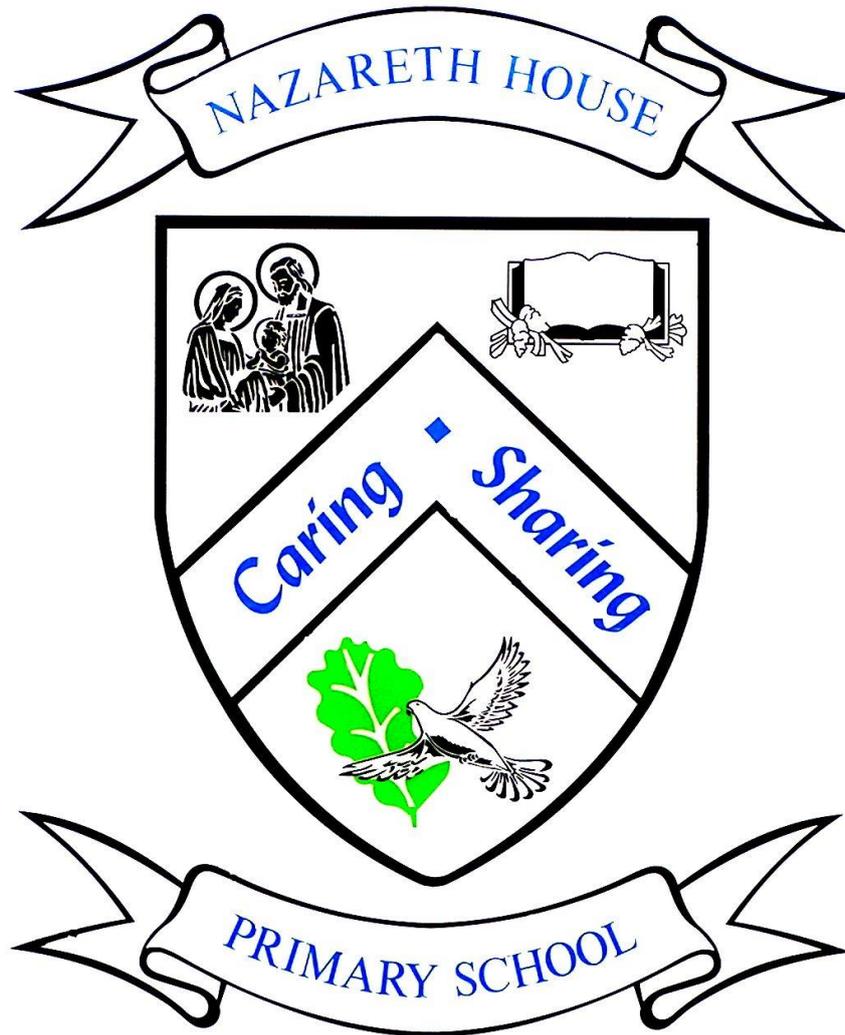


# Nazareth House Primary School



## Attendance Policy

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ (Board of Governors)

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ (Principal)

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

## **Rationale**

In Nazareth House Primary School, we are committed to maintaining high levels of attendance and punctuality. Regular school attendance and good punctuality are vital components in helping pupils to have full access to the Northern Ireland curriculum and fulfil their potential. Nazareth House Primary School strives to promote an ethos and culture which encourages good attendance and punctuality and where each pupil feels valued and secure.

## **Mission Statement**

Nazareth House Primary School is a Catholic school, committed to upholding the legitimate rights of children, teachers and parents. The staff will aim, at all times, to create a safe climate so that learning and teaching can occur within relationships of mutual valuing and respect. We believe education should provide for and equip children with skills and values necessary to make a positive contribution in a changing world. Nazareth House Primary School wants children to be self-motivated and to be at peace with themselves, others and the world. To achieve these aspirations, the school requires the help, commitment and co-operation of children, parents, staff, governors and the wider community.

## **Aims**

- To improve and maintain the overall attendance of pupils at Nazareth House Primary School.
- To develop a framework that defines roles and responsibilities in relation to pupil attendance and punctuality.
- To provide advice, support and guidance for parents/guardians and pupils.
- To work in partnership with parents/guardians to establish good patterns of punctuality and attendance.
- To develop positive and consistent communication between home and school, including set procedures for attendance information.
- To develop a positive reward system that encourages good pupil attendance and punctuality.
- To develop a systematic approach for gathering and analysing data.
- To promote effective partnership with the Education Welfare Service.

## **The Role Of The School**

- The Principal at Nazareth House Primary School has overall responsibility for school attendance.
- Class teachers and the Designated Teacher for Child Protection should bring any concerns regarding school attendance to his 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 at the beginning of morning and afternoon registration sessions.
- 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:  
<http://www.deni.gov.uk/index/support-and-development-2/school-attendance/recording-pupil-absences.htm>
- Nazareth House Primary School is committed to working with parents to encourage regular and punctual attendance.

## **The Role Of The Parent**

- Parents 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 (Article 45 (1) of The Education and Libraries (NI) Order 1986).
- If a child is registered in school, their parent has a legal duty to ensure that they regularly attend the school.
- It is the parent's responsibility to inform the school of the reason for a pupil's absence on the first day of absence. This may 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 between 9.00 -9.15 am for registration and the beginning of classes. It is the responsibility of parents to ensure their child is punctual. Lateness is recorded at registration and on the child's attendance record.
- If the child appears reluctant to attend school, parents should discuss the matter promptly with the class teacher or Principal to ensure that both the parent and the child receive maximum support.

