



School Attendance Policy

Introduction:

The law in Ireland states that all children are required to attend school every day. It is the responsibility of every parent or guardian to make sure that their son or daughter attends school every day. There is a very strong tradition of good attendance in Scoil Bheinín Naofa Cailíní, Damhliag; this policy document was drawn up to ensure and maintain a high level of attendance at school by all pupils. Establishing good attendance habits from the very beginning of a child's time at school is very important.

Aims:

- To comply with requirements under Education Welfare Act 2000
- Raising awareness of the importance of school attendance
- Ensuring that pupils are registered accurately and efficiently
- Ensuring that pupils' attendance is recorded daily, encouraging full attendance where possible
- Identifying pupils at risk of poor attendance
- Enabling all pupils to avail fully of learning opportunities
- Developing, subject to available resources, links between the school and the families of children who may be at risk of developing attendance problems
- Identifying and removing, insofar as is practicable, obstacles to school attendance.

School's Role:

The Education Welfare Act 2000

Under the terms of the Education Welfare Act 2000 (amended by the Child and Family Agency Act 2013) schools are obliged to:

- Maintain a record of students attending school



- Record school attendance and notify the relevant Educational Welfare Officer of particular problems relating to attendance
- Support students with difficulties in attending school on a regular basis
- Prepare and implement a school attendance strategy to encourage, in a positive way, regular school attendance and an appreciation of learning within the school
- Prepare and implement a code of behaviour, setting standards of behaviour and disciplinary procedures for the school.
- Liaise with other schools and relevant bodies on school attendance issues
- The Annual Attendance Report is submitted at the end of each academic year and provides information on levels of attendance. Schools are required to provide the following data in the AAR:
 - Total number of days lost through student absence in the entire school year.
 - Total number of students who were absent for 20 days or more during the school year.
 - Total number of students expelled in respect of whom all appeal processes have been exhausted or not availed of during the school year.
 - Total number of students who were suspended for any number of days during the school year.
- Transfer to Another School / Communication with Other Schools Under Section 20 of the Education (Welfare) Act (2000),



Logging Absenteeism:

- The Aladdin Software System has been purchased by the school and is being used as a tool to help monitor each child's attendance.
- Class teachers are required to call and mark the DES Electronic Roll Book (Aladdin system) on a daily basis - An electronic copy of the Leabhar Tinrimh (Attendance Book) is maintained on the Aladdin system.
- The rolla is taken each morning at 10.10am. Any pupil not present at this time will be marked absent for the day.
- The category of absence is identified by the class teacher on Aladdin
- When a child returns to school with a letter explaining their absenteeism, the class teacher will make a note of this on Aladdin
- An absence will be reported 'unexplained' when parents/ guardians fail to send in a letter of explanation of absence
- Written explanations of absenteeism/Medical cert's should be kept in the file in the class filing cabinet, given to special duties post teacher at the end of the year & stored in the principal's office
- All attendance is reported in the end of year school reports to parents
- The school secretary records the annual attendance of each individual pupil on the AAR, Tusla attendance returns website, information provided in enrolment forms(Pupil's Name, Date of Birth, Address, and Religion) is recorded on the Primary Online Database (POD)



Procedures for ongoing monitoring of attendance/Difficulty with punctuality or poor attendance:

- Each class teacher has a responsibility to monitor the attendance of the children in their care. Teachers should be aware of emerging patterns in relation to poor attendance.
- What to do when a child reaches 12 days absence:
 1. Where teachers see a pattern of poor attendance (12 days or more) emerging, they should bring this to the attention of parents by calling them and reminding them of their statutory duty as parent(s)/guardian(s) to ensure that their child is sent to school: poor attendance patterns are more easily changed if attention is drawn to them at an early stage.
 2. When a child has missed 12 days a letter is sent home to parents highlighting this and encouraging improvement. (A template of this letter is available in the secretary's office for the class teachers use)
 3. The class teacher in conjunction with the school will follow a series of progressive steps, as per EWS Pre-Referral Checklist, when they are concerned about a pupil's attendance (A PDF copy of the checklist is saved to the school server)
 4. The parents'/guardians' reasons for the child's poor attendance are noted in the TUSLA EWS Pre-Referral Checklist by the class teacher. The purpose of the checklist is to note the actions taken prior to referral to the EWS.
 5. It is school policy that when a child has been absent for 12 days the class teacher should bring the issue to the attention of the Principal / Special Duties teacher (Veronica Ní Chuinn)
 6. Class teacher completes a Log of Actions on pupils absent 12 days or more.
- Pre- Referral Checklist is as follows;
 - In-school discussion with pupil
 - Contact between school and parent/guardian to express concern e.g. phone call, letter, discuss at parents evening
 - Specific meeting in school with parent/guardian to identify problems and agree interventions
 - Concerns and agreements communicated in writing to parent/guardian



- Implementation of any appropriate in-school measures (e.g. change of class, 'contact person' in school, support in class etc.)
 - Use of appropriate interventions with pupil (e.g. attendance charts/ attendance report, incentives, rewards etc)
 - Other school interventions (e.g. care team, student support team etc. will vary depending on child)
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- If there is still no improvement the principal, special duties teacher for attendance along with the class teacher will have a further discussion.
 - The principal/special duties teacher (attendance) would formally meet the parent outlining that the Board of Management of the school will be informed about the poor attendance, and/or the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) will be contacted.
 - Ms. Ní Chuinn has, under the terms of her Special Duties Post, undertaken to monitor school attendance and policy development in this area. She will be available to support, advise and remind staff on an ongoing basis of how these procedures are being implemented.
 - Túsla will be contacted regarding any child who has missed 20 days or more.
 - The EWO, Principal & Special Duties Teacher will work together to support families of children with particularly poor attendance.
 - The Pre-Referral Checklists, Log of Actions, sick notes and cert's from parents to be stored in the classroom filing cabinet until year end, they will then be collected & stored in the principal's office.



