



# Scoil Éanna Attendance & Punctuality Policy

## Introduction

Improving student's attendance in our school prompted the updating and review of the school's attendance & punctuality policy. The drafting was a collaborative school process involving staff and the Board of Management, Parents and Students.

## Rationale

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

- To promote and encourage regular attendance and punctuality as an essential factor in our pupils' learning
- Legislative requirements such as the Education Welfare Act 2000 and the Education Act, 1998
- DES requirements for recording & reporting on school attendance – Circular 33/2015
- The role of the NEWB (National Education Welfare Board)
- Levels of disadvantage
- National School Attendance Campaign and support grant 2023/24
- Changing attitudes to education.

## Aims and Objectives

The Attendance policy is geared towards:

- Ensuring that pupils are registered accurately and efficiently
- Ensuring that pupil attendance is recorded daily
- Promote and support regular attendance where possible
- Identifying pupils at risk
- Promoting a positive learning environment
- Enabling learning opportunities to be availed of
- Raising awareness of the importance of school attendance
- Fostering an appreciation of learning
- Identifying pupils at risk of leaving school early
- Ensuring compliance with the requirements of the relevant legislation
- Developing, subject to available resources, links between the school and the families of children who may be at risk of developing attendance problems
- Use targeted interventions designed to bring about improvements in attendance levels
- Identifying and removing, insofar as is practicable, obstacles to school attendance.

## Compliance with School Ethos

This policy is centrally linked to the school ethos and culture of nurturing in a caring environment where the welfare of children is paramount.



## **Roles and Responsibilities**

All staff have an input into the implementation of the policy. Class teachers record individual patterns of attendance (via Aladdin) and the school makes returns to the NEWB. A member of the Senior Management Team communicates absences and concerns to the NEWB through the TUSLA Portal.

The Principal and staff in consultation with parents and the Board of Management are responsible for the implementation of this policy.

## **Punctuality**

School begins at 9:00 am. All pupils and teachers are expected to be on time. 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.

## **Recording and Reporting Attendance**

The school attendance of individual pupils is recorded on the school's data base system (Aladdin) on a daily basis. Class attendance data is recorded daily through Aladdin. If a pupil does not attend on a day when the school is open for instruction, their non-attendance will be recorded by the class teacher. The roll call is taken from after 9:20am each morning and must be taken before 11 am each morning. A note from parents/guardians is required to explain each absence, we recommend that parents use the Aladdin App to explain absences, or alternatively provide the teachers with an explanation in the homework journal or a telephone call to the office. Such notifications will be kept in the student's individual profile on Aladdin. Late arrivals will be recorded on Aladdin. Parents/guardians must inform the school if their child is departing early. The parent/guardian can collect the pupil from the school office where they will be signed out by the secretary/principal.

Parents/guardians are made aware of the requirements of the NEWB particularly the by-law relating to absences of more than 20 days per school year. They are notified in writing on the end of year report of the total number of absences during the school year.

Monthly attendance is reported to Board of Management at every meeting in the principal report.

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

## **Promoting Attendance**

The school promotes good attendance by:

- creating a safe place for pupils
- fostering a positive school culture and welcoming environment
- displaying kindness, compassion and understanding
- being vigilant so that risks to good attendance such as disadvantage, bullying etc. are identified early
- the quality of the links between home and school.
- the quality of relationships between children and young people and their peers and between children and young people and school staff.



- the extent to which children and young people find classroom experiences engaging, interesting and relevant.
- the extent to which children and young people experience success in their learning.
- the extent to which children and young people experience high-quality and inclusive teaching and learning.

### **National Education Welfare Board**

The Education Welfare Officer is informed if:

- A child is expelled
- A child is suspended
- A child has missed more than 20 days
- A child is on a reduced day

The NEWB is furnished with the total attendances in the school year through the Annual Report Form which is completed on-line.

### **Whole School Strategies to Promote Attendance**

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 pupils.

Scoil Éanna endeavours to create a safe, welcoming environment for our pupils and their parents/guardians. We provide an early morning snack and a warm, school meal for all pupils and better concentration levels are reported by teachers and staff following the warm meal daily. We promote the importance of good attendance and punctuality via the parent newsletter.

