

# Attendance Policy



## Introduction

*Changing social habits and patterns necessitated the updating of the School's Attendance Policy. The school has been involved in DEIS Planning and there was a huge focus on Attendance. A lot of work had been undertaken in the whole area of Attendance so redrafting the policy was a concerted effort to draw all this together in a coordinated way.*

## Rationale

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 pupils' learning

- Legislative requirements such as the Education Welfare Act 2000 and the Education Act, 1998
- The role of the NEWB
- Levels of disadvantage
- Changing attitudes to education.

## Aims and Objectives

The revised policy is geared towards:

- Ensuring that pupils are registered accurately and efficiently
- Ensuring that pupil attendance is recorded daily
- encouraging full 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
- identify 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

- identifying and removing, insofar as is practicable, obstacles to school attendance.

### **Compliance with School Ethos**

- This policy complements the school mission statement where Scoil Bhríde is a happy caring and welcoming place where pupils' confidence, behaviour and academic achievement are developed to the full.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

All staff has an input into the implementation of the policy. Class teachers record individual patterns of attendance and has responsibility for monitoring, encouraging, liaising with Attendance Committee personnel and other key factors that promote attendance. The school makes regular returns to NEWB. The Deputy Principal has responsibility for monitoring Attendance.

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

### **Punctuality**

School begins at 8.50am. 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 **Databiz** system on a daily basis. Class attendance data is recorded daily on the school's **Databiz** system. The annual attendance of each individual pupil is also available from the school's **Databiz** system together with information provided in enrolment forms (Pupil's Name, Date of Birth, Address, Religion, Parents' Names and Parents' Occupations). All information is also transferred to the Department of Education's Primary Online Database (POD).

If a pupil 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 by 10.30 a.m. each morning. Any pupil not present will be marked absent for the day. A note from parents/guardians is required to explain each absence. Such notes will be retained on the Class **Attendance File** by the class teacher. Parents/guardians must also

provide a note if a child departs early during the school day. These notes are dated and kept in **The Attendance File** and inserted in the child's individual file in the school's central location at the end of each school year (Meeting Room). Late arrivals and early departures are recorded by the class teacher.

Parents/guardians are made aware of the requirements of the TUSLA 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. Pupils whose non-attendance is a concern are discussed at the monthly meeting of the **School's Attendance Committee** (See Appendices for further details) and during Parent/Teacher meetings 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 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:

- The BOM has a dedicated Post of Responsibility assigned to the area of Attendance. (Mary O Loughlin is the post holder for this area.)
- Creating a safe and welcoming environment
- Ensuring children are happy
- Displaying kindness, compassion and understanding
- Being vigilant so that risks to good attendance such as disadvantage, bullying etc. are identified early
- Rewarding good attendance with certificates and medals on a regular basis.

### **TUSLA**

The Education Welfare Officer is informed if:

- A child is expelled
- A child is suspended
- A child has missed more than 20 days.

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**

Scoil Bhríde endeavors to create a safe, welcoming environment for our pupils and their parents/guardians. 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.

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 5 days in a 20-day period without an accompanying note of explanation from parents/guardians. Appropriate contact takes place between the school and parents/guardians either via home visit (**HSLO**), a letter or a note in the homework diary when this occurs. A meeting between Parents and the **Principal/HSLO/EWO/SCPC** may be set up if deemed necessary. Absences of more than 20 days are automatically referred to the Education Welfare Officer.

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

Our homework policy, drawn up in consultation with parents/guardians, clearly outlines the school's expectations in terms of the quantity of homework assigned and in the quality of homework presented. There is a consistent approach to homework throughout the school.

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.

Pupils are expected to wear the correct school uniform.

Parents/guardians are informed if a child has no lunch, and if one cannot be provided for him/her, the school will provide one and a drink.

Our EWO **Paul McCavera** awards certificates to pupils who have full attendance during the school year. Certificates are also available to pupils who improve their attendance over a short period of time, and to pupils who improve their overall attendance.

The question of equality of access is addressed through the school's policy on Equal Opportunity and Gender Equity.

### **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 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 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 he/she concludes 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 EWB during the school year through an online system. An annual report is submitted – not more than six weeks following the end of the school year - detailing the overall level of attendance at the school during that school year. This information will be communicated to the school community through the school’s website.

### **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. This will come through the POD system and the child will only be removed from the school database when it shows as a conflict on the POD system.

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. 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 (EWB) personnel and there is ongoing communication in relation to children who are at risk. Scoil Bhride work with SCP Westside, Westside Family Service and the HSE Social Work Department and other relevant Agencies in regard to Attendance.

The school maintains communication with local pre-schools and second-level schools in order to make the transition for pupils as easy as possible.

### **Communication with other Schools**

- When a child transfers from **Scoil Bhríde** to another school, the school's records on attendance, academic progress etc will be forwarded on receipt of written notification of the transfer provided once parents have been informed by the new school that such records are being sought.
- When a child transfers into Scoil **Bhríde** confirmation of transfer will be communicated to the child's previous school, and appropriate records sought.
- Pupils transferring from **Scoil Bhríde** to a post primary school will have their records forwarded on receipt of confirmation of enrolment. The Education Passport form will follow the child to the new school.
- **Scoil Bhríde** will assist second level schools by completing the agreed Transfer of Information Form to be forwarded by the second level college or school.

### **Communication with Parents**

The school informs all parents of the implications of non-attendance as per the *Education Welfare Act 2000*. This information is posted on the school website. Parents of new children 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 education welfare service 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 Leabhar Rolla, Records and Statistical Returns
- Happy confident well adjusted children
- Positive parental feedback
- Teacher vigilance.

### **Implementation/Ratification and Review**

This policy has been in operation in the school since September 2010 and was updated in January 2015. It will be reviewed again in June 2015.

### **References:**

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

Education Welfare Act 2000

Education Act 1998

Section 29 Education Act

*Empty Desks* - CDU Mary Immaculate