

**Scoil Phádraig**

**Attendance Strategy**

**Policy**

# Attendance Strategy Policy

## Introductory Statement

This Attendance Strategy Policy was formulated by the Staff of Scoil Phádraig during the school year 2010/2011. The Board of Management and Parents' Association were also consulted.

## Rationale

Scoil Phádraig decided to review its attendance because;

- It is a requirement under the Education Welfare Act 2000
- We want to ensure that our pupils continue to attend regularly.
- It is important to encourage pupils to be in attendance.

## Relationship to the Characteristic Spirit of the School

This Attendance Strategy Policy is in accordance with the School's Ethos and Vision.

We, in Scoil Phádraig, seek to celebrate the uniqueness and importance of each child. We seek to create, develop, foster and maintain an environment which is Safe, Happy, Welcoming and Inclusive. We will strive to meet the various needs of each pupil – intellectual, social, emotional, physical and spiritual. The full school community – Staff members, Pupils, Parents and Board of Management members will work in co-operation to bring our vision to reality. Our everyday, lived reality is based on the Christian values of **Peace, Honesty and Respect.**

## Aims

By introducing this Policy, Scoil Phádraig hopes

- to comply with requirements under Education Welfare Act 2000 and guidelines from the N.E.W.B.
- to encourage pupils to attend school regularly and punctually.
- to raise awareness of the importance of school attendance amongst all in the School Community.
- to enhance the learning environment where children can make progress in all aspects of their development.
- to promote positive attitudes to learning.
- to ensure that the system of rules, rewards and sanctions are implemented in a fair and consistent manner, that encourages pupils to attend school.
- to identify pupils at risk of leaving school 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, as far as is practicable, obstacles to school attendance.

## Defining and Recording Non- Attendance

Parents are obliged to cause a child between the ages of 6 and 16 to attend school, on each day that the school is open for instruction.

## How do we record non-attendance?

Official Roll-call occurs at 9.50a.m. Each teacher calls and marks the Roll, daily. Parents are informed, at the initial meeting for Parents of Junior Infants, of the importance of good attendance at school. Our School Policy Booklet, informs parents that:

- children are required to attend school regularly and to be punctual.
- If a child is absent for 20 days or more in any School Year, the school is obliged to contact the National Educational Welfare Board, as per Education Act 2000.
- They are also told that a note from the pupil's Parents/Guardians is required to explain absences.
- Prior notification is required, if a child has to leave school early. Parents are required to sign the booklet in the office, when children are being collected early.
- **Late notes;** Any pupil arriving late for school should have a note explaining the reason for the delay.

Each Teacher has a **Late Arrival Notebook** in which to record the details of any child regularly coming late to school. **The Late Arrival Notebook** in every class (from February 2011), to be passed to next Class Teacher, in June.

## Punctuality

- School is open from 8 45a.m. to 2 45p.m. Children are expected to be in their classrooms no later than 9.00a.m. All pupils and staff are expected to be on time.
- The School will contact Parents/Guardians in the event of pupils being **consistently** late.
- Due allowance will be made for delays caused by local traffic.
- The Principal is obliged, under the Education Welfare Act, to report children who are persistently late to the Education Welfare Board.

## School Uniform

- If a child regularly comes to school without a uniform/complete uniform, his teacher will inform the Principal. The Principal will discuss the issue with Parents/Guardians. Principal will regularly remind pupils at “**Morning Assembly**” about our uniform regulations.

## **Whole school strategies to promote attendance may include these and/or other:**

- **Environment:** We strive to make each classroom a safe and welcoming environment for our pupils and their parents. Pupils are registered accurately and efficiently. Pupil attendance is recorded daily, at 9.50a.m.
- **Early Intervention:** As mentioned above, we inform parents of the importance of good attendance at school. If a child is not attending regularly, we make contact with the parents, to discuss our concerns.
- **Homework:** We need to be aware of the sanctions we impose for non-completion of homework, in case these might cause a child to miss school. Children should always be encouraged and helped in every way possible.
- **Transport:** We have a reliable private bus service to the school.
- **Lunches:** If a child arrives to school without a lunch/breakfast the teacher will
  - (a) inform School Secretary, who will make contact with Parents/Guardians.
  - (b) arrange for some lunch to be obtained from a brother, if possible.
  - (c) arrange for other pupils to offer to share some lunch.
  - (d) ask staff to provide some lunch.
- **Assessment:** We, as a staff, need to be aware that some children might miss school on a Friday, when they know there will be a test. If we notice such a pattern emerging, we need to address the issue with the child and his parents.
- **Equality of Participation:** We do charge for certain events but inability to pay will not preclude any child. We are also aware of families that have a number of children, so reductions are offered to these families. We are careful to give the children adequate time to source materials required for class - tin-whistle, hurleys, costumes, swimming togs, football boots, etc. (The school maintains a supply of some of the above for use, as required).
- **Reports:** We report the total number of days missed in a year, to parents, in the End of Year Report. Where there is a concern over attendance this would be discussed at Parent/Teacher Meetings. It may be useful to explain what proportion of the year has been missed.
- **Curriculum:** We need to be aware that there may be aspects of the operation/management/teaching of the curriculum that may contribute to problems relating to school attendance, on the part of some pupils.
- **Timetabling:** Teachers will endeavour to organize individual class timetables so that “interesting subjects” e.g. P.E., Art, Drama, Computers etc., are on different days.
- **Parents:** We need to continue to communicate the requirements of schools and of parents under the Education Welfare Act, to parents. We can refer parents to “Don’t let your child miss out” (leaflet for Parents, N.E.W.B. 2004).

