



Scoil an Linbh Íosa

Policy on Attendance

Introduction

This policy document was drawn up by the Board of Management of Scoil an Linbh Íosa, in consultation with staff and parents/ guardians. The Board wishes to raise awareness in the whole school community of the importance of attendance and the correlation between high levels of attendance and success in school.

Rationale

The policy was drafted for the following reasons:

- the Board of Management wishes to comply with such legislation as:
 - The Education Act, 1998
 - The Education (Welfare) Act, 2000
- the Board of Management wishes to promote and encourage regular attendance as an essential factor in our pupils' learning.

Relationship to the Characteristic Spirit of the School

In Scoil an Linbh Íosa, we recognise that attendance is more than just being present in school. We also understand it to mean participation in and engagement with the learning process. We endeavour to create a caring environment that promotes attendance and ensures the best possible outcomes for the children and their families. We also endeavour to provide every child with the opportunity to actively participate in all school activities.

See Appendix 1: Mission Statement

Aims of this policy

This policy aims to:

- raise awareness of the importance of regular school attendance
- identify pupils at risk of leaving school early
- promote and foster positive attitudes to learning
- ensure compliance with the requirements of the relevant legislation

Whole School Approach to promote Attendance Participation and Retention

School organisation:

- School opens 15 minutes before starting time and children are supervised in their classrooms.
- Children are greeted each morning at the main doors by members of staff.
- School is warm and inviting.
- Pupils are expected to wear the correct school uniform and if parents/guardians have difficulty in providing this, support is offered.

- If a child has no lunch, and if one cannot be provided for him/her, the school will provide a slight snack and a drink.
- The school secretaries are open and friendly to the children and their parents/guardians. They consistently follow up with parents/guardians on their queries in a considerate and confidential manner. They provide information and support to new families.
- The school ensures that the whole school environment is inclusive and favourable to pupils with chronic conditions. (See Policy on Administration of Medication)
- Children are allocated to different class groupings each year.
- All school policies are reviewed regularly.

Staff:

- The teaching staff collaborates in the planning and implementation of the primary school curriculum, so as to provide a stimulating learning environment for all, including those with special needs.
- Teachers use a variety of methodologies to accommodate different learning styles.
- The staff are committed to building positive relationships with both the pupils and their parents/guardians.
- The staff engage in ongoing professional development.

Curricular and Extra Curricular Activities:

- Children are given opportunities to engage in a wide variety of experiences including Green Schools, Discovery Science, Art/Drama workshops, school choir, School Garden, Creative Writing, School Concert, Sports day, After School Sports, School teams, Quizzes, Seachtain na Gaeilge, Witch and Wizard Walk and Teddy Bear's Picnic.
- Children are taken on outings to explore the local community.
- Children are taken on school tours to places that are of interest to them.
- All children are encouraged to participate in after school activities based in the school.

Behaviour:

- There is a strong emphasis on promoting positive behaviour.
- We have high expectations, good behaviour is affirmed and rewarded.
- Children are engaged in drawing up the class rules.
- The Code of Behaviour is regularly reviewed by the Board of Management.
- The school yard is supervised and children are encouraged to take part in playground games.
- Children are monitored on the yard and if children are not engaging with others the matter is addressed in an appropriate manner.

Resources:

- The B.O.M endeavours to provide the necessary resources to support a positive learning environment.
- Children have access to information and communication technologies to enhance their learning.
- The B.O.M. is committed to maintaining the school building to a high standard.

Parents/Guardians:

- Parents/guardians are encouraged to meet with their children's teachers regularly.
- Parents/guardians are encouraged to be involved in the life of the school.
- Parent Teacher Association plays an active role in the school.
- Meetings are organised to inform parents on matters relating to their child's education.
- Attention of parents/guardians is drawn to attendance in newsletters and also at the induction meeting for new parents/guardians.

Wider Community:

- There are strong links between the school and the local community through the church, G.A.A, tennis club, soccer club, St. Farnan's (local secondary school).
- Pupils in 6th class participate in a Transition to Secondary School programme.
- Teachers of 6th class liaise with the local secondary schools.

Special Education Needs:

- Children with special needs and their parents/guardians are supported by the whole school community.
- The curriculum is differentiated to meet the needs of the pupils.
- The school provides a July Programme for children with autism.
- The learning support/resource teachers work closely with the class teachers to provide the most appropriate support.
- The SNAs provide appropriate support for the children with special needs, and are mindful of promoting independence.

Communication:

- The attention of parents/guardians is drawn to attendance in newsletters and also at the induction meeting for new parents/guardians.
- The attention of children is regularly drawn to both attendance and punctuality at assembly.
- At the end of the year certificates are given to those children who had full attendance.
- The school's homework policy, drawn up in consultation with parents/guardians, clearly outlines the school's expectations in terms of the quantity of homework assigned. There is a consistent approach to homework throughout the school.
- Parents are frequently reminded in newsletters and also at parent meetings to visit the school if they have any concerns in relation to their children. The school is committed to working closely with parents/guardians to ensure that the child's experience in school is a happy one.
- The calendar for each school year is published annually 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.

Strategies to counteract Reluctance to Attend/Participate/Engage, Lateness and Absences

It is understandable that anybody can be reluctant to attend, be delayed or absent on an occasion. However, if a pattern is seen to be developing, it is the responsibility of the school to address the matter. The class teacher will keep a record of poor attendance and punctuality. Some or all of the following approaches may be taken:

- the teacher speaks to the child
- teacher writes note in homework journal
- the teacher and or principal meets with parent
- positive behaviour plan is put in place
- classroom support plan is drawn up
- classroom checklist
- where necessary, differentiated work will be given
- in the case of child with special needs, some extra supports might be required e.g. visual schedule or child might need hurdle help
- a child may need to access support from the SEN Team
- support from outside agency may be required

Recording and Reporting of Attendance and Non-Attendance

- The school attendance of individual pupils is recorded on the Aladdin System each day.

- 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 at 9.50am each morning. Any pupil not present will be marked absent for the day. A note from parents/guardians is required to explain each absence. Such notes will be retained by the class teacher. If a child departs early during the school day, the adult collecting him/ her must sign him/her out.
- Late arrivals and early departures are recorded in the sign in book at the administration office.
- Parents/guardians are informed, 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.
- The school must inform Tusla in writing, where a child has missed 20 or more days in a school year, where attendance is irregular, where a pupil is removed from the school register and where a child is suspended or expelled for 6 days or more.
- The school has developed a good relationship with Tusla personnel and there is ongoing communication in relation to children who are at risk.

Procedures 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 Tusla 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 Tusla, following all reasonable efforts to consult with the child’s parents and the Principal of the school, may serve a ‘School Attendance Notice’ on any parent/guardian whom he/she concludes is failing or neglecting to address the child’s attendance. A successful case taken against the parent/guardian may result in a fine and/or imprisonment.

Reasons for absence are recorded and reported to Tusla 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

When a child transfers 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.

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.

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 parent/guardian awareness of their legal obligations under the Education (Welfare) Act 2000

Roles and Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the Principal and staff to implement this policy under the guidance of the school's Board of Management.

Implementation

This policy will be implemented immediately following ratification by the Board of Management and communication to the Parents' Association.

Ratification and Review

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management.

Signed: _____

Chairperson, B.O.M