



Principal: Mr. Ken Scully M.Ed.

School Attendance Policy

Introduction

This policy document was drawn up to ensure and maintain a high level of attendance at school by all pupils. Establishing good attendance habits from the very beginning of a child's time at school is very important.

Aims and Objectives

The aims and objectives of this policy are as follows:

- Ensuring that pupils are registered accurately and efficiently
- Ensuring that pupil's attendance is recorded daily, encouraging full attendance where possible
- Identifying pupils at risk of poor attendance and at risk of leaving school early
- Promoting a positive learning environment
- Enabling all pupils to avail fully of learning opportunities
- Raising awareness of the importance of school attendance
- 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.

Compliance with School Ethos

This policy complements the school ethos of encouraging and supporting children in living their lives to the full, in a caring environment, where the welfare and interests of the children is paramount.

The Education Welfare Act 2000

Under the terms of the Education Welfare Act 2000 (amended by the Child and Family Agency Act 2013) schools are obliged to:

- Maintain a record of students attending school
- Record school attendance and notify the relevant Educational Welfare Officer of particular problems relating to attendance
- Support students with difficulties in attending school on a regular basis
- Prepare and implement a school attendance strategy to encourage, in a positive way, regular school attendance and an appreciation of learning within the school
- Prepare and implement a code of behaviour, setting standards of behaviour and disciplinary procedures for the school.
- Liaise with other schools and relevant bodies on school attendance issues

Punctuality

School begins at 8.50am. All pupils and staff are expected to be on time. The school motto in relation to punctuality is 'In Your Line, for Ten to 9'. There is a clock on the yard gate and at the school reception that is colour coded to show pupils when they are on time for school and when they are late.

- It is the responsibility of the class teacher to maintain a record of children who arrive late to school, leave school early or are collected late. This can be recorded on Aladdin.
- A child will be recorded as being late to school if they arrive after 9am.
- Parents/guardians must provide a note if a child departs early during the school day. These notes can be left in pupils' journals or kept in pupils' files as appropriate.
- Where teachers see a pattern of poor punctuality emerging, they should bring this to the attention of parents/guardians at an early stage
- If there is still no improvement in punctuality then a letter should be sent home notifying parents / guardians of the issue. (Template letters on the school server)
- If punctuality continues to be an issue then teachers should bring the issue to the attention of the Principal / Special Duties teacher (Pamela O'Keeffe)

Procedures for Ongoing Monitoring of Attendance

Ms. O'Keeffe has, under the terms of her Special Duties Post, undertaken to monitor school attendance and policy development in this area. She will be available to support, advise and remind staff on an ongoing basis of how these procedures are being implemented.

- Class teachers are required to call and mark the DES Electronic Roll Book (Aladdin system) on a daily basis
- An electronic copy of the Leabhar Tinrimh (Attendance Book) is maintained on the Aladdin system. At the end of each month a hard copy of that month's Leabhar Tinrimh is printed by the Special Duties teacher (Pamela O'Keeffe), signed by the Principal and filed.
- The school secretary records the annual attendance of each individual pupil on the Primary Online Database (POD), together with information provided in enrolment forms (Pupil's Name, Date of Birth, Address, and Religion).

Keeping records of Absences:

- The rolla is taken each morning at 10.35am. Any pupil not present at this time will be marked absent for the day.
- Parents will be informed of their responsibilities in relation to school attendance, and will be requested to provide written explanations for all absences from school, regardless of the length or nature of the absence.
- For pupils in 1st to 6th class the main means of communication between home and school is the School Homework Journal. There is a specific section in the journal, Explanation of Absence, which parents are asked to use.
- For pupils in Junior and Senior Infants parents can be given a standard note to complete, sign and return to the class teacher (Template letter on the school server)
- Notes written in Homework Journals can be left in the journal.
- Individual notes and other written communication around attendance, such as Medical Certificates and other explanations for student absences should be kept in the pupil files. These will be retained for possible inspection by the National Educational Welfare Officer.
- When a child is marked absent on Aladdin, teachers should ensure that they enter the reasons for the absence in the appropriate section, (i.e. under Edit Absence Reasons tab) as soon as that information becomes available. This allows teachers to categorise the absence, such as Unexplained, Illness, Urgent family reason etc. This information will form part of the reporting procedure to the Educational Welfare Services section of the Tusla - Child and Family Agency

- Letters will be sent home, drawing parents' attention to poor attendance, after 10 and 20 days absence
- If a child misses school and a written explanation is not sent in, the class teacher must send home a letter requesting this. (Template letter on the school server)
- Each class teacher has a responsibility to monitor the attendance of the children in their care. Teachers should be aware of emerging patterns in relation to poor attendance.

What to do when a child reaches 10 days absence:

- It is school policy that when a child has been absent for 10 days the class teacher writes to his/her parents notifying them of the absence
- A sample letter is attached and is saved on the school server

What to do when a child reaches 20 days absence

- When a child has been absent for 20 days we notify the Educational Welfare Services section of Tusla - Child and Family Agency
- The School has no discretion over handing this information on to Tusla - Child and Family Agency, regardless of the reason for absence.
- However, Tusla - Child and Family Agency will take account of absences due to illness, bereavement or other such circumstances
- There are four periods during the year when we are obliged to report information to Tusla - Child and Family Agency. Class teachers will be responsible for providing information on these absences. Additionally, Tusla - Child and Family Agency request an Annual Report at the end of each school year.

