

# Attendance Policy

## Introduction

Changing social habits and patterns necessitated the updating of the school's attendance policy. The redrafting was a collaborative school process involving staff and Board of Management, following initial drafting by the staff.

## 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

## Relation to School Ethos

The school promotes positive home-school contacts, not only in relation to the welfare of children, but in relation to all aspects of school life. This policy is in keeping with the school ethos through the provision of a safe, secure and caring school environment and the furthering of positive home-school links.

## Roles and Responsibilities

All staff have an input into the implementation of the policy. Class teachers record individual patterns of attendance and the Principal make returns to the Educational Welfare Services (EWS).

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 opens at 9.05am. School begins at 9.25 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.

## **Recording and Reporting Attendance**

The school attendance of individual pupils is recorded in the Leabhar Rolla (Roll Book) of each class on a daily basis.

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 before little break each morning. Any pupil not present will be marked absent for the day unless the school has been notified of a late arrival. The roll book may not be altered once it has been filled in. A note from parents/guardians is required to explain each absence. Such notes will be retained by the class teacher. Parents/guardians must also sign their child out if he/she departs early during the school day.

Parents/guardians are made aware, through this policy, of the requirements of the EWS particularly the by-law relating to absences of more than 20 days per school year.

All students who exceed 20 days cumulative absence must be included in the absence report submitted by the school. Where we have concerns regarding a pupil's attendance, a referral will be made.

The following strategies will be implemented:

- At day 15, a note will be sent to parents making them aware that their child has missed 15 days and that an absence of 20 days will be reported to the EWS.
- After 20 days have been reached a meeting will be arranged to discuss matters of attendance and the parents' responsibility.

They are notified in writing on the end of year report of the total number of absences during the school year.

## **Promoting Attendance**

The school promotes good attendance by:

- 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

## **Educational Welfare Services**

The Educational Welfare Services will be informed if:

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

The EWS 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**

St. Paul's N.S. endeavours 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 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 20 days or more are automatically reported and may be referred to the Educational Welfare Services.

A Parent evening for Junior Infants is organized where the attendance Policy is discussed. There is a focus on the value of regular attendance and on the importance of developing good attendance habits from Junior Infants onwards.

The calendar for the coming school year is published annually in June and is available on the school's 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.

The question of equality of access is addressed through the school's policy on "Equality of Access"

### **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 twice 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.

### **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. Transfer on Primary Online Database will take place.

### **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.

The school maintains communication with local second-level schools through the Home Youth Liaison Service in order to make the transition for pupils as easy as possible.

### **Communication with other Schools**

Pupils transferring from St. Paul's N.S. to a post primary school will have their Education Passport forwarded on receipt of confirmation of enrolment.

### **Communication with Parents**

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

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 the school if their child/children, 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..
- Happy confident well adjusted children
- Positive parental feedback
- Teacher vigilance.

**Ratification and Communication**

The Board of Management ratified this policy on the 16<sup>th</sup> May 2022

Signed: Rev Andrew Ison (Chairperson, BOM)

Date: 16/5/22

Signed: Mary Bourke (Principal)

Date: 16/5/22