

**Attendance of
Pupils**

Title: Attendance of Pupils Policy of St. Patrick's Infants School

Introductory Statement

This Policy was formulated in May 2008 involving the Deputy Principal, Assistant Principal and members of the In-School Management team and staff. A review of this policy was carried out in June 2017 by the Deputy Principal and Policy Review Subcommittee.

Rationale

Attendance is a requirement under the Education Welfare Act 2000 and was identified by staff and management as an area of concern and is included in our DEIS plan. In St. Patrick's Infants School we aim to educate all pupils to the best of their abilities and good attendance is essential to achieve this. It is with the co-operation between staff and parents that the pupils' true potential can be nurtured and realised.

Aims

St. Patrick's Infants School's Attendance policy aims to achieve

- An appreciation of learning.
- Awareness of the importance of school attendance.
- Identification of pupils at risk of school leaving early.
- Enhancement of the learning environment where children can make progress in all aspects of their development.
- Promote positive attitudes to learning.
- Ensure that the system of rules, rewards, and sanctions are implemented in a fair and consistent manner that will encourage pupils to attend school.
- Compliance with requirements under Education Welfare Act 2000/Guidelines from TUSLA.
- Improve attendance (ongoing).
- Sense of being fully part of all school activities for pupils who have good attendance.
- Habit of good attendance that will be valuable to pupils throughout their schooling.

Guidelines

Defining and Recording Non-Attendance

- Non-attendance is defined as a student not being present by 9.35a.m. The roll is called between 10.45 and 10.55 a.m. (as per timetable) each day. All students are required to attend school on each day the school is open for instruction.
- Non-attendance is recorded daily in the class teachers roll book. The daily numbers are then entered into the rolla records booklets in the staffroom between 10.20 and 10.40a.m. The Deputy Principal records the daily numbers in the *online Tinrimh Laethúil*. A record of attendance is kept as a hard copy by the Deputy Principal. This is signed each month by the Principal.
- All class teachers will be provided with up-to-date contact details for all students. All class teachers will read, sign and date notes from parents and store them in the designated folder in the rolla book.
- Procedures and good attendance strategies are communicated to parents on the information night, via the school newsletter and the school website. The effects non-attendance has on a student's learning and correct procedures as laid out by the Education Welfare Act are communicated to parents through these mediums. The advantages of good school attendance (positive effect of habit of good school attendance on educational achievement, self-esteem and social development) will be outlined occasionally in the school newsletter.
- Under the Education Welfare Act 2000 all parents are obliged to notify the school of the cause of absence not later than the third day of absence. As per the DEIS plan a tracking system for target pupils (children for whom attendance is a concern) is in place which the class teacher will fill out during the year.
- The Deputy Principal reports certain non attendance matters to TUSLA (i.e. pupils absent for 20 days or more or where the Principal is concerned about a pupil's attendance)
- Class teachers are responsible for making parents/guardians aware (verbally) of their concerns about their child's attendance.
- Parents/guardians will be reminded via the school newsletter that the school is obliged to report poor attendance to the TUSLA. Parents/guardians are informed by the class teacher that their child has been absent 15 days, reminding them that TUSLA will be contacted should the pupil be absent for 20 days or more.
- The HSCL teacher and SCP personnel shall be involved to support parents in improving their child's attendance.
- The Deputy Principal and Principal shall ask to meet with parents to discuss their child's attendance in the case of lack of improvement in attendance levels.

- Information regarding the attendance of a pupil may be passed onto a child's new school if requested, provided that their parent/guardian has signed the agreement to transfer information on the school's enrolment form.

