

Attendance Policy

Date ratified by Governors: _____



Our School Vision

At St. Mary's we aim to promote the ethos of a Catholic School by creating a **safe** and **happy School Community** where:

- ✚ Everyone feels valued as a member of our inclusive **team** in an atmosphere of **fairness** and **respectfulness**.
- ✚ High standards of learning and teaching take place in a **fun, caring** and stimulating environment which enables everyone to reach their full potential.

The Management of Attendance



Roles and Responsibilities of the Board of Governors

The Board of Governors has the ultimate responsibility for school attendance but this is delegated to 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.
- The Principal reports to the Board of Governors about attendance issues on a regular basis.



Roles and Responsibilities of the Principal

The Principal at St. Mary's Primary School has overall responsibility for school attendance; teachers should bring any concerns regarding school attendance to his attention.

The Board of Governors provide support by reviewing school attendance figures and targets and ensuring it is placed 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 morning and afternoon registration sessions.

To accurately record and monitor attendance in a consistent way we will adhere to the guidance provided in the Department of Education Circular 2017/15, which can be found at the following link:

www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/circular-201715-attendance-guidance-and-absence-recording-by-schools

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

Teachers mark the register at 9.15a.m. and 1. 20p.m each day.

Parents/carers will be provided with their child's attendance record during parent teacher interviews and on the end of year report.

Clear procedures are in place to identify pupils who have not registered in school and no contact has been received from the parents to explain their whereabouts (includes first day contact).



Roles and Responsibilities of Class Teacher

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

- Developing trusting relationships with all pupils
- Monitoring attendance, e.g. marking register, collecting absence notes and identifying pupils with irregular attendance patterns
- 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 Responsibility of Office Staff

The Office staff have an important role to play in monitoring attendance in school. The following are some of the roles they may undertake:

- Operating the Sims.net system
- Taking phone messages from parents when pupils are absent
- Maintaining the late register
- Compiling lists of absentees
- Collating registration data

Role of Parent

Parents have a legal duty¹ 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. *1 Article 45(1) of The Education and Libraries (NI) Order 1986*



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 with a written note/phone contact/email. This should be confirmed with a written note/phone contact/email 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 at St Mary's Primary School for registration and the beginning of classes at 9.15am. It is the responsibility of parents to ensure that your child is punctual. Lateness is recorded at registration and on your child's attendance record.

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.

Role of Pupils

Each pupil at St Mary's Primary School 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.

Absence Procedures

All Parents/Guardians are required to complete a written absence notification form which provides a clear reason for any absence.



Family holidays during Term Time

St Mary's Primary School discourages 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. Only in exceptional circumstances will a holiday be authorised. St Mary's Primary School will not be providing support or copies of work missed due to unauthorised absences.

Procedures for Managing Non-attendance

Regular meetings are held with the Principal and teachers to discuss all attendance concerns and appropriate actions are taken following these meetings such as letters sent to parents or meetings arranged to discuss attendance concerns with parents.

Education Welfare Service

The Education Authority through the Education Welfare Service (EWS) have a legal duty to make sure that parents/guardians meet their responsibility towards their children's education. If a pupil's absence causes concern, or if their attendance falls below 85% and there is also a concern, they will be referred to the EWS, if appropriate. EWS will support staff and parents in developing and implementing strategies to address or improve school attendance.

The Department of Education Guidelines

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:

- **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**
- **religious holidays (when prior notification of absence is given)**

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**

When a pupil is absent on a regular basis, a letter will be sent to the parents to highlight the school's concerns. This letter will detail the attendance percentage and the number of days of absence. Please see (Appendix A) for sample of the letter.



