**Markethill High School**

**Attendance Policy**

**Introduction**

Markethill High School is a successful school. You, your child and our staff play their part in making it so. We aim for an environment which enables and encourages all members of the community to reach their potential. For our children to gain the greatest benefit from their education, it is vital that they attend regularly and your son/daughter should be at school, on time, every day the school is open, unless a reason for the absence is unavoidable.

It is very important that you ensure that your child attends regularly and this policy outlines how together we will achieve this.

**Why Regular Attendance is important:**

* It is required by law;
* Learning – absence affects the pattern of a child’s schooling and regular absence will negatively impact on their learning. Any pupil’s absence disrupts teaching routines and may also affect the learning of others in the same class;
* Safeguarding – Your child may be at risk of harm if they do not attend school regularly. Safeguarding the interests of each child is everyone’s responsibility and within the context of Markethill High School, promoting the welfare of your child will also draw on procedures highlighted in the following related policies:
  + Behaviour Management
  + Health and Safety
  + Bullying
  + Relationships
  + Child Protection
* Attendance at school promotes social development;
* Employers of school leavers will take into account the young person’s school attendance and punctuality record before making a job offer.

**Authorised/Unauthorised Attendance**

A child may be absent from school when he/she:

* Is ill;
* Has an unavoidable medical appointment - wherever possible these should be arranged outside school hours;
* Is taking part in a religious event;
* Has an exceptional family circumstance, e.g. funeral.

A child may **NOT** be absent for:

* Birthdays;
* Visiting relatives;
* Shopping;
* Looking after other family members.

**Role of Parents/Guardians**

The duty of a parent, in relation to the education of their children, is found in the Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 1986:

“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.”

* It is the responsibility of parents to ensure that their children attend school and arrive in good time for class each morning. If a pupil is late 3 times (after 9.10) without good reason, after school detention may be incurred;
* If your son/daughter starts avoiding school, contact school straightaway and work with staff to address the issue;
* If your son/daughter is ill, contact the school office on the first day of absence. The school’s telephone number is 028 37551270;
* Make sure school has up-to-date contact numbers;
* Please ensure that your son/daughter brings a written explanation of the absence to their form teacher on the day they return to school. The pro-forma in your child’s diary may be used for this. A written explanation for every absence is required;
* If your child has an appointment please notify the school in writing in advance (no later than the day before). If your child comes into school on the same day as the appointment a present mark may then be awarded; If you know in advance of the absence you should ask permission from the school giving as much notice as possible and full details;
* Ideally, Medical and Dental appointments should not be made during school hours.
* **Holidays should not be arranged during term time**;

**Pupils**

Markethill High School expects pupils to:

* Value education and attend all classes;
* Be punctual for school. Pupils must be in by 9.10am. A student who is late 3 times without a valid reason will be given an after school detention;
* Bring a written explanation of an unavoidable absence to the form teacher on the first day of returning to school. Failure to do so will result in sanctions being applied;
* Catch up on work missed;
* Sign out in office if attending an unavoidable medical appointment and sign in on return. NB a medical appointment will reduce the overall attendance rate of your son/daughter and should normally take place outside of school hours;
* Ask permission of staff, whose lesson you will miss, if attending sporting/other event/trip.

**Role of the Southern Education and Library Board**

Education and Library Boards through their Education Welfare Service have a legal responsibility to make sure that parents and carers meet their own responsibility towards their children’s education. If they do not, the Education and Library Board is duty bound to use the legal processes of Court action, to uphold a parent’s duty to make sure that the young people in their care receive an education.

If your son/daughter does not attend school regularly:

* You could be fined up to £1000 for each child who fails to attend regularly;
* The SELB may apply for an Education Supervision Order in respect of your son/daughter.

It is important that you co-operate with the school and the Education Welfare Officer in order to resolve any difficulties early before any legal action becomes necessary.

**Roles and Responsibilities:**

**Staff**

Form teachers and teaching staff are responsible for:

* marking attendance through SIMS and monitoring day-to-day attendance of pupils, liaising with parents, if necessary;
* monitoring patterns of attendance in each subject and for notifying form teachers;
* offering advice and support, so pupils can catch up on work, when a pupil returns from a period of unavoidable absence;
* notifying staff of pupils who are attending a sporting/other event/trip.

Form teachers are responsible for monitoring student attendance and ensuring reasons are supplied for absence. They should liaise with the Year Teacher if a pupil is absent for more than 3 days.

Year teachers monitor monthly reports on attendance by year group and work with pupils to promote good attendance. They liaise with form teachers and Mrs Henry.

Mrs Henry fulfils a key leadership role with regard to attendance and works closely with the team of teachers to monitor, record and respond appropriately to pupils’ attendance. She works closely with the EWO and may make a referral should there be a concern. It is a legal requirement to refer when a pupil’s attendance fall below 85%.

**Role of Board of Governors**

Markethill High School’s Board of Governors will oversee this attendance policy and monitor and review it annually.

**Strategies for promoting good attendance**

Markethill High School is renowned for its very good quality of pastoral, academic and extra-curricular provision. Associated with this are other key strategies which the school applies to help promote good attendance:

* Positive school ethos and culture;
* Implementation of this attendance policy and target setting;
* Designated staff with roles and responsibilities;
* Effective recording and monitoring of attendance;
* Additional support for poor attendees;
* Strong relationship with staff and parents/guardians;
* Links with the wider community;
* Collaboration with EWO.

**Strategies used to tackle absenteeism:**

* Positive relationships between staff and pupils;
* Positive relationship with home;
* Extra-Curricular activities;
* Supportive Atmosphere;
* Strong links with external agencies;
* Referral to EWO.

**Structure for Managing Attendance in Markethill High School**

**Key Contacts**

Your son/daughter’s Form Teacher

Your son/daughter’s Year Teacher

Mrs C. Henry – Senior Teacher with responsibility for Attendance

Mr Maxwell – School Principal

Date of Policy/Review

April 2015