



Attendance Policy

**Date of review:
February 2020**

Castle Tower School caters for pupils with special educational needs in the North Eastern area of the Education Authority. The school provides education for pupils from 3 to 19 years old with a wide range of barriers to learning.

At Castle Tower we celebrate the talents of each individual and strive to improve the quality of each person's life by developing confidence, tolerance, honesty, happiness and curiosity. We aim to develop within each individual the skills they require for a full and happy life and help them to be independent, ambitious and look forward with hope to the future.

The nurturing ethos of the school contributes to a safe, caring and happy environment where children are supported to help them overcome any barriers to learning.

The school has a large catchment area, stretching from Portrush in the North to Carrickfergus in the South; from Magherafelt in the west to Cushendall in the East. The majority of pupils are brought to school by Education Authority transport with a few being brought by parents / carers.

Introduction

Regular school attendance is crucial to ensuring that every child has full access to the school curriculum and support services and to their reaching their full potential.

Castle Tower will strive to promote an ethos and culture which encourages good attendance and where each pupil will feel valued and secure.

Aims of the Attendance Policy

1. To improve/maintain the overall attendance of pupils in Castle Tower School.
2. To develop a framework that defines the roles and responsibilities in relation to attendance
3. To provide advice, support and guidance to parents/carers and pupils.
4. To promote good relationships with the Education Welfare Service.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Principal of Castle Tower School has the overall responsibility for school attendance.

The Director of Pastoral Care (DPC) has day to day responsibility for monitoring attendance and liaising with the EWS, (including specialist LAC Services).

Teachers should mark roles diligently, using the appropriate coding.

Teachers have the responsibility to bring any concerns regarding school attendance to the attention of the DCP. In particular, school staff have a responsibility to inform the DPC on the absence of a pupil on the Child protection Register. School staff also have a responsibility to talk to pupils, at an appropriate level, about their attendance and the importance of regular attendance. *In particular, pupils reaching Key Stage 4 who are leaving*

school for training and /or work placements should have the importance of regular attendance as part of their careers lessons.

Administration staff have the responsibility to enter all pupil attendances using the Attendance Module. Attendance under 85% each week is emailed to the Director of Pastoral Care every week.

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.

Dissemination of the policy

A copy of the policy will be on Fronter/School website. Parents / carers may request a copy from the school.

Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed every two years or in the event of a significant change in legislation.

To enable Castle Tower School to accurately record and monitor attendance in a consistent way, we will adhere to the guidance provided in Department of Education Circular 2017/15.

Parents / Carers

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

Parents / carers have a legal duty to ensure their child of compulsory school age shall receive efficient full time education suitable to their 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 a school, their parent/carer have a legal duty to ensure that they regularly attend school.

It is a parent'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 / completion of the pre-printed absence note in the child's Homework Diary when the child returns to school. If the absence is likely to be prolonged, this information should be provided to the school to allow for any necessary arrangements (such as homework/ course work) to be made. In certain circumstances, Home Tuition may have to be considered.

Pupils are expected to be in school on time. As the majority of the pupils at Castle Tower School are transported to school by transport provided, parents/carers are obliged to ensure that their child is ready at the collection time which will have been pre-arranged. Parents who make their own arrangements for bringing their child to school have the responsibility of ensuring that it is done in a timely manner.

If a child is reluctant to attend school, parents/carers should discuss this matter with the child's class/form teacher in the first instance, to ensure that the maximum support can be given.

Absence procedures, including procedures for managing non-attendance

Where possible, appointments with doctors, dentists etc should be made after school hours or during periods of school closure. Where this is unavoidable, pupils should attend before and/or after the appointment when possible. The school should be notified in such a case. Castle Tower School discourages holidays during term time due to the impact they have on pupils' learning. Family holidays taken during term time will be considered to be "unauthorised absence". Only in exceptional circumstances will a holiday be authorised. The DPC will hold regular meetings with the schools' link Education Welfare Officer for the purpose of reviewing the attendance of pupils who fall into the below 85% category. At these meetings, consideration will be given to the individual circumstances of the pupils under discussion and decisions will be taken as to whether a letter, expressing concern about the pupils' attendance, will be sent home. Should such a letter be sent, the child's attendance will be reviewed at the next meeting and, should there be no improvement and no satisfactory explanation, a further letter will be sent, requesting a meeting with the parents/ carers.

At all times, the focus is to support the pupils and their parents/carers to ensure good attendance by all our pupils.

In a case where there is no improvement after a second letter and a meeting, the school will make a formal referral to the Education Welfare Service and this service will support staff and parents/carers in developing and implementing strategies to address or improve attendance.

In Castle Tower School we recognise that a number of our pupils have additional medical needs and in some cases this may necessitate absences for appointments, procedures, hospitalisation and recuperation. In such cases, every effort will be made to facilitate appropriate learning opportunities for those pupils, including, if necessary, the provision of Home Tuition.

This policy will be available to all parent/carers .

This policy has been ratified by the Board of Governors