



**Scoil Chroí Mhuire gan Smál
Béal an Mhuirthead,
Co. Mhaigh Eo.**

■ **Title**

Attendance Strategy Statement

■ **Introductory Statement**

This policy was formulated by the principal & staff of the school. It was adapted to the current format in accordance with the guidelines of the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) and to comply with requirements under the Educational Welfare Act 2000 and the guidelines from the Child and Family Agency (TUSLA).

■ **Rationale**

A directive from TUSLA (Child and Family Agency) has required Scoil Chroí Mhuire gan Smál to update the schools attendance policy. We are required to submit an Attendance Statement/Policy to Tusla by the end of this school year 2016-2017.

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
- Tusla Developing The Statement of Strategy for School Attendance 2015

■ **Relationship to Characteristic Spirit of the School**

In keeping with our Attendance Policy which emphasises the importance of attendance of our pupils and school employees. The Board of Management, Scoil Chroí Mhuire gan Smál recognises the importance of the legislation enacted in the Education Welfare Act, 2000. Our objective is:

- To identify the needs of individual children and put in place the appropriate strategies and combination of strategies that will address identified needs.
- To foster, promote and establish contact with parents and the wider community to create and maintain a positive approach to our Attendance Policy in the school.
- Ensure that the school has in place procedures to promote attendance/participation.

● **Aims**

- To foster an appreciation of learning and to promote positive attitudes to learning.
- To raise awareness of importance of school attendance.
- To identify pupils at risk of school leaving early.
- To develop, subject to available resources, links between the school and the families of children who may be at risk of developing attendance problems.
- To identify and remove, insofar as is practicable, obstacles to school attendance.
- To enhance the learning environment where children can make progress in all aspects of their development.
- To ensure that the system of rules, rewards, and sanctions are implemented in a fair and consistent manner that encourage pupils to attend school
- To comply with requirements under Education Welfare Act 2000/Guidelines from TUSLA.
- To ensure that pupils are registered accurately and efficiently
- To ensure that pupil attendance is recorded daily
- To Encourage full attendance where possible

■ **Guidelines (*content of policy*)**

Roles and Responsibilities

All staff have an input into the implementation of the policy. Class teachers record individual patterns of attendance on 'Aladdin' and the school Principal makes returns to NEWB online.

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 9.20 am. All pupils and teachers are expected to be on time. The school will contact parents/guardians in the event of pupils being consistently late on an ongoing basis. The Principal is obliged under the Education Welfare Act, to report children who are persistently late, to the Education Welfare Board.

Defining and Recording Attendance

- We define attendance as the obligation of a parent 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.
- We record the attendance of individual pupils on the 'Aladdin' system. The roll call is taken at 11.00am. Any pupil not present will be marked absent for the day.
- A written note is required for absences from parent/guardian outlining: date of absence, reason for absence and parent's/guardian's signature. These records are kept on file in the school for one year. This procedure is communicated to parents informing them that the Act obliges the parents of an absent child to notify the class teacher/principal of the cause of absence not later than the third day of absence. The principal/secretary will inform the class teacher when a parent/guardian contacts the school to explain an absence. All other absences are recorded as unexplained. We are also obliged to report certain non-attendance matters to TUSLA (i.e. pupils absent for 20 days or more or where a principal is concerned about a pupil's attendance) and this is also communicated to the parents, in written form after 15 absences and 20 absences, as per TUSLA requirements. We also communicate the effects of non-attendance on pupil learning by means of P-T Meetings, school reports and letters home.

- In relation to half-day absences, the Education Welfare Act requires a parent to notify the school when a child is absent for part of a school day, a school day or more than a school day in the above manner. Parent/guardian must also personally inform the school to sign out a child if s/he leaves early during the school day.
- Late arrivals are also recorded by the class teacher.
- Parents/guardians are made aware of the requirements of the NEWB 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 invited to meet with the Principal during Parent/Teacher meetings and are informed of the school's concerns.

Whole school strategies to promote attendance include the following:

- **Environment:** We as a school, and within the classroom, endeavour to create a safe, welcoming environment for our pupils and their parents with warm bright colours and a friendly atmosphere. 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.
- **Late Arrivals:** In the case of late arrivals, amounts of times are added together by class teachers and inform parents verbally when a full day has been arrived at.
- **Early intervention:** We target new mothers/fathers to inform them of procedures in relation to attendance and the importance of attendance.
- **Homework:** See Homework Policy.
- **Lunches:** If a child arrives to school without a lunch, parents are contacted by phone.
- **Assessment:** Repeated non-attendance on test days is reported and discussed with parents.
- **Rewards:** Good attendance is acknowledged on the annual school report and at parent-teacher meetings.
- **Equality of Participation:** All pupils are given equal opportunity in all areas.
- **Equality issues:** Special cases, where there may be issues of payment for lessons are dealt with individually. In relation to non-attendance of events due to religious considerations, parents are encouraged to inform the school in line with our ethos statement and make their own supervision arrangements.
- **Reports:** The total amount of days missed in a year is not reported to parents in the end of year reports/parent teacher meetings. Instead we give a general comment on attendance e.g. 0-5 absences = excellent, 6-10 = VG, 11-15 = Good, 16-20 = Fair, >20 = Poor
- **Parents:** We communicate the requirements of schools and of parents under the Education Welfare Act to parents by including *Don't Let Your Child Miss Out* (leaflet for parents). The principal liaises with families in regard to any attendance issues which may arise. Parents/guardians are consulted in drafting and reviewing policies with the aim of promoting a high-level of co-operation among the school community
- **School Calendar:** The calendar for the coming school year is distributed annually in June and it is published on the school website. 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.
- **Learning Needs:** We cater for the learning needs of "at risk pupils" by adapting our curricular delivery to meet the needs of all pupils. Where appropriate the curriculum may be differentiated to meet the learning needs of individual pupils as specified in our Special Needs Policy.

