



Ballymoney Model Controlled Integrated Primary

PUPIL ATTENDANCE POLICY

(Reviewed November 2016)

Department of Education Circular: 2015/02

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.

Ballymoney Model CIPS will strive to promote an ethos and culture which encourages good attendance and punctuality where each pupil will feel valued and secure.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that as a school we do all that we can to ensure maximum attendance for all pupils. Any problems that prevent full attendance will be identified and addressed as speedily as possible in line with the procedures identified in this policy.

Ethos Statement

Ballymoney Model Controlled Integrated Primary School provides a happy, caring family environment where the uniqueness of each child is fostered.

We welcome children of all religions or none and openly celebrate the diversity of cultures in our society.

We encourage respectful relationships at all levels within the school.

We are firmly committed to developing positive pastoral care systems in our school. We encourage acceptable behaviour and work with our pupils and parents to address inappropriate behaviour and resolve any issues.

All pupils are valued and encouraged to reach their full potential through providing effective education and establishing close links with the home, local and wider community.

Our strap line is 'Learning for Tomorrow'.

Our school promotes the UN Convention on the Rights of a Child. Articles 3 and 29 underline our school ethos:

Article 3

'The best interest of the child must be a top priority in all our actions'.

Article 29

'Education must develop every child's personality, talents and abilities to the full. It must encourage the child's respect for human rights, as well as respect for his parents, their own cultures, and the environment.'

Aims of this policy

1. To improve/maintain the overall attendance of pupils at Ballymoney Model CIPS.
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 good relationships with the Education Welfare Service.

What is the law about school attendance?

Parents/carers and the Education Authority have clear duties and responsibilities.

Parental Duty

The duty of parents/carers, in relation to the education of their children, is found in the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986 and says:

"The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him/her to receive efficient full time education suitable to his/her age ability and aptitude, and to any special educational needs he/she may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise."

Duty of the Education Authority

The Education Authority (EA) through the Education Welfare Service (EWS) have a legal duty to make sure that parents meet their responsibility towards their children's education. If they do not, the Education Authority is duty bound to use the legal processes of Court action, to uphold a parent's/carer's duty to make sure that the young people in their care receive an education.

Why is school attendance important?

- It is required by law.
- Children need to attend school regularly to allow them to fulfil their potential and promote social development.
- A good education will give your child the best possible start in life and enable him or her to make the best of the opportunities available.
- Children need to develop good habits in readiness for later life.

Role of the School

The Principal has overall responsibility for school attendance; class teachers should bring any concerns regarding school attendance to the Principal's 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 daily.

To enable our school to accurately record and monitor attendance in a consistent way we will adhere to the guidance provided in the Department of Education Circular 2015/02, which can be found at the following link:

www.deni.gov.uk/index/support-and-development-2/school-attendance/recording-pupil-absences.htm

Ballymoney Model CIPS is committed to working with parents to encourage regular and punctual attendance.

Role of Parent/Carer

Parents/carers have a legal duty (**Article 45 (1) of The Education and Libraries (NI) Order 1986**) 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 important that everyone works together to help children obtain the best possible start in life with a good education. Parents/carers are therefore encouraged to work in partnership with the school, notifying the school of the reason for any of their child's absences and highlighting any areas of concerns they may have so they can be addressed promptly.

It is a parent's responsibility to inform the school of the reason for a pupil's absence 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 their class lines in the playground for the bell at 9.00am. It is the responsibility of parents to ensure that their child is punctual. Children not in school by 9.05am will be recorded as late. An explanation from an accompanying adult, a parent's note or a telephone call will enable this record of lateness to be updated accordingly.

If a child appears reluctant to attend school the parent/carers should discuss the matter promptly with the class teacher or Principal to ensure that both the child and parent/carers receive maximum support.

If a parent/carers wants their child to miss school, for example for a religious festival or some other special occasion, they should seek the school's agreement well in advance and give full details.

Role of Pupils

Each pupil at Ballymoney Model CIPS must attend school punctually and regularly. If they have been absent from school, a written note from a parent/guardian must be provided to their teacher when they return.