## **The Role Of The Pupil**

- Pupils should attend school regularly.
- Pupils should arrive at school on time.
- They should be organised and ready for work.
- They should inform the class teacher about any issues that may prevent them attending school regularly and on time.
- They may supply a written note to explain any absence on their return to school.

## **Communication**

Information on punctuality, attendance and absenteeism is outlined in our Pastoral Care Guidelines booklet which all parents receive at the beginning of each school year. This emphasises the importance of being at school on time and notifying Nazareth House Primary School if a child is absent for any reason.

The importance of regular attendance is discussed and explained at the Pre-School Induction Meeting held at Nazareth House P.S. in June for the parents of those children who will be entering Primary One in September. This reiterates that parents and children should arrive at school on time, so that each child can be given the best possible start to the school day.

New admissions to our school may happen at various times throughout the year. All parents requesting a place are asked to make an appointment with the Principal. At this meeting, the importance of regular attendance is always highlighted, together with other school routines.

## **Family Holidays During Term Time**

Nazareth House Primary 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. Only in exceptional circumstances will a holiday be authorised.

## **Procedures To Record Attendance And Punctuality**

Nazareth House Primary School uses a computerised registration system (SIMS) and the register is completed in the morning and afternoon at specific times.

### **Arrival and Registration**

- Pupils should not arrive at school before 8.30 am, as there is no supervision available before this time.
- Children may attend Breakfast Club from 8.30 am onwards.
- Primary 1-3 pupils will go straight to their classes on arrival from 9.00 – 9.15 am.
- Primary 4-7 pupils will line up in their respective class lines on the playground on a dry day, or in the school hall on a wet day. They will be admitted into the school building by the Principal.
- Registration is taken at 9.15 am by the class teacher. Any child who arrives after 9.15 am, but before 9.30 am, will be marked as late (Code L) and a note of how many minutes late will be recorded on the child's attendance record. If a child arrives after 9.30 am, the class teacher will record the lateness as Code U (late after registration), again stating how many minutes late the pupil was. All pupils who are late must report to the office.

## **Categorising Absence**

### **Authorised Absence**

- Illness
- Unavoidable medical appointments
- Taking part in a religious event
- Exceptional family circumstance (e.g. wedding, funeral)
- Representing their club/school/county/country in a particular event (e.g. sport, music)

### **Unauthorised Absence**

- Birthdays
- Visiting relatives
- Looking after other members of the family
- A pupil is unnecessarily kept off school
- Shopping
- Family holiday/long weekend break
- No verbal/written reason is provided when a child is absent

## **Absence Through Illness**

Nazareth House Primary School continues to provide as much education as the child's medical condition allows to keep up the momentum of their learning. Nazareth House Primary School monitors attendance of those pupils who are absent from school due to short-term or chronic illness, and close links are maintained with parents. Educational support, including the provision of work and materials is provided for those pupils who are absent from school with medical conditions. The teaching staff liaise with parents and/or medical advisors so that, during prolonged absence, pupils receive suitable work for their age and ability group.

The reintegration of children into school following a long absence through ill health is considered a priority. The school consults parents about general concerns, medical issues and the timing and pace of return.

## **Truancy**

All staff at Nazareth House P.S. believe in the importance of each child's safety, welfare and happiness. Although truancy is very rare at Nazareth House Primary School, if staff are suspicious that a child may be playing truant, action is taken immediately.

If truancy is suspected, the Principal and the Education Welfare Officer are notified. Parents are contacted, either by telephone or a home visit. We encourage parents to bring their child to school, so that the reasons for truancy can be discussed and, hopefully, resolved.

## **Proactive Strategies**

- Regular use of SIMS to monitor attendance
- Discussions about the importance of attendance in circle time sessions between class teachers and pupils
- Regular liaison meetings with the Education Welfare Officer
- Gold, Silver, Bronze certificates at the end of the school year celebrating attendance at school
- Talks from Principal, Vice-Principal and Key Stage Co-ordinators at assemblies
- "Star of the Week" certificates presented to those pupils showing good/improved attendance
- Posters advertising the importance of attendance are placed on the main entrance areas of the school

## **Reactive Strategies**

- Obligation on parents to contact school regarding absences
- Obligation on DTCP/class teachers to inform Principal about concerns of a child's non-attendance or unpunctuality
- Class teacher will speak to parents to ascertain the reason for persistent absence
- Details of attendance will be extracted from SIMS
- Informal meeting will be held between Parents/Guardians and Principal
- If absence persists, the DTCP contacts the EWO

## **Monitoring Absence**

- Each half-term an audit is printed out from SIMS which identifies pupils whose attendance is showing signs of concern (under 90%).
- The Designated Teacher for Child Protection will alert class teachers to those identified pupils and measures will be taken accordingly.
- If there has been a genuine reason for a particular pupil's absence, no further action will be taken.
- When the class teacher believes there is a concern regarding pupil's attendance/punctuality and there is not a sufficient reason to explain this, the class teacher will speak to the parent about his/her concerns, perhaps at a parent/teacher meeting.
- If attendance does not improve, a letter will be sent to the parent/guardian advising of the school's concern and asking them to contact the school to arrange a meeting with the Principal.
- If attendance fails to improve, and falls below 85%, then a referral form may be sent to the EWO. Parents/Guardians will be informed of this decision.

## **Education Welfare Service**

Education and Library Boards (ELBs) through the Education Welfare Service (EWS) have 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 in developing and implementing strategies to address or improve school attendance.

The Education Welfare Officer meets the Designated Teacher for Child Protection termly to discuss attendance issues, offering action, advice and support.

## **Monitoring of the Policy**

This policy will be reviewed every two years and any changes will be presented to the Principal, Governors and staff. The policy will be available for parents to view.