The school informs all parents of the implications of non-attendance as per the *Education Welfare Act 2000*. This information is disseminated by regular school circulars.

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 in writing 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.

Communication with other schools/other providers

- In the case of transferral to other primary schools, we provide attendance information by way of the school report on receipt of written notification of the transfer.
- Post Primary schools may access attendance information on request.
- The school contacts the NEWB when necessary and submits the necessary forms.
- The school maintains communication with local pre-schools and second-level schools in order to make the transition for pupils as easy as possible.

Non Attendance

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 a letter or a note in the homework diary when this occurs. A meeting between parents and the Principal may be set up if deemed necessary. Absences of more than 20 days are automatically referred to the Education Welfare Officer.

Tusla Guidelines for Schools in relation to taking holidays during Term Time.

Parents have a legal duty to ensure that their child who is attending a recognised school is at school unless there is a genuine reason for him or her not to attend, (Section 21(9) of education welfare act 2000). Therefore the school cannot give permission for holiday absences during term time. However the School should be informed of such absences.

In the Tusla guidelines for Developing The Statement of Strategy for School Attendance 5.5 it states that, schools should strongly discourage parents from taking students on holidays during term time'. Therefore the school is not responsible for the provision of school work for students / parents that may be missed during this term time absence. Teachers will not provide the class work that will be missed during this period either before or on return from such absences. This is to discourage such Term Time holiday absences as advised by the Tusla Guidelines.

Strategies in event of non-attendance

The school will inform 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.

- **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.**
- Parents/guardians are again made aware of their statutory duties outlined in Education Welfare Act in relation to causing their children to attend school via the *Don't Let Your Child Miss Out* (leaflet for parents).
- Parents/guardians are also 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, of the serving of a "school attendance notice" by 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) 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).
- Parents/guardians are expected to communicate the reasons for the non-attendance of their child in the school by way of a written note from parent outlining, date of absence, reason for absence and parent's/guardian's signature. These records are kept on file in the school for one year.
- If the parent refuses to explain the reason for the absence, this is documented and if repeated, reported to the EWO.
- Non-attendance of a pupil is communicated to the principal by the class teacher if there is cause for concern and via the 'Aladdin system'.
- Communication to the parent of the non-attendance of their child in the school is undertaken verbally/written at 15 absences and in written form via the TUSLA template at 20 absences.(Appendix 1)
- We communicate the non-attendance of a child to the Education Welfare Officer via the TUSLA reporting guidelines.
- Children First Guidelines are also adhered to in relation to concerns about non-attendance.
- Depending on the duration and nature of the absences teachers **may** support the child to "catch up" on work missed at home and/or during revision, for example, sickness.

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

The principal will 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.

- All communication with the Education Welfare Officer in relation to the following matters is by phone:
 - intended expulsion of the child,
 - notification from another school that the child has been enrolled in that school,
 - notification by the Education Welfare Officer that the child is in receipt of education outside of the regular school system (e.g. home) or
 - has enrolled in a special school.
- Transfer to another school: Where parents remove a child from the school the principal will, if asked, give them and the new school information in relation to 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. When the principal receives notification that a child has been registered elsewhere he/she will 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/she considers appropriate.
- Transfer from another school: Where a family make an approach to transfer a pupil to our school, the principal will contact the principal of the school that the child is currently attending and make him/her aware of the situation and will also ask for any relevant information pertaining to the proposed transfer. Our enrolment policy precludes enrolments from outside our catchment area except in very exceptional circumstances (see Enrolment Policy). In cases where a transfer proceeds, we will communicate to the previous school that the child has been registered in this school by phone as soon as possible.

Staff Absences

The arrangements in relation to teacher and special needs assistant absences in the school are in accordance with Department provisions for the particular absence involved. See Department of Education and Skills website for the most recent circulars governing all absences.

■ Success Criteria

Our success criteria will be based on the achievement of our objectives. We will use attendance data from our roll book on 'Aladdin', staff observation and parental feedback as our benchmark for success or otherwise of the policy.

■ Roles and Responsibility

Attendance Officer: Carol Gaughan Lennon.

The Attendance Officer will be responsible for the implementation and evaluation of the policy. Any feedback received will be recorded and any problems that arise will be taken into account for the purposes of evaluation and review.

■ Timeframe for Implementation

The policy will be implemented on Sept 2017.

■ Timeframe for Review

This policy is reviewed annually.

■ Responsibility for Review

The school principal staff and BoM will be responsible for reviewing the policy.

■ Ratification and Communication

The Board of Management ratified this policy on the 6 of JUNE 2017

Signed: , (Chairperson, BOM)

Scoil Chroí Mhuire gan Smál. does not have adequate resources to circulate all of its policies to all the concerned members of the wider school community. The policy is communicated to the members of the BOM and is available on the school notice board.