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## **ATTENDANCE POLICY**

### **INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT**

This policy was drawn up as a result of consultation between teachers. There is a very strong tradition of good attendance in Scoil Chroí Naofa. However, the changing social fabric of the nation is altering attitudes to school and we are anxious that parents be aware of the absolute necessity for regular punctual attendance at school.

### **RATIONALE**

The following factors have contributed to the formulation of this revised policy

- The changing fabric of society
- The influx of non-nationals
- The role of Tusla and Tusla Education Support Service (TESS)
- Levels of disadvantage
- Legislative requirements
- Changing attitudes to education

The Board of Management wish to comply with legislation i.e. the Education Act (1998) and the Education Welfare Act (2000) Section 2. The Board submitted a statement of Strategy for School Attendance, which is the written account of the Attendance Policy to Tusla (Child & Family Agency). School attendance strategies are required to encourage learning and regular attendance. The Board of Management wish to promote and encourage regular attendance as an essential factor in our pupils' learning.

This policy is concerned with

1. promoting and fostering in families an appreciation of the benefits to be derived from education with respect to the physical, intellectual, emotional, social, cultural and moral development of children and of the social and economic advantage that flow there from.
2. encouraging school attendance
3. ensuring and maintaining a high level of attendance at school by all pupils.
4. monitoring school attendance
5. rewarding good attendance
6. responding to poor attendance
7. reporting unsatisfactory school attendance in accordance with the Education Welfare Act 2000.

## **RELATIONSHIP TO CHARACTERISTIC SPIRIT OF THE SCHOOL**

Scoil Chroí Naofa is a Presentation Primary school. As a Catholic school we endorse the Catholic ethos. We are a Christian group of pupils, parents, staff and management. We share a similar vision. We live out the Christian message by handing on the Faith and Christian values.

We cherish our pupils equally and recognising the uniqueness of each child, we work together so that they may all reach their potential in all areas of the curriculum. The aim of our school is

1. To enable the child to live a full life as a child and to realise his or her potential as a unique individual.
2. To enable the child to develop as social beings who are living and cooperating with others and so contribute to the good of society.
3. To prepare the child for education and lifelong learning.

Scoil Chroí Naofa endeavours to enable every pupil to actively participate in all school activities. Regular attendance helps to create a stable learning environment for all pupils, and the school hopes to promote co-operation among pupils, parents/guardians and staff in maintaining a high level of regular attendance through the school year. This policy complements the school ethos of nurturing potential in a caring environment where the welfare of children is paramount.

## **AIMS OF ATTENDANCE POLICY**

1. To protect and promote the right of a child to education.
2. To promote and foster positive attitudes to learning and an appreciation of learning.
3. To raise awareness of the importance of regular school attendance
4. To encourage pupils to attend school regularly and punctually.
5. To share the promotion of school attendance amongst all in the school community.
6. To inform the school community of its role and responsibility as outlined in the Act.
7. To establish partnership and collaboration between parents, pupils and teachers in promoting and encouraging children's attendance at school.
8. Identify and remove, insofar as is practicable, obstacles to school attendance
9. To emphasise the importance of continuous, uninterrupted attendance at school.
10. To identify poor or erratic or irregular attendance patterns of pupils.
11. To identify at an early stage students at risk who may develop attendance problems.
12. To identify pupils at risk of leaving school early
13. To ensure that relevant agencies will be informed of the identity of erratic or irregular attendance patterns of pupils.
14. To ensure compliance with the requirements of the relevant legislation.