Absence Procedures

All parents/carers are required to notify the school in writing of the reason of their child's absence. To assist parents/carers with this absence slips are issued at the beginning of the school year to each family. Additional slips are available from the school office.

Family Holidays during Term Time

The Department of Education for Northern Ireland and Ballymoney Model CIPS 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.

If a parent/carer takes his/her child out of school during term time for a family holiday, it is the policy of the school that the teachers will not provide work that the child has missed as a result of this time out of school.

Procedures for Managing Non-Attendance

At Ballymoney Model CIPS, we promote a culture and ethos in which children enjoy coming to school, and do not want to miss out. We aim to provide sensitive and appropriate guidance to parents/carers concerning pupil attendance, taking into account guidance from the Department of Education.

- We will give a high priority to conveying to parents/carers and pupils the importance of regular and punctual attendance.
- We recognise that parents/carers have a vital role to play and that there is a need to establish strong home-school links and communication systems that can be utilised whenever there is a concern about attendance.
- We will work together to ensure that all pupils feel supported and valued.
- We will send a clear message that if a pupil is absent, she/he will be missed.
- We will ensure that all staff are aware of the requirements of the Registration Regulations and the Law relating to attendance.
- We give high priority to attendance and punctuality. Pupils should be in class lines for 9.00am. Those pupils who arrive after 9.05am will be noted as late.
- We recognise the importance of early intervention and ask parents/carers for explanations of pupil absence. Parents/carers are contacted by the Principal and interviews arranged if necessary, as a result of attendance concerns.
- If there are problems which affect a pupil's attendance we will investigate, identify and strive in partnership with parents/carers, pupils and if necessary the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) to resolve attendance problems as quickly and efficiently as possible.
- If necessary we hold informal meetings and/or telephone calls with parents/carers to discuss reasons for a pupil's poor attendance – school absence letters are issued when levels of absence become a 'Cause for Concern'.
- We work closely with the EWO to regularly monitor and review absences and punctuality. The EWO pays particular attention to children whose attendance fails below 85% and it may be necessary after monitoring a child's attendance percentage or pattern of attendance for a referral to be made to the Education Welfare Service.
- Any concerns about individual pupils are reported directly to the Principal who decides appropriate action and monitors to the results.
- Information relating to attendance is included in the Governors' Annual Report to parents/carers,

- Regular notes and monthly newsletters keep parents/carers in touch with school events and helps to foster the sense of community.
- A copy of this policy will be made available from the school office and is also available to view on the school's website.
- If your child has to be away from school you should notify the school as soon as possible, preferably on the first day of absence.
- If a parent/carer knows in advance of the absence, you should ask permission from the school giving as much notice as possible and full details.

Role of Education Welfare

The Education Authority through the Education Welfare Service (EWS) has a legal duty to make sure that parents meet their responsibility towards their children's education.

If a pupil's absence causes concern, or if their attendance falls below 85%, they will be referred to the EWS, if appropriate. EWS will support staff and parents/carers in developing and implementing strategies to address or improve school attendance. The EWO can put parents/carers in touch with other agencies that may be able to offer further advice and help. If the problem is of a practical nature, the EWO can also offer advice about free school meals, uniform grants and transport to school.

Parents/carers are legally responsible for ensuring that a child of compulsory school age attends school regularly.

A child with 90% attendance will have missed 19 school days in one academic year.

A child with 85% attendance will have missed 28.5 school days in one academic year.

When a child can be absent from school

When he or she:

- is ill;
- has an unavoidable medical or dental appointment;
- is taking part in a religious event;
- has an exceptional family circumstances, e.g. wedding or a funeral

Some unacceptable reasons for absence

- birthdays;
- term time holidays;
- visiting relatives;
- looking after other members of the family.

Conclusion

This attendance policy will be reviewed by the Board of Governors of Ballymoney Model CIPS every two years or as appropriate as a result of new guidance or changes in legislation by the Department of Education N.I.

Date agreed by the Board of Governors: 228th Meeting – 24th November 2016