

St Malachy's P. S.  
and Nursery Unit  
Camlough

Attendance Policy

## **Mission Statement**

St. Malachy's promotes the Catholic ethos in all aspects of the school community while educating the whole child in a caring atmosphere. Great value is placed on the individuality of each child as we nurture and develop his or her needs.

This school offers a broad and balanced curriculum within a stimulating learning environment and encourages all pupils to strive towards excellence.

We foster good relationships within the school and extend them to develop strong links with the wider community.

## **Statement of Principal**

All members of the school community of St Malachy's Primary School are fully committed to the principle that good attendance is an important part of school life. It is further acknowledged that it is the duty of the school to promote an environment in which attendance is nurtured and in which positive steps are taken to promote the emotional and physical well-being of every pupil in its care.

## **Aims and Objectives**

St Malachy's Primary School aims to ensure that every child will want to attend school. This will be achieved by creating a warm, welcoming and secure atmosphere where the pupils feel valued, and a stimulating and accessible curriculum is delivered in a physically clean, bright and attractive environment.

# **The Management of Attendance**

## **Responsibilities of Parents**

*“To ensure that children have an efficient education suited to their age, aptitude and any special educational needs”*

*Education and Libraries Order 1986*

**Parents are asked to phone the school on the first day of absence and inform the school why the child is absent and expected length of absence. Please confirm this with a written note when your child returns to school.**

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

The Board of Governors has the ultimate responsibility for school attendance but this is delegated on a day-to-day basis to the Principal. The Board of Governors has a responsibility to monitor school attendance and the effectiveness of the school's attendance policy and practice.

- The Board of Governors is fully aware of the school's Attendance Policy
- A member of the Board of Governors has been appointed to help monitor attendance
- Attendance is placed as an agenda item at each B. of G. meeting

## **Roles and Responsibilities of the Principal**

Overall responsibility for attendance on a day-to-day basis lies with the Principal. The Principal has the role, along with the Board of Governors for determining resources and staffing to deal with attendance issues, ensuring the Board of Governors are informed about attendance issues and ensuring statistical information is provided as required by government.

**The Principal has overall responsibility for attendance. The Principal will meet with the Education Welfare Officer regularly to discuss pupil attendance issues.**

The Principal will:

- Liaise with the Education Welfare Service about individual pupils
- Talk to pupils with irregular attendance
- Send a letter to parents of pupils who are absent from school on a regular basis without explanation
- Make a referral to the Education Welfare Service if improvement in attendance is not made
- Collate and report attendance information
- Take responsibility for overall monitoring of attendance

## **Roles and Responsibilities of Class Teacher**

Effective practice in relation to managing individual pupil attendance depends on the class teacher. In St Malachy's Primary School the class teacher is responsible for:

- Developing trusting relationships with all pupils
- Monitoring attendance, e.g. marking register, collecting absence notes
- Following up pupil absence if notes not produced
- Talking to individual pupils about their attendance
- Promoting class attendance through the curriculum
- Referring pupils to the Principal
- Providing support to pupils after a long absence from school

## **Roles and Responsibilities of Parents**

It is the parent's responsibility to inform the school of the reason for your child'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.

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.

Pupils are expected to be in school at 9.15 am for registration. It is the responsibility of parents to ensure that your child is punctual. If a pupil arrives after registration has closed the teacher will mark him/her 'Late', unless a valid reason is provided. If a child is late on a regular basis, the Principal will contact the parents to discuss the matter.

## **Roles and Responsibilities of Pupils**

Each pupil must attend school punctually and regularly. If you have been absent from school, a written note from a parent/guardian must be provided to your teacher when you return.

## **Roles and Responsibilities of Office Staff**

Office staff have an important role to play in monitoring attendance in school.

The following are some of the roles they may undertake:

- Operating SIMS
- Taking phone messages from parents when pupils are absent
- Send text messages/make phone calls when pupils are absent and no contact has been made with the school
- Maintaining the register
- Collating registration data
- Identifying pupils with irregular attendance patterns
- Liaising with the Education Welfare Officer

## The Recording of Attendance

The Department of Education has issued guidelines about categorising absence as authorised or unauthorised. As a result the following codes will be used to record absence:

/\	Present	I	Illness
A	Artistic Endeavour	M	Medical/dental appointment
B	Bereavement	N	No reason yet recorded
C	Suspended	0	Exceptional circumstances
D	No reason provided	U	Late – registration closes at 9.30 am
F	Family Holiday (agreed)		
G	Family Holiday (not agreed)		
H	Other Absence (reason not acceptable)		

To ensure the school's Attendance Policy operates in an appropriate manner, the Board of Governors has delegated authority to the Principal who has the authority to decide whether an absence should be classified as authorised/unauthorised.

