



Attendance Policy

Introduction

By law, every child must attend school regularly up to sixteen years of age or complete at least three years post primary, whichever comes later. The legislative requirements are set out in the Education Welfare Act 2000 and the Education Act 1998.

It is mandatory for the school to report all absences in excess of 20 days to the Child and Family Agency (TUSLA).

This policy was put in place to try to ensure that this law is upheld.

Other factors contributing to this policy are:

The role of the National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB) assumed into the Child and Family Agency or TUSLA and Department of Education Circular 33/2015.

Further aims of this Attendance Policy are to:

- Encourage pupils to attend school regularly and punctually, encouraging full attendance where possible
- Share the promotion of school attendance amongst all in the school community.
- Inform the school community and raise awareness of its role and responsibility as outlined in the Act.
- Identify pupils who may be at risk of developing school attendance problems.
- Ensure that the school has procedures in place to promote attendance/participation.
- Develop, subject to available resources, links between the school and the families of children who may be at risk of developing attendance problems.
- Identify and remove, insofar as is practicable, obstacles to school attendance.

The school will ensure that:

- The importance of school attendance is promoted throughout the school.
- Pupils are registered accurately and efficiently.
- Pupil attendance is recorded daily.
- Parents or guardians are contacted when reasons for absences are unknown or have not been communicated.
- Pupil attendance and lateness is monitored and recorded.
- School attendance statistics are reported as appropriate to:
 - The Child and Family Agency - TUSLA
 - The Education Welfare Officer
 - The Board of Management

Compliance with School Ethos

In Scoil Naísiúnta Mhuire, Rathpeacon we want every pupil to actively participate in all school activities. Regular attendance helps to create a stable learning environment for all pupils, and the school hopes to promote co-operation among pupils, parents/guardians and staff in maintaining a high level of regular attendance and punctuality throughout the school year.

General Information Regarding Attendance

- The school attendance/absence of individual pupils is recorded on a daily basis on the school data management system, 'Aladdin'. Class attendance data is recorded daily in electronic format on Aladdin. The annual attendance/absence of each individual pupil is recorded in electronic format also.
- Non-attenders must provide a written note from their parent/guardian with reason for absence outlined. The school keeps a record of all absences using the following codes as set down by the NEWB
 - A Illness
 - B Urgent Family Reasons (e.g. bereavement)
 - C Expelled
 - D Suspended
 - E Other (e.g. holidays, religious observance, emigration)
 - F Unexplained
 - G Transfer to another school (written confirmation received from other school)
- Attendance is monitored by the Principal and if a child is absent for long periods of time without explanation, parents are contacted by the Principal/Deputy Principal.
- The school calendar is published before the end of each school year for the following school year. It is hoped that parents will use this to plan holidays. Parents are discouraged from taking children out of school for holidays during school time.
- Teachers will not be required to supply schoolwork and/or homework to pupil who are absent on holidays during school time.
- Parents will receive an automatic reminder text from the school when 10, 15 and 20 days' absence have been recorded.
- Absences of 20 days or more are submitted automatically to TUSLA at the end of each quarter. These procedures apply to all pupils regardless of reason for absence.
- The school will support parents in helping their child improve their attendance where necessary. However, if the school feels there are ongoing concerns regarding a pupil's absence, despite the school's best efforts to support the family, the school may deem it necessary to make a referral to TUSLA. Parents will be made aware of this referral during the support process.

Punctuality

- We ask parent to value every minute that their child spends at school. Supervision begins at 9.00 a.m. Pupils are required to be assembled in their class line not later than 9.10 a.m. All pupils and teachers are expected to be on time. Lateness causes a disturbance to the class and is also time missed from the teaching and learning environment.
- Class teachers also monitor punctuality on the Aladdin Electronic Data System. Lateness is usually not the child's fault but if a pattern develops he/she will receive a verbal reminder.
- The school will contact parents/guardians in the event of pupils being consistently late.
- The Principal is obliged under the Education Welfare Act, to report children who are persistently late, to the Education Welfare Board.

Early Collection of Pupils.

- The school day is 9.10 a.m.-1.50 p.m. in Infant Classes and 9.10a.m.- 2.50 p.m. from 1st - 6th Class. Pupils should be at school for the full school day.
- Pupils should not be collected early from school outside of these times except in exceptional circumstances. A note of explanation/appointment card should be provided to the school in advance.
- Collecting older siblings when collecting infant pupils or collecting children early to avoid the rush/traffic at home time is not acceptable under our Attendance Policy.
- Children who are collected before the end of the school day must be signed out by a parent/guardian/carer at the school office. The school keeps this record on file.

Family Holidays.

- As previously stated, parents are advised to avoid planning family holidays during school time.
- The school calendar is published before the end of each school year for the following school year. It is hoped that parents will use this to plan holidays. Parents are discouraged from taking children out of school for holidays during school time
- Teachers will not be required to supply schoolwork and/or homework to pupil who are absent on holidays during school time.