## **POLICY CONTENT**

This policy is linked to all the Curricular Policies and policies on Special Education, Learning Support, Daily Routine, Record Keeping, Communication, Child Protection, Homework, Assessment, Differentiation, Code of Behaviour and Anti - Bullying

## **Procedures:**

### **1. Emphasising the importance of Attendance**

- The necessity for constant, regular attendance at school will be impressed on parents through regular newsletters, the Annual General Meeting for Parents, Parents Council Meetings and parent-teacher meetings.
- Parents of new children receive a copy of our Code of Behaviour and Discipline as part of the enrolment process. They are requested to confirm in writing that the code is acceptable to them and that they shall make all reasonable efforts to ensure compliance.
- Parents are reminded of the school rules with reference to attendance at the beginning of each year via the newsletter.
- At the beginning of each term, Principal and teachers remind children of school rules. Teachers remind children of school rules on a regular basis during the school week also.
- Parents are informed in the first newsletter each year of the obligation of the school under the Education Welfare Act 2000, to notify Tusla & TESS of pupils who have been absent from school for 20 days in any school year. Parents are also advised of same at Annual General Meeting of Parents and at the Open Night for New Parents.
- The principal cannot authorise a child's absence for holidays during school time. The school calendar is distributed to all parents at the beginning of the year so parents can plan their holidays in accordance with the school holidays. This calendar is also available on the school website homepage and in the parents' hub.
- At the end of each school year, parents receive a school report regarding their child. Children's attendance during the year is noted on this report. They are also informed if their child has been reported to the NEWB.
- An annual report is given to the Board of Management each year regarding attendance and absenteeism in the school

### **2. Recording Attendance**

- All pupils and teachers are expected to be on time. The school will contact parents/guardians in the event of pupils being consistently late.
- Late arrivals and early departures are noted and monitored by the class teacher.
- Late arrivals are logged on Aladdin which is our schools e-attendance database.
- Class teachers call the roll daily before 10am
- Class attendance of individual pupils is recorded on Aladdin (e-roll book) by the class teacher. In the event of a teacher being absent, the attendance post holder records attendance.
- The monthly school attendance data is collated on Aladdin. Leabhar Tinrimh (Attendance Book).
- General school attendance is monitored by a post holder.

### **3. Recording and monitoring Non and Poor Attendance**

- If a child is absent from school, parents must communicate to the school reasons for absence preferably using Aladdin.
- Absentees are categorised as follows;  
Irregular Absentee: 2/5 days absent in a 20-day period without a valid reason  
Seriously Irregular Absentee: 6/10 days absent in a 20-day period without a valid reason  
Chronic Absentee: 11+ days absent in a 20-day period without a valid reason

- A list of pupils who have been reported to TESS in the previous year is circulated to teachers at the beginning of each new school year, to make all staff aware of monitoring poor attenders.
- As soon as staff notice a pattern emerging from the children on the list, they will notify the Principal who will make contact with parents outlining their child's history of poor attendance.
- If staff notice other erratic attendance in other children, they will notify the Principal. Principal will then meet with parents.
- Particular attention will be paid to children who display the following patterns of absence from school: one or more days each week, frequent absences on Mondays or Fridays, frequent half days, frequent appointments on Friday afternoons and entire family members missing same days regularly.
- Notes from parents of children who have a history of poor attendance will be kept by the class teacher for the school year. These will be available for inspection by the Education Welfare Officer on his visit to the school.
- A pupil's absence is authorised by the Principal when the child is involved in activities organised by the school or in which the school is involved.

#### **4. School Transfer**

- Attendance, behaviour and academic records of children who transfer to another primary school will be forwarded to the Principal of the school by post as soon as written confirmation of this transfer is received.
- If children transfer into our school from a previous school, Principal notifies the Principal of the other school on completion of a School Transfer Form. Attendance, behaviour and academic records of children are sought on a report which is attached to the School Transfer Form.
- The support teacher and the Home School Liaison Teachers from the Presentation College School link with the sixth-class teachers in ensuring the sixth-class girls make a smooth transition.
- The class teacher and the support teacher in Athenry Boys National School links with our First Class teachers in ensuring the first class boys make a smooth transition.

