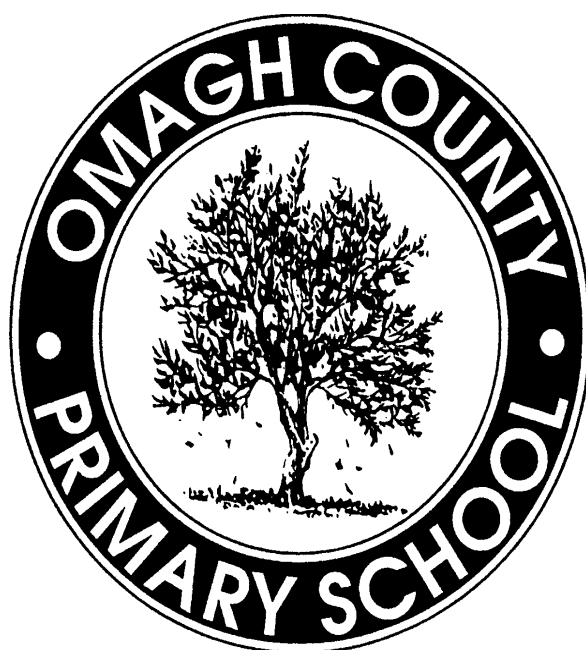


OMAGH COUNTY

P.S.

Attendance Policy



Devised 2014
Reviewed 2016

Signed:

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Omagh County Primary School is committed to providing a full and efficient educational experience for all pupils. We believe that if pupils are to benefit from education, good attendance is crucial.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that as a school we do all that we can to ensure maximum attendance for all pupils. Any problems that prevent full attendance will be identified and addressed as promptly as possible in line with the procedures identified in this policy.

Objectives of this policy

- to encourage full attendance and punctuality;
- to record and monitor attendance and absenteeism and apply appropriate strategies;
- to minimise absenteeism; and,
- to ensure a consistent approach throughout the school.

WHAT IS THE LAW ABOUT SCHOOL ATTENDANCE?

Parents and the education and library boards have clear duties and responsibilities.

Parental Duty

The duty of a parent, in relation to the education of their children, is found in the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986 and says:

"The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him/her to receive efficient full time education suitable to his/her age ability and aptitude, and to any special educational needs he/she may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise."

Duty of the Education and Library Board

Education and Library Boards through their Education Welfare Service have a legal responsibility to make sure that parents and carers meet their own responsibility towards their children's education. If they do not, the Education and Library Board is duty bound to use the legal processes of Court action, to uphold a parent's duty to make sure that the young people in their care receive an education.

WHY IS SCHOOL ATTENDANCE IMPORTANT?

- It is required by law.
- Children need to attend school regularly to keep up with their work and promote social development.
- A good education will give your child the best possible start in life and enable him or her to make the best of the opportunities available.
- Children need to develop good habits in readiness for later life.

WHAT CAN A PARENT/CARER DO TO HELP THEIR CHILD?

- Make sure your child goes to school regularly, arrives there on time, and keeps to the school rules. Start good habits at an early age while your child is at primary school.
- If your child starts avoiding school, contact the school straightaway and we will work together to resolve any issues.
- If your child is ill, contact the school on the first day of absence. Staff will be concerned if they don't hear from you.
- If your child is ever off school, tell the school why.
- If you want your child to miss school, for example for a religious festival or some other special occasion, seek the school's agreement well in advance and give full details.

WHEN A CHILD CAN BE ABSENT FROM SCHOOL

When he or she:

- is ill;
- has an unavoidable medical or dental appointment;
- is taking part in a religious event;
- has an exceptional family circumstance, e.g. wedding or a funeral.

SOME UNACCEPTABLE REASONS FOR ABSENCE

- Birthdays;
- Term time holidays;
- Visiting relatives;
- Looking after other members of the family.

SUPPORT BY PARENTS/CARERS

Whilst parents/carers have a legal duty to ensure that their children of compulsory school age receive a suitable full-time education, it is also vital that they encourage their child's regular and punctual attendance at school.