Whole school strategies to promote attendance include:

- **Environment:** A safe, welcoming environment for our pupils and their parents.
- **Parental Involvement:** Includes 'Maths for Fun' is organised for each class on a rota basis. A Sports Day is held annually and parents are invited to help run this event. Parents are also encouraged to participate in other curricular areas, depending on their strengths (e.g. Arts, Science), under the guidance of the classroom teacher and HSCL teacher. Classes for parents are also run by the HSCL teacher.
- **Late Arrivals:** Curricular subjects are timetabled in each classroom for the beginning of each school day to promote punctual arrival. If a child arrives after 8.35a.m., the parent/guardian should allow the child to enter the classroom discretely without the adult to avoid disruption to teaching and learning. A drop and go system is in place. Also, a whole school assembly takes place each Friday morning at 8:35a.m. During this time, certificates and stickers are awarded.
- **Early Collections:** Early collections are strongly discouraged except for exceptional circumstances. Children may be released from school only in exceptional circumstances i.e. medical appointments, family occasions. If the school deems the number of early collections to be too frequent, the matter will be addressed by the school.

Parents wishing to collect their child early from school must sign them out in the secretary's office first. The pupils name, date and reason for collection will be recorded. Should a teacher become concerned about the frequency of this, he/she will refer to the sign out book in the secretary's office. Firstly, the class teacher must bring to the attention of the parent/guardian the number of days it has occurred and the number of hours of instructional teaching missed. If the problem continues the Deputy Principal should be informed by the class teacher.
- **Free Lunches/Snacks:** All students' benefit from free lunches/snacks, which include sliced bread, plain crackers, meats, cheese, fruit, milk and plain water.
- **After-School Classes:** Throughout the year students may be offered a variety of after school classes that may include creative dance, art and crafts, sports and drama. These activities vary from year to year depending on the availability of personnel and are run from 13:15 to 14:15.
- **After-School Club:** The school operates an after-school club from 13:15 to 14:30. This allows parents, with students in the senior school, to collect their children at the one time.
- **Early intervention:** We inform new parents/guardians of procedures in relation to attendance and the importance of attendance at the information evening, parent/teacher group meeting in October/November and via the school newsletter.

- **Rewarding Good Attendance:** We reward improvements in attendance and good attendance by giving certificates, prizes and award ceremonies in the school hall with parents invited. Stickers and little prizes are also given to individual children for good attendance.
- **Recording Attendance:** Pupils record their own attendance, using a cert form on display in/outside the classroom, thereby giving them a sense of being involved in their own progress and learning.
- **Improved/Excellent/Full Attendance Certificates:** Certificates are awarded to pupils each term at the assembly to congratulate pupils and encourage attendance.
- **Roll of Honour:** The photos of students with full, excellent or improved attendance are displayed outside the entrance to the school hall.
- **Equality of Participation:** While there is a charge for certain events, the school has funds for students who are unable to pay.
- **Book Rental Scheme:** The school for a nominal charge at the beginning of the school year provides levelled English readers, supplementary readers and library books.
- **Removing children during school term:** All parents are encouraged to take family holidays during official school holidays. This is emphasised at our Induction Day in June.
- **Reports:** We report the total amount of days missed in a year to parents in the end of year reports and at parent teacher meetings if applicable. It is put in proportion of the school year as a whole.
- **Assembly:** Every Friday morning a whole school assembly takes place encouraging good attendance and time keeping.
- **Parents:** We communicate the requirements of schools and of parents/guardians under the Education Welfare Act to parents/guardians via the TUSLA publication ***Don't Let Your Child Miss Out*** on our school website. This information is also referred to in the school's information booklet.
- **Support:** Liaison with the Home School Community Liaison teacher, SCP, TUSLA and the parents.
- **Learning Needs:** With regard to "at risk pupils" who are struggling, the curriculum is adapted and differentiated. Where concerns are raised about the students attainment levels a number of supports are available to explore (speech & language referral, Occupational Therapist referral, liaising with the Special Education Needs team, Home School Community Liaison teacher and Principal)

Communication/links with other schools/other providers

The following agencies may be contacted or contact our school with regard to pupils:

- With St. Patrick's Boys' and St. Patrick's Girls' Primary Schools.
- With schools that pupils transfer to / from during the school year.
- The local Education Welfare Officer (Tony O' Connor).
- National Educational Psychology Service (NEPS)
- HSCL (Home School Community Liaison Officer)

- HSE (Health Service Executive)
- SENO (Special Educational Needs Organiser)

