



Student Attendance Policy

Introductory Statement

This policy was drawn up in consultation with the staff, parents and the Board of Management of St. John the Apostle, Knocknacarra NS. St John the Apostle, Knocknacarra NS is a 16 classroom Primary School which caters for boys and girls from Junior Infants to Sixth Class.

Rationale

This policy was drawn up in order to establish a culture of optimal attendance for all students in this school, in order to ensure that every student has full access to education and an opportunity to achieve to the best of their ability.

Aims

This policy aims to

- ensure that each child attends school every day that they are well enough to do so
- help each child to experience the value of being a responsible participating member of the school community
- provide clarity with regard to expectations for optimal attendance of each student
- support the practical strategies to be employed within the school community to support high expectations of full attendance throughout the school, as outlined in our Attendance Strategy
- outline the role of each member of the school community in promoting good attendance
- reflect that this school acknowledges that low attendance rates may be linked to external factors.
- provide positive support including focussed Attendance Plans for those children who are more vulnerable to absenteeism
- outline procedures to be followed where a child's attendance levels are poor

Roles & Responsibilities

Every member of the school community has a role to play in promoting optimum attendance in our school. Emphasis is on supportive measures which involve all partners (BOM, Staff, Parents and Pupils) in the school community in understanding and supporting families and individual students.

Board of Management

The Board of Management will ensure that the entire school community is involved in the development, implementation and regular review of the school's Attendance Policy and Strategy for Attendance. The BOM will support the Principal, staff and parents in implementing this policy by providing opportunities for

- staff to deepen their understanding of the factors that affect good/poor attendance
- dialogue among staff, parents and students to promote attendance and follow up with ‘at risk’ students
- Exploring ways of helping parents to encourage greater attendance at school
- Finding ways of helping children to understand the importance of continuity in school attendance in order to achieve to the best of their ability.

The BOM and school community will ensure that systems are in place to acknowledge and reward good attendance, progress in attendance and efforts to improve attendance. Some children need more active intervention to encourage good attendance. The BoM will review its Attendance Strategy annually in order to ensure that every effort is made to monitor and promote attendance.

Principal

The Principal will

- Promote a positive climate in the school which focuses on affirming good attendance and sets expectations for high rates of attendance throughout the school
- Ensure that procedures for monitoring and encouraging full attendance are followed
- Communicate with parents where there is an ongoing concern regarding attendance/punctuality and /or evidence of patterns in absenteeism
- Assist in coordinating an Attendance plan for ‘at risk’ students setting targets for improvement and identifying strategies for home and school which will promote improved attendance.

Staff

All staff members have a role in praising and reinforcing good attendance. At the start of each school year, staff will establish and clearly communicate expectations for attendance with students and with parents at Curriculum Information Evenings, by explaining the connection between a child’s attendance and success in learning. Staff use strategies to motivate children, who are poor attendees, not to miss school. Staff are regularly reminded of their role in monitoring and recording attendance, noticing patterns or concerns, through discussion at Staff Meetings, regular discussions regarding attendance with the Assistant Principal the principal as part of her class visits.

Parents

Parents are required to inform the school of the reason for a child’s absence in writing/through the school’s Aladdin Connect App.

Parents are encouraged to

- Ensure that children attend school regularly and punctually
- Be interested in, support and encourage their children’s school work
- Communicate with the school in relation to any problems which may affect their child’s attendance
- Meet with the class teacher and principal where an Attendance Plan is required for their child and engage with the plan in order to improve attendance

Parents are reminded that the school starts at 8.40am and finishes for Infant classes at 1.20pm and First to Sixth classes at 2.20pm. Parents must ensure that children attend school for the full school day, unless there is a valid reason for late arrival or early leaving. A system is in place to log and monitor regular late arrival and early leaving, in order to gauge the amount of school time missed by a student.

Students

The Student Council gives pupils a representative body and a voice. It creates a positive partnership between principal, staff and students. Ideas which help promote good attendance are discussed and sought from the student council.

TUSLA Education Welfare Officer;

It is acknowledged that children who are poor attenders are at risk of failing, behaviourally, socially and educationally. Where a concern remains and there is no improvement following an Attendance Plan, the school will contact the Education Welfare Officer for advice and if advised will make a referral to TUSLA. Involvement with Social Workers and/or or Family Support workers may provide support in some individual cases.

The school is required under the obligations of the Education Welfare Act 2000 to record and report children's absences to TUSLA. The school is obliged to report to the NEWB when a student has accumulated 20 days of absence, in one school year..

Record Keeping

A vital component in monitoring attendance school-wide is the recording of daily attendance of each student and each class. The Class Teacher has responsibility for recording attendance for their class before 10am daily. The Assistant Principal with responsibility for monitoring attendance liaises with class teachers and parents where high rates of absenteeism are evident. Our Attendance Strategy outlines the procedures in place to follow up on poor attendance. Late arrivals are recorded by the school office, via the Aladdin system. Early leavers are recorded via a 'Sign-out' book for parents who collect children early.

The school submits a quarterly and annual report on Attendance to the TUSLA Education Welfare Officer.

Success Criteria

- All absences are explained by a written note / message on the Aladdin App by parents/guardian
- Overall Attendance levels in the school are maintained or increase
- For those with a poor record of attendance; evidence of improvement through our records on the Student Management System Attendance Log

Timetable for Review

This policy will be reviewed every three years, or as new guidelines are issued by the Department of Education and Skills.

Ratification & Communication

This policy was reviewed and ratified by the Board of Management of St. John the Apostle, Knocknacarra NS, on March 5th 2020 and subsequently communicated to the school community via the school's website.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Michael Gallagher, Chairperson,
Board of Management.