The Recording of Attendance

QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE

CODES FOR RECORDING PUPIL ABSENCE ON C2K

CODE	DESCRIPTION	STATISTICAL MEANING
/ \	Present: / = (AM): \ = (PM) Present at registration.	Present
A	Artistic Endeavour Performances, auditions, exams, competitions, award ceremonies etc not organised by the school.	Authorised Absence
B	Bereavement Death of a close relative.	Authorised Absence
C	Suspended School have suspended pupil for fixed period.	Authorised Absence
D	No reason provided for absence It has not been possible to establish a reason 5 days following pupil's return.	Unauthorised Absence
F	Family Holiday (agreed) Agreed in exceptional circumstances when holiday is judged important for family cohesion, child well-being etc eg following a bereavement or illness.	Authorised Absence
G	Family Holiday (not agreed) Holidays taken during term time where there are no exceptional circumstances, eg cheaper deal.	Unauthorised Absence
H	Other Absence Reason provided is not acceptable eg birthday or haircut.	Unauthorised Absence
I	Illness (not medical or dental appointments) Parents must be encouraged to notify the school when pupil is absent due to illness.	Authorised Absence
L	Late (before registration closed) Schools should have a policy on how long registers should be kept open and may keep registers open longer in circumstances such as bad weather or public transport difficulties.	Present
M	Medical/Dental Appointments A pupil who presents for registration and later goes out to attend an appointment should be marked present.	Authorised Absence
N	No reason yet provided for absence (temporary code only) For use during unexplained absences and in first 5 days of return whilst reason for absence is sought.	Unauthorised Absence
O	Other Exceptional Circumstances Special occasions at the discretion of the school or an exceptional event outside control of pupil eg court appearance, family travelling for cultural reasons, failure of Board transport.	Authorised Absence
P	Approved Sporting Activity Pupil is participating in or attending a school-organised sporting event.	Approved Educational Activity
R	Religious Observance A day set aside exclusively for religious observance by the religious body to which the parent/ carer belongs, including religious festivals.	Authorised Absence
S	Study Leave Study leave should be applied only to certain public examination candidates during the examination period.	Approved Educational Activity



Appendix A

SAMPLE LETTER TO PARENT RE CHILD'S ATTENDANCE

To the Parents of _____

Dear Parent,

We have recently analysed the register and have noted that your child's attendance has dropped to.... % which means that he/she has missed.... days of school.

While 100% attendance is clearly the ideal, in many cases legitimate illnesses or other factors can prevent it. However, when attendance falls below a certain level we become concerned, as our aim is to help your child to reach his/her full potential. This is difficult to achieve if a lot of days are missed from school.

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

Yours Sincerely,

Principal: Mr. D. Cullen
2 Whitebridge Road
Ballygawley
Co. Tyrone
N. Ireland
BT70 2EX
Email: - dcullen481@c2kni.net

Tel.: - 028 855 68621
Mob:- 07827444215



Lateness

In St Mary's Primary School lateness is strongly discouraged. Pupils are expected to be in the classroom before the bell rings at 9.15am. The teacher will mark the class register on arriving to the classroom. If a pupil arrives after registration has closed the teacher will mark him/her 'L' on the late register, unless a valid reason is provided. (SEN Taxi)

The Principal reviews late marks on a weekly basis:

- Register amended / further action taken.
- When a child is late on a regular basis, the principal will contact the parents to discuss the matter.
- Whenever it is deemed appropriate an Attendance Action Plan will be drawn up which involves a Parent / School Contract.
Please see (Appendix B)





Appendix B

St. Mary's Primary School

Parent/School Attendance Contract

Name of Child: _____

Date of Meeting with Parents: _____ Review Date: _____

Child's Attendance: _____

Child's Punctuality: _____

Concern's to be raised with parent:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

