



Pupil Attendance Policy

In St. Mary's Primary School and Nursery Unit we encourage all children to have a positive start to their learning day. Maintaining excellent attendance and arriving to school on time helps to establish routines and enables the children to make appropriate progress. To safeguard this, we have a clear set of school routines which we expect all parents/guardians and pupils to adhere to:

- Pupils to enter their respective playground at 8:45am for supervision by classroom assistants. Parents/guardians of children who are left unsupervised in the school grounds before 8:45am will be contacted to come back to school to supervise children until then
- The school day for the Nursery Unit and main school begins at 9am. We expect pupils to be in no later than 8:55am
- Any child arriving to school after 9:05am will be recorded as late on the class register
- Pupils arriving after 9:05am should proceed to the main school reception. Mrs Holmes will give the children access to the school building
- Pupils who are **late** will be expected to walk to the classroom by themselves. Parents/guardians are not permitted entry into the main school building without a previously agreed appointment

KEY PRINCIPLES OF ST. MARY'S ATTENDANCE POLICY

St. Mary's Primary School and Nursery Unit considers excellent, high levels of attendance are directly linked to pupil attainment. Excellent attendance and excellent punctuality are central and integral to the efficient day-to-day management of our school. We support parents/guardians in their commitment to ensure their child (ren) achieves maximum possible attendance throughout the school year. It is the responsibility of parents/guardians to ensure their child arrives to school and comes home safely. This also pertains to after school clubs and for those children in P6 and P7 who have permission to walk home, cycle home and/or take the Translink Bus home. St. Mary's Primary School and Nursery Unit, including the Board of Governors, are not responsible for supervising children to and from school.

AIMS

- To improve the overall attendance of St. Mary's Primary School and Nursery in line with/or above the NI average
- To produce an attendance framework that defines the school's roles and responsibilities
- To provide support to parents/guardians and pupils

- To promote excellent relations with the school's Education Welfare Officer (EWO)
Caroline Farrell

EXPECTATIONS

- ✓ Pupils to arrive punctually and attend school every day
- ✓ Pupils to be prepared for the day ahead i.e., school uniform, homework and healthy breaks etc

ROLES

Parents/guardians and carers have a legal duty to ensure their child attends school daily. It is their sole responsibility to inform us for the reason of a child's absence. Parents should contact school on the first day of absence by phoning Mrs Holmes (secretary) on 02843723730 or by emailing the school principal, Mr Murray at dmurray538@c2kni.net

Mrs Holmes and/or Mr Murray will inform the teachers on your behalf. There is no need to call and speak to your child's class teacher as this could disrupt class teaching for the rest of the children.

If absences are likely to be prolonged, this information should also be presented to Mrs Holmes/Mr Murray to ensure arrangements can be made to support you with your child's work/homework for the period of absence. ***Please note classwork and/or homework will not be provided for you if you take your child (ren) out of school term time for holidays.***

Pupils are expected to be in their classrooms at 9am. Registration is taken from this time. Children arriving to class after 9:05am will be recorded as 'late'. It is your responsibility to manage your child's arrival to school. Regular periods of lateness will be reported to the school's Education Welfare Officer (EWO).

If your child appears reluctant to attend, please contact Mrs Holmes so a suitably mutual appointment can be made between you and your child's class teacher.

NOTIFYING ABSENCES

Children may need to be absent from school for other reasons such as attending a medical appointment, attending a dentist or representing the school in music or speech and language festivals. These should only take up part of the normal school day. School should be informed of such absences through contacting Mrs Holmes, Mr Murray or by sending a private message to your child's teacher through Seesaw or Google Classroom. Children should be brought back to school after all appointments if appropriate.

Included below is the DE ‘Attendance Matters – a Parent’s Guide (Pg4)’ taken from Circular 2023/11 “Attendance Guidance and Absence Recording by Schools”



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.



