

St Colman's Primary School



Attendance Policy

April 2024

Policy Reviewed on:

June 2024

Ratified by Governors

April 2026 (or before if required)

Date of Review

Signatures

“Joined by Faith, Encouraged to Succeed”

ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY

This policy is one of a suite of Pastoral Policies which aim to protect, care for and safeguard our children. Our Attendance Policy promotes good attendance at school and sets out how we best support those children who experience difficulty in achieving excellent attendance.

We have referred to guidelines in DENI circular 2017/04- “*Child Protection and Safeguarding in Schools- A Guide for Schools.*” Updated September 2024.

It is very important that children in St Colman’s PS come to school and importantly want to come to school every day. This will be achieved by creating a warm, welcoming and secure environment where our pupils feel valued, ensuring also that the children access a curriculum that is stimulating, diverse and challenging.

Parents should make every effort to make sure that children do not miss any days at school unnecessarily. There is much to do and much to learn and children who miss days at school can very quickly fall behind in their schoolwork and become anxious and worried making the return to school even more difficult.

It is very important that children come to school on time and do not arrive in school after class has started. Children can miss out on important activities e.g., Words of the week, class news, handwriting activities, ICT tasks etc. and late arrivals can often disrupt the work of the class.

Children should arrive in school five or ten minutes before class starts each day. Rushing in the mornings can upset children and can get the day in school off to a poor start leaving them anxious and unhappy. It also can form poor habits as children grow to believe that it is not important to be on time and that being in class for early morning activities does not really matter.

In St Colman’s, we operate a Breakfast Club and school is open from 8.00am. Children not attending Breakfast club go to the playground in the morning except on wet mornings when they go to the Assembly Hall. The Principal and Vice Principal are on duty every morning to welcome the children to school. The entrance gate to the playground is supervised by a senior member of teaching staff every morning from 8.35am to 9.00am.

Lateness on a persistent basis is a cause for concern and parents will be asked to discuss poor time keeping with the school and how we can support to ease the problem.

Our Attendance Aims

1. To encourage a positive approach to the importance of good school attendance and to give priority to the attendance of all children.
2. To provide an environment which promotes regular attendance and makes attendance and punctuality a priority for all.
3. To inform parents if the school is concerned over a child's punctuality and attendance.
4. To monitor and support children whose attendance is a cause for concern and work in partnership with parents and carers to resolve any difficulty.
5. To analyse attendance data regularly to inform future policy and practice.
6. To work closely and utilise the support from outside agencies, particularly the Education Welfare Service.
7. To recognise those pupils and parents who are always punctual and attend school well.

The Responsibility of Parents

The responsibility of ensuring children attend school regularly and punctually rests with parents.

However, when school attendance difficulties occur, the key to resolving these issues is to re-engage the child through early intervention by collaborative practice between the parent and the school.

Parents should:

- Notify the school on the first day of absence and inform the school of the reason and expected length of absence or;
- Provide written confirmation briefly explaining reasons for absence on the child's return to school.
- Ensure their children attend regularly.
- Ensure children are punctual for school.
- Ensure children are appropriately dressed for school/PE and have requisite break, books, resources etc.
- Comply with the school's Attendance policy.
- Make sure their child understands that good attendance and punctuality is an important skill for life.
- Make sure medical/dental appointments are made outside school hours wherever possible and provide evidence for the appointment when it is not.
- Plan for holidays outside of term time, however in the event of special circumstances, consult with the Principal.
- Only allow absences from school for legitimate reasons

- Work in partnership with the school to ensure high standards of attendance are maintained.

Responsibility of Class Teacher

Effective practice in relation to managing individual pupil attendance relies on the class teacher implementing the following procedures.

- Developing trusting relationships with their pupils and encouraging pupils to come to school every day.
- Monitoring attendance in their class i.e., collecting absence notes, identifying pupils with irregular attendance patterns.
- Following up with parents if there has been no explanation regarding their child's absence.
- Talking to individual pupils pastorally about their attendance
- Requesting school office to contact the home of a child when there is not an explanation of a child's absence.
- Promoting excellent class attendance in a class-based reward system
- Referring pupil(s) attendance concerns to the principal or VP.

Responsibility of Board of Governors

The Board of Governors of St Colman's PS has the ultimate responsibility for the promotion of excellent 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.

Attendance Data is reported as part of the principal's report to the Board of Governors at least annually. The Principal will provide comparative data displaying how St. Colman's performs against DENI benchmarks and NI averages.

Responsibility of the Principal

The principal will collate and report attendance information for the purpose of communicating with parents, The Board of Governors and the designated Education Welfare Officer.

Attendance of pupils and staff is an item on the Board of Governors Meeting Agenda once per year.

Principal will ensure parents receive attendance feedback via the pupil's Annual Report. This will also be reported in the annual parent/teacher consultation.

Responsibility of Office Staff

Our Office staff have an important role to play in recording and monitoring attendance in St Colman's PS.

The following are some of the roles they undertake.

