

**ATTENDANCE POLICY**

### Refer to Department of Education Circular: 2015/02

**1.0 INTRODUCTION**

Regular attendance is crucial in raising standards in education and ensuring that every child can have full access to the school curriculum and reach their full potential. Inchmarlo School will strive to promote an ethos and culture which encourages good attendance and 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.

### 2.0 MISSION STATEMENT

We endeavour to assist our pupils in developing skills to become independent and self-sufficient adults with the ability to succeed and contribute responsibly in a global community.

### 3.0 VISION STATEMENT

It is our vision that Inchmarlo School is a place where children are nurtured in a caring environment conducive to effective learning.

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

Article 3

*‘The best interests 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 their parents, their own cultures, and the environment.’*

### OBJECTIVES OF THIS POLICY

* + - To improve/maintain the overall attendance and punctuality of pupils at Inchmarlo School.
    - To develop a framework that defines roles and responsibilities in relation to attendance.
    - To provide advice, support and guidance to parents/carers and pupils in relation to attendance.
    - To record and monitor attendance and absenteeism and apply appropriate strategies.
    - To promote good relationships with the Education Welfare Service.
    - To ensure a consistent approach throughout the school.

**5.0 WHAT IS THE LAW ABOUT SCHOOL ATTENDANCE?** Parents/carers and the education authority have clear duties and responsibilities.

### Parental Duty

The duty of a parent/carer, 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 Authorities

Education Authorities through their Education Welfare Service have a legal responsibility to make sure that parents/carers meet their own 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 fulfill 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.

### 7.0 ROLE OF THE SCHOOL

The Headteacher has overall responsibility for school attendance; the teachers should bring any concerns regarding school attendance to their 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 on a daily basis.

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-](http://www.deni.gov.uk/index/support-and-development-2/school-attendance/recording-) pupil-absences.htm

### 8.0 ROLE OF THE PARENT/CARER

Inchmarlo School is committed to working with parents/carers to encourage regular and punctual attendance.

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/carer 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 concern they may have so they can be addressed promptly.

It is a parent’s/carer’s responsibility to inform the school of the reason for a pupil’s absence on the first day of absence. This should be confirmed 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 school at 8.55 a.m. for registration and the beginning of classes. It is the responsibility of parents/carers to ensure that their child is punctual. Lateness (defined as being after 9.10am) is recorded at registration and on your child’s attendance record.

If a child appears reluctant to attend school the parent/carer should discuss this with the class teacher or Headteacher to ensure that both the child and parent/carer receive maximum support.

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

### 9.0 ROLE OF PUPILS

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

### 10.0 ABSENCE PROCEDURES

All parents/carers are required to notify the school. In the first instance this can be through email to [info@inchmarlo.belfast.ni.sch.uk](mailto:info@inchmarlo.belfast.ni.sch.uk) or by phoning the school on 02890381454.

If the teacher reports an absence which is has no explanation then the school office will ring the parents to confirm the absence.

### 11.0 FAMILY HOLIDAYS DURING TERM TIME

The Department of Education for Northern Ireland and Inchmarlo 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 and will be reported to the EWO. These unauthorised absences will also be reported to RBAI during the P7 tracvnsition process.

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 Inchmarlo School, 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 concern about attendance.
    - We will work towards ensuring that all pupils feel supported and valued.
    - We will send a clear message that if a pupil is absent, he will be missed.
    - We will ensure that all staff are aware of the requirements of the

registration process and that they receive training on Registration Regulations and the Law relating to attendance.

* + - We give high priority to attendance and punctuality. Registration begins at

8.55 a.m. and the register is closed at 9.10a.m. A child who arrives at school after registration closes will be registered as late.

* + - We recognise the importance of early intervention and ask parents/carers for explanations of pupil absence. Parents/carers are contacted by the Headteacher 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 becomes 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 falls below **85%** and it may be necessary after monitoring a child’s attendance percentage or pattern of attendance eg. an unusually high number of Fridays off school, for a referral to be made to the Education Welfare Service.
    - All staff mark their class register using the same system of appropriate categorisation of absence.
    - Any concerns about individual pupils are reported directly to the Headteacher who decides appropriate action and monitors the results.
    - A regular newsletter keeps 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, 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.

### 13.0 THE ROLE OF THE EDUCATION WELFARE

Education Authorities through the Education Welfare Service (EWS) have a legal duty to make sure that parents/carers 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.

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.

### 14.0 WHEN A CHILD CAN BE ABSENT FROM SCHOOL

When he:

* is ill;
* has an unavoidable medical or emergency dental appointment;
* is taking part in a religious event;
* has an exceptional family circumstance

### 16.0 CONCLUSION

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

Policy reviewed : December 2024 AM and ES