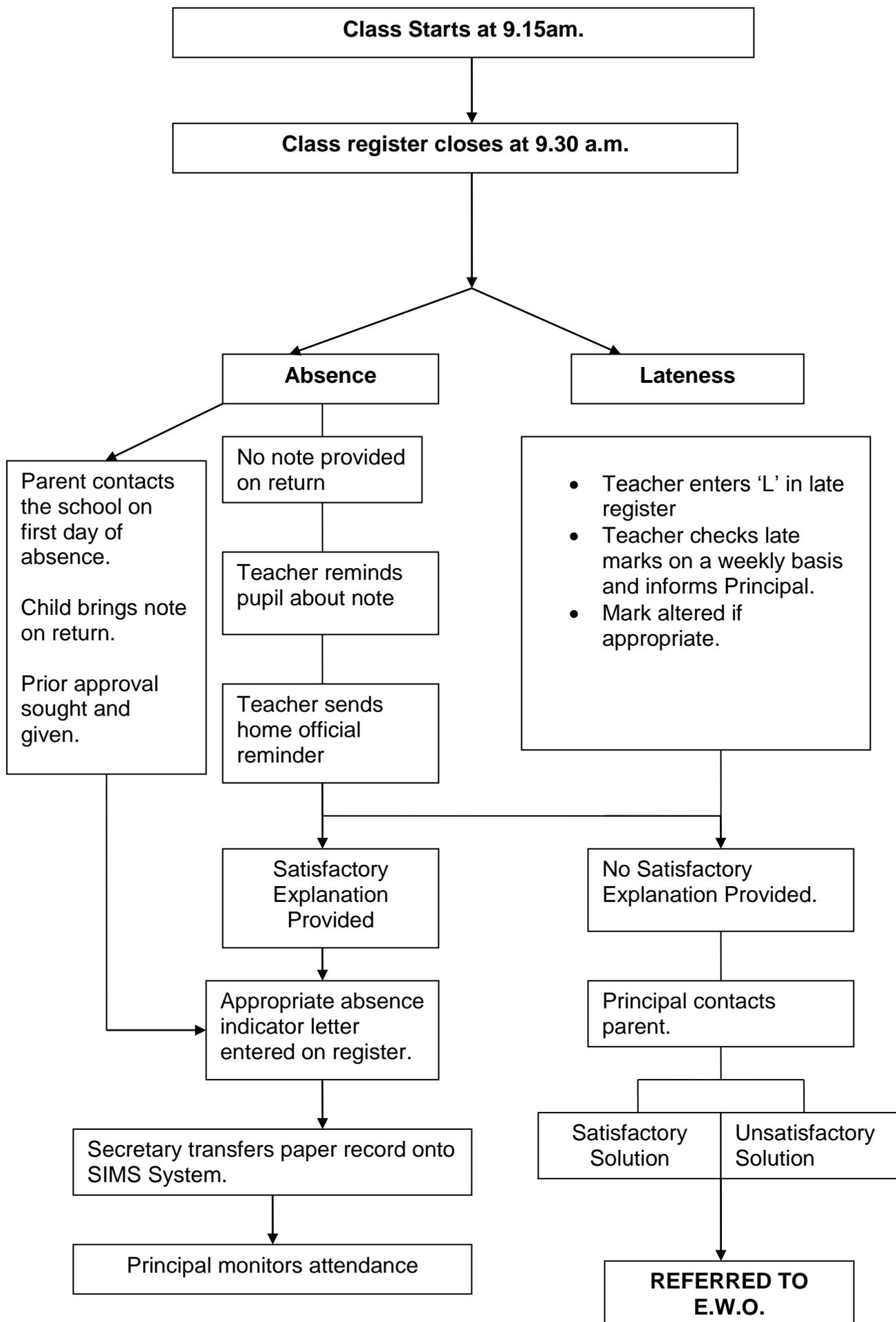
How the parent will help resolve the concerns:

How the school will support the parent::

Signed: _____ (Parent) Date: _____

Signed: _____ (Parent) Date: _____

REGISTRATION / ATTENDANCE PROCEDURES





The Board of Governors of St. Mary's Primary School will monitor and review the effectiveness of this Policy and its procedures and update it regularly in line with new initiatives and developments

Date Policy Reviewed: _____

Signed: _____ (Principal)

Signed: _____ (Chair of Board
of Governors)