

St Mary's High School, Newry

Ref No: 523-0108

A combination of an attendance coordinator appointment, positive relationships with parents enhanced by the education welfare officer and a comprehensive policy, rigorously implemented.

Context:

St Mary's High School is a girls' non-selective maintained school. The current enrolment has a free school meal entitlement of 48%. Nine percent of the enrolment comprises newcomers and 39% of pupils live in Neighbourhood Renewal Areas.

Intervention:

- The school recognises the importance of attendance in ensuring pupil attainment, engagement and enjoyment of learning and adopts a consistent, whole school approach to attendance.
- Attendance is a key priority on the school development plan with annual targets set above the NI average.
- An attendance coordinator was appointed in 2009 to establish effective attendance policies and procedures which ensure whole school attendance remains above the NI average.
- In February 2010, the school adopted the whole school policy of 'Every Day Counts' and has been fully embraced, understood and appreciated by parents and pupils.
- Form Teachers record pupil lateness and absence on 'Every Day Counts' charts which are displayed in Form Rooms and pupils record their monthly attendance in their diaries.
- The introduction of SIMS Lesson Monitor has reduced the degree of lateness to lessons.
- Truancy Call is an automated system used to contact parents to inform them of their daughter's absence if they have not informed the school by the morning.
- Attendance data is shared monthly with the pastoral leaders which helps to identify pupils with poor attendance and enables early intervention.
- Pupils whose attendance falls below 90% are invited to a meeting with the Attendance Officer and the Education Welfare Officer (EWO); a positive relationship with the EWO strengthens home school links and leads to improvement.
- Effective Education Maintenance Allowance arrangements promote good attendance and ensure reasons are always given for any absence post-16.

- “Partnership xChange” has been established to ensure sharing of relevant pastoral information including attendance between schools involved in post 16 collaborations in the area learning community.
- Good attendance is rewarded and celebrated through monthly awards ceremonies at assemblies and photographs are shared on the School Facebook, Twitter and Website.

Impact:

Sustaining very good whole school average attendance consistently above the NI average can be attributed to pupils and parents taking ownership of their attendance.

	2009/2010	2010/2011	2011/2012	2012/2013	2013/2014	2014/2015
Yr 8 intake	92	81	93	80	88	93
Enrolment	570	545	562	554	553	554
% attendance (NI %)	91.8% (91%)	93.0% (92%)	93.2% (92.6%)	93.6% (91.3%)	94% (92%)	93.8%