Strategies in the event of non-attendance or poor attendance include:

- The school informs the Education Welfare Officer in writing where a child is suspended or expelled for 6 days or more, where the child has missed 20 or more days in a school year, where attendance is irregular and when the pupil is removed from the school register.
- Parents/guardians are aware of their statutory duties outlined in Education Welfare Act in relation to their responsibility of ensuring their child's attendance at school, having received information from the leaflet ***Don't Let Your Child Miss Out*** (leaflet for parents TUSLA) in our school booklet which they receive on enrolment of their child.
- Parents/guardians are made aware of the schools duties outlined in the Education Welfare Act in relation to
 - reporting the non-attendance of a child to the Education Welfare Officer
 - the serving of a "school attendance notice" by the Education Welfare Officer (following all reasonable efforts by TUSLA 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
 - the possible consequence of a successful case being taken against the parent (fine and/or imprisonment)
- In the event a parent may have a literacy problem, the teacher will be sensitive to the situation. A phone message could be recorded and dated by the teacher.
- If a parent/guardian refuses to explain the reason for the absence, the teacher will note it in the attendance folder. If the teacher has concerns about the child's welfare it will be reported to the designated liaison person for child protection in the school (Principal).
- The non-attendance of a pupil is communicated to the Principal. Once a pupil is beyond 20 days absence, it is reported to TUSLA.
- The non-attendance of a child to the Education Welfare Officer is communicated via a referral process to TUSLA. This is made by the Deputy Principal after consultation with the class teacher and the Principal.

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

- 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 by that school.
- Transfer to another school: Where parents transfer a child to another school the Principal is obliged to give them and the new school a record of the child's 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: The Deputy Principal notifies the Principal of the child's last school attended and that the child is now registered in their school.
- In order to remove pupils from our register/POD we request a formal letter from both St. Patrick's Boys N.S. and St. Patrick's Girls N.S. listing names of students who transferred onto their schools after September 30th each year.

Annual Report

- The Deputy Principal will inform the Board of Management, the Education Welfare Officer via TUSLA of the level of attendance at the school for each school year.
- The Annual Report form for the TUSLA will take the format of an online report detailing the amount of pupils absent for 20 days or more, the number of pupils who left the school throughout the school year. The Deputy Principal will complete this report at the end of the school year.

Success Criteria

The success of this statement will be determined by an increase in attendance levels from school year to school year as laid out in rolls and registers. It will also be determined by an increase in the level of communication with parents in relation to absences through notes, phone calls and medical certificates. The level of attendance at the end of the school year will also be a factor in determining the success of this statement. The report for the previous year will be submitted to the Board of Management in Term 1 of each year. The Principal and Deputy Principal will co-ordinate and monitor the implementation of the strategies in this statement in conjunction with the ISM team and all members of the teaching staff.

- The class teacher has a responsibility to report frequent absences and irregular attendance to the Deputy Principal, to request notes and/or medical certificates to explain absences, to read date and store the notes/certificates in an efficient manner and to alert the Deputy Principal if a student is absent for 20 consecutive days or has missed 15 days or more in the school year.
- The Principal will oversee the strategies being implemented.
- Pupils, as a result of their age, will have a limited role to play. The role of the parents is to limit the number of days absences of their child/ward, provide a written and clear explanation detailing why the pupil has been absent and on the third day of absence contact the school.
- Liaising with HSCL and other agencies like National Educational Psychological Service and TUSLA will also help to meet the criteria for success, supporting staff, students and parents.