A Parent's/Guardian's Role & how they can promote good attendance:

"A parent is obliged to cause a child between the ages of 6 and 16 to attend at 'a national school or other suitable school' on each day that the school is open for instruction." Education Welfare Act 2000

- A child is expected to attend each day.
- 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.
- Reasons for pupils' absences must be communicated in writing and or via the Aladdin Connect software programme online, by parent(s)/ guardian(s) to the school and will be retained by the school. To facilitate this, the school journal has pages where parent(s)/ guardian(s) may write reason(s) for absence(s) and Aladdin Connect software has a reason(s) for absence(s) section. These notes will form a record which may be inspected by the Education Welfare Officer on a visit to the school
- The category of absence is also identified by the class teacher on Aladdin
- If a child misses a half day a verbal and or written explanation is required either in the child's journal, note or on Aladdin Connect
- 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;
- Refraining from taking holidays during school time;
- Showing an interest in their child's school day and their child's homework;
- Encouraging their children to participate in school activities;
- Praising and encouraging their child's achievements;
- Encouraging parents to make appointments for dentist/ doctor etc outside school hours;
- Contacting the school immediately, if they have concerns about absence or other related school matters;



- Notifying the school, or the teacher, if their child (particularly in infant classes) is to be collected by someone not known to the teacher.

School Strategy to Promote Attendance:

- We promote attendance through ongoing praise to attendance.
- Class teacher will highlight good attendance in the classroom.
- Principal will highlight good attendance at assembly each month
- The class with the best and or most improved attendance will receive an award (trip to the playground, extra playtime etc)
- Specific incentives may be offered to particular children to encourage attendance.
- The calendar for each coming school year is published annually 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
- At the initial meeting of parents of any new pupils, the “Don’t Let Your Child Miss Out” leaflet will be distributed.
- The school may hold an information night re. attendance which the Education Welfare Officer speaks at.
- In the interest of health and safety of the children, parents are reminded that external doors are closed at 9.30 each morning.
- With older children we have discussions about improving time-keeping.



Procedures in relation to the Removal from Register/Transfer from another school:

The school is aware that *'A principal may only remove a pupil's name from a school register where they have been informed that the child has been enrolled in another school or when the Welfare Board notifies them that the child has been registered by it as in receipt of out-of-school education.'*

The Board of Management may in exceptional circumstances suspend a child.
(See Code of Behaviour)

Transfer to another school:

Where parents remove a child from a school the principal is obliged to give them and the new school a certificate stating child's record of attendance and absences in the school, the last class the child attended, and any other relevant information pertaining to the education of the child.

Transfer from another school:

When Scoil Bheinín Naofa Cailíní receives a new student, the principal will notify the principal of the child's last school attended that the child is now registered in our school "as soon as may be". When a principal receives notification that a child has been registered elsewhere he/she 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.



Removal of a Pupil during the School Day:

Aims:

- To highlight the importance of remaining in school for a full school day
- To ensure the safety of all pupils in our school by having all visitors and parents report to the school office
- To ensure the accountability of all pupils during any emergency evacuations
- To retain a record of pupils regularly leaving school early

Rationale:

Pupils are expected to remain in school for a full school day. Pupils should only be removed early from school in cases of emergency or unavoidable medical appointments.

Action:

1. *Unavoidable medical appointments / Withdrawing a sick child from school*

If a pupil needs to leave early for an unavoidable medical appointment, a letter should be sent in beforehand from his/her parents.

If a child is sick during the school day, the secretary will firstly ring the parent and if uncontactable, will ring the emergency contact number. Ensure all phone numbers are up to date.

When collecting the child, the parent should report to the school office and the child will be signed out in the Appointments Record Book. The parent can then wait in the foyer while the child is called via the intercom from the classroom.

On returning the child after the appointment, the return time will be recorded in the Appointments Record.



No child will be allowed to leave the school with any other adult other than his/her parent unless a letter has been received beforehand naming the person who is to collect the child.

2. Arriving late to school due to medical appointment or emergency

Our school day begins at 9.20am. If a child has a medical, dental or unavoidable morning appointment, a letter should be sent in beforehand from his/her parents. The school rolla is taken daily at 10.10 am. After this time a child is marked absent/late. All late arrivals are recorded in the Late Arrivals/Punctuality Record Book.

3. Emergencies

The parent should ring the school en-route and explain the situation. The secretary can then have the child collected from the class and ready to meet the parent. The child will be signed out in the Appointments Record Book.

No child will be allowed to leave the school with any other adult other than his/her parent unless the parent themselves has been in an accident. In such cases, the child will only be released to an immediate family member known to the Principal & staff, as named as the Emergency Contact person.



Punctuality:

School starts at 9.20am. For security reasons, all doors will be locked at 9.25am. The Rolla will be called at 10.10am. If a child arrives to school after 9.25am, they must be brought to the Office through the Reception Entrance. Pupils will be recorded in the Late Arrivals/ Punctuality Record Book.

If following school intervention & strategies punctuality does not improve, the principal will report the case to the Education Welfare Officer for further intervention and action.

A copy of the policy will be given to members of staff, Board of Management, and available to parents to view in the school and will be available on our website.

Ratified by Board of Management on 29th January 2020

The original policy was drawn up prior to June 2011

Next review: Jan. 2021 or as necessary