



## Policy for School Attendance

Revision No 3  
January 2017

### **Introduction:**

**Rationale:** The purpose of this policy and statement is:

- To outline procedures and practices in St. Joseph's relating to attendance.
- To comply with legislation and Departmental circulars.
- To identify a clear strategy in promoting attendance and maximising attendance.
- To satisfy the requirements of the document "A Guide to Whole-School Evaluation in Primary Schools".

### **Relationship to characteristic spirit of the school:**

This statement of strategy of attendance affirms the school's commitment to attendance as an important aspect of school ethos and policy. It aims to build a culture of high expectations among all staff and with every student for the student's learning, participation and attendance.

It recognises how all areas of the student's experience at school impacts on their engagement and attendance. It places a premium on working with parents to secure high levels of attendance partnership in developing attendance policy and close working relationships with parents of individual students to address problems.

### **Aims:**

Through recording this document we hope to highlight the importance of education in the life of a child. We hope to raise the awareness of the importance of the academic and social aspects of education for a child.

We aim to:

- encourage pupils to attend school regularly and punctually.
- raise awareness of the importance of good attendance and an awareness of forming good patterns of attendance in early years.
- share the promotion of school attendance amongst all in the school community.
- Make parents aware of their responsibilities under the Education Welfare Act and practices in relation to Tusla's Education Welfare Services.
- inform the school community of its role and responsibility as outlined in the Act.
- identify pupils who may be at risk of developing school attendance problems and reporting this to Tusla's Education Welfare Services .
- ensure that the school has procedures in place to promote attendance/participation.
- ensure that the system of rules, rewards and sanctions are implemented in a fair and consistent manner that encourage pupils to attend school.
- develop, subject to available resources, links between the school and the families of children who may be at risk of developing attendance problems.
- Identify and remove, insofar as is practicable, obstacles to school attendance,

### **Defining and Recording Attendance:**

- Children are entitled to be in school every day the school is open for instruction. A calendar is given to parents at the beginning of the school year. This is also posted on the website.



# St. Joseph's Primary School

Macroom, Co Cork

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- Parents are notified of the school's opening and closing times. Children should arrive at school for 9am and be collected promptly at 1.40 (Jun/Senior Infants) and at 2.40 (all other classes).
- **Punctuality:** School begins at 9.00 a.m. School is open to receive pupils at 8.50a.m. All pupils and teachers are expected to be on time. The school will contact parents/guardians in the event of pupils being consistently late. The Principal is obliged under the Education Welfare Act, to report children who are persistently late, to the TUSLA Child and Family Agency, Educational Welfare Services.
- Reasons for pupils' absences must be communicated in writing, by parents/guardians to the school and will be retained by the school (This is an obligation under the Education Welfare Act). To facilitate this, special explanation for absence sheets are given to each parent in September. Following an absence the pupil should give/ the signed explanatory note to the class teacher. This note contains the child's name, the dates of absence, the reason for the absence and the parent's signature. These notes will form a record, which are kept by the class teacher during the year and may be inspected by the Education Welfare Officer on a visit to the school. When no note is sent to the school absences are reported as unknown reason.
- Notes sent detailing absences are kept by the class teacher for the school year. If/when a child misses 20 days these notes are used to inform TUSLA Educational Welfare Services the reasons for absences. Notes are kept in the school in a secure location.
- If the child does not miss 20 days the notes are shredded at the end of the school year.

## **Recording Attendance**

- The school attendance of individual pupils is recorded on the Aladdin School administration software, 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 at 10.00 am each morning. Any pupil not present will be marked absent for the day. The roll may not be altered once it has been filled in. Late arrivals and departures are discouraged by the staff unless absolutely necessary.
- Dates for reporting non-attendance are received from TUSLA each year. The Deputy Principal together with the class teachers check individual attendances of pupils on these dates and when children have missed 20 days or more they are reported to TUSLA, Educational Welfare Services.
- It is the parents' responsibility to inform the class teacher if a child is going to be late arriving to school or if the child has to leave school early.
- If a child has to leave school early, a parent must first report to the school office and sign out the child in the sign out notebook before collecting the child in the classroom.

## **Guidance for Parents**

Section [(21) (9)] of the Act states that: "a pupil's absence can only be authorised by the Principal when the child is involved in activities organised by the school or in which the school is involved". The school Principal cannot authorise a child's absence for holidays during school time.

## **Responding to Poor Attendance:**

**TUSLA Child and Family Agency**, Educational Welfare Services, is informed if;

- A child is expelled for 6 days or more
- A child is suspended for 6 days or more
- A child has missed more than 20 days



TUSLA Child and Family Agency is furnished with the total attendances in the school year through the Annual Report Form which is completed on-line by the Deputy Principal.

## **A whole school strategy for promoting good school attendance**

The Board of Management of St. Joseph's Primary School is committed to providing a positive school atmosphere that is conducive to promoting good school attendance. In this regard:

- The school curriculum, insofar as is practicable, is rendered flexible and relevant to the needs of the individual child through a differentiated approach
- The school will promote development of good self-concept and self-worth in the children.
- Support for pupils, who have special educational needs, are in place in accordance with Department of Education & Science guidelines.
- Internal communication procedures are in place to inform teachers of the special needs of pupils.
- A special reward system is in place for encouraging the children who have full attendance at St. Joseph's Primary School. While attendance is strongly encouraged, parents and children must realise that school is no place for a sick child.
- The assistance of the Education Welfare Officer will be utilised.
- Pupils with a poor attendance record will insofar as is practicable, be supported in an effort to improve their attendance.
- Parents of new enrolments to St. Joseph's are given a school booklet with information parents on the importance of school attendance and TUSLA Child and Family Agency. This information is also available on the school website.
- Parents are informed of their responsibility to send a note explaining absences to the staff. A reminder is given to parents in school newsletters that the staff are legally obliged to report absences of 20 days or more.
- **School Records of Attendance:** The staff is involved in keeping daily, monthly and annual records of attendance. The staff also keeps notes receives from parents re absences.
- **School Reports:** Children's individual attendances are recorded in the annual school report which is sent home to parents.
- **NEWB/TUSLA Child and Family Agency:** Quarterly and annual returns are forwarded to TUSLA Child and Family Agency about attendance every year.
- **Homework:** St. Joseph's has a Homework Policy. Homework creates a good link between school and home and also helps to nurture life-long learning. A copy of the Homework Policy and the Code of Behaviour is available on the school website and issued to pupils on enrolment. Parents are free to approach the teacher if the child is experiencing issues with homework.
- **Assessment:** Individual teachers make arrangements for their own class tests. If lack of attendance was due to fear of tests parents would be encouraged to talk to the class teacher. Tests reflect class work and homework. Encouraging children to do homework will help alleviate their fears. Weekly tests are differentiated by teachers so that all pupils experience success in their tests.
- **Equality of Participation:** In St. Joseph's we strive to make education available to all. School books are supplied to children through the Book Rental Scheme. Research is carried out annually to select school tours which are the best value for money. Bus charges are often supplemented by the Parents' Association to reduce costs. Charges for swimming are generally borne by the parents but the BOM and/or the PA generally help with the cost of bus charges to keep costs to a minimum. If parents have difficulty with funding for school tours/swimming they can discuss this with the Principal.



- **Equality issues:** We in St. Joseph's promote the Catholic Ethos and we welcome children of all faiths and nationalities.
- **Learning Needs and absences:** Extra support may be offered to children who are long term absent due to illness or hospitalisation. Teachers liaise with parents in the event of a child being absent where necessary.

## **Roles and Responsibilities in promoting school attendance:**

### **The Principal will**

- Provide leadership for the creation of a school ethos and climate that is supportive of high levels of engagement and attendance.
- Leads on the review and implementation of the school's Attendance Strategy.
- Puts arrangements in place for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the School's Attendance Strategy
- Provides opportunities for staff to engage actively with the development and monitoring of the School's Attendance Strategy.
- Initiates links with other schools and relevant bodies on school attendance issues.

### **The Post Holder (Deputy Principal)**

The Deputy Principal will:

- Ensure that the school register of pupils is maintained in accordance with regulations.
- Submits attendance reports as required by Tusla's Educational Welfare Services.
- Notifies Tusla's Educational Welfare Services and the relevant EWO of particular problems in relation to attendance
  - 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.
  - When a pupil's name is removed from the school register.
- Inform parents of a decision to contact the Education Welfare Officer of concerns regarding a pupil.

### **Class Teacher**

The class teacher will:

- Ensure attendance data are recorded accurately and reviewed in line with school procedures.
  - Keep a record of explained and unexplained absences.
  - Contact parents in instances where absences are not explained in writing.
  - Set high expectations for punctuality and attendance in their classrooms.
  - Sets example by their own punctuality.
  - Encourage pupils to attend regularly and punctually.
  - Alerts the Principal/ Deputy Principal of concerns s/he may have regarding the attendance of any pupil.
- The class teacher will inform the Deputy Principal of the names of any children who are absent 20 days or over. These names will then be reported to Tusla's Educational Welfare Services.
- Provides a classroom climate and classroom management that support participation and engagement, especially with students who may be at risk of poor attendance.

- **Parents/Guardians can promote good school attendance by**



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1. Setting high standards for their child in relation to attendance and punctuality.
2. Engaging with the school/Tusla's Education Welfare Services if there is a problem about their child's attendance and support plans to address the problem.
3. Ensuring that their child regularly attends and arrives at school on time.
4. Avoiding taking their child out of class unless there is a serious reason.
5. Notifying the School in writing of the reasons for absence from school.
6. Notifying the school if their child/children, particularly children in junior classes, are to be collected by someone not known to the teacher.
7. Showing an interest in their children's school day and their children's homework.
8. Encouraging their children to participate in school activities.
9. Praising and encouraging their children's participation and achievements.
10. Instilling in their children, a positive self-concept and a positive sense of self-worth.
11. Ensuring, insofar as is possible, that children's appointments (with dentists etc), are arranged for times outside of school hours.
12. Signing children in and out when collecting and returning children to school during the school day.
13. Contacting the school immediately, if they have concerns about absence or other related school matters.

## **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 requested to promptly pass on absence notes from parents to their class teacher and obtain extra copies if required.

## **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, via P.O.D. (Primary Online Database) 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.
- When a child transfers into St. Joseph's Primary School, confirmation of transfer will be communicated to the child's previous school via P.O.D., and appropriate records sought.

## **Procedures in relation to the Removal from Register**

In accordance with Section 20 Of the Education Welfare Act, a Principal may only remove a pupil's name from a school register where they have been informed via P.O.D. (Primary Online Database) by a Principal that the child is now registered in their school or when Tusla's Education Welfare Officer notifies them that the child has been registered by it as in receipt of out-of-school education.



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## Evaluation

The success of this Statement of strategy and Attendance Policy is measured through:

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

## Implementation/Ratification and Review

This policy was ratified by the BoM of St. Joseph's Primary School on \_\_\_\_\_.

It will be reviewed again in \_\_\_\_\_.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Chairperson