Indicators of success of the strategies in this statement include:

- Increase in attendance levels which will be evident in rolls, registers etc
- Positive feedback from teachers, parents, pupils

- Increase in the number of certificates and prizes awarded to students. This is monitored by the Deputy Principal.
- Increase of awareness of both pupils and parents of the importance of regular school attendance

Roles and Responsibility

The people who have particular responsibilities for aspects of the statement include

- Principal
- Deputy Principal
- In School Management team
- Class teacher
- Resource, Learning Support and Home School Community Liaison Teacher.
- Schools Completion Programme
- Parents
- Pupils
- Education Welfare Officer
- Board of Management
- National Educational Psychology Services

The Board of Management is committed to providing a positive school atmosphere, which is conducive to promoting good school attendance. In this regard:

- The school curriculum, insofar as is practicable, is flexible and relevant to the needs of the individual child.
- The school will promote development of good self-esteem and self-worth in the children.
- Support for pupils, who have special educational needs, are in place in accordance with Department of Education & Skills guidelines.
- Internal communication procedures are in place to inform teachers of the special needs of pupils.
- A special reward system will be introduced for promoting good attendance at school.
- The assistance of the Education Welfare Officer will be utilised.
- The class teacher will monitor the attendance rates of pupils in the first instance, and the class teacher will notify the Deputy Principal of any concerns regarding the attendance of any child.
- Pupils with a poor attendance record will, insofar as is practicable, be supported in an effort to improve their attendance.

School Principal

The School Principal in consultation with the Deputy Principal will:

- Ensure that the school register of pupils is maintained in accordance with regulations.
- Inform the Education Welfare Officer:
 - If a pupil is not attending school regularly.
 - When a pupil has been absent for 20 or more days during the course of the school year

Implementation Date

The decisions as laid out in this policy take effect immediately.

Roles and Responsibility

This policy will be supported, developed and implemented by the Principal and Board of Management of Saint Patrick's Infants N.S.

Success Criteria

The Principal in conjunction with the Board of management will monitor and evaluate the policy to see that it is effective.

This evaluation will take place annually.

Ratification and Review:

This policy was reviewed by the Deputy Principal and Board of Management in June 2017.

This policy will be distributed to all BOM members at meeting level. A copy will be given to Parents' Association representatives. It will be available to parents on the school website and as a hard copy in reception. It will be communicated to teachers via the school's server and to Special Needs Assistants via a hard copy in reception and in the Principal's Office.

18.—Where a child is absent from the school at which he or she is registered during part of a school day, or for a school day or more school than a school day, the parent of such child shall, in accordance with procedures specified in the code of behaviour prepared by the school under *section 23*, notify the principal of the school of the reasons for the child's absence.

20.—(1) The principal of a recognised school shall, as soon as may be after the commencement of this section, cause to be established and maintained a register of all students attending that school.

(2) The principal of a recognised school shall, on the day on which the child first attends that school, enter the child's name, the date of his or her first so attending and such other particulars as may be prescribed by the Minister, in the register maintained under this section in respect of that school, and the child concerned shall, for the purposes of this Act, be deemed, as on and from that date, to be registered in that school.

(3) The principal of a recognised school shall, as soon as may be after entering in the register maintained under this section in respect of that school the name of a child who is registered in another recognised school, so inform by notification in writing the principal of the second-mentioned school.

(4) The principal of the second-mentioned school referred to in *subsection (3)* shall, on receipt of a notification under that subsection, remove the name of the child concerned from the register maintained under this section in respect of the said second-mentioned school except where the child continues to receive part of his or her education at that school.

(5) The principal of a recognised school shall, on receiving a notification under *subsection (3)* in relation to a child, notify the principal of the school first-mentioned in that subsection of—

(a) any problems relating to school attendance that the child concerned had while attending the second-mentioned school referred to therein, and

(b) such other matters relating to the child's educational progress as he or she considers appropriate.

(6) The principal of a recognised school shall not remove a child's name from the register other than—

(a) in accordance with *subsection (4)*, or

(b) where he or she has received a notification in writing from the Board that the child concerned is registered in the register maintained under *section 14*.

21.—(1) The principal of a recognised school shall cause to be maintained in respect of each school year a record of the attendance or non-attendance on each school day of each student registered at that school.

(2) A record maintained under *subsection (1)* shall specify the following, that is to say:

(a) where a student attends at the school concerned on a school day, the fact of his or her attendance, or

(b) where a student fails to so attend, the fact of his or her failure and the reasons for such failure.

(3) A record to which this section applies shall be maintained at the recognised school concerned and shall be in such form as may be specified by the Board.

