CARRICKFERGUS MODEL PRIMARY SCHOOL



ATTENDANCE & PUNCTUALITY POLICY

Date of Rewrite of Policy	**November 2026**
Date of Governor Ratification of Policy	
Person (s) Responsible for review and update of Policy	Mrs J Miller

CARRICKFERGUS MODEL PRIMARY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY

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. Carrickfergus Model will strive to promote an ethos and culture which encourages good attendance and where each pupil feels valued and secure.

Aims

1. To improve/maintain the overall attendance of pupils at Carrickfergus Model.

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.

Role of the School

The Principal has overall responsibility for school attendance. Teachers/designated staff should bring any concerns regarding school attendance to her attention. The Board of Governors provide support by reviewing school attendance figures and targets and ensuring it is a standing 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 2026/15. Carrickfergus Model is committed to working with parents/guardians to encourage regular and punctual attendance.

Role of Parent/Guardian

Parents/guardians have a legal duty 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/guardian has a legal duty to ensure that they regularly attend that school. It is a parent's/guardian's responsibility to inform the school

of the reason for a pupil's absence on the first day of absence. 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 8.45am in the morning and after lunch (12.50pm / 1.25pm) for registration and the beginning of classes. It is the responsibility of parents/guardians to ensure that your child is punctual.

The back gate of school closes between 8.45am – 8.50am to allow a few minutes grace for traffic etc. On days of inclement weather this might be extended for safety reasons.

Lateness is recorded at the front office and in registration. 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. Entrances of school are staffed to help children when / if necessary.

As stated, an important factor in pupil achievement is school attendance. The significant majority of our children enjoy their time at school as evidenced by a number of key indicators.

❖ High Level of Whole School Annual Attendance. This is consistently > 95%

❖ Low level of poor attendance i.e. < 85%

❖ Positive outcomes to the majority of attendance related issues

❖ Each year a large number of children have > 98% attendance

❖ Each year many children have > 100% attendance

Carrickfergus Model Primary School Expectations

We expect that all our pupils will:

• Attend school every day

• Attend school punctually

• Attend appropriately prepared for the day (i.e.; Homework, PE kit, school bags, etc.)

We expect that our parents/carers will:

• Ensure regular school attendance and be aware of their legal responsibilities by ensuring their children attend school regularly

• Ensure that their child arrives at school punctually and prepared for the school day

• Be honest about matters at home that may be affecting attendance

• Ensure that they contact the school either:

❖ On the first day of absence, via our ParentMail system, before 9am or by telephoning the school between 9am and 9.30am. The second option may be more appropriate if there are attendance related issues other than sickness.

❖ Notify school immediately of any changes to emergency contact details.

We expect Carrickfergus Model Primary School will:

- Provide a welcoming atmosphere
- Provide a safe learning environment
- Record pupil attendance at the start of each school day (before 9.30am) using BROMCOM (information recorded by schools is reviewed by DENI)
- Update attendance records promptly and accurately
- Notice patterns
- View attendance and punctuality as part of safeguarding and child protection

Carrickfergus Model Primary School follows up on absences to:

- Ascertain the reason
- Ensure the proper safeguarding action is taken if required
- Identify whether the absence is authorised or unauthorised
- Ascertain if support is required or a referral made to the EWO (Education Welfare Officer)
- Make referrals to the EA EWS in partnership with parents if possible. Referals cannot be left to the end of the academic year

Carrickfergus Model Primary School will promote good attendance and punctuality by:

- Promoting good attendance and punctuality and reduce absence through a system of reward and recognition
- Record attendance and lateness daily
- Where appropriate, informing parents / carers when attendance drops below 85% every half-term by way of email in the first instance and then follow-up phone calls as required
- Act to address patterns of absence in an empathetic and understanding manner
- Endeavouring to keep in contact with families during a prolonged or significant absence
- Report on the number of minutes late and overall absence on each child's end of year school report
- Have attendance as a standing item at Board of Governor meetings

The school acknowledges that good attendance should be recognised and rewarded by the following

- At the end of the school year, pupils receive an award for having over 98% attendance in recognition of the fact that a few days sickness absence can prevent them being awarded with 100% attendance.
- 100% Attendance is also awarded in recognition of this excellent achievement.
- At the end of each year a cup is awarded to the Primary 7 child with the highest 7 year attendance
- Information on Full Attendance for 7 years is forwarded to Education Authority (NE Region)

Absences during term time

Every absence from school has to be classified by the school (not by the parents), as either authorised or unauthorised. This is why information about the cause of any absence is always required.

• Details how to inform school about an absence are noted above.

• If the absence is prolonged i.e. requires hospitalisation or is particularly significant, parents are requested to keep school informed. The Principal/V.P. always try to visit or keep in touch. In these circumstances work can be provided by the class teacher to be completed at home.

• Sometimes a child may be reluctant to attend school. Where this is the case, we believe that effective home / school communication contributes to a solution. This will help us to identify the root cause of the reluctance to attend and plan the way forward together. Our Pastoral Care Policy and Anti-Bullying Policies provides more detail on this, in particular, for Emotionally Based School Avoidance.