Note: Section [(21) (9)] of the Act states that: “a pupil’s absence can only be authorised by the Principal when the child is involved in activities organised by the school or in which the school is involved”. In other words, the school principal cannot authorise a child’s absence for holidays during school time. However, it is essential that parents inform the school in writing of such arrangements.

Procedures for Parents/Guardians re. Explanation of Absences.

- All absences from school must be explained in writing to the Class Teacher/Principal when the child returns to school.
- Children in 1st - 6th Class have a section for explanation of absences at the back of their Homework Journal. Parents of children in Infant Classes will have an 'Absence Booklet' to fill in on the child's return to school.
- The absence notes in the children's journals/absence booklets must state the child's name, the dates of absence and the reason for the absence.
- A phone call to the school office explaining the child's absence, while welcome, is not sufficient. All absences must be explained in writing.
- The school will contact parents when a written explanation for the child's absence is not received by the school.
- For significant absences (greater than ten school days) due to illness the school requires a doctor's certificate.
- All absence notes will form a record which may be inspected by the Education Welfare Officer on a visit to the school.
- When a child has reached in excess of 20 days absence the parent will be informed by way of a letter from the school Principal. It is mandatory for the school to report all absences in excess of 20 days to the Child and Family Agency, TUSLA, in quarterly returns.
- Where the school is concerned about excessive unexplained/not credible absences, the NEWB will be informed of its concern outside of quarterly return dates.

Strategies to Promote School Attendance

1. School Practices to Promote Attendance

- The Attendance Policy is published on the school website.
- Extracts from the Attendance Policy are published each year on the school calendar and also in the school journal.
- School attendance and punctuality is addressed at the Parents' Association AGM and at Information Evenings for new parents.
- The school curriculum, insofar as is practicable, is flexible and relevant to the needs of the individual child.
- The school promotes development of good self-concept and self-worth in the children.
- The school provides support for pupils who have special educational needs in accordance with Department of Education and Skills guidelines.
- The school avails of the assistance of the Education Welfare Officer.
- The attendance rates of pupils are recorded and monitored by the class teacher in the first instance. The class teacher notifies the Principal of any concerns regarding the attendance of any child. The Aladdin Data System also alerts the Principal and parents when a child has reached 10, 15 and 20 days absence.
- Pupils with a poor attendance record will, insofar as is practicable, are supported in an effort to improve their attendance.

2. Parents/guardians can promote good school attendance by:

- Ensuring regular and punctual school attendance.
- Notifying the school if their children cannot attend for any reason.
- Working with the school and education welfare service to resolve any attendance problems;
- Making sure their children understand that parents support approve of school attendance;
- Discussing planned absences with the school.
- Refraining, if at all possible, from taking holidays during school time
- Showing an interest in their children's school day and their children's homework.
- Encouraging them to participate in school activities.
- Praising and encouraging their children's achievements.
- Instilling in their children, a positive self-concept and a positive sense of self-worth.
- Informing the school in writing of the reasons for absence from school.
- Ensuring, insofar as is possible, that children's appointments (with dentists etc.), are arranged for times outside of school hours.
- Contacting the school immediately, if they have concerns about absence or other related school matters.
- Notifying, in writing, the school if their child/children, particularly children in junior classes, are to be collected by someone not known to the teacher.

3. Pupils:

- Should inform staff if there is a problem that may lead to their absence.
- Are responsible for promptly passing on absence notes from parents to their class teacher.
- Are responsible for passing school correspondence to their parents, on the specified day.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Principal is responsible for:

- Ensuring that the school register of pupils is maintained in accordance with regulations.
- Informing the Education Welfare Officer:

- If a pupil is not attending school regularly.
- When a pupil has been absent for 20 or more days during the course of a school year.
- If a pupil has been suspended for a period of six or more days.
- When a pupil's name is removed from the school register.
- Informing parents of a decision to contact the Education Welfare Officer of concerns regarding a pupil.
- Insofar as is practicable, promoting the importance of good school attendance among pupils, parents and staff

The Class Teacher is responsible for:

- Maintaining the school roll-book in accordance with procedure.
- Keeping a record of explained and unexplained absences.
- Contacting parents in instances where absences are not explained in writing.
- Encouraging pupils to attend regularly and punctually.
- Inform the Principal of concerns s/he may have regarding the attendance of any pupil.

Record Keeping/Communication

Subject to the restrictions of the Data Protection Act, attendance, behaviour and academic records of children who transfer to another primary school will be passed on written request to the Principal of the new school, by post, as soon as written notification is received of the transfer.

Attendance, behaviour and academic records of children who transfer from another primary school to our school will be sought directly from their previous school.

Attendance, behaviour and academic records of pupils transferring to a second level school will be sent to the school, when requested, once enrolment has been confirmed.

References:

Don't Let Your Child Miss Out - NEWB 2004

Education Welfare Act 2000

Education Act 1998

Section 29 Education Act

This Attendance Policy will be reviewed after there has been a material change in any matter to which this document refers.

This Attendance Policy was reviewed and adopted by the Board of Management on 19th of February 2018.

Signed: _____
Chairperson of Board of Management

Signed: _____
Principal/Secretary to the Board of Management

Date: _____

Date: _____