Procedures for Serious Absences

- Where teachers see a pattern of poor attendance emerging, they should bring this to the attention of parents at an early stage: poor attendance patterns are more easily changed if attention is drawn to them at an early stage.
- The Educational Welfare Act, 2000 requires schools to notify the Educational Welfare Services section of the Child and Family Agency (Tusla) of pupils who have been absent for 20 days and who are aged over 6 years of age.
- However, in this school, we will be monitoring the attendance patterns of children from when they start school in Junior Infants, and we will inform the Tusla - Child and Family Agency of such absences, in order to seek to address the matter and deal with it as early as possible in the child's school career.
- The class teacher in conjunction with the school will follow a series of progressive steps, as per EWS Pre-Referral Checklist, when they are concerned about a pupil's attendance (A PDF copy of the checklist is saved to the school server)
- If an 'at risk' pupil is identified then the class teacher will complete the Pre-Referral Checklist.
- 'At risk' pupils 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.
- Where the School has cause for concern over a pupil's attendance for whatever reason and in spite of all efforts at resolution made at school level and in collaboration with the home a formal written and signed Referral will be made to the Educational Welfare Service.

Reporting Absenteeism to Educational Welfare Services (EWS)

Since the inception of the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000 schools are obliged to report on school attendance. Ms. O'Keeffe has, under the terms of her Special Duties Post, is responsible for these reports. The following reports will be submitted:

Student Absence Report:

This report is submitted four times each year on those students falling within the following criteria:

- a student has been absent from school for a cumulative total of twenty days or more

- a student's name is to be removed from the school register for any reason
- a student has been suspended for a cumulative total of six or more days
- the school has expelled a student
- a principal is concerned about a student's attendance

Annual Attendance Report (AAR)

The Annual Attendance Report is submitted at the end of each academic year and provides information on levels of attendance. Schools are required to provide the following data in the AAR:

- Total number of days lost through student absence in the entire school year.
- Total number of students who were absent for 20 days or more during the school year.
- Total number of students expelled in respect of whom all appeal processes have been exhausted or not availed of during the school year.
- Total number of students who were suspended for any number of days during the school year.

Transfer to Another School / Communication with Other Schools

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.

When a Principal receives notification that a child has been registered elsewhere he/she must 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 or she considers appropriate. This applies to pupils who transfer between primary schools and to pupils who transfer from primary to second-level education.

Communication with other Schools

- When a child transfers from Scoil Ghráinne CNS to another school, the schools records on attendance, academic progress etc will be forwarded on receipt of written notification of the transfer
- When a child transfers into Scoil Ghráinne CNS confirmation of transfer will be communicated to the child's previous school, and appropriate records sought
- Pupils transferring from Scoil Ghráinne CNS to a post primary school will have their records forwarded on receipt of confirmation of enrolment
- The school will also follow the four steps to update POD as per Circular 0033_2015

Strategies to Promote and Support Good Attendance

As already stated, there is a need for regular review of school attendance in each class. The primary responsibility for this lies with the class teacher. Teachers should therefore actively review the attendance patterns of all children in their care.

The school will continue to encourage full or near full attendance through the following strategies and approaches:

- Rewarding pupils with full attendance each quarter, by giving them a Homework Pass and / or a certificate
- By acknowledging excellent attendance at the end of the school year, with certificates and trophies for excellent attendance
- Through the implementation of the You Can Do It! programme the school hopes to support the development of the social and emotional capabilities that all pupils need to reach their academic potential in school, to experience wellbeing and create positive relationships with others.
- By creating a safe and welcoming environment for our pupils and their parents/guardians.
- By being vigilant so that risks to good attendance such as disadvantage, bullying etc are identified early (see below for further details)

Identifying 'at risk' pupils:

- While actively reviewing attendance patterns of children in their care, teachers should be vigilant so that 'at risk' pupils are identified early
- 'At risk' pupils 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.
- When this occurs, teachers should follow the steps outlined under the Procedures for Serious Absences section above

Communication with Parents/Guardians:

- Good communication with parents/guardians is key to encouraging good attendance
- By consulting with parents/guardians when reviewing policies the aim is to promote a high-level of co-operation among the school community.
- The calendar for each coming school year is published annually in June and a reminder is published in September. 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 school also informs all parents of the implications of non-attendance as per the Education Welfare Act, 2000. (This information is disseminated at least once a year in a school newsletter). Specific reference is made to the consequences of long absences on children's progress in language acquisition and general academic progress, and also to the fact that children can become unsettled and find it difficult to readapt to their class situation after a long absence.

End of Year Procedures

At the end of the school year, each teacher will review the attendance patterns of the class for the year. The attendance of each pupil will be reported to parents/guardians as a percentage on their child's report card.

Success Criteria

The success of any Attendance Policy is measured through:

- Improved attendance levels as measured through Leabhar rolla records and statistical returns
- Happy confident well adjusted children
- Positive parental feedback
- Teacher vigilance.

Implementation/Ratification and Review

This policy has been in operation in Scoil Ghráinne CNS since April 2015. It was reviewed in September 2015 and will be reviewed again in May 2016.