(4) Where—

(a) a student is suspended from a recognised school for a period of not less than 6 days,

(b) the aggregate number of school days on which a student is absent from a recognised school during a school year is not less than 20,

(c) a student's name is, for whatever reason, removed from the register referred to in *section 20* by the principal of the school concerned, or

(d) a student is, in the opinion of the principal of the recognised school at which he or she is registered, not attending school regularly,

the principal of the school concerned shall forthwith so inform, by notice in writing, an educational welfare officer.

(5) On receiving a notice under *subsection (4)*, an educational welfare officer shall—

(a) consult with the student concerned, his or her parents, the principal and such other persons as he or she considers appropriate, and

(b) make all reasonable efforts to ensure that provision is made for the continued education of the child and his or her full participation in school.

(6) The board of management of a recognised school shall, not later than 6 weeks after the end of each school year, submit a report to—

(a) the educational welfare officer who has been assigned functions under this Act in relation to that school, and

(b) the parents' association of the recognised school concerned established under section 26 of the Act of 1998 (where so established), on the levels of attendance at that school during the immediately preceding school year.

(7) A report under *subsection (6)* shall be in such form and comply with such requirements as may be determined by the Board.

(8) An educational welfare officer may during any school day enter a recognised school and inspect the register maintained at that school under *section 20* or a record to which this section applies, and take copies of extracts from such register or record.

(9) For the purposes of this section a student shall be deemed not to be absent from school where any period of absence is authorised by the principal and relates to activities organised by the school or in which the school is involved.

22.—(1) The board of management of a recognised school shall, after consultation with the principal of, teachers teaching at, parents of students registered at, and the educational welfare officer assigned functions in relation to, that school, prepare and submit to the Board a statement of the strategies and measures it proposes to adopt for the purposes of fostering an appreciation of learning among students attending that school and encouraging regular attendance at school on the part of such students (hereafter in this section referred to as a “statement of strategy”).

(2) Without prejudice to the generality of *subsection (1)*, a statement of strategy shall provide for—

(a) the rewarding of students who have good school attendance records;

(b) the identification at an early stage of students who are at risk of developing school attendance problems;

(c) the establishment of closer contacts between the school concerned and the families of students to which *paragraph (b)* applies;

(d) the fostering, promoting and establishing of contacts by the school with—

(i) other schools that provide primary or post-primary education,

(ii) bodies engaged in the provision of youth work programmes or services related thereto, or engaged in the organising of sporting or cultural activities, and

(iii) such other bodies within the area in which the school concerned is situated as the board of management considers appropriate;

(e) in so far as is practicable, the development, following consultation with the bodies referred to in *paragraph (d)*, of programmes of activities designed to encourage the full participation of students in the life of the school;

(f) in so far as is practicable, the coordination with other schools of programmes aimed at promoting good behaviour among students and encouraging regular attendance at school by students, and the exchanging of information relating to matters of behaviour and school attendance with such schools;

(g) the identification of—

(i) aspects of the operation and management of the school and of the teaching of the school curriculum that may contribute to problems relating to school attendance on the part of certain students, and

(ii) strategies—

(I) for the removal of those aspects in so far as they are not necessary or expedient for the proper and effective running of the school having regard, in particular, to the educational needs of students, and

(II) that will encourage more regular attendance at school on the part of such students.

(3) The board of management of a recognised school shall, in preparing a statement of strategy, have regard to such guidelines issued by the Board regarding the preparation and carrying into effect of statements of strategy.

(4) A statement of strategy prepared and submitted by the board of management of a recognised school, in accordance with *subsection (1)*, shall be carried out by that board of management in accordance with its terms.

(5) The board of management of a recognised school may, with the consent of the Minister, and for the purpose of giving effect to a statement of strategy prepared and submitted by it in accordance with this section, appoint such and so many teachers employed by it, as it considers appropriate, to liaise with the parents of students registered at the school concerned and to give such assistance to the families of those students as the board of management concerned considers appropriate.