- **Support:** It is important in the case of a child who is not attending regularly that both the Class Teacher and the Principal would liaise with the parents and support them in their efforts to get their child to school.
- **Learning Needs:** The learning needs of each child must be to the fore, at all times, in our planning. We must ensure that we are adequately catering for the learning needs of “at risk” pupils by offering a relevant curriculum and by using the environment and life experiences of the child.
- **Staff Development:** As a staff, we will be always open to on going professional development. We will make provision for teachers to attend training in new initiatives and programmes, thus ensuring that we are up to date with best practice, in all areas of Education.
- **Rewards:** We reward good attendance at the end of each school year, by presenting Certificates to all pupils who have **not** missed a day.

### Communication with other Schools/other providers

- **Information to be shared:** Curriculum, covering any areas of difficulty for the child in accessing the different subjects.  
Has the child had the support of an S.N.A.?  
Has the child had an I.E.P.?  
Whether any Special Programmes have proved useful in helping the child – Literacy, Numeracy, Phonics, Computer, Rainbows, etc.  
Learning Support/Resource?
- **Local Links:** The school could liaise with the following Clubs and Organisations;  
Clane G.A.A. Club  
Clane Rugby/Soccer Club  
Scouts  
Clane Tennis Club  
Clane Community Games  
Clane Local Development is a particularly helpful organisation that runs a programme to bridge the gap between Primary School and Secondary School.

### Strategies in the event of Non-Attendance

(The school must inform the Education Officer in writing where a child is expelled or suspended for 6 days or more, where the child has missed 20 days or more in a school year, where attendance is irregular and when the pupil is removed from the school register).

- Parents must be informed and reminded of their statutory duties outlined in the Education Welfare Act, in relation to causing their children to attend school. Refer to “Don’t let your child miss out” (leaflet for Parents, N.E.W.B.)
- **Parents must be informed and reminded of the school’s duties, outlined in the Education Welfare Act, in relation to:**
  - reporting the non-attendance of a child to the Education Welfare Officer.
  - 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 he concludes is failing or neglecting to cause the child to attend school.
  - the possible consequence of a successful case being taken against the parents (fine or imprisonment).

### Education Welfare Officer

The school will contact The Educational Welfare Board, on a regular basis, to report or discuss any issues of non-attendance.

### In-house procedures

- The Class Teacher will alert the Principal if any pupil is showing signs of a pattern of non-attendance, particularly in the case of a child who regularly misses a Monday and/or a Friday. The Class Teacher will closely monitor any child who is approaching 20 days absences. The Principal will follow up with the Parents of any child who is showing signs of developing a pattern of non-attendance. The Principal will always stress to parents, pupils and teachers the importance of regular and consistent attendance.
- Parents are expected to send a note to the child's Teacher to explain any absence. These notes are included in the homework diary (1<sup>st</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> classes).
- For Junior Infants and Senior Infants classes, parents are requested to "send in a note" after each absence. Teacher then transfers information on to the "Standard Note" form, as per more senior classes. These notes are given to the Secretary, on a weekly basis and are stored securely in the office. If a parent has a literacy problem, this information can be communicated orally to the teacher who will give a written record to the Principal/Secretary.
- If the school has a concern about the attendance of any child, the Class Teacher will contact the parent, to discuss these concerns. If the problem remains unresolved, the parent(s) will be invited to meet the Principal, to look at ways to improve attendance levels.
- It may be helpful to make contact with other agencies, in order to support a family, which is having difficulties in getting the child(ren) to school. The following agencies may offer support; N.E.P.S., Social Services, Child Guidance, St. Vincent De Paul.
- It is also necessary to consider how we can assist the child who has fallen behind in his work, because of absence from school. Each teacher will use his/her own initiative in this area. It might be helpful to prioritise areas that need to be covered.

