

ST. MARY'S S.N.S.

ROWLAGH



ATTENDANCE POLICY

Reviewed November 2022

St. Mary's S.N.S. Attendance Policy

Introduction

This policy has been drawn up in consultation with the Board of Management, the principal, teachers and parents with the aim of enabling our pupils to maximise their attendance at school. This policy is regularly reviewed with the last review carried out in November 2022.

Rationale

The staff have decided to review the schools' attendance policy because

- It is a priority area identified by the staff and the Education Welfare Officer.
- It is a requirement under the Education Welfare Act 2000 and the Education Act 1998.
- We see the need to promote and encourage regular attendance as an essential factor in our pupil's learning.
- Regular school attendance leads to continued engagement with education in secondary school.

Relationship to characteristic spirit of the school

This policy complements the school's ethos of nurturing potential in a caring environment where the welfare of children is paramount. We are committed to creating a caring, supportive and respectful atmosphere at school where every pupil can achieve their full potential.

Aims

The revised policy seeks to:

- Encourage full attendance where possible.
- Raise an awareness of the importance of school attendance among both parents and pupils.
- Identify pupils at risk of developing attendance problems and at risk of early school leaving.
- Promote a positive learning environment and promote positive attitudes to school and learning.
- Enhance the learning environment where children can make progress in all aspects of their development,
- Ensure that the system of rules, rewards, and sanctions are implemented in a fair and consistent manner that encourage pupils to attend school.
- Comply with the requirements under the Education Welfare Act 2000/Guidelines from TESS (Tusla's Educational Support Service)

Guidelines

Defining and Recording Non-Attendance

How we define non- attendance.

- Parents are 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. Non-attendance is defined as a pupil not attending the school on any day that the school is open for instruction.

How we record non- attendance.

- Individual school attendance is recorded on the Aladdin attendance and statistical record system.
- Overall Class attendance is recorded in the Leabhair Tinreamh. The school will print and retain copies of the Excel record for each month. This will be signed by the Principal Teacher as a complete, authentic and accurate record and can be made available to the Department if requested (Circular 0028/2013). All children attending are recorded in the school register. Both of these are to be kept in the Principal Teacher's office.
- A note, phone call or message on Aladdin Connect from parents/guardians is required to cover each absence and these are recorded by the class teachers on the Aladdin system.
- The HSCL teacher meets with the secretary weekly to monitor attendance. A monthly record of absence is kept by the HSCL teacher in the school Attendance folder.
- A record of late arrival at school (more than 10 minutes) is recorded by the class teacher on the Aladdin system.
- Any parent wishing to collect their child from school is asked to sign them out in the 'Pupil Sign Out Record' sheet and a record is kept on Aladdin.
- Unexplained absences of more than 40 days are automatically referred to the Education Welfare Officer.

How we communicate non-attendance

- The non-attendance of pupils will be communicated to the parents verbally in the parent teacher meetings and in writing in their school report.
- Parents will also receive:
 - A daily text if a pupil is absent without an explanation
 - A text to state that their child has missed 5, 10 and 15 days of school.
 - A letter when their child has missed 20 days of school. In this letter, Parents are made aware of the requirements of the TESS, particularly the bye- law relating to absences of more than 20 days per school year. They are also informed that a referral to TUSLA may be made.
 - A letter to inform parents when a referral to Tusla has been made.
 - Parents may receive a phone call/ home visit by the HSCL to discuss attendance concerns.
 - Attendance clinics may be arranged with HSCL and the EWO to discuss attendance concerns with target parents.

What we do in the event of half-day absences

- Parents are reminded that taking children from the school early or for a half day unless it is absolutely necessary, is not acceptable. Parents must sign out their children if they are taking them from the school during the day, stating the time and the reason. A record of the time missed is kept on Aladdin.

Whole School Strategies to Promote Attendance

- **Environment:** As a school, we strive to create a safe, welcoming environment for our pupils and their parents as stated in the school's mission statement. If pupils arrive to school late they are praised for coming to school and are not sanctioned for arriving late. (Where lateness is a regular occurrence, we strive to discuss with the pupil/parent the reasons why and if punctuality can be improved)

- **Early Intervention:** Parents of incoming pupils are informed of the school's procedures in relation to attendance and are reminded of the importance of good attendance. The attendance of all pupils will be discussed with parents in parent-teacher meetings.
- **Uniform:** Pupils are encouraged to wear the school uniform. A common sense approach is used where pupils are not wearing a uniform on occasion for genuine reasons.
- **Homework:** Pupils are not sanctioned for homework not completed. They are simply given a 'Homework Incomplete' stamp to keep a record.
- **Breakfast/ Lunches:** A healthy breakfast is available to all pupils in the school. Pupils all receive a free school lunch daily in which they are given a choice of healthy snacks, fruit and water.
- **Rewards:** The school has implemented incentive policies to encourage good habits in relation to attendance. Pupils are given Bonus Stamps every day. Pupils who have full attendance or who have only missed one school day will receive a prize and a Good Attendance Certificate on a termly basis.
- **Recording Attendance:** A display board in the hall displays monthly attendance percentages for each class group which is praised at Assembly. A small treat is given to the class level with the best attendance.
- **School Completion Programme:** The School Completion Programme funds After-school homework clubs for targeted pupils who may have poor attendance or in danger of early school leaving. They also provide key workers who run individual and small group activities for these pupils to encourage attendance and participation in school.
- **Parents:** Through the constant emphasis on the importance of attendance, the school hopes to raise an awareness of the importance of school attendance among both parents and pupils.
The school newsletter is used to highlight the importance of constant attendance.
- **Reports:** We report the total amount of days missed in a year to parents in the end of year reports.
- **Attendance Drive:** During the year we have 'attendance Drives' where we focus on attendance for a month with extra incentives given.
- **Assembly:** The importance of good attendance is regularly on the agenda for school assemblies.
- **Positive Notes:** Each month, the Principal sends a "Well Done!" note home for children who have missed no days during the previous month.