Examples of authorised absences are:

• Illness;

• Religious observance by the religious body to which the child's family belongs;

• Attend to immigration matters;

• A need to leave the UK for a complex family need ie a family funeral;

•Absences allowed by the school. These would usually include: - medical appointments – suspension - exclusions - family occasions e.g. close family wedding, bereavement etc. - extreme family emergencies e.g. house fires, burglaries etc.

• If a child is involved in an educational extra-curricular activity that requires them to be absent (care should be taken for this not to be more than 10 days in one school year, less if other absences occur). Evidence should be provided to the school for this.

• Authorised Absences From time to time children need to be absent from school for other reasons such as medical appointments. Such absences usually only take up part of a day. School should be informed of such absences in writing (email is acceptable) in advance and children should be brought in to school for morning registration and back to school straight after the appointment, where possible.

• Every effort, however, should be made to arrange medical appointments outside school hours.

Unauthorised Absences Unauthorised absences are those which the school does not consider reasonable and for which no "leave" has been given.

Examples of unauthorised absences are:

- Parents/carers keeping children off school unnecessarily
- Unexplained absences i.e. the absence has never been properly explained to school
- Shopping, looking after other children or birthdays
- Day trips or holidays in term time. School discourages family holidays during term time and work will not be provided for children going on holiday.
- For families who take time to travel abroad for extended periods of time to visit relatives in a country of origin, this is treated in the same way as any other holiday.
- Being collected early for no authorised reason
- Mental Health or Rest Days should be reported as illness
- Truancy Holidays During Term Time

Even though the above absences are unauthorised, parents should inform school by email / phone call if they are going on holiday. We appreciate the courtesy of this information, and an understanding that as a safeguarding matter, school needs to know where children are.

Extended Leave

Extended leave allows pupils, for a maximum of two weeks only, to travel outside Northern Ireland without their attendance levels being adversely affected. This is not the same as a family holiday and a request should be made in writing / email to the Principal. Each request will be considered on an individual basis considering the circumstances, previous similar requests and whether the specific needs of the child will be met during the proposed absence. This may be in the case of:

- Short-term parental placement / employment outside the UK

- A need to leave Northern Ireland for a specific complex family need such as:
  - care for a sick relative
  - sibling or parent receiving medical treatment outside NI; or attend to immigration matters

The following documentation must be provided:

- An email or letter from the parent's employer confirming the dates and location of placement / employment outside NI / UK
- An email or letter from the hospital or clinic confirming appointment details
- An email / letter confirming appointment details at either passport office or a visa application centre outside of Northern Ireland

Flexible Timetables

School may consider the need to reduce the time a pupil is in attendance in school for:

- welfare reasons
- additional needs that cannot be catered for throughout the full day due to staffing, a child awaiting a SPIM placement or a reduced timetable
- a reduced timetable is not likely to be used in school very often but it may be the best decision for a child for a period of time. The target will always be to gradually increase the pupil's time in school in a careful and sustained way especially if this can avoid suspension or expulsion at such a young age. Governors should be involved in these decisions due to them being exceptional circumstances
- a long term health condition
- emotionally based school avoidance

Persistent Absenteeism

• The school will continuously monitor each child's attendance record. The school follows a two-step process for any children who are persistently absent for any reason:

1) Each Half Term the Principal will review all absences and the reasons given for children whose attendance falls below 85% as a cumulative percentage. It is noted if attendance is improving or deteriorating within the previous date. Following this analysis, a range of action may result:

• School may phone parents to discuss the matter and offer support.

• School may send a letter to the parents/carers of specific children whose attendance is causing concern. This will inform parents of their child's attendance, school's concerns and invite parents to contact school to avail of assistance in effecting improvement.

• Teachers will inform parents of concern at parent interview time. Very often these early interventions are successful in effecting improved attendance.

2) The list of children whose attendance is below 85% is also discussed with the Educational Welfare Service, when available, on a termly basis and where school's action has not resulted in improved attendance, formal referral to the Educational Welfare Service will be discussed / agreed.

The Pastoral Care team will liaise with the class teacher, SENCO and, when necessary, other professionals, if the need for support is identified.

Punctuality, Registers, Punctuality and Lateness

Punctuality to school is crucial. Lateness into school causes disruption to that individual's learning and to that of the other pupils in the class. It is paramount therefore that all pupils arrive at school on time.

At Carrickfergus Model Primary School, the gates are opened at 8.30am each morning to allow a soft start for pupils and early drop-off provision for parents. This is a very unique resource offered by our school and we are one of very few to do so. Breakfast club is also open from 8.00am for those wishing to avail of that. Gates are staffed in the mornings to welcome children and families.

All children should be in classrooms at 8.45am to start their learning. This creates a positive start to the school day and allows learning to commence promptly. The register will be taken at 8.50am which is a legal requirement.

Regular lateness is not acceptable. If your child misses the start of the day they can miss work and the time with their class teacher getting vital information and news for the day. Late arriving pupils also disrupt lessons. This can be embarrassing for the child and can encourage absence. The school day starts at 8.45am and we expect all children to be in class at this time.