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

EDUCATION WELFARE SERVICE (EWS)

The Education Authority (EA) through the EWS has a legal duty to make sure parents/guardians and carers meet their responsibilities towards their children’s education. When a pupil’s absence causes concern/suspicion, or if attendance falls below 85% and there still is a concern, the pupil and their family will be referred to EWS. If appropriate, EWS will

support the pupil and their families to implement strategies to address and improve attendance.

UNAUTHORISED ABSENCES

Unauthorised absences are those which the school and EA considers to be unreasonable and for which absence will not be approved. Such examples are:

- Parents/guardians and carers keeping children off unnecessarily
- Absences which have not been explained properly to school
- Shopping, birthdays, days trips, looking after other children and truancy
- Holidays during term time

NURSERY UNIT ATTENDANCE

The Department of Education does not make attendance at Nursery Units compulsory. However, at St. Mary's Primary School and Nursery Unit we consider excellent attendance and parental support with this, to enable the Nursery Unit staff, to set the first main building blocks of Foundation Education. We consider regular and consistent attendance as vital components to early years' learning. We expect parents/guardians and/or carers to follow the same attendance guidance and procedures within this Policy that is set for the P1 – P7 children.

HOLIDAYS DURING TERM TIME

Holidays taken during term time are an unauthorised leave of absence. The school holiday list is presented to parents/guardians and carers in April/May for the following year ahead. St. Mary's Primary School, DE and EA do not grant such leaves of absence unless there are exceptional and extenuating circumstances. These will only be granted on very rare occasions and only by Mr Murray. Parents/guardians and carers should inform Mr Murray through emailing dmurray538@c2kni.net if they intend to go on holiday during term time. We appreciate the courtesy with this. As stated previously, teachers will not be setting classwork/homework for any such leaves of unauthorised absence.

THE ROLE OF MANAGING ATTENDANCE IN ST. MARY'S PRIMARY SCHOOL AND NURSERY UNIT

- Teaching staff email daily attendance updates to Mr Murray before 9:30am
- Mr Murray reviews attendance on a week-by-week and monthly basis
- If a child's attendance is dropping (100% to 92%) Mr Murray will contact parents/guardians and/or carers by phone to advise

- If attendance continues to fall (From 92% to 88%) parents/guardians and/or carers will receive a written warning on behalf of the Governors to address and improve attendance. This will be monitored over a four-week period
- If attendance falls below 88% to 85% a second letter will be issued and parents/guardians and/or carers will be invited to school for a formal meeting with Mr Murray. Attendance will be monitored over a four-week period
- If improvements are not readily noticeable, and attendance drops below 85%, the pupil and their family will be referred to EWS for family intervention. This will also be interpreted as neglect and a UNOCINI will be sent to Social Services. The Board of Governors of St. Mary's Primary School and Nursery School will be updated and the school's CPOMS register will also be updated accordingly

ILLNESS GUIDELINES

Rashes and skin infections	Recommended period to be kept away from school, nursery or childminders	Comments
Athlete's foot	None	Athlete's foot is not a serious condition. Treatment is recommended
Chickenpox*	Until all vesicles have crusted over	See: Vulnerable children and female staff – pregnancy
Cold sores, (Herpes simplex)	None	Avoid kissing and contact with the sores. Cold sores are generally mild and self-limiting
German measles (rubella)*	Four days from onset of rash (as per "Green Book")	Preventable by immunisation (MMR x 2 doses). See: Female staff – pregnancy
Hand, foot and mouth	None	Contact the Duty Room if a large number of children are affected. Exclusion may be considered in some circumstances
Impetigo	Until lesions are crusted and healed, or 48 hours after commencing antibiotic treatment	Antibiotic treatment speeds healing and reduces the infectious period
Measles*	Four days from onset of rash	Preventable by vaccination (MMR x 2). See: Vulnerable children and female staff – pregnancy
Molluscum contagiosum	None	A self-limiting condition
Ringworm	Exclusion not usually required	Treatment is required
Roseola (infantum)	None	None
Scabies	Child can return after first treatment	Household and close contacts require treatment
Scarlet fever*	Child can return 24 hours after commencing appropriate antibiotic treatment	Antibiotic treatment recommended for the affected child. If more than one child has scarlet fever contact PHA Duty Room for further advice
Slapped cheek (fifth disease or parvovirus B19)	None once rash has developed	See: Vulnerable children and female staff – pregnancy
Shingles	Exclude only if rash is weeping and cannot be covered	Can cause chickenpox in those who are not immune i.e. have not had chickenpox. It is spread by very close contact and touch. If further information is required, contact the Duty Room. SEE: Vulnerable Children and Female Staff – Pregnancy
Warts and verrucae	None	Verrucae should be covered in swimming pools, gymnasiums and changing rooms

