



# **Holy Rosary Primary School**

## **Attendance Policy**

**for**

**Parents and Children**

**June 2022**

**Review Date – May 2025**

## **Mission Statement**

Holy Rosary is a UNICEF Rights Respecting School and Article 29 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) underlines our school mission:

In Holy Rosary Primary School, we believe our school to be a vital part of the overall Catholic Community providing an educational experience in accordance with Christ's teaching that is inclusive and that celebrates diversity.

Our school is welcoming, caring, safe and secure, reflecting the highest standards of pastoral care. A child friendly school in which every child is encouraged to grow and develop into responsible citizens, able to make reasonable and informed decisions based in their faith, respect, rights, environmental/global awareness, equality and social justice.

We, in Holy Rosary PS, are committed to delivering a broad, balanced, creative, skills-based curriculum, utilising modern technology and innovative resources and strategies, which reflect our high expectations and culture of achievement.

## Introduction

### **Article 3 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child:**

**‘The best interests of the child must be a top priority in all things that affect children’.**

Regular attendance at school is essential to ensure uninterrupted progress and to enable children to attain their full potential. The attendance pattern for all children is monitored weekly with the school seeking to work actively with parents to ensure a regular pattern is maintained. We expect all children on roll to attend every day when the school is in session as long as they are fit and healthy enough to do so. We do all we can to encourage the children to attend, and to put in place appropriate procedures to support this. We believe that the most important factor in promoting good attendance is development of positive attitudes towards school and learning.

Poor attendance can seriously affect each child’s:

- Attainment in school
- Relationships with other children and their ability to form lasting friendships
- Confidence to attempt new work and work alongside others

Each child’s attendance can be summarised as:

**96%+ Excellent – Well done!** This will help all aspects of their progress and life in school. This will give them a good start in life and support a positive work ethic.

**94-95% Average – Well done, strive to build on this.**

**85-93% Poor – Absence is now affecting attainment and progress at school. Please work with the school urgently to improve the situation.**

**Below 85% Unacceptable – Absence is causing SERIOUS CONCERN. It is affecting attainment and progress and is disrupting your child’s learning. We will work with you and the Education Welfare Officer [EWO] to improve your child’s attendance.**

Permitting absence from school without a good reason is an offence by the parent. **Only the school can ‘authorise’ absence.** The school will not assess all reasons as ‘valid’.

Non-attendance is an important issue that is treated seriously. However, each case is different and the school acknowledges that no one standard response will be appropriate in every case. Consideration is given to all factors affecting attendance before deciding what intervention strategies to apply.

a) In every case, early intervention is essential to prevent the problem from worsening. It is essential that parents keep the school fully informed of any matters that may affect their child’s attendance,

they are reminded of this duty in the school prospectus.

b) Prior to the engagement of the EWO, the school may issue letters to parents clearly defining the concerns within school regarding a pupil's absence. The school may also organise attendance meetings with the vice-principal to discuss poor attendance. It is hoped that a positive response and change in levels of absence will prevent the need for EWO involvement.

## **Principles**

### **Arrival and Registration:**

All children should be in the school ready to register at 9.00 a.m. each day although children are entitled to enter the classroom from 8.45 a.m. when the teacher is present. The register is taken twice a day. A day counts as 2 attendances. Morning registration ends at 9.15 a.m. It is the responsibility of parents/guardians to ensure that their child is punctual. Lateness is recorded at registration and on the child's attendance record. If a child arrives after the registration period, 'Late' arrival after 9.15am is recorded as an unauthorised late mark.

### **Parental Responsibility:**

#### **Article 18 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child:**

**'Both parents share the responsibility for bringing up their child and should always consider what is best for the child....'.**

Throughout this policy the term '**parent**' represents one parent, both the parents, or the carer with whom the child resides. Parents are informed of their responsibility to ensure their children attend regularly, in the school prospectus. Punctuality is also stressed as lateness impacts on learning not only for the individual, but the class as a whole.

Attendance will be discussed with each parent at parent/teacher meetings, with the current attendance percentage being reported.