It is important that everyone works together to help children obtain the best possible start in life with a good education.

Parents/carers are therefore encouraged to work in partnership with the school, notifying the school of the reason for any of their child's absences and highlighting any areas of concern they may have so they can be addressed promptly.

THE ROLE OF THE EDUCATION WELFARE OFFICER

Every school has a link Education and Welfare Officer (EWO) employed by the relevant Education and Library Board (ELB) whose aim is to reduce unnecessary absences from school by offering support and help to pupils, parents and schools. The school may make a referral to Education Welfare Service when a pupil's attendance is a cause for concern or when attendance drops below **85%**.

The EWO can suggest things that parents can do to help improve matters. He/She can offer to go to the school with parents to talk to the staff about any problems and what needs to be done or can attend the school on their behalf to try and find answers to their child's problems. The EWO can put parents in touch with other agencies that may be able to offer further advice and help. If the problem is of a practical nature, the EWO can also offer advice about free school meals, uniform grants and transport to school.

PROCEDURES IN OMAGH COUNTY PRIMARY SCHOOL

At Omagh County P.S. we promote a culture in which children enjoy coming to school, and do not want to miss out on opportunities. We aim to provide sensitive and appropriate guidance to parents concerning pupil attendance, taking into account guidance from the Department of Education.

- We will give a high priority to conveying to parents/carers and pupils the importance of regular and punctual attendance.
- We recognise that parents/carers have a vital role to play and that there is a need to establish strong home-school links and communication systems that can be utilised whenever there is concern about attendance.
- We will work towards ensuring that all pupils feel supported and valued.
- We will send a clear message that if a pupil is absent, she/he will be missed.
- We will ensure that all staff are aware of the requirements of the registration process and that they receive training on Registration Regulations and the Law relating to attendance.
- We give high priority to attendance and punctuality. We also celebrate and record 100% attendance throughout the academic year.
- Registration begins at 9.00 a.m. and the register is closed at 9.15a.m. A child who arrives at school after registration closes will be registered as late.
- We recognise the importance of early intervention and ask parents for written explanations of pupil absence. Parents/carers are contacted and interviews arranged if necessary as a result of attendance concerns.
- If there are problems which affect a pupil's attendance we will investigate, identify and strive in partnership with parents, pupils and if necessary the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) to resolve attendance problems as quickly and efficiently as possible.
- We work closely with the EWO to regularly monitor and review absences and punctuality. The EWO pays particular attention to children whose attendance falls below **85%** and it may be necessary after monitoring a child's attendance percentage or pattern of attendance eg. an unusually high number of Fridays off school, for a referral to be made to the Education Welfare Service.
- **The Department of Education discourages parents taking their child/children out of school for family holidays during term-time.**
- Absence as a result of a family holiday taken during term time, will be recorded as an unauthorized absence. If a parent/carer takes his/her child out of school during term time for a family holiday, it is the policy of the school that the teachers will not provide work that the child has missed as a result of this time out of school.

- All staff mark their class register using the same system of appropriate categorisation of absence.
- Any concerns about individual pupils are reported directly to the Principal who decides appropriate action and monitors the results.
- Information relating to attendance is included in the *Governors' Annual Report to Parents and School Prospectus*.
- A regular newsletter keeps parents in touch with school happenings and helps to foster the sense of community.
- A copy of this policy will be made available on the school website

CONTACTING THE SCHOOL

- If your child has to be away from school you should notify the school as soon as possible, preferably on the first day of absence.
- ***An absence record sheet is available to assist parents/carers to inform the school of any school absence.***
- If you know in advance of the absence, you should ask permission from the school giving as much notice as possible and full details.

CONCLUSION

This attendance policy will be reviewed by the Board of Governors of Omagh County Primary School every two years or as appropriate as a result of new guidance or changes in legislation by the Department of Education N.I.

This policy will be reviewed in the Summer Term 2016.

Policy Agreed: Spring Term 2014 Policy Review: Summer Term 2016