#### **5. TESS:**

- The Education Welfare Officer is informed if;
  - A child is expelled
  - A child is suspended
  - A child has missed more than 20 days
- If any child's attendance pattern has reached critical levels, a decision is made to refer them immediately to TESS via the online portal. This referral is done by the principal
- If a child has been referred, a number of case conferences with parents, class teacher, principal and Attendance Officer takes place. Parents are given warnings and if there is no improvement over a certain period of time 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.' A successful case taken against the parent may result in a fine and/or imprisonment.
- The Board of Management are informed of critical cases and if a referral has been made.
- The Annual Report Form is completed online by a Post holder before Christmas and at the end of the school year and forwarded to TESS

## **Practices and Strategies for Promoting Good Attendance**

The following strategies have been put in place to help foster an appreciation of learning, develop pupils social and personal development, and consequently, good attendance:

### **1. Awareness-Raising Strategies**

- Attendance is discussed with parents at parent teacher meetings
- Attendance is discussed at morning assemblies
- Monthly attendance for the school is recorded in the Leabhar Tinrimh on Aladdin
- Each child's annual attendance is recorded in their end of year report in June
- School leavers have their attendance recorded in the Education Passport before transition to secondary school
- Pupils are affirmed and praised by class teachers for good attendance
- The calendar for the coming school year is published annually in June and a reminder is published in September.

### **2. Parental involvement**

- Parents/guardians are consulted in drafting and reviewing policies with the aim of promoting a high-level of co-operation among the school community
- 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.
- Parents are made aware of the negative effect which missing classes or coming late to school can have on a pupil's achievement and stress levels

### **3. Support Programmes**

**Scoil Chroi Naofa offers its pupils an array of sporting, music and drama activities in order to cater for the varying needs, interests, abilities and talents of the pupil body with a view to providing positive and affirming experiences for the pupils:**

- Pupils are given the opportunity to engage in a variety of sport workshops over the course of the school year provided by staff and external agencies
- Pupils are given a chance to compete in various individual and team sports such as camogie, hurling, football, basketball and athletics
- The school band involves pupils from 2<sup>nd</sup> class up to 6<sup>th</sup> class, giving children the opportunity to learn a new instrument each year and perform bi-annually at town events
- A range of extra-curricular activities are available to pupils throughout the school year
- Classrooms are equipped with interactive whiteboards and differing forms of technology from laptops, chrome books and iPads which allow all students to engage with and access the curriculum
- There are several committees in operation in the school which give a voice to the pupils of the school and provide them with decision making opportunities and leadership experience. Such committees are: The Students Council, The Green School Committee, The Active School Committee, The Diversity committee and The Health Promoting Committee.
- Senior Classes participate in various projects during the school year which focus on building pupils' business and enterprise skills such as the JEP and Bizworld programmes

- The Stay Safe, Walk Tall, RSE and Weaving Wellbeing programmes are taught throughout the school

#### **4. Rewarding good attendance**

- The class with the best attendance for each month is acknowledged with a class certificate and a trophy at the monthly all-school assembly

#### **5. Community Links**

- When pupils make the transition from primary to secondary school, their attendance is communicated to the schools in question by means of the Education Passport
- Town schools collaborate on the school calendar in relation to holiday planning to support attendance from families with children attending different schools. 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.

Attendance Strategy following a meeting with EWO on 28/11/2018- The practical steps. (An addendum to our current policy)

1. Teacher identifies pupils with 20% or greater absenteeism rate and report to principal
2. It is established whether such cases at 1 above are genuine cases for concern having gone through notes or lack thereof, sent in by parents to explain absences.
3. The principal and deputy principal presents the evidence (printed off Aladdin) to the parents and discusses a way forward.
4. If after having monitored the situation subsequently an improvement is not noticed the parents are then asked to attend an informal “Attendance Clinic” with our E.W.O. This meeting will also be attended by the principal and deputy principal.
5. Should the intervention at step 4 fail to yield the desired attendance improvement for a pupil, a referral will be sent to the education welfare service in relation to the case. The process is now at a formal stage. The E.W.O. will now lead up the proceedings from this point.

N.B. The current Túsla system of reporting pupils with over 20 days absence twice yearly does not necessarily highlight priority cases for automatic follow up by an E.W.O. This is where we invoke step 5 above.