Traditionally, school attendance is strong in our school. However, the staff remains vigilant so that 'risk' students are identified early. Risk students can be categorised as those who miss more than 3 days consecutively without an accompanying note of explanation from parents/guardians. Appropriate contact takes place between the school and parents/guardians by telephone when this occurs. Absences of more than 20 days are automatically referred to the Education Welfare Officer. Teachers continually monitor punctuality and will contact parents/guardians following 6+ late arrivals.

New students and their parents/guardians are invited to engage in an induction process, through which the school's policies and procedures in relation to attendance are made available. 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 communicated to the school community in June and published annually on the school website. 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 question of equality of access is addressed through the school's admission policy.



## Strategies in the Event of Non-Attendance

Section 17 of the Education (Welfare) Act (2000), states that 'the parent of a child shall cause the child concerned to attend a recognised school on each school day'.

Section 21 of the Act obliges schools to inform the National Education Welfare Officer if a child is absent on more than 20 days in any school year, or if a child does not attend school on a regular basis.

In such cases the Education Welfare Officer (following all reasonable efforts by the National Education Board to consult with the child's parents and the Principal of the school) may serve a 'School Attendance Notice' on any parent who they conclude is failing or neglecting to cause the child to attend the school. A successful case taken against the parent may result in a fine and/or imprisonment.

Reasons for absence are recorded and reported to the NEWB during the bi annual reporting times during the school year through the online school system. An annual report is submitted – not more than three months following the end of the school year - detailing the overall level of attendance at the school during that school year.

## Transfer to Another School

Under Section 20 of the Education (Welfare) Act (2000), the Principal of a child's current school must notify the Principal of the child's previous school that the child is now registered in their school.

When a Principal receives notification that a child has been registered elsewhere they must notify the Principal of the pupil's new school of any problems in relation to attendance at the pupil's former school and of such matters relating to the child's educational progress as he or she considers appropriate. This applies to pupils who transfer between primary schools and to pupils who transfer from primary to second-level education.

## Communication

The school has developed a good relationship with the local Education Welfare Board (NEWB) personnel and there is ongoing communication in relation to children who are at risk.

The school maintains communication with local pre-schools in order to make the transition for pupils as easy as possible and the school also communicates with local post-primary schools to assist with the transition to post-primary.

## Communication with other Schools

- When a child transfers from *Scoil Éanna* to another school, the schools' records on attendance, academic progress etc will be forwarded on receipt of written notification of the transfer and consent from parents/guardians.
- When a child transfers into *Scoil Éanna* confirmation of transfer will be communicated to the child's previous school, and appropriate records sought.
- Pupils transferring from *Scoil Éanna* to a post primary school will have their records (Education Passport) forwarded on receipt of confirmation of enrolment or via request



## Communication with Parents

The school informs all parents of the implications of non-attendance as per the *Education Welfare Act 2000*. This information is disseminated by regular school circulars. Parents of new pupils are informed on enrolment.

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 the NEWB to resolve any attendance problems;
- making sure their children understand that parents support good 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
- 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.

## Evaluation

The success of any Attendance Policy is measured through:

- Improved attendance levels as measured through attendance records and statistical returns
- Increased parent awareness of their legal obligations under Education Welfare Act 2000
- Good practice and procedures in relation to electronic recording
- pupils better informed on the importance of good school attendance
- Happy confident well-adjusted pupils
- Positive parental feedback
- Teacher vigilance.

## Communication of Policy

This policy will be communicated to all school staff and added to the school shared drive. A copy of the policy will be published on the school website and the policy will be available in the principal's office should anyone request to view it.



## Implementation/Ratification and Review

This policy will be implemented with immediate effect following ratification. It will be reviewed every three years or as is necessary.

### References:

*Don't let your Child Miss Out* - NEWB 2004

Education Welfare Act 2000

Education Act 1998

Section 29 Education Act

Guidelines to National School Attendance Campaign 2023/2024

Signed:

Signed:

*Fiona Mc Gath*

Chairperson of Board of Management

*Diane Murphy*

Principal

Date: 05/12/23