Parents have a legal obligation<sup>1</sup> to ensure their children receive a full-time education. For Years 1, 2 and 3 children, full time means 9.00am to 2.00pm. For Years 4, 5, 6 and 7 children, full time means 9.00am to 3.00pm. This is achieved by regular attendance at school.

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.

### **Illness and Medical Appointments**

When a child is unwell, parents should contact the school before 9.15am on the first day of absence informing the school of the reason for absence.

When a child is absent, the class teacher will record the absence in the register. As part of our Safeguarding Procedures, the school office will endeavour to contact the parent or carer and other emergency contacts if no message has been received regarding the reason for the absence to check on the safety of the child.

- a) Every effort should be made to arrange medical appointments outside school hours.
- b) An appointment card or verification by the doctors/ dentist/hospital is required.
- c) If it is necessary for a child to be out of school for this reason, the child should be returned to school **directly after the appointment.**
- d) If your child is absent due to vomiting then they should not return to school for the next 48 hours after the last time that the child is sick. This is to reduce the risk of infection to other children and adults at the school.
- e) For more than three days of absence the school require a written explanation of why the child was absent. The school office will request this if it is not produced.
- f) Medical certificates are required for absence greater than five days.

The Senior Leadership Team and all staff work to ensure a high level of enjoyment and commitment to learning as a means of ensuring regular attendance.

Specific responsibilities for attendance matters are identified in this policy. The Principal holds responsibility for attendance matters, supported by the Vice-Principal and the family.

Where school attendance problems occur, the school will endeavour to work with parents in the interests of the child to achieve a resolution.

Attendance is recorded and data stored and analysed using the SIMS Attendance module.

It is a **statutory duty** for class teachers to call and maintain accurate registers; these are legal documents, and may be called for as evidence by the court. Class teachers are legally responsible

for marking their class attendance register twice per day at the start of each session.

The Principal, not parents, authorises absence; Holy Rosary Primary School adheres to the EA guidelines in authorising absence. Absence for any reason during term time is discouraged.

Absence known to be for the following reasons would be authorised:

- Illness
- Religious observance
- Attendance at medical appointments which cannot be made outside school hours

When it has become necessary to make a referral to the Education Welfare Officer [EWO], all further absences will be unauthorised pending investigation. The EWO liaises with the school regarding absences following contact with the parents.

#### **Family Holidays/Absence during Term Time**

The Governors recognise that pupil absence during term time can seriously disrupt a pupil's continuity of learning. Parents are therefore strongly urged to avoid booking a family holiday in term time.

Parents do not have an automatic right to withdraw pupils from school for a holiday.

Examples of what may constitute exceptional circumstances:

I. To have a short absence to attend a family wedding, or a special family celebration (e.g., an 80th birthday of a grandparent); or to attend a special family reunion; or to attend a special religious/cultural festival may constitute an exceptional circumstance.

II. If a parent, due to the nature of their work, cannot possibly take time off during the regular school holidays, then this might constitute an exceptional circumstance. This will need to be evidenced by a letter from the employer. Factors indicated above will still be taken into account.

III. To have a week's winter or summer holiday in school time, because the cost is cheaper during term time, does not constitute an exceptional circumstance.

#### **Definitions:**

Every half-day absence must be classified by the school (not by the parents) as either

AUTHORISED or UNAUTHORISED. This is why information about the cause of each absence is always required, preferably in writing or by telephone.

**Authorised Absence:**

An absence is classified as authorised when a child has been away from school for a legitimate reason and the school has received notification from a parent or guardian. For example, if a child has been unwell and the parent writes a note, telephones or e-mails the school to explain the absence.

Only the school can make an absence authorised.

**Unauthorised Absence:**

An absence is classified as unauthorised when a child is away from school without the permission of the principal.

Unauthorised absences are those, which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no authorisation has been given. This includes:

Parents keeping children off school unnecessarily.

Truancy before or during the school day.

Absences that have never been properly explained.

Holidays not agreed.

**Rewards**

The prime benefit derived from regular attendance is that continuity and progression in learning are ensured.