## **Strategies for Responding to Poor Attendance**

### **1. School Climate and Ethos**

- Scoil Chroí Naofa endeavours to create a safe, welcoming environment for our pupils and their parents/guardians.
- Staff make every effort to ensure that the children are happy.
- Kindness, compassion and understanding is encouraged and nurtured in our school ethos.
- Staff are vigilant so that risks to good attendance such as disadvantage, bullying etc. are identified early.
- 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.

### **2. Attending to individuals and groups who require additional support**

- Pupils from families where there has been a history of poor attendance are monitored more closely and interventions are staged if patterns of poor attendance emerge such as principal meeting with parent, letter sent home regarding poor attendance and logging attendance patterns

### **3. Dialogue with Parents and Pupils**

- Staff do their best to engage with, understand and respond to the underlying reasons why a pupil has non-attendance in order to prevent the problem getting worse by talking to pupils and by listening to them supportively and compassionately
- Class teachers engage with parents where possible to ascertain reasons why pupils have unexplained absences.
- Class teachers emphasise to parents where necessary the importance of regular attendance and the negative impact of non-attendance on pupil development, achievement and self-esteem
- The principal engages parents of poor attenders and puts supports in place to ensure that their children can attend school e.g. set targets for attendance, purchasing an alarm clock, providing advice etc
- The principal follows up and re-engages families of poor attenders to re-establish their commitment to setting targets and improving
- In an instance of no improvement in attendance, the principal advises parents of their legal obligation under the Education Act 2000 and the likelihood of a referral to Tusla's Educational Welfare Services

### **4. EWO Involvement**

- A post holder sends weekly updates to the EWO regarding pupils with recurring poor attendance who have been referred on to Tusla
- The Attendance Officer gave the Principal a handout entitled "School Attendance Strategy Booklet" which outlines tips on helping schools, teachers and parents improve school attendance. See Appendix.

### **5. Involvement of School bodies**

- Principal reports to Board of Management regarding the general attendance of pupils during the school year

## **ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES**

It is the responsibility of the school community to promote good school attendance and implement this policy under the guidance of the Board of Management.

### **The Board of Management**

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-concept and self-worth in the children.
- Support is provided for pupils who have special educational needs. Internal communication procedures are in place to inform teachers of the special needs of pupils.
- A special reward system will be used for promoting good attendance at school.
- The assistance of the Education Welfare Officer is utilised.
- 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 will:

- Ensure that the Pupil Online Database 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 a school year.
  - If a pupil has been suspended for a period of six or more days.
- Inform parents of a decision to contact the Education Welfare Officer of concerns regarding a pupil.
- Insofar as is practicable, promote the importance of good school attendance among pupils, parents and staff

### **Class Teacher**

- Maintain the class e-roll-book in accordance with procedure.
- Keep a record of explained and unexplained absences.
- Encourage pupils to attend regularly and punctually
- Praise pupils for good attendance
- Engage with pupils with poor attendance in order to ascertain the reason for the same and to plan for supporting the pupil
- Notify the post holder and Principal of any concerns regarding the attendance of any child.

### **Attendance Post holder**

- Complete online attendance in the event of a teacher being absent
- Collate monthly attendance figures for inclusion in the Leabhar Tinrimh
- Inform the principal when a child is coming on the radar as having an attendance issue
- Inform the principal when a child is reaching 20 days absence
- Ensure that class teachers follow up pupils who have unexplained absences
- Furnish data to the EWO if and when required

**Parents/guardians:**

- Protecting your child's right to education.
- Making sure their children understand that parents support a good school attendance practice;
- 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.
- Ensuring regular and punctual school attendance.
- Discussing planned absences with the school. Notifying the school if their children cannot attend for any reason.
- Contacting the school immediately, if they have concerns about absence or other related school matters Working with the school and education welfare service to resolve any attendance problems
- Refraining, if at all possible, from taking holidays during school time
- Ensuring, insofar as is possible, that children's appointments (with dentists etc), are arranged for times outside of school hours..
- 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.

