

Scoil Éanna, Ballybay

Attendance and Punctuality Policy

Introductory Statement

The staff and Board of Management of Scoil Éanna, taking into consideration some of the latest developments with regard to attendance and punctuality, decided to review and amend our policy. An initial draft was prepared by a representative group and circulated to all staff, members of the parent community and the Board of Management. All opinions and comments were taken into consideration prior to its final ratification at the Board of Management meeting on 10th November 2015.

Rationale

The school recognises that when a child is absent or late for school, they miss out on both educational and social needs. It is also difficult for children, who are frequently absent, to maintain relationships and to attain their potential in their education.

The main factors contributing to the formulation of a revised policy can be summarised as follows:

- To promote and encourage regular attendance as an essential factor in our children's learning.
- Legislative requirements including the Education Welfare Act 2000, the Education Act, 1998 and subsequent circulars including the provision to record attendances electronically.
- The role of TUSLA and the publication of their document "Developing the Statement of Strategy for School Attendance (2016)"

Aims

The aims of this policy are to:

- Ensure compliance with the requirements of the relevant legislation.
- Promote positive learning environments.
- Encourage children to attend school regularly and punctually.
- Share the promotion of school attendance amongst all in the school community.
- Inform the school community of its role and responsibility as outlined in the Education Welfare Act 2000.
- Identify children who may be at risk of developing school attendance problems.
- Ensure that the school has procedures in place to promote attendance and 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.
- Promote positive attitudes to and an appreciation of learning.
- Ensure that the system of rules, rewards, and sanctions are implemented in a fair and consistent manner, thus encouraging children to attend school.

Implementation of Policy

All staff have an input into the implementation of the policy. Class teachers record individual patterns of attendance and the school secretary makes returns to TUSLA.

It is the responsibility of the Principal and staff to implement this policy under the guidance of the school's Board of Management.

The school staff will ensure that:

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

Punctuality

School is open from 9.15 a.m. and children are required to be in their classrooms not later than 9.25a.m. All children and teachers are expected to be on time. The school will contact parents/guardians in the event of children being consistently late. The Principal is obliged under the Education Welfare Act, to report children who are persistently late to TUSLA.

Recording and Reporting Attendance

The school uses an electronic package, Aladdin, to assist with day to day administration. Individual child information obtained from the enrolment form is recorded on Aladdin. The attendance of individual children is recorded on the electronic roll book of each class on a daily basis. As a consequence, daily, termly and annual attendance reports for individual children and for classes can be generated as and when required.

If a child does not attend on a day when the school is open for instruction, his/her non-attendance will be recorded by the class teacher. The roll call is taken at 10.35a.m. each morning. Any child not present will be marked absent for the day. Teachers may also use the facility on Aladdin to record late arrivals.

When a child is absent, it is the parent/guardian's responsibility to write a note to explain the absence. It is not sufficient to telephone or text the school, but where a child is going to be absent for a number of days, either would be an acceptable method of informing the school **prior to providing a written note** upon the child's return. *A note from parents/guardians is required to explain each absence.* Such notes will be retained by the class teacher for the remainder of the school year. On occasions where school staff have concerns regarding child attendance, these notes may be retained for a longer term which may be determined by the Board of Management from time to time.

Parents/guardians must also inform the school if a child needs to depart early during the school day. The parent collecting the child is required to complete the necessary information in the "sign out" book which is retained in the secretary's office.

Although planned holidays and other absences are strongly discouraged, a note **must** be sent in to explain the absence from school. **The teacher will not provide schoolwork (or homework – which is a consolidation of schoolwork) for children for any planned absences.**

Parents/guardians are made aware of the requirements of TUSLA particularly the by-law relating to absences of more than 20 days per school year. They are notified by automatic text from the Aladdin system when their child has missed 15 days and again when they

have missed 20 days. They are notified in writing on the end of year report of the total number of absences during the school year. Parents, of children whose attendance is a concern, are invited to meet with the class teacher and the Principal and are informed of the school's concerns.

The school must inform the Education Welfare Officer in writing, where a child has missed 20 or more days in a school year, where attendance is irregular, where a child is removed from the school register and where a child is suspended or expelled for 6 days or more.

What to do if you know your child will be late

If the child is going to be late for school, a phone call before 9:30am, outlining the reason and the approximate time of arrival, will be accepted and the child will not be marked absent in the roll book at roll call time. However, the child may still be marked absent if they do not arrive in class at the time outlined by the parent in their communication to the school.

If a child has a morning appointment, e.g. doctor, dentist, etc., it is acceptable to write a note in advance to tell the teacher of the appointment. A certificate/appointment confirmation may be requested.

Whole School Strategies to Promote Attendance

At Scoil Éanna we endeavour to create a safe, welcoming environment for our children and their families. Parents/guardians are consulted in drafting and reviewing policies with the aim of promoting a high-level of co-operation among the school community. The teaching staff collaborates in the planning and implementation of the primary school curriculum, so as to provide a stimulating learning environment for all children.

