



## Attendance Policy

*'Where Happy Children Grow'*

### **UN CRC Article 28**

All children have the right to a primary education

Ratified by Governors:	March 2024
Review Date:	September 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.

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

## **Our School Ethos**

The ethos of our school is a child centred one creating a caring and secure environment with close links between school, home and community. Our children are encouraged to have a positive attitude to themselves and others with high expectations and standards to learning and to developing good inter-personal relationships and communication skills.

In order to achieve this it is hoped our children will feel valued as individuals and develop their self-esteem, confidence and independence. We encourage an understanding and appreciation of the environment, and of spiritual, moral, cultural and physical development.

## **Aims of Assessment Policy:**

1. To improve/maintain the overall attendance of pupils at Knockloughrim 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 has overall responsibility for school attendance; (teachers/designated staff) should bring any concerns regarding school attendance to his 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.

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 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-andabsence-recording-by-schools](http://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/circular-201715-attendance-guidance-andabsence-recording-by-schools)

Knockloughrim 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.

Parents are responsible for:

- Providing accurate and up-to-date contact details.
- Providing the school with more than one emergency contact number.
- Updating the school if their details change.
- The attendance of their children at school.
- Promoting good attendance with their children.
- Informing school promptly regarding absences.
- Ensuring their child arrives punctually. (Each school can decide what it feels is the most

The school has high expectations for pupils' attendance and punctuality and ensures that these expectations are communicated regularly to parents and pupils.

Pupils will be expected to attend school punctually every day they are required to be at school, for the full day.

The school day starts at **9am**, and pupils will be in their classroom, ready to begin lessons at this time; therefore, pupils will be expected to be on the school site by **8.55am**.

Registers will be taken as follows throughout the school day:

- The morning register will be marked by 9:00am. Pupils will receive a late mark if they are not in their classroom by this time. Pupils attending after this time will receive a L mark to show that they were on site, but this will count as a late mark
- The morning register will close 30 minutes later at 9:30am.
- The afternoon register will be marked by 1:00pm. Pupils will receive a late mark if they are not in their classroom by this time.
- The afternoon register will close 30 minutes later at 1:30pm.

Pupils will be encouraged to communicate any concerns related to attendance and absence as soon as possible to the relevant member of staff. 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**

Pupils are responsible for:

- Attending their lessons and any agreed activities when at school.
- Arriving punctually to lessons when at school.

## **DEFINITIONS**

The following definitions apply for the purposes of this policy:

### **Absence:**

- Arrival at school after the register has closed
- Not attending school for any reason Authorised absence:
  - An absence for sickness for which the school has granted leave
  - Medical or dental appointments which unavoidably fall during school time, for which then school has granted leave
  - Religious observances

- An absence due to a family emergency (for example, a bereavement) for which the school has granted leave
- Authorised educational sporting events

#### **Unauthorised absence:**

- Parents keeping children off school unnecessarily or without reason
- Truancy before or during the school day
- Absences which have never been properly explained
- Arrival at school after the register has closed
- Pupils who have been permitted to stay up late the previous night
- Absence due to shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- Absence due to day trips and holidays in term-time
- Leaving school for no reason during the day

#### **Persistent absence (PA) and Severe Absence (SA):**

- PA is missing 10% or more of schooling across the year for any reason (equivalent to 1 day or more a fortnight across the school year)
- SA is missing 50% or more of schooling across the year

#### **Absence Procedures**

Parents will be required to contact the school office via telephone before 9:00am on the first day of their child's absence – they will be expected to provide an explanation for the absence and an estimation of how long the absence will last, for example, one school day.

Where a pupil is absent, and their parent has not contacted the school by 9.30am (the time the register closes) to report the absence, Admin (or a member of the office staff) will send a ParentMail/phonecall to parents asking them to contact school urgently or they will contact the parent by telephone to ascertain the reason for absence.

If no reason for absence has been established by 10am, this absence will be reported to the Principal. If a child is already receiving multi-agency support, this will also be reported to the Designated Teacher and/or allocated social worker.

The school will always follow up any absences in order to:

- Ascertain the reason for the absence.
- Ensure the proper safeguarding action is being taken.
- Identify whether the absence is authorised or not.
- Identify the correct code to use to enter the data onto the school census system.

#### **Family holidays during Term Time**

Knockloughrim 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.

## **Leave of Absence**

Leave of absence will only be granted in exceptional circumstances. The Principal will consider each application individually taking into account the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind the request. In order to have a request for a leave of absence considered, the school expects parents to contact the Principal in writing at least two weeks prior to the proposed start date of the leave of absence, providing the reason for the proposed absence and the dates during which the absence would be expected to occur. The Principal must be satisfied that there are exceptional circumstances to warrant granting the leave of absence and if the leave of absence is granted, will determine the length of the time the pupil can be away from school.

As the Principal will only grant leave of absence in exceptional circumstances, it is highly unlikely a leave of absence will be granted for the purposes of a family holiday.

## **Procedures for Managing Non-attendance**

There are various groups of pupils who may be vulnerable to high absence and PA (equivalent to 1 day or more a fortnight across a full school year), such as:

- Children in need
- Looked After Children
- Young carers
- Pupils who are eligible for Free School Meals
- Pupils with English as an Additional Language
- Pupils with SEND
- Pupils who have faced bullying and/or discrimination

The school will use a number of methods to help support pupils at risk of PA to attend school.

These include:

- Offering catch-up support to build confidence and bridge gaps.
- Meeting with pupils to discuss patterns of absence, barriers to attendance, and any other problems they may be having.
- Establishing plans to remove barriers and provide additional support.
- Leading weekly check-ins to review progress and the impact of support.
- Making regular contact with families to discuss progress.
- Assessing whether SEN intervention may be appropriate.
- Considering what support for re-engagement might be needed, including for vulnerable groups

## **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.

Signature – Principal

Signature – Chair, Board of Governors

Date