****

**Sperrinview Special School**

**Pupil Attendance Policy**

UNICEF: Rights Respecting Schools: The Right to an Education

**Rationale:**

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. In Sperrinview Special School we strive to promote an ethos and culture which encourages good attendance and where each pupil will feel valued and secure. We believe pupils will be happy members of the school community if they attend school every day.

Our School Motto is “Where Pupils Come First”. We aim to ensure that every child will want to attend school by developing an ethos and environment that is:

 Welcoming

 Happy and caring

 Organised and well-equipped

 Facilitating learning

 Opportunities for fulfilment

 Challenging and stimulating

 Peaceful and calm

 Enriching experiences

 Listening to all

 Developing self

In Sperrinview we aim to:

 Provide quality, child-centred, holistic education

 Promote communication

 Develop personal and independent living skills

 Celebrate achievement, building self-esteem and confidence

 Foster links with families, schools and our local and global communities

The Governors and staff of Sperrinview Special School are committed to providing a full and effective education for all our pupils to ensure they achieve their full potential in all that they do. We work together to engender in our pupil’s positive attitudes and behaviours based on respect for self and others. We will strive to promote an ethos and culture which encourages good attendance and where each pupil will feel valued and secure. Pupils, parents and teachers work together to maintain high standards of attendance. Our school aims to achieve good attendance by implementing a Pupil Attendance Policy within which staff, pupils, parents and the Education Welfare Service can work together in partnership.

This policy emphasizes the important link between good attendance and educational achievement. All staff have a responsibility for pupil attendance in school. There is a strong link with the Educational Welfare Service, via our assigned EWO Carmel Kelly.

To accurately record and monitor attendance in a consistent way we will adhere to the guidance provided in the Department of Education Circular 2017/15, which can be found at the following link:

[www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/circular-201715-attendance-guidance-andabsence-recording-by-schools](http://www.education-ni.gov.uk/publications/circular-201715-attendance-guidance-andabsence-recording-by-schools)

Sperrinview Special School is committed to working with parents/guardians to encourage regular and punctual attendance.

**Aims**

1. To improve/maintain the overall attendance of pupils at Sperrinview Special School.

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.

**Roles and responsibilities:**

**The Principal**;

* has overall responsibility for school attendance. Staff should bring any concerns about attendance to her attention.
* will ensure that the Pupil Attendance Policy is shared with staff, pupils and parents.
* works collaboratively with the Education Welfare officer(EWO) Carmel Kelly to support all children and their families to promote consistent attendance.
* will ensure that clear guidance is provided for relevant school staff on accurate recording of codes used to record pupil absences. (see appendix 1-Codes)
* Has clear procedures in place to identify and follow up all pupil absences and lateness.

**Board of Governors**

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**

Effective practice in relation to managing individual pupil attendance depends on the class teacher.

* Teachers are responsible for recording pupil attendance/absence on SIMS at the beginning of the morning and the afternoon sessions using the C2k codes attached to this policy.
* Teaching staff regularly monitor the attendance and punctuality of pupils
* Teachersshould bring any concerns regarding school attendance to the Principal’s attention at or before the weekly teachers meeting where Attendance is a regular agenda item.
* Teachers should take care in how pupil absences are recorded and should ensure that the reasons for pupils’ absences are followed up with parents or carers within 5 days.
* Where information regarding an absence is not received teachers will send home the Absence Notification Form for parents to complete and return to school providing a clear reason for any absence.
* Appendix Two: Absence Notification Form

**Role of Parents/Guardians**

**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. 1 Article 45(1) of The Education and Libraries (NI) Order 1986
* have a legal duty if a child is registered in school, to ensure that they regularly attend that school.
* are responsible for informing the school of the reason for a pupil’s absence on the first day of absence. This can be done by phoning the school secretary or class teacher or via Seesaw. A message via the bus escort is not acceptable. The date and reason for the absence should be confirmed with a written note when the pupil returns to school. This information is required as part of the SIMS recording system in school used by the school to record attendance.
* who don’t report reasons for absence will receive the Absence Notification Form to complete and return to school providing a clear reason for any absence.
* were the absence is likely to be prolonged, this information should be provided to enable the school to assist with any other necessary arrangements which may be required.
* should ensure that their child is punctual. Lateness is recorded at registration and on your child’s attendance record. 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.

**Reporting medical appointments/respite dates etc.**

The teacher must be notified of all appointments and respite dates at the earliest opportunity by phone, email or in writing.

**Role of Pupils**

**Pupils**

* Each pupil at Sperrinview Special School must attend school punctually and regularly. If you have been absent from school, a written note from a parent/guardian must be provided to your teacher when you return.
* Pupils are expected to be in school at 9.10 for registration and the beginning of classes.

**Roles and Responsibilities of Office Staff**

Office staff have an important role to play in monitoring attendance in school. The following are some of the roles they may undertake:

* Operating SIMS
* Taking phone messages from parents when pupils are absent
* Send text messages/make phone calls when pupils are absent and no contact has been made with the school
* Supporting teachers in maintaining the register
* Collating registration data
* Identifying pupils with irregular attendance patterns (in liaison with teachers)

**Absences/Family holidays during Term Time**

Sperrinview Special Schooldiscourages 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 for Managing Non-attendance**

* Have informal telephone calls and/or meetings with parents to discuss the reasons for a pupil’s non- attendance – school absence letters could be issued when levels of absence become a ‘Cause for Concern’.
* Provide attendance information to pupils and their parents at Annual Reviews, with End of Year Reports or on request.
* Remind parents/carers of the potential sanctions for failure to meet their responsibilities (e.g. Applications to the Family Proceedings Court for an Education Supervision Order – Children (NI) Order 1995 and/or Parental prosecutions – Education and Libraries (NI) 1986, Article 45, Schedule 13).
* Remind parents/carers to ensure their child only misses school for reasons which are unavoidable or justified, such as illness or days of religious observance.
* Stress to parents/carers the importance of continuity of learning and encourage them not to book holidays during term time.
* Remind parents/carers to always notify the school as soon as possible – preferably on the first morning – of any absence. Explain links between poor attendance and reduced attainment to parents/carers. The leaflet entitled School Attendance Matters: A Parent’s Guide, is a useful resource

(the link to this can be found on the school website)http://www.deni.gov.uk/a\_parents\_guide\_individual\_pages.pdf

* Encourage parents/carers to be aware of letters from school which their child brings home and to take an active interest in their child’s education.
* Encourage parents/carers to talk to the school if they are concerned that their child may be reluctant to attend.
* Provide information about a range of support services that parents/carers can access, such as transition support from primary to post primary, programmes for parents or home-school liaison.
* Identify pupils who may become persistent absentees and put in place individual action plans to address the issue. This could include: individual curriculum (alternative/flexible provision for disaffected pupils); vocational options included in the curriculum recognising likely career pathways of students; pupil mentoring/buddy system or additional study support.

**Retention of Records**

All schools must continue to hold copies of pupil attendance records and pupil registration records for not less than ten years from the date on which the register ceased to be used. This can be in the form of a printed version of the data held on the system or alternatively the documentation can be retained electronically. Paper copies of such information may be required for purposes of verification, for example audit of pupil numbers.

**Education Welfare Service**

The Education Authority (EA) 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.

**Monitoring and Review**

A sub-committee of the Board of Governors will monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of this policy as part of a timetabled, on-going process.

Signature: (Chair, Board of Governors)

Date :

Appendix A: Absence Codes Guidance

Appendix B: Absence Notification Form