

St Joseph's Primary School



Pupil Attendance Policy

September 2025



ST JOSEPH'S PRIMARY SCHOOL, STRANGFORD



PUPIL ATTENDANCE POLICY

Introduction

Regular school attendance is crucial in raising standards in education and ensuring that every child can have full access to the school curriculum and reach their potential. St Joseph's Primary School will strive to promote an ethos and culture which encourages good attendance and where each pupil will feel valued and secure.

While 100% attendance is clearly the ideal, in many cases legitimate illnesses or other factors can prevent it. However, children should only be absent from school if medically unfit to attend or due to a family bereavement or family emergency. It is not acceptable for children to be absent because it is their birthday, to go on holidays, go shopping or to look after younger brother or sisters. Attendance is recorded electronically, stored on our computer system and shared with our school's Education and Welfare Officer. Where necessary the school's Principal or the Education and Welfare Officer will liaise with families to help improve children's attendance.

Aims of this Policy

1. To improve the overall attendance of pupils at St Joseph's Primary School.
2. To develop a framework that defines roles and responsibilities in relation to attendance.
3. To provide advice, support and guidance to parents/guardians and pupils.
4. To promote effective relationships with the Education Welfare Service.

The staff members and Governors of St Joseph's Primary School recognise that pupil attendance and educational achievement are inextricably linked. As a result, St Joseph's Primary School has:

- a designated member of staff with the responsibility for Pupil Attendance (Principal: L Fitzsimons);
- a Pupils' Attendance Policy, which is approved and ratified by the Board of Governors. Staff, pupils, Governors and parents are involved in the consultation process, to devise and to review this policy. All staff, pupils, parents and Governors have been made aware of this Policy;
- a summary and evaluation of the school's strategy for promoting pupil attendance is included in the School Development Plan;
- pupils' attendance is monitored carefully so that any issues can be identified and addressed at the earliest opportunity;
- pupils' attendance is included on the agenda of staff and Board of Governors' meetings.

Role of the School

The Principal at St Joseph's Primary School has overall responsibility for school attendance. Class Teachers and/or the school secretary should bring any concerns regarding school attendance to the Principal's attention.

The Board of Governors provides support by reviewing school attendance figures and targets and ensuring that this issue is included as an agenda item at each meeting.

Teaching staff regularly monitor the attendance and punctuality of pupils by ensuring that attendance is recorded at the beginning of each day.

To enable our school to accurately record and monitor attendance in a consistent way we will adhere to the guidance provided in the DE Circular 2025/09 – Attendance Guidance and Absence Recording by Schools.

St Joseph's Primary School is committed to working with parents to encourage regular and punctual attendance.

Role of Parent

Parents have a legal duty to ensure their child of compulsory school age shall receive efficient full time education suitable to age, ability and aptitude and to any special educational needs they may have, either by regular school attendance or otherwise.

If a child is registered in school, their parent has a legal duty to ensure that they regularly attend that school.

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 by 8.50am for registration and the beginning of classes. It is the responsibility of parents to ensure that their child is punctual. Lateness is recorded at registration and on children's attendance records.

If a child appears reluctant to attend school, please discuss the matter promptly with the class teacher or Principal to ensure that parents and children receive maximum support.

Role of Pupils

Each pupil at St Joseph's Primary School must attend school punctually and regularly. If a child has been absent from school, a written note from a parent/guardian must be provided to the class teacher upon return.

Absence Procedures and Appointments

Parents/Guardians should contact the school on the first day of a child's absence, explaining why the child is absent and giving the child's expected date of return. Upon returning to school please ask your child to give a note to the teacher explaining the child's absence.

Permission for your child to leave school must be requested in writing, stating the reason for the planned absence. These notes should be given to the class teacher. Parents are asked to make these requests only in exceptional circumstances.

Routine dental and medical appointments should be scheduled for a time after school or during school holidays. Where this is not possible parents should try to make the appointment for first thing in the morning or late afternoon, to minimize disruption of the school day.

If the school staff are concerned about a child's attendance or punctuality, or about an emerging pattern, the Principal or Education Welfare Officer will contact the child's parents to discuss the situation.

Family Holidays during Term Time

The Governors and staff discourage 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.

Education Welfare Service (EWS)

The Education Authority through the Education Welfare Service (EWS) have a legal duty to make sure that parents meet their responsibility towards their children's education. They will liaise with parents if there is a concern about a child's attendance or punctuality, if appropriate.

Procedures for Managing Non-attendance

St Joseph's Primary School is committed to the promotion of an ethos and culture which encourage good attendance and where each pupil feels valued and secure. The staff members are also committed to managing any non-attendance in a sensitive manner.

If a pupil's absence causes concern, or if their attendance falls below 85%, they will be referred to the EWS, if appropriate and the Principal will contact the parents/guardians. EWS will support staff and parents/guardians in developing and implementing strategies to address or improve school attendance.

Annual Reporting to Parents:

As part of their Annual Pupil Report, each parent receives notification of their child's attendance for that school year. This attendance is also classified against the guidance in DE's School Attendance Matters: Guide to Parents.

ATTENDANCE RATE	CATERGORISATION
95-100%	Excellent
90-94%	Satisfactory
85-89%	Poor
80-84%	Very Poor
Less than 80%	Unacceptable

Monitoring & Evaluation:

This policy will be monitored and reviewed every two years in consultation with pupils, staff, parents and Governors. The policy will also reflect any recommendations and/or guidance from DE, the EWO and/or external agencies.

Signed:

Laura Fitzsimons

Principal

Date: September 2025

Review Date: September 2027