### Procedures in relation to the removal from Register/Transfer to/from another school

- A Principal may only remove a pupil's name from the School Register when informed that the child has been enrolled in another school or when the Education Welfare Board notifies him that the child has been registered by them as being in receipt of Out of School Education.
- **Notification from the Education Welfare Officer that a child is in receipt of education outside of the regular school system (e.g. home schooling):** The Class Teacher is informed. The child is then taken off the rolls and enrolment numbers are adjusted accordingly.
- **Notification from the Education Welfare Officer that a child has enrolled in a Special School:** The class teacher is informed and the child is taken off the rolls. Enrolment numbers are adjusted accordingly.
- **Notification from another School that the child has been enrolled in that School:** When such a letter is received the Class Teacher is informed. The child's name is taken off the rolls and enrolment numbers are adjusted accordingly. All reports pertaining to that child will be forwarded to the new School.
- **Transfer to another School:** When parents remove a child from a school, the Principal is obliged to give them and the new school a certificate stating 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. We will notify the new school of any problems in relation to attendance and of such matters relating to educational progress, that are deemed appropriate.
- **Transfer from another School:** The Principal of the current school must notify the Principal of the school which the child last attended, that the child is now registered in his school.
- **Intended expulsion of a pupil:** The Board of Management will make contact with the Education Welfare Officer by phone to inform him of the Board's decision to expel a pupil. Written confirmation will also be sent.

### Pupil Absence Reports and Annual Report

The Board of Management through the Principal, will undertake to report to the Education Welfare Board quarterly, on or before the specified dates, the rates of absenteeism, numbers of suspended/expelled pupils etc., as required.

The Annual Report will also be returned by the required date.

The figures and information included in the Annual Report will be made available to The Educational Welfare Officer, if sought.

The information may also be made available to the Chairperson of the Parents' Association, if sought.

**The Collation of Information:** The School Principal, in collaboration with the School Secretary, collates all necessary details of pupil attendance/absence, in order to complete the Annual Report for the National Education Welfare Board.

**Success Criteria:** We will determine the success of this Policy by monitoring our attendance levels and noticing an improvement in over-all attendance throughout the school. We will do this by checking our rolls, register etc. Another measure of success would be increased positive feedback from teachers, parents and pupils. The Principal, in conjunction with each teacher, is responsible for evaluating its success at the end of each reporting period and particularly at the end of each school year. The Principal, in conjunction with each teacher, will co-ordinate and monitor the implementation of the strategies in this Policy.

### **Roles and Responsibility**

The following people have particular responsibility for aspects of this Policy, e.g.

#### **The School Principal will:**

- Ensure that the School Register of pupils is maintained in accordance with regulations.
- **Inform the Education Welfare Board when;**
  - (a) A pupil has been absent for 20 days or more during the course of a school year.
  - (b) A pupil has been suspended for a period of six days or more.
  - (c) When a pupil's name is removed from the register.
  - (d) Inform parents of a decision to contact the Education Welfare Officer because of concerns regarding a pupil.
  - (e) Promote the importance of good School Attendance among pupils, parents and staff.

#### **The Class Teacher will:**

- Maintain the School Roll Book, in accordance with correct procedure.
- Keep a record of explained and unexplained absences.
- Contact parents in cases where absences are not explained in writing.
- Encourage pupils to attend regularly and punctually.
- Inform the Principal of any concerns regarding the attendance of any pupil.

#### **Parents and Guardians can promote good attendance by:**

- Ensuring regular and punctual school attendance.
- Notifying the School if their child cannot attend for any reason.
- Working with the School and Education Welfare Service, to resolve any attendance problems.
- Making sure their children understand the importance of regular school attendance.
- Discussing planned absences with the school.
- Refraining, if at all possible, from taking holidays during school term.
- Showing an interest in their child's school day and homework.
- Encouraging their child to participate in school activities.
- Informing the school in writing of the reason for any absence from school.
- Ensuring, where possible that appointments (Doctors and Dentists) are arranged outside school hours.
- Contacting the school immediately, if they have concerns about absence or other school related matters.
- Notifying the school in writing if their child, particularly children in Junior classes, is to be collected by someone unknown to the class teacher.

#### **Pupils:**

- Pupils have the clear responsibility to attend school regularly and punctually.
- Pupils should inform staff if there is a problem that may lead to their absence.
- Pupils are responsible for promptly passing on absence notes from parents, to their class teacher.
- Pupils are responsible for promptly passing on school correspondence to their parents, on the same day.

**The Board of Management will ensure that:**

- The curriculum is flexible and relevant to the child's individual needs.
- The school promotes positive self-esteem in all our pupils.
- Support for pupils, with Special Educational Needs, is in place, in accordance with Department of Education and Skills Guidelines.
- Internal communication procedures are in place to inform teachers of the special needs of pupils. ("Hand-over meeting", in June).
- The assistance of the Education Welfare Officer is utilized.

**Ratification**

The Board of Management ratified this Policy at its meeting, held on the 28.03.2011.

Feedback on the Draft Policy had been received from both the Staff and Parents' Association.

**Communication**

The ratified Policy will be made available to all staff and to the Parent Body.

It will be given to all new parents of Scoil Phádraig.

**Implementation Date**

This Policy came into effect from April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2011.

**Timetable for Review**

This Policy will be reviewed as required.