A child arriving after 8.45am is late. This matter is initially addressed by the class teacher. If work is missed there is an expectation that this will 'made up' by the child. A child arriving after 8.45am will need to come to the main school entrance where the school secretary will note their reason for being late. Our Late Register is regularly reviewed by the Senior Leadership Team and patterns and frequency of lateness discussed with the Class Teacher for the purposes of addressing with parents at Parental Interviews.

Registers Registers are typically taken at the start of the school day. A child who is late into school will have received an L code (late mark) for that day. Should a child arrive after registers are closed it requires a further change to be made. If a child does not arrive into school a D code is used. This equates to an unauthorised absence and will be recorded as such on a child's annual attendance record. However, on a child's return, where a reason is provided, the D code is changed for example to I for illness. If a child arrives after registers have closed – for reasons not considered acceptable by the school – they will be recorded as 'Late after registers closed'. They are marked as being on site but this

does not count as a present mark and will show as an unauthorised absence and affect their attendance record.

Every effort should be made by parents to encourage their children to see the importance of high attendance and good punctuality. These are life-long skills and expectations.

School Illness Guidelines

The information below has been provided by the Health Protection Agency but parents are provided with reminders throughout the year.

Chicken Pox: 5 days from the onset of rash

Slapped Cheek: 5 days from the onset of rash

Whooping Cough: 5 days from commencing anti-biotics

Hand Foot and Mouth: 5 days from the onset of rash / blistering

Scarlet Fever: 5 days from commencing anti-biotics

Diarrhoea / Vomiting: Until diarrhoea / vomiting has settled for 48 hours Headlice

★ Other Guidelines are held in school for other illnesses/injuries. Parents should contact school for guidance. Please note:

• If a child arrives to school with any of the above symptoms – he / she will be sent home immediately to prevent the spread to others.

• School will provide some work activities, on request.

• School will not provide written work activities when a child has been withdrawn for a holiday. Typically, children are asked to continue with their Reading / Spellings / Tables during any such holiday absence.

Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA)

Whilst EBSA is not an illness, a small number of children can struggle with this. As a school we want to do everything we can to help. More detail on this can be found in our Pastoral Care Policy.

Removal of pupils' names from the register

A pupil's name may be removed from a school's register only in the following circumstances:

- Confirmation that a pupil is registered at another school in Northern Ireland
- Departure from Northern Ireland
- Expulsion
- Death

- Parent / carer advises that child is being removed under Regulation 6(2) of The Registration and Attendance of Pupils Registration (NI) 1974 (NO. 78), for example elective home education. In this instance a SA1 form should be completed which is a legal requirement. If a parent has indicated that they are considering elective home education, school will constructively engage in discussion so full implications are understood. The EA has guidelines in respect of Elective Home Education.

Retention of Records

School keeps attendance records for not less than ten years. Attendance data is automatically included as part of the annual school census.

Exceptional Closures

Exceptional Closures are only used when the school has been granted permission by DENI. These may be granted in the case of:

- Flooding or burst pipes at the school;
- Electricity failure
- Damage to school
- Severe Weather conditions eg storm / heavy snowfall
- The death of a member of staff, Board of Governors or pupil at the school
- Polling Station
- Industrial Action

Links to other school policies / documents:

- Pastoral Care
- Anti-Bullying
- Positive Behaviour
- Safe-guarding & Child Protection
- SEN
- Circular 2026/15 Attendance Guidance & Absence Recording by schools
- Absence codes guidance for schools using Bromcom: Annex C: August 2026

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE LETTER SAMPLE

Date: _____

Dear Parents,

Following our telephone conversation on _____ I am writing to alert you to your child's attendance figure which currently sits at _____.

Any attendances which fall below 85% must be reported to the Education Welfare Officer.

At Carrickfergus Model Primary School, we understand that family life is busy and that circumstances can sometimes make good attendance difficult. We would ask that all parents / carers discuss these matters with school staff in case we can do anything to help.

We will now be monitoring your child's attendance in the hope that things improve over the next month. Thank you for working with school to achieve this.

I have noted anything that we have agreed below.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs J Miller

Principal

Agreed actions (if any):

SCHOOL LATENESS LETTER SAMPLE

Date: _____

Dear Parents,

Following our telephone conversation on _____ I am writing to express concern regarding your child's / children's lateness to school.

Our school is one of the few schools in the area to open our school gates from 8.30am so that our pupils can access a soft start to their day. Learning starts at 8.45am sharp.

Being late for school does not set children up for a good day as they have to play catch up from important announcements, routines at the beginning of the day. This can leave a child feeling confused and anxious which is not a feeling we want them to have at the start of the day.

At Carrickfergus Model Primary School, we understand that family life is busy and that circumstances can sometimes make good punctuality difficult. We would ask that all parents / carers discuss these matters with school staff in case we can do anything to help.

We will now be monitoring your child's punctuality in the hope that things improve over the next month. Thank you for working with school to achieve this.

I have noted anything that we have agreed below.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs J Miller

Principal

Agreed actions (if any):