Communication with other schools/ other providers

Links

- As a school, we have a good working relationship with other schools in the area, both primary and post-primary. We have a transfer programme with our feeder junior school and post-primary schools led by the HSCL teacher.
- We also have close links with School Completion, Dóchas, TESS, the EWO and other agencies.

Strategies in event of non-attendance

- The school informs all parents of the implications of non-attendance as per the Education Welfare Act 2000.

- Where necessary, the school will inform parents of their duties as outlined in the Education Welfare Act, in relation to reporting the non-attendance of a child to the EWO, of the serving of a “school attendance notice” by the EWO (following all reasonable efforts by the Education Board to consult with the child’s parents and the principal of the school) on any parent who they conclude is failing or neglecting to cause the child to attend the school and of the possible consequence of a successful case being taken against the parent (fine and/or imprisonment).
- A note or phone call from parents/guardians is required to cover each absence and these are recorded by the class teachers on the Aladdin system. The class teacher will also record instances where no reason has been given for an absence. In the event of poor literacy in the home, where no notes have been presented, a phone call will be made to the family in question to discuss the absences.
- Parents are made aware of the requirements of the TESS particularly the bye-law relating to absences of more than 20 days per school year.
- Parents are sent a text on 5, 10, 15 days and then a letter on 20 days non-attendance. A letter is then sent when the school makes a referral to TESS (when a pupil has approximately 40 absences without good reason).
- Where necessary, the issue of poor attendance is brought to the attention of parents at Parent/Teacher meetings or in a meeting arranged by the class teacher/ Principal Teacher.
- Cases where home difficulties/problems are causing poor attendance are referred to the HSCL, who is also a member of the Care Team. The Care team discuss possible interventions to try and minimize poor attendance.
- Where there is a concern about attendance or the risk of early school leaving, the pupil will be prioritised for referral to SCP or for SCP interventions such as after-school clubs etc.
- The EWO is informed in writing where a child is suspended or expelled for 6 days or more and when the pupil is removed from the school register.
- TESS is furnished with the total attendances in the school year through the Annual Report Form which is completed on-line.

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

- When a child transfers from St. Mary’s S.N.S to another school, a certificate stating the 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 will be forwarded on receipt of written notification of the transfer. The Principal Teacher will also notify the pupil’s new school of any problems in relation to attendance while they were attending St. Mary’s SNS and of such matters relating to the child’s educational progress as he or she considers appropriate.
- When a child transfers into St. Mary’s S.N.S, confirmation of transfer will be communicated to the child’s previous school, and appropriate records sought in writing. The Principal Teacher will notify the Principal of the child’s last school attended that the child is now registered in their school.
- Pupils transferring from St. Mary’s S.N.S to a Post Primary school will be monitored through our school transfer programme to ensure that all pupils transfer successfully. The HSCL teacher oversees the transfer programme and communicates with all parties involved.

- The Educational Passport is completed by pupils and their families and is sent on by the HSCL to their respective Post Primary school.
- The EWO will be notified using the online school return form of any of the following (on a termly basis):
 - intended expulsion of the child,
 - notification from another school that the child has been enrolled in that school,
 - notification by the EWO that the child is in receipt of education outside of the regular school system (e.g. home) or
 - has enrolled in a special school.

Annual Report

- The EWO is given the Annual Attendance Report at Christmas and at the end of each school year. Since 2013, this has been submitted online.
- Parents are informed about the whole school attendance levels in the end of year newsletter in June and can attend the award giving assembly.

Success Criteria

The success of this Attendance policy is measured through:

- Improved attendance levels, especially of those pupils targeted by TESS
- Accurate record keeping of pupils' attendance.
- Effective communication with all agencies involved in monitoring pupils' attendance.
- Successful transfer of pupils from/ to other schools.

The Principal is responsible for evaluating the success of this statement. This evaluation will take place annually. The Principal will co-ordinate and monitor the implementation of the strategies in this statement.

Roles and Responsibility

- All staff have a responsibility in implementing the Attendance Policy.
- The class teacher has responsibility for recording daily class attendance on the Aladdin system. They also have responsibility for recording reasons for absence or if there is no reason given on the Aladdin system.
- The Deputy Principal will ensure that Aladdin is completed each day and in conjunction with the HSCL, will monitor pupils who are being tracked by TESS.
- The Principal Teacher will ensure that the Leabhar Tinreamh is completed and that the returns are made to TESS.
- The HSCL and secretary will meet weekly to monitor attendance and send any letters required.
- The School Care Team will monitor changes in individual attendance patterns.

Implementation Date

This policy has been in operation in St. Mary's S.N.S since Sept. 2004 and was updated in 2007, November 2014, October 2016 September 2018 and November 2022. It will be reviewed again in 2023.

Ratification & Communication

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on: _____

Our Attendance Policy is available to parents and the school community through the school website.

Chairperson of the Board of Management

Date