

Attendance Policy



Mol an óige agus tiocfaidh sí!

**Gaelscoil na Speiríní**

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Attendance Policy

**Rationale:**

In Gaelscoil na Speiríní 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. Gaelscoil na Speiríní 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 Gaelscoil na Speiríní.

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. (Comortas na dtithe)

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 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**

The Principal is responsible for managing pupil 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 include in fortnightly newsletter reminding parents about punctuality and attendance to school.

To discuss with parents at Annual Parents Meeting in September/October.

To provide an attendance figure on each school report in June.

To provide an annual attendance figure for the whole school to be included in the annual school report.

To monitor punctuality.

**Roles and Responsibilities of the Board of Governors:**

To consider the Principal’s report on school attendance each year in June.

**Roles and Responsibilities of Teaching Staff and Clerical Staff:**

To make daily accurate records of attendance and lateness of the registers to the office each Friday.

To report any concerning patterns of absence to the Principal/Child Protection Officer.

**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 9:05am 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:**

Gaelscoil na Speiríní 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/Principal 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.

**Procedures to Record Attendance and Punctuality:**

**Arrival and Registration**

Registration is taken at 9:10 am by the class teacher. Any child who arrives after 9:10 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%).

If attendance is a concern a letter **(see Appendix A)** will be sent to the parent/carer and the parent/carer will be asked to contact the school to arrange a meeting with the Principal.

If attendance does not improve and falls below 85% then a referral form will be sent to the EWO 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 a letter will be sent to the parent/carer by the Principal.

If there is no improvement the 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.

- *Source: School Attendance Matters – A Parent’s Guide* 8

**Incentives to Improve Attendance and Punctuality:**

The Principal will talk to individual pupils when necessary.

The school will present certificates to the children who achieved full attendance at prize giving.

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.

**Truanting**

If any pupil is caught truanting 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 truanting pupils and parents/carers will be telephoned immediately if any pupil on this register is absent.

**Monitoring of the Policy**

Principals and Board of Governors will review the policy every two years.

**Appendix A**

**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 Gaelscoil na Speirini 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.

I will be in touch with you to arrange an appointment date by telephone to discuss the issue.

Yours sincerely

Review date: 1/2/2018

Next review date: February 2021