Traditionally, school attendance is strong in our school. However, the staff remains vigilant so that 'risk' children are identified early. Risk children can be categorised as those who miss more than 5 days in a 20-day period without a medical or other significant explanation. Appropriate contact takes place between the school and parents/guardians either via a phone call, a letter or a note in the homework diary when this occurs. A meeting between parents and the Principal may be set up if deemed necessary. Absences of more than 20 days are automatically referred to TUSLA.

There is a focus on the value of regular attendance and on the importance of developing good attendance habits from Junior Infants onwards.

The calendar for the coming school year is published annually in June and a reminder is published in September. It is hoped that this approach will enable parents/guardians to plan family events around school closures, thus minimising the chances of non-attendance related to family holidays during the school term.

The school awards certificates to children who have full attendance during the school year at an end of year awards ceremony. Certificates are also available to children who improve their attendance over a short period of time, and to children who improve their overall attendance.

Transfer to Another School

Under Section 20 of the Education (Welfare) Act (2000), schools must communicate with each other when students transfer from one school to another. Therefore, attendance,

behaviour and academic records of children who transfer to another primary school will be passed to the Principal of the school, by post, as soon as we receive written notification of transfer.

Similarly attendance, behaviour and academic records of children who transfer from another primary school will be sought directly from the previous school. Attendance, behaviour and academic records of children transferring to a second level school will be sent to the school, if requested, once enrolment has been confirmed.

Guidance for Parents

Section [(21) (9)] of the Act states that: “a child’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”. The school principal cannot authorise a child’s absence for holidays during school time. However, it is essential that parents inform the school of such arrangements.

- Parents are informed at enrolment and again annually at the beginning of the school year of the Education Welfare Act and its implications.
- Parents are required to explain their children’s absences in writing. The note will be retained by the school and will form a record which may be inspected by the Education Welfare Officer on a visit to the school. The space provided at back of homework journal may be used for these notes, or they may be written (for children in Infants stating child’s name, dates of absence and reason for absence) on a separate sheet of paper.
- Attendance is recorded on Aladdin each morning and absences noted.
- Aladdin also collates all absences of children (termly and annual reports may be generated).
- When a child is absent for a period of fifteen days on aggregate, a text is sent to the child’s parents reminding them of the ‘Twenty Days Absence Rule’.
- When a child has missed twenty days the Educational Welfare Board will be informed.
- The attendance of each child will be recorded and written into the child’s end of year report at the end of each academic year.
- At the end of the school year a Certificate will be awarded, at a special presentation, to all children with full attendance and to those who have significantly improved attendance.

Roles and Responsibilities

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 and 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.

Pupils

- Children have the clear responsibility to attend school regularly and punctually.
- Children should inform staff if there is a problem that may lead to their absence.
- Children are responsible for promptly passing on absence notes from parents to their class teacher.
- Children are responsible for passing school correspondence to their parents, on the specified day.

Board of Management

The Board of Management is committed to providing a positive school atmosphere which is conducive to promoting good school attendance. In this regard:

- The school curriculum, insofar as is practicable, is flexible and relevant to the needs of the individual child.
- The school will promote development of good self-concept and self-worth in the children.
- Supports for children, who have special educational needs, are in place in accordance with Department of Education & Skills resources and guidelines.
- Internal communication procedures are in place to inform teachers of the special needs of children.
- The assistance of the Education Welfare Officer will be utilised.
- The attendance rates of children will be monitored by the class teacher in the first instance, and the class teacher will notify the Principal of any concerns regarding the attendance of any child.
- Children with a poor attendance record will, insofar as is practicable, be supported in an effort to improve their attendance.
- A presentation is made at end of each school year and awards are presented to children with exemplary attendance or who have significantly improved their attendance.

School Principal

The School Principal will:

- Ensure that the school register of children is maintained in accordance with regulations.
- Inform the Education Welfare Officer:
 - If a child is not attending school regularly.
 - When a child has been absent for 20 or more days during the course of a school year.
 - If a child has been suspended for a period of six or more days.
 - When a child's name is removed from the school register.
- Inform parents of a decision to contact the Education Welfare Officer of concerns regarding a child.

- Insofar as is practicable, promote the importance of good school attendance among children, parents and staff.
- Hold a presentation at end of school year to reward children who have not missed a day from school or who have made a notable effort to improve attendance and punctuality.

Class Teacher

The class teacher will:

- Maintain the school roll-book, on Aladdin, in accordance with procedure.
- Keep a record of explained and unexplained absences.
- Contact parents in instances where absences are not explained in writing.
- Encourage children to attend regularly and punctually.
- Inform the Principal of concerns s/he may have regarding the attendance of any child.

Ratification

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on 10th November 2015

Signed Chairperson, BOM

Date

Review

The Board of Management will review this policy in three years' time or sooner should any developments warrant it.