(6) Two or more boards of management of recognised schools may, if they consider it appropriate, coordinate, and cooperate in, the carrying out of the statements of strategies prepared and submitted by them, in accordance with *subsection (1)*.

(7) The Board shall issue guidelines to boards of management of recognised schools for the purposes of this section.

(8) The statement of strategy prepared by the board of management of a recognised school shall be included in the plan prepared by it under section 21 of the Act of 1998.

23.—(1) The board of management of a recognised school shall, after consultation with the principal of, the teachers teaching at, the parents of students registered at, and the educational welfare officer assigned functions in relation to, that school, prepare, in accordance with *subsection (2)*, a code of behaviour in respect of the students registered at the school (hereafter in this section referred to as a “code of behaviour”).

(2) A code of behaviour shall specify—

(a) the standards of behaviour that shall be observed by each student attending the school;

(b) the measures that may be taken when a student fails or refuses to observe those standards;

- (c) the procedures to be followed before a student may be suspended or expelled from the school concerned;
- (d) the grounds for removing a suspension imposed in relation to a student; and
- (e) the procedures to be followed relating to notification of a child's absence from school.

(3) A code of behaviour shall be prepared in accordance with such guidelines as may, following consultation by the Board with national associations of parents, recognised school management organisations and trade unions and staff associations representing teachers, be issued by the Board.

(4) The principal of a recognised school shall, before registering a child as a student at that school in accordance with *section 20*, provide the parents of such child with a copy of the code of behaviour in respect of the school and may, as a condition of so registering such child, require his or her parents to confirm in writing that the code of behaviour so provided is acceptable to them and that they shall make all reasonable efforts to ensure compliance with such code by the child.

(5) The principal of a recognised school shall, on a request being made by a student registered at the school or a parent of such a student, provide the student or parent, as the case may be, with a copy of the code of behaviour in respect of the school concerned.

Education Act 1998

15.—(2) FUNCTIONS OF A BOARD

(c) consult with and keep the patron informed of decisions and proposals of the board,

(d) publish, in such manner as the board with the agreement of the patron considers appropriate, the policy of the school concerning admission to and participation in the school, including the policy of the school relating to the expulsion and suspension of students and admission to and participation by students with disabilities or who have other special educational needs, and ensure that as regards that policy principles of equality and the right of parents to send their children to a school of the parents' choice are respected and such directions as may be made from time to time by the Minister, having regard to the characteristic spirit of the school and the constitutional rights of all persons concerned, are complied with,

***Appendix 42 p.171 Rule 130 of the Rules for National Schools**

(1) *Appendix 54 p.164 Guidelines for School Behaviour and Discipline.

(2) *Appendix 55 p.194 A suggested Code of Behaviour & Discipline for National Schools

*These references apply until new guidelines are issued by the Education Welfare Board

- Department of Education and Science Guidelines on Countering Bullying Behaviour in Primary and Post Primary Schools (1993) available on DES website
- Report to the Minister of Education Niamh Breathnach, T.D. on Discipline in Schools. Maeve Martin Spring 1997. Ch. 4 p.56-61 Recommendations for Schools
- Discipline in the Primary School INTO August 2002
- Enhancing Self Esteem INTO 1995
- The Education Act 1998. The Education Welfare Act 2000. Questions and Answers INTO
- The Principal's Legal Handbook Oliver Mahon B.L. IVEA 2002 Ch. 2 School Discipline
- Quality Circle Time in the primary school. Jenny Mosley. LDA 2000
- Responding to Bullying. First Steps for Teachers. The Cool School Programme. NE Health Board
- Investigating and Resolving Bullying in Schools. The Cool School Programme. NE Health Board
- Stop it! Steps to Address Bullying. Wexford Education Network. Wexford Area Partnership. Phone: 053 23994
- Stay Safe and Walk Tall Programmes
- School's own SPHE Plan
- Anti Bullying Unit. Trinity College. Dr. Mona O Moore.
- NPC website www.npc.ie
- IPPN website www.ippn.ie
- INTO website www.into.ie
- SDPS website www.sdps.ie