. We will continue to monitor the number of days your child is absent from school. If there is no significant improvement the school will request the assistance of the Education Welfare Office (EWO) who will help with this problem. If you wish to discuss or explain reasons for your child absence please contact the Vice-Principal, Mr White.

Current Attendance: _____ %

Yours sincerely

Principal

Appendix E



Dear _____

I am writing to inform you that there continues to be ongoing concerns regarding your child _____'s attendance. Your child's current level of attendance is _____%. If your child's attendance falls below 85% without a valid reason for the absence he/she will be referred to the Education Welfare Officer.

If you wish to discuss or explain reasons for your child absence please contact the Vice-Principal, Mr White.

Yours sincerely

Principal

Appendix F (Page 1/2)

**EDUCATION & LIBRARY BOARDS
EDUCATION WELFARE SERVICE – REFERRAL FORM**

School Name: _____

Alternative Education Provider: _____

Student Name: _____ DOB: _____ Year Group: _____

Address: _____ Postcode: _____

Telephone Number: _____

Full name of those with parental responsibility: _____

Relationship to pupil: _____

Gender: Male Female Referred by: School Parent/Carer Student Other agency (please specify) _____

Looked After Child: Yes/No (delete as applicable)

Ethnicity:* _____ Nationality/Language: _____

Is a translator required? Yes/No (Delete as appropriate)

*One of the following categories should be used:
Black – African, Black – Caribbean, Bangladeshi, Black – Other, Chinese/Hong Kong, Indian/Sri Lankan, Korean, Mixed Ethnic Group, Malaysian, Other Non White, Pakistani, Irish Traveller, Vietnamese or White.

Is this a re-referral? Yes No

Reason(s) for referral, please tick box/es as appropriate

Attendance	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Behaviour <small>(where it is impacting on attendance including concerns regarding suspension/s)</small>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Medical	<input type="checkbox"/>
Welfare Concerns	<input type="checkbox"/>	School Age Mother	<input type="checkbox"/>
School Placement	<input type="checkbox"/>	Social & Emotional <small>(e.g. bullying, transition)</small>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>		

If other (please specify) _____

Action taken by school pre-referral

Letters sent to home

Parent(s)/carer(s) contacted by phone

Parent(s)/carer(s) interviewed at school

Individual work with student

Contact with other agencies, please specify

Date of Contact

Please give more information overleaf

<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/>	_____

Appendix F (Page 2/2)

When and how was parent contacted about this referral?

Please note that referrals will not be accepted without the family having been informed unless in exceptional circumstances.

Date: _____ Letter Phone call Other Please specify: _____

Special Educational Needs

Does the SENCo know the student? Yes No

At what stage on the code of practice is this student (1-5)?

To ensure effective EWS assessment the section below must be completed

Please detail the following:

Reasons for absence

School interventions to address pupil's absence

Parent/guardian's response to school's intervention

Please attach a copy of attendance printout with this referral.

Signature: _____ (Mr/Mrs/Ms) Designation: _____

Print Name: _____

Please Print Name & Designation of person who should be contacted (if different from above):

Date of referral: _____

Please note – the contents of this form may be shared with the student and parent(s)/carer(s).

Thank you for taking the time to complete this form.

For Office Use Only	
Date Received	
Allocated to	
Date	