- Taking phone messages from parents when pupils are absent from school, and then informing class teacher.
- Phoning parents of pupils who are absent from school.
- Collecting, collating registration data
- Reminding staff to complete daily SIMS attendance registers.
- Providing attendance printouts for Principal and class teachers when required.
- Providing updates of attendance for EWO upon request for individual children on the EWO register
- Assisting with Awards system e.g., Pupil of the week in the Friday Note.

Recording of Attendance

Registers must be completed carefully and accurately, as they provide a record of pupil's attendance.

Staff are to complete morning registration by 9.30am and 1.15pm daily.

Registers are a vital legal document and must be updated twice daily at the start of the morning and afternoon sessions. The register must record whether the pupil is present, absent or attending an approved educational activity. Attendance and all forms of absence should be recorded using the Absence and Attendance Codes as outlined in Annex B of DENI circular 2024/13.

Note updated amendments dated:

-DE Attendance Guidance & Absence Recording by Schools – Circular 2024/13

Daily Procedures

- Teachers mark attendance on SIMS daily from Monday to Friday adhering to attendance codes (Appendix A – Absence Codes Guidance for Schools- January 2024)

Lateness

Pupils arriving after the register has been closed at 9.15am, will be considered as late. Persistent lateness will necessitate in Principal/Vice-Principal requesting to meet with a parent to discuss persistent lateness and agreeing a way forward to address the matter.

Medical or Dental Appointments

Absence from school due to a medical or dental appointment will be considered as an authorised absence. Parents should inform the school in advance and show the letter or appointment card as evidence.

Parents/guardians are encouraged to make all medical appointments out of school hours.

Holidays During Term Time

Parents can continue to demonstrate their commitment to their child's education by not taking holidays during term time.

Every effort should be made to book family holidays during school holiday time. We understand the reasons why parents may choose to go on holiday during school time but it is important to note that time lost is extremely challenging for children to make up.

School holiday lists are given to all parents in advance of the beginning of the academic year to help parents forward plan holidays/family breaks.

Following the release of DE Circular 2024/13 (date effective 26th August 2024) schools are to discourage family holidays during term time and must record them as "Unauthorised Absences". St. Colman's must follow this policy therefore no member of staff is permitted to authorise term time family holidays.

Teachers will not be able to provide schoolwork to children who are away from school on holidays or family breaks.

Monitoring Attendance

- Attendance concerns will be discussed with teachers and actioned by the Principal as deemed appropriate.
- Office staff will contact parents whose child is absent where no reason has been previously given.
- Teachers must inform Principal when they notice a child's poor pattern of attendance emerging.
- EWO will meet with Principal monthly or as scheduled to discuss current referrals and highlight attendance concerns.

The following process will be followed:

Step 1: Class teacher raises concern with parent and monitors attendance (informal communication).

Step 2: Formal Class Teacher letter of concern to parent.

Step 3: Vice principal informs parents by letter of growing concern.

Step 4: Vice principal invites parents for a meeting to discuss attendance levels of child.

Step 5: Formal referral to the Educational Welfare Officer for investigation.

Reporting Attendance

To Parents

Attendance information pertaining to individual pupils will be reported to the parents at the end of the academic year within their child's annual report.

Throughout the course of the year attendance is addressed at Parent Teacher Meetings.

Attendance levels of 90% or below is deemed to be poor or worse.

Every single day a child is absent from school equates to a day of lost learning.

(School Attendance Matters- A Parent's Guide Department of Education 2013)
(Safeguarding and Child Protection in Schools- A Guide for Schools 2017/04 – Updated 2024)

If a child's attendance falls below 85% the school is required to refer the child to the Education Welfare Service (EWS) who will then liaise directly with the family. It must be noted that EWS will act in a supportive capacity, seeking a resolution to improve attendance.

Target for improvement

In St Colman's we strive daily to improve attendance. This is a fundamental aspect of our School Development Plan.

We aim each year to have pupil attendance above the NI averages and have agreed attendance targets in place.

The principal reports on pupil attendance at one Board of Governor meeting per academic year and provides an annual attendance rate for Governor information and discussion.

-The attached **Circular DE2024/13** (date effective 26th August 2024) illustrates a Checklist to help schools manage attendance amongst their pupils.

-Further it provides detailed guidance on the use of Codes for recording attendance which the school will follow.

DE reports:

“Pupil attendance continues to be very challenging in many settings and DE, EA and schools are continuing to work together to identify and promote effective practice. Whilst there has been some improvement in pupil attendance in 23/24 compared to 22/23 and this is warmly welcomed, there remains a considerable amount of work to do both in school and outside school, to address pupil absence levels and consequently pupil attendance should remain a priority for everyone...”

DE Attendance figures across NI

Primary average attendance

18/19 94.7%

22/23 92.5%

23/24 93%

St. Colman's PS Average Attendance for 23-24 was 94.58%

School will continue to monitor the effectiveness of our good attendance work by completing the EA Self Reflection Guide and shape our work according to the feedback.

Policy Date: April 2024

Review Date: April 2026 or earlier if required due to annual revision of data.