Diarrhoea and vomiting illness	Recommended period to be kept away from school, nursery or childminders	Comments
Diarrhoea and/or vomiting	48 hours from last episode of diarrhoea or vomiting	
<i>E. coli</i> O157 VTEC*	Should be excluded for 48 hours from the last episode of diarrhoea	Further exclusion is required for young children under five and those who have difficulty in adhering to hygiene practices
Typhoid* [and paratyphoid*] (enteric fever)	Further exclusion may be required for some children until they are no longer excreting	Children in these categories should be excluded until there is evidence of microbiological clearance. This guidance may also apply to some contacts of cases who may require microbiological clearance
Shigella* (dysentery)		Please consult the Duty Room for further advice
Cryptosporidiosis*	Exclude for 48 hours from the last episode of diarrhoea	Exclusion from swimming is advisable for two weeks after the diarrhoea has settled

Respiratory infections	Recommended period to be kept away from school, nursery or childminders	Comments
Flu (influenza)	Until recovered	See: Vulnerable children
Tuberculosis*	Always consult the Duty Room	Requires prolonged close contact for spread
Whooping cough* (pertussis)	48 hours from commencing antibiotic treatment, or 21 days from onset of illness if no antibiotic treatment	Preventable by vaccination. After treatment, non-infectious coughing may continue for many weeks. The Duty Room will organise any contact tracing necessary

Other infections	Recommended period to be kept away from school, nursery or childminders	Comments
Conjunctivitis	None	If an outbreak/cluster occurs, consult the Duty Room
Diphtheria *	Exclusion is essential. Always consult with the Duty Room	Family contacts must be excluded until cleared to return by the Duty Room. Preventable by vaccination. The Duty Room will organise any contact tracing necessary
Glandular fever	None	
Head lice	None	Treatment is recommended only in cases where live lice have been seen
Hepatitis A*	Exclude until seven days after onset of jaundice (or seven days after symptom onset if no jaundice)	The duty room will advise on any vaccination or other control measure that are needed for close contacts of a single case of hepatitis A and for suspected outbreaks.
Hepatitis B*, C, HIV/AIDS	None	Hepatitis B and C and HIV are bloodborne viruses that are not infectious through casual contact. For cleaning of body fluid spills. SEE: Good Hygiene Practice
Meningococcal meningitis*/septicaemia*	Until recovered	Some forms of meningococcal disease are preventable by vaccination (see immunisation schedule). There is no reason to exclude siblings or other close contacts of a case. In case of an outbreak, it may be necessary to provide antibiotics with or without meningococcal vaccination to close contacts. The Duty Room will advise on any action needed.
Meningitis* due to other bacteria	Until recovered	Hib and pneumococcal meningitis are preventable by vaccination. There is no reason to exclude siblings or other close contacts of a case. The Duty Room will give advice on any action needed
Meningitis viral*	None	Milder illness. There is no reason to exclude siblings and other close contacts of a case. Contact tracing is not required
MRSA	None	Good hygiene, in particular handwashing and environmental cleaning, are important to minimise any danger of spread. If further information is required, contact the Duty Room
Mumps*	Exclude child for five days after onset of swelling	Preventable by vaccination (MMR x 2 doses)
Threadworms	None	Treatment is recommended for the child and household contacts
Tonsillitis	None	There are many causes, but most cases are due to viruses and do not need an antibiotic