**Pupil Attendance**

**Policy**



**Approved by Governors: 05/07/21**

**To be reviewed: Term 3 -2024**

**Rationale**

At St Mary’s Primary School Altinure, we believe that children can only learn effectively if they attend school regularly. It is important too, that children arrive and leave school on time. It is equally important that children should not be at school if they are unwell. St Mary’s Primary School, Altinure is a happy school. Children learn best when they are happy and relaxed. All staff show concern and care about each child’s welfare. As attendance is crucial to effective learning and continuity of learning experiences, school places great emphasis on this in its communication with parents.

**Communication**

Information on lateness, illness and absence is given to parents in the Prospectus and in School Newsletters. Information from DENI such as ‘School Attendance: A Brief Guide’ is distributed to all families as directed. The importance of being at school on time is highlighted and parents are asked to notify the school by telephone or in writing if their child is absent for any reason.

At the pre-school induction meetings held each year for children about to enter Primary One, the importance of regular attendance is discussed and explained. This talk also includes the importance of children arriving at school on time so that each child can be given the best possible start to each school day. Being picked up on time is also stressed, especially for young children who can be very upset if they are the only ones left. Parents are asked to share any worries their child might have in school. Sometimes little things upset children which means they become unhappy and may not want to come to school.

It is expected that parents arrange family holidays within the school holidays, rather than in term time so that their child’s education is not disrupted. The Principal talks to those parents who persistently take their holidays in term time, reminding parents of the disruption to their child’s education. (Family holidays within term are recorded as Family Holidays, Not Agreed which is an unauthorised absence)

Children are also admitted to school at various times of the year, and into various year groups. All parents requesting a place are asked to make an appointment with the Principal. At this meeting, the importance of regular attendance is highlighted along with other school routines.

Authorised and unauthorised absences are explained to parents. Parents are also informed that late arrivals and getting out early will impact on their child’s attendance. Children who come to school after 9.30am will be recorded as late on the attendance register.

All parents are asked to contact school if their child is absent. This can be done by telephoning or visiting in person to school reception. The secretary records any messages and passes them on to the child’s class teacher.

Parents can alternatively send a letter to school or write in the homework diary when their child returns explaining the absence. An absence notification form is also available for parental use and may be sent home for parents to complete if no reason for absence has been provided (See Appendix A). Reasons for absence are important for accurate recoding of attendance in the SIMS attendance register. If no notification is received about a child’s absence, the absence is recorded as No Reason Provided. The EA has specific codes to be used for Covid 19 related absences and periods of remote learning. These codes do not impact negatively on a child’s overall attendance record.

**Concerns**

If a child is regularly late for school or is often absent, then the class teacher may contact the parent concerned to have an informal discussion about this. A reminder note may be sent out by the class teacher. If this persists, then the teacher registers their concern to the Principal/Vice Principal. Attendance records are looked at regularly and letters may be issued to parents of pupils whose attendance is between 85% and 90% to inform them of their child’s attendance to date and encourage improved future attendance. The Education Welfare Officer meets with the Principal or Vice Principal regularly to discuss attendance issues and to offer advice and support. The EWO can also access the school’s computerised pupil attendance records at any time. The school must make a formal referral to the EWO when any pupil’s attendance falls below 85%. The EWO will then make a home visit to discuss attendance and provide advice and support.

**Truancy**

At St Mary’s Primary School, we recognise that children’s regular attendance will provide continuity in learning. We are also concerned about each child’s safety, welfare and happiness. Although it is a rare occurrence for a child to truant, if there is a concern that a child might be truanting then action is taken straight away. If truancy is suspected, the Principal is notified, who then contacts the parent and the Education Welfare Officer. Parents are encouraged to bring their child to school so that reasons for the child not wanting to attend can be discussed and hopefully resolved. In the event of not being able to talk to the parent, then the Principal/Vice Principal talks to the child concerned to find out if there are any worries or problems in school that might make that child not want to attend. If there are, then these are discussed with the class teacher and appropriate action is taken. The school always strives to maintain good communication with parents who are respected and valued as a child’s prime carer.

**Positive Approach**

At St Mary’s PS Altinure, attendance rates are generally high and we aim for an average pupil attendance of 97%. Teachers reward high attendance rates through praise. Pupils with at least 97% attendance are recognised at the end of each school year by the presentation of certificates. Pupils with excellent attendance receive public recognition through photographs on the school website and Year 7 pupils are awarded attendance prizes at their Leaving Ceremony. Any pupils will 100% full attendance for their combined primary and post-primary education have this exceptional achievement recognised by the Education Authority.

Date Reviewed: 05/07/21

Signed:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (Chair of BOG)

Date of next review: Term 3 - 2024

**Appendix A**

** ABSENCE NOTIFICATION FORM**

Please note, for each period of pupil absence, please telephone reception or complete this absence notification form and return to school immediately so that absences can be correctly recorded.

**Name of Pupil: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Class / Teacher Name:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Date(s) of Absence: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Reason: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Signed (Parent / Guardian): \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

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**Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

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**Date(s) of Absence: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Reason: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Signed (Parent / Guardian): \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**