

# St. Oliver Plunkett Primary School & Nursery Unit



## Attendance Policy

Signed (Chair of the Board of Governors):	
Signed (Principal):	
Agree Date:	October 2022
Review Date:	October 2025

## **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.

St. Oliver Plunkett Primary School and Nursery Unit will strive to promote an ethos and culture which encourages good attendance and where each pupil will feel valued and secure.

This policy has been developed in consultation with the Board of Governors, teachers, Educational Welfare Services, parents and children and DE Circular 2018/12. It seeks to ensure that all parties involved are aware of attendance matters in the school and to outline the school's commitment to attendance matters detailing procedures monitoring and promoting pupil attendance.

The staff of St. Oliver Plunkett Primary School and Nursery Unit recognise their responsibility in monitoring and promoting the regular attendance of all its pupils. We acknowledge that irregular attendance seriously disrupts continuity of teaching and learning and impedes the child's ability to develop and maintain friendships within school.

## **Aims**

In St. Oliver Plunkett Primary School and Nursery Unit, we aim to raise and maintain high levels of attendance by:

- promoting a positive and welcoming atmosphere in which pupils feel safe, secure and valued.
- promoting opportunities to celebrate and reward pupil's successes and achievements.
- ensuring that attendance is monitored effectively and reasons for absences are recorded promptly and consistently.
- providing advice, support and guidance to parents/guardians and pupils.
- developing a framework that defines roles and responsibilities in relation to attendance.
- promoting good relationships with Education Welfare Service.

## **Role of the School**

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 2018/12, which can be found on the DENI website.

## **The Board of Governors**

The Board of Governors have the ultimate responsibility for school attendance; however, this is delegated on a daily basis to the Principal. The Board of Governors have the responsibility to monitor school attendance and the effectiveness of the school's policy and practice, and to ensure that it is regularly placed as an agenda item at Board of Governor meetings.

## **The Principal**

The Principal has overall responsibility for school attendance; teachers should bring any concerns regarding school attendance to his/her attention. The Principal is responsible for monitoring attendance on a daily basis. The Principal will:

- alongside the Board of Governors, determine resources and staffing to deal with attendance issues
- assume responsibility for attendance and ensure that the school meets all legal requirements, sets targets for attendance and unauthorised absence and reports to stakeholders regarding attendance figures
- ensure that parents and pupils are aware of their responsibilities regarding attendance and punctuality at the point of admission
- liaise with the Education Welfare Officer to discuss pupil attendance issues
- ensure that the Board of Governors are informed about attendance issues and ensure statistical information is provided as required by the government

### **The Class Teacher**

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. The class teacher will:

- develop trusting relationships with all pupils
- monitor daily attendance by marking registers, collecting absence notes and assisting the Principal in identifying irregular attendance patterns
- follow-up any unexplained prolonged absence by informing the Principal
- promote class attendance
- refer pupils to the Principal
- provide support to children whilst on long term absence and upon their return to school.

### **The School Secretary**

The school secretary will:

- operate the SIMS Attendance system
- take phone calls from parents when pupils are absent from school and inform class teachers
- collate registration data
- compile lists of absentees.

### **Parents/Guardians**

St. Oliver Plunkett Primary School and Nursery Unit are committed to working with parents/guardians to encourage regular and punctual attendance.

Parents have a legal duty to ensure:

*Every child of compulsory school age shall receive efficient full-time education suitable to age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs he may have, either by regular school attendance or otherwise.*

**(Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986)**

It is a parent/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.

Pupils are expected to be in school between 9.00-9.15am for registration and the beginning of classes. It is the responsibility of parents to ensure that their child is punctual.

Lateness is recorded at registration and recorded 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.

### **The Pupils**

Each pupil at St. Oliver Plunkett Primary School and Nursery Unit has a duty to ensure that they 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.

### **Absence Procedures**

Class begins promptly at 9.15 a.m. The class teacher will take a register recording who is present and absent. Registration will close at 9.20 a.m. Any child arriving after this time will be marked late. The Principal will monitor punctuality on a termly basis. If a pupil is considered to be regularly late, the parents will be contacted and the matter will be discussed with the view to ensuring the child will arrive in school on time. If a child is absent, parents should notify the class teacher via a Seesaw message or telephone the school office.

### **Authorised absence**

Some absences are allowed by law and are known as 'authorised absences'. For example: if a child is ill, family bereavement, religious observance. We realise that there are rare occasions when there might be a particular problem that causes your child to be absent. Please let us know and we shall try to deal with it sympathetically.

### **Unauthorised absence**

There are times when children are absent for reasons which are **not** permitted by law. These are known as 'unauthorised absences'. Examples of unauthorised absence are: got up too late; other children in the family ill; family day out; tired after a late night; unapproved holidays.

A set of standard codes are used consistently within the register. These codes are input into the electronic register weekly / monthly and are used to give depth of meaning to the register and provide statistical meaning to the absences.

### **Request for leave of absence**

If a parent wishes to request a period of absence for their child, they are required to write to the Principal. If the request is denied, the school will inform the parent of the reason by a letter and the request will be noted in the electronic register. Leave of absence will **not** be offered to pupils for family holidays except under special / exceptional circumstances.

### **Family Holidays during Term Time**

St. Oliver Plunkett Primary School and Nursery Unit 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. The Principal's discretion may be applied in exceptional circumstances.

### **Covid 19 Absence Circular 2020/08**

Circular 2020/08 Addendum provides guidance to schools on managing pupil attendance as a result of Covid-19. If pupils are absent due to Covid, arrangements can be made to provide hard copies of work which is being taught in school alongside some online learning activities. Parents may contact the school via Seesaw to arrange this.

### **Monitoring Pupil Attendance**

The Principal will review the attendance of all pupils on a monthly basis.

- If a pupil is identified as having less than 90% attendance, the Principal will arrange a meeting or phone call with the parent to explain his concerns and offer support to improve the pupil's attendance. The principal will also explain the subsequent procedures and protocol if attendance does not improve.
- If a pupil is identified as having less than 88% attendance, an initial formal letter from the Principal will be sent to the parents. The letter will inform them of the school's concerns and offer support to resolve any problems that may be impeding the child from attending school.
- The pupil's attendance will be closely monitored and if there appears to be no improvement, the parents will receive a second letter informing them of the school's continued concern. It will be stated in this letter that if attendance continues to be a problem and is unexplained, the school will formally refer the pupil to the EWO.
- The electronic registration system provides many reports and information that assist the school to monitor attendance. These reports will be accessed when relevant and provide information to assist the school strategically manage attendance issues. The EWO will also have access to this information and will use the reports to support her role.

### **Rewarding Good attendance**

Children who receive 100% attendance will receive a full attendance certificate at our Prize Giving Ceremony in June.

### **Education Welfare Service (EWS)**

The Education Authority has, through the Education Welfare Service, a legal responsibility to make sure that parents meet their responsibility towards their children's education.

Regular attendance is an essential requirement for educational results and where attendance difficulties exist or a pupil's attendance falls below 85%, Education Welfare Service (EWS) will support staff and parents in developing and implementing strategies to address or improve school attendance.

### **Monitoring, Evaluation and Reviewing**

As part of the school's monitoring and evaluation process, we continually keep abreast of new and effective initiatives and adapt our practice accordingly. Therefore, this policy will be reviewed by the Principal, staff and Governors in 2025.