



# Castlebar School Attendance Policy

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## 1. Introduction

Punctual and regular attendance is crucial to the success of all pupils and the smooth organisation of the curriculum. Lateness disrupts the whole class, and irregular attendance undermines the educational process, leading to educational disadvantage.

Unjustified occasional absence, arranged and condoned by parents, gives the wrong message to the child about the importance and value of school, and raises an inappropriate expectation that the Class Teacher will distort their whole class planning and practice to compensate a single child.

It is the policy of the school to encourage full attendance for every child, except in cases of illness or unavoidable occasional absence, and to give a very clear message to parents that unjustified absence is not appropriate and will not be compensated for.

Parents are primarily responsible for ensuring that their children attend school, and are punctual. It is the responsibility of the school to support attendance and take seriously problems which may lead to non-attendance.

## 2. Registration

The Class Teacher will call the register using SIMS online registration at the beginning of each session. The register will be kept open for five minutes after the opening of each session, or until the last coach has arrived. Children arriving after the register has been closed should be brought to the school office for registration when their arrival time will be recorded. Late arrival will be indicated on the register by an 'L' and the number of minutes late recorded. Where the reason for lateness is known or where the pupil is consistently late the comment box will need to be completed to provide as full a record of the lateness as possible.

Class Staff concerned about continued lateness will consult the relevant Assistant Headteacher or SSW (School Social Worker) to decide on further action.

Reasons for pupil absence should be indicated by selection of the appropriate letter on the online register (e.g. 'I' for illness).

## 3. Reporting Absences

It is the parents' responsibility to inform the school of the reasons for a child's absence as soon as possible.

Parental contact on the day of absence is the expectation. Parents should ring the school by no later than 9.00am on the day of absence. It is not acceptable for a message to be passed via the passenger assistant.

If a pupil is absent and no reason has been received from the parent/carer, then class staff are to phone home in the first instance. Contact with parents should be effected as soon as possible.

The school administrator has responsibility for monitoring absence and will liaise with the class base to ascertain reasons for absence and to provide support where required. The administrator provides reports as necessary to the SLT (Senior Leadership Team) regarding pupil absence. Half termly absence figures are produced by the Administrator and these are shared with the SLT, SSW and the Governors Pupil and Parents Committee.

## **4. Monitoring**

The teaching and non-teaching staff will monitor attendance through registration and will inform the office if a persistent non-attender is absent. In all cases, if there is not a message, class based staff will telephone the home for an explanation.

## **5. The School Attendance Team (Assistant Head Teachers and SSW)**

LAs are charged in law with enforcing school attendance for pupils of compulsory school age.

The school attendance team is responsible for monitoring attendance. The attendance team will check the attendance reports at the end of every half term and will follow up any concerns with class staff and parents as necessary.

## **6. Persistent Non-Attendance**

Recent DfE guidance has defined Persistent Non-Attendance as pupils with below 90% attendance. It is therefore contingent upon the school to very vigilantly monitor and act on these episodes.

Please refer to Appendix 1 & 2 to see outlined procedures employed by the school to tackle issues relating to attendance.

Teachers (and AH's) will closely monitor any pupils with Persistent Absence. They may, where necessary, send work home to ensure all efforts are made to support progress.

## **7. Illness, Medical and Dental Appointments**

Absence through illness will be recorded as authorised. However, evidence may be requested.

Where there is a doubt about the authenticity of absence through illness, or where there is excessive/continuous absence, the attendance team may request proof of medical appointments and/or illness. The team may also request that the parent/guardian obtain medical certificates to explain continued absences.

## **8. Lateness**

School starts at 9am and finishes at 3.10pm. All pupils are expected to arrive on time and parents/carers should make every effort to support this happening. Travel assistance issues and difficulties are not reasons in themselves for lateness.

The reason for repeated lateness will be sought from parents/carers by the Class Teacher. The school is sympathetic to family circumstances, but punctuality will be encouraged even where there are difficulties. It is especially important in difficult family circumstances that the child's daily routine is disrupted as little as possible. Lateness disrupts not only the child's education and routine but also that of the other children. Coach delays resulting in lateness do not incur a late mark.

## **9. Term Time Absence/Leave**

Statutory guidelines make clear that Headteachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances. The Headteacher should determine the number of school days a child can be away from school if the leave is granted. Any request for time off will need to be made in writing prior to making travelling arrangements or taking leave.

## 10. Traveller Children

The special position of traveller children is acknowledged by the Education Act. In summary however a special absence code can only be entered for this group if indeed they are travelling for 'occupational purposes'. Travel needs to be agreed by the school. Children from these groups whose families do not travel are expected to register at a school and attend as normal. They are subject to the same rules as other children in terms of the requirement to attend school regularly once registered at a school.

## 11. Interviews and Examinations

The school may authorise absence for the purpose of an interview or examination in preparation for secondary transfer, or for instrumental music exams.

The school will request, and expect, that the child will return to school following their interview or examination. Failure to return from a morning appointment will result in the afternoon absence being unauthorised.

## 12. Absence for Performance Purposes

The Headteacher may grant leave of absence for approved public performances, considering the following:

- the nature and purpose of the performance
- the frequency of absence requested, and the impact of such absence on the child's education, particularly in terms of continuity and the particular child's progress
- the overall attendance pattern of the child.

Where a child is paid for their performance, a licence must be obtained from the Local Authority, and absences will be monitored by the Headteacher to ensure that they comply with the permissions given in the licence.

## 13. Off-Site Tuition

Where a child's special needs are recognised by the school, and special tuition/therapy not available in school is required, the Headteacher may authorise absence for specific times when such tuition or therapy may be given outside school.

## 14. Partnership with Parents/Carers

The school values the support of parents in matters of attendance, and appropriate opportunities will be taken to state attendance policy. This will be on admission, at parents' meetings and in letters to parents.

A summary of this attendance policy can be found on the school website.

Castlebar School

February 2017

RATIFIED BY THE GOVERNING BODY ON: 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2017

REVIEW DATE: February 2020



## Appendix 2 – Attendance Procedure Outline

- 1) The administration office will produce a weekly report on attendance for the management team and the School Social Worker. They will then liaison with the class teachers to clarify the reasons and nature of the absence.
- 2) Once a child's attendance falls below 95% (including authorised absences), the school will start communicating with the parents/carers.
- 3) Once a child's attendance falls below 90% (including authorised absences), a letter will automatically be sent to the parents/carers.
- 4) If a pupil is off for more than one week at a time or if their attendance falls below 90% in any academic year, the school will seek to work with the parents/carers to improve attendance which may include a home visit.
- 5) Progress of pupils with persistent absence is monitored and, where necessary, work will be sent home to ensure all efforts are made to support progress.
- 6) If there is no improvement in the proceeding fortnight, the Assistant Head Teachers or the School Social Worker will contact the parent/carer to further examine the causes for the decline in attendance and determine if the school can offer support to ensure the child's attendance improves.
- 7) Parents and Carers of children with attendance concerns may be asked to work in conjunction with the Attendance Team. This will likely involve an attendance contract that will outline measures to be taken to improve attendance.
- 8) Depending on the circumstance, the School Social Worker may make a home visit to offer parents support.
- 9) If there is a high volume of absenteeism due to medical purposes, a doctor's note or appointment slip may be required.
- 10) The same procedure listed above will apply to children who are persistently late for school.
- 11) If the situation arises in which there is persistent absenteeism and the explanations for the absences are not seen to be satisfactory, advice will be sought from an Education Welfare Officer within the Local Authority. In some cases, this may result in a fine and in extreme situations this may result in legal action.