**Class Rewards:**

Whilst acknowledging that individual children may have issues which impact on their attendance, it is important to promote attendance and highlight improving and good attendance within the school community generally. From time to time the school may use class-based incentive schemes to reward classes for their positive attendance rates.

**Roles & Responsibilities****Vice-Principal will:**

Oversee day to day attendance where there is cause for concern, working closely with parents and children to improve poor attendance.

Monitor pupil attendance monthly, reports to the Principal and act according to this policy.

Analyse trends in attendance data to identify appropriate action.

Investigate reasons for absence exploring any underlying cause either at home or in school.

Liaise with the Education Welfare Officer and make referrals as necessary.

Work with the EWO towards improved patterns of attendance for referred pupils identifying the course of action that should be taken.

Make referrals to other agencies where appropriate.

Ensure that all staff are aware of attendance codes to be used on SIMS.

Work with class teachers to agree and implement strategies to reengage pupils with emerging attendance problems.

Work with the Learning Support Co-ordinator and the class teacher to plan reintegration for pupils who have been absent for a period.

Compile and update standard letters re: % attendance, notification of reasons for absence and lateness and send to parents when necessary.

#### **Class Teachers will:**

Prepare and deliver stimulating and enjoyable learning for all children.

Take registration of pupils at the start of morning and afternoon sessions on SIMS.

Maintain a Roll Book of attendance using only the child's first name. This Roll Book is to be kept in a designated box file in the classroom ***in the same secure location in each class***. This Roll Book will also be used to ensure that all children are accounted for during any evacuation process or fire drills.

Use the correct code for recording any absences.

Communicate with parents to ascertain the reasons for any absences and ensure that all D codes used are changed to the correct absence code on SIMS where possible and inform the office if no reason is given.

Alert the vice-principal to any children who demonstrate an unsettled pattern of attendance or whose attendance pattern changes.

Report percentage attendance at parent-teacher meetings; encourage regular punctual attendance; work to secure this.

Where necessary inform the office of reasons for absences which should be recorded on SIMS. Ensure any absence notes are kept securely in the class.

**Children on the Child Protection Register (CPR) – the class teacher will inform the Designated teacher or Deputy Designated teacher about the absence of any child who is on the CPR *on the day of the absence*.**



**Secretary will:**

Inform class teachers of any phone calls/messages from parents regarding absences and record these on SIMS.

Make calls to parents when first day of absence contact has not been made by parents.

Accurately record attendance data on SIMS daily using agreed codes.

Record late arrival and reasons.

Ensure reasons for absences are accurately recorded.

Give any absence notes handed into the office to the appropriate teacher.

**Parents will:**

Ensure their child attends daily and on time.

Keep the school fully informed on all matters that might affect attendance and their child in school.

Telephone the school **on the first day** of any absence to inform school of the reason.

Provide a note, send an e-mail or telephone the school confirming the reason for absence on the child's return to school.

If attendance becomes a problem – work with the school to improve matters.

Give serious consideration to whether it is appropriate or necessary to request term time absence.

**Education Welfare Officer:**

Work closely with school and families to resolve attendance issues.

Visit school for meetings at agreed times.

Identify, with school, cases of unauthorised absence which necessitate action and advise on responses.

View the school's attendance audits to identify trends and individual issues in partnership with the school.

On receipt of a written referral, take appropriate action, which may include:

- Advice on strategies to improve attendance
- Assessment home visits
- Action planning
- Agreed time-limited intervention
- Attendance at school meetings

- Written record of work undertaken
- Verbal feedback where appropriate
- Written response to referral within 10 days
- Liaise with other agencies
- Onward referral to other agencies
- Liaison with other Education Authority departments
- Preparation of cases for prosecution including sending warning letters
- Preparing Witness Statements for Magistrates Court

### **Governing Body:**

It is the responsibility of the governors to monitor overall attendance. The Governing Body also has the responsibility for the Attendance Policy, and for seeing that it is carried out. The Governors will therefore examine closely the information provided to them and seek to ensure that the school's attendance figures remain high.

The Attendance Policy will be reviewed by the Governing Body every three years, or earlier if considered necessary.

### **Review**

This policy will be reviewed according to the schedule for policy review.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Chair of Governors