## **Authorised absences**

*In normal circumstances the following types of absences will be classified as authorised (pupil will still be marked absent):*

- Illness (when note is provided by parent)
- Hospital / dental appointments (when prior notice is given)
- Family bereavement
- Representing the school / county / country at an approved event
- Taking music / ballet / drama examinations

In special circumstances parents may apply for a leave of absence for their child. The authorisation of the absence is at the Principal's discretion and must be requested in writing, prior to the absence. In exceptional circumstances, when a written request is impractical, parents should contact the Principal, in person, to discuss the matter in confidence.

## **Unauthorised absences**

In normal circumstances the following types of absence will be classified as unauthorised:

- Birthday
- On a shopping trip with parents
- Staying at home with ill parent or sibling
- Term time holiday – we discourage holidays during term time due to the impact they have on pupils' learning. Teachers will not provide work for pupils going on holiday.

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

- Parents contact the school re. pupil's absence
- This is noted in the back of role book
- Each teacher checks book – if a pupil is absent and name is not in book teacher adds name to list
- When book returns to office, secretary sends a text message/make a telephone call to all parents who have not informed school of pupil absence
- Percentage attendance for each pupil is checked on a weekly basis by SEO
- Principal/teacher will be informed of any concerns
- Teacher will raise any concerns with parent at Parent/Teacher consultations
- If a pupil's attendance falls below 90% a letter will be sent to the parents to highlight the school's concerns (**Appendix A**)
- If a pupil's attendance falls below 85% a further letter will be sent to the parents (**Appendix B**)
- If a pupil's attendance continues to cause concern they will be referred to the Educational Welfare Service (**Appendix C**)

## **Rewarding Good Attendance and Punctuality**

St Malachy's Primary School believes that good attendance and punctuality are to be encouraged at every opportunity. Parents are responsible for ensuring that their children attend regularly and are punctual. The school currently rewards regular attendance and punctuality:

- Attendance stickers – Attendance weeks
- Acknowledgement at school assembly
- Trophies for full attendance

## **Monitoring and Review**

The Principal has worked in partnership with staff, parents and the school's Education Welfare Officer to develop a policy, which ensures consistency. The policy will be reviewed on an annual basis to determine the success or otherwise of the attendance strategies employed within the school.

## Appendix A

# ST. MALACHY'S PRIMARY SCHOOL And nursery unit

Principal:  
Mr J Kearns  
B.Ed(Hons) M.A. Educ Man  
PQH(NI)

3 Chapel Road, Camlough, Newry, Co Down  
Tel: 02830 830559 Fax: 02830 839135

[www.stmalachyscamlough.com](http://www.stmalachyscamlough.com)

### NOTIFICATION OF ATTENDANCE

Dear Parent / Guardian

This is a letter informing you of your child's attendance. To date \_\_\_\_\_ has an attendance of \_\_\_\_%. The government has set targets for primary school attendance at 95% and your child falls well below that target. If your child's attendance is 85% or less a referral must be made to the Education Welfare Officer.

I cannot stress enough how important regular attendance is to the social and academic well-being of each and every one of our pupils. I hope that through our combined efforts we can improve your child's attendance and effectively nurture your child's development.

In addition, it is very important that you inform the school if your child is off due to illness so that we can record him/her as ill. Otherwise it may be recorded as "No reason" provided for absence.

Over the next number of weeks, I will be monitoring your child's attendance and hope to see an improvement.

If you feel that you wish to discuss the situation, please contact the school office to make an appointment.

Yours sincerely

Jim Kearns  
Principal

## Appendix B

# ST. MALACHY'S PRIMARY SCHOOL And nursery unit

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### NOTIFICATION OF ATTENDANCE

Dear Parent / Guardian

I am writing to inform you that your child's attendance has fallen below 85%. To date \_\_\_\_\_ has an attendance of \_\_\_\_%. The Education Welfare Officer has been informed of the school's attendance figures. Over the next number of weeks I will be monitoring your child's attendance and hope to see an improvement. If there is no improvement a referral will be made to the Education Welfare Officer.

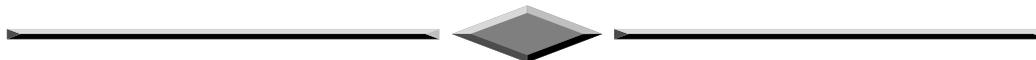
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Yours sincerely

Jim Kearns  
Principal

## Appendix C

# ST. MALACHY'S PRIMARY SCHOOL And nursery unit



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### NOTIFICATION OF ATTENDANCE

Dear Parent / Guardian

As you are aware, your child's attendance has fallen below 85%. To date \_\_\_\_\_ has missed \_\_\_ days of school this academic year. A referral has been made to The Education Welfare Officer who will be in touch with you in due course.

Yours sincerely

Jim Kearns  
Principal

## **Monitoring and Evaluation**

The Leadership Team in St Malachy's Primary school will update this policy and procedures in the light of any further guidance and legislation as necessary and review it triennially.

The Board of Governors will also monitor attendance on a regular basis through the provision of reports from the principal.

On-going evaluation will ensure the effectiveness of the policy.

Date policy reviewed: 20/11/2017

Signed:

\_\_\_\_\_ (Principal)

\_\_\_\_\_ (Chair of Board of Governors)