**Pupils**

- Pupils have the clear responsibility to attend school regularly and punctually.
- Pupils are responsible for promptly passing on absence notes from parents to their class teacher.
- Pupils are responsible for passing school correspondence to their parents, on the specified day.

**SUCCESS CRITERIA**

The following will provide some practical indicators of the success of this policy:

- An increase in annual attendance rates
- Board of Management, Staff and parents/guardians are very aware of their legal obligations under the Education (Welfare) Act 2000
- Teachers are more vigilant.
- Feedback from staff and parents. Formal parent-teacher meetings which are held once a year. Parents are also invited to meet with teachers to discuss Individual Education Plans and Individual Profile Learning Programmes. Teachers also meet with parents if there are any concerns throughout the year.
- End of year reports are issued for all pupils. Attendance is noted, as part and parcel of the whole report.

**ATTENDANCE POLICY**

- Attendance Policy has been updated by Cathriona according to the Attendance Strategy and has been forwarded to TUSLA 2017/2018
- An attendance trophy has been purchased is presented to the class with the best attendance record for each month.

## **RATIFICATION AND COMMUNICATION**

The Board of Management ratified this policy in January 2019

**REVIEWED DATE: January 2024**

Signed: *Bernie Ryan*  
Chairperson

Signed: *Fergal Naughton*  
Principal

## **Appendix 1: WHAT PARENTS CAN DO TO IMPROVE SCHOOL ATTENDANCE?**

### **After school every day:**

- Make sure that the homework is done as early as possible
- Keep the school uniform for school wear only

### **The night before:**

- Try and have ready, School bag, Lunch and Uniform
- Get your child to bed at a reasonable hour every night
- Set the alarm on your mobile phone or the alarm clock for the morning

### **Before school every day:**

- Get up on time in the morning so that you will not be rushing
- Don't allow your child to watch television in the morning
- Get your child to eat some breakfast every morning
- Talk positively about school
- If possible don't allow your child to go to the shop in the morning as this delays them and they could be late for school
- Let your child know that you will be there to collect him/her in the afternoon or that you will be waiting at home when they come in
- You know your child best. Only keep your child at home if he/she is really sick.

## **TOP TIPS FROM PARENTS**

- Get your child to bed in good time on school days and Sunday nights. Plenty of sleep and rest will help a child stay alert.
- Remember to set the alarm clock in good time so that you can get your child to school on time.
- Help your child pack his or her schoolbag and prepare your child's lunch the night before so you and your child have more time to get ready in the morning.

### **How you can help your child to attend school regularly**

- Make education important in your home and let your child know it is not okay to miss school.
- Listen to your child. Be interested in his or her news about school and ask about what he or she is doing.
- Help your child to be proud of a good attendance record.
- Build your child's confidence by praising him or her when he or she does well.
- Read letters and reports from the school and know the school rules.
- Go to school meetings and get to know the teacher, staff and your child's friends.
- Don't take family holidays during school term.
- Be alert for reasons why your child may not want to go to school. If your child finds school work hard, talk to the school right away.

## **WHAT CAN TEACHERS DO TO IMPROVE SCHOOL ATTENDANCE?**

- Welcome students every morning
- Praise each student for their effort
- Give students a reasonable amount of homework

- Give homework every night from Monday to Thursday.
- Give no homework at weekends
- Reward students for good attendance

#### **WHAT CAN SCHOOLS DO TO IMPROVE SCHOOL ATTENDANCE?**

- Promote attendance and reward efforts for good attendance.
- Keep up to date attendance records that are reviewed regularly by class teacher, post holder and Principal so that the staff can respond to patterns of non-attendance as well as patterns of good or improved attendance
- Create positive systems of reward for good and improved attendance
- Develop a greater awareness amongst the pupils and their parents of the long-term benefits to be gained from a good attendance record
- Ensure a consistent approach to attendance promotion throughout the school
- Involve all stakeholders in supporting high expectations for school attendance and attainment