

Scoil Ursula

■ Title

Attendance Strategy Statement

■ Introductory Statement

This policy was formulated by the principal & staff of the school. It was adapted to the current format in accordance with the guidelines of the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) and to comply with requirements under the Educational Welfare Act 2000 and the guidelines from the National Education Welfare Board (NEWB).

■ Rationale

Scoil Ursula decided to review its attendance policy because it is a priority area identified by the parents, pupils & staff of the school. It is also a requirement under Education Welfare Act 2000 and the school wishes to encourage pupils to be in attendance on each day the school is open for instruction.

■ Relationship to Characteristic Spirit of the School

According to our Mission Statement Scoil Ursula strives to provide a well-ordered, caring, happy and safe environment for our pupils. In keeping with this philosophy our Attendance Strategy emphasises the importance of attendance of our pupils. The Board of Management of Scoil Ursula recognises the importance of the Legislation enacted in the Education Welfare Act, 2000. Our objective is to endeavour to promote our values of nurturing potential in a harmonious teaching and learning environment for all our employees and pupils and requires the co-operation of staff, parents and pupils.

■ Aims

- To foster an appreciation of learning.
- To raise awareness of importance of school attendance.
- To identify pupils at risk of school leaving early.
- 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 encourage pupils to attend school
- To comply with requirements under Education Welfare Act 2000/Guidelines from NEWB.

■ Guidelines (*content of policy*)

Defining and Recording Non-Attendance

- We define attendance as the obligation of a parent to cause a child between the ages of 6 and 16 to attend at “a national school or other suitable school” on each day that the school is open for instruction.
- The school attendance of individual pupils is recorded in the Leabhar Rolla (Roll Book) of each class on a daily basis. Class attendance data is recorded daily on Aladdin, the administration system which presents cumulative attendance data on a monthly record sheet. This system has replaced the Leabhar Tinrimh (Attendance Book). The annual attendance of each individual pupil is recorded in the Clár Leabhar (Register), together with information provided in enrolment forms (Pupil’s Name, Date of Birth, Address, Religion, Parents’ Names).
- 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 10.00am each morning and entered on Aladdin and in the roll book. 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. Parents/guardians must also sign out a child if he/she departs early during the school day. The Class Teacher enters the reason for absence on Aladdin when one is provided. All other absences are recorded as ‘unexplained’. This procedure is communicated to parents informing them that the Act obliges the parents of an absent child to notify the principal of the cause of absence not later than the third day of absence. The Principal and/or Secretary will inform the class teacher when a parent contacts the school to explain an absence. We are also obliged to report certain non attendance matters to NEWB (i.e. pupils absent for 20 days or more or where a principal is concerned about a pupil’s attendance) and this is also communicated to the parents, verbally after 15 absences and in written form after 20 absences as per NEWB requirements. We also communicate the effects of non-attendance on pupil learning by means of PT Meetings, School reports and letters home.
- Late arrivals are recorded by the class teacher on Aladdin.
- In relation to half-day absences, the Education Welfare Act requires a parent to notify the school when a child is absent for part of a school day, a school day or more than a school day in the above manner.

Whole school strategies to promote attendance include the following:

- **Environment:** We as a school, and within the classroom, endeavour to create a safe, welcoming environment for our pupils and their parents with warm bright colours and a friendly atmosphere.
- **Late Arrivals:** In the case of late arrivals, times are recorded by class teachers on Aladdin and inform parents verbally when a full day has been arrived at.
- **Early intervention:** We target new mothers/fathers to inform them of procedures in relation to attendance and the importance of attendance.
- **Homework:** See Homework Policy.
- **Transport:** Parents are responsible for bringing their children to school.
- **Lunches:** If a child arrives to school without a lunch, parents are contacted by phone.

- **Rewards:** We reward improvements in attendance by means of an Attendance Certificate generated by Aladdin, which is awarded to pupils with 5 or less absences per annum and a prize for pupils with full attendance.
- **Equality of Participation:** All pupils are given equal opportunity in all areas.
- **Equality issues:** Special cases, where there may be issues of payment for lessons are dealt with individually. In relation to non-attendance of events due to religious considerations, parents are encouraged to inform the school in line with our ethos statement and make their own supervision arrangements.
- **Reports:** The total amount of days missed in a year is not reported to parents in the end of year reports/parent teacher meetings. Instead we give a general comment on attendance e.g. 0-5 absences = excellent, 6-10 = VG, 11-15 = Good, 16-20 = Fair, >20 = Poor
- **Parents:** We communicate the requirements of schools and of parents under the Education Welfare Act to parents by including *Don't Let Your Child Miss Out* (leaflet for parents NEWB 2004) in our enrolment pack. It is also available on the parents' section of our website. Our Attendance Officer liaises with families in regard to attendance issues.
- **School Calendar:** The calendar for the coming school year is published annually in June on the school 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.
- **Learning Needs:** We cater for the learning needs of "at risk pupils" by adapting our curricular delivery to meet the needs of all pupils. Where appropriate the curriculum may be differentiated to meet the learning needs of individual pupils as specified in our Special Needs Policy.

Communication with other schools/other providers

- In the case of transferral to other primary schools, we provide attendance information by way of the school report.
- Post Primary schools may access attendance information on request.
- The local EWO is Marie Mc Dermott (0871320718). Meetings are organised with her where deemed necessary.

Strategies in event of non-attendance

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

- Parents are again made aware of their statutory duties outlined in Education Welfare Act in relation to causing their children to attend school via the *Don't Let Your Child Miss Out* (leaflet for parents NEWB 2004).
- Parents are also made aware of the schools duties outlined in the Education Welfare Act in relation to reporting the non-attendance of a child to the Education Welfare Officer, of 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 they conclude is failing or neglecting to cause the child to attend the school and of the possible consequence of a successful case being taken against the parent (fine and/or imprisonment).
- Parents are expected to communicate the reasons for the non-attendance of their child in the school by way of a written note from parent outlining, date of absence, reason for absence

and parent's signature.

- A teacher, with a concern about attendance, may communicate with a parent using the template letter included as Appendix 1.
- If a parent has a literacy problem, these details can be verbally communicated and recorded by the class teacher.
- If the parent refuses to explain the reason for the absence, this is documented and if repeated, reported to the EWO.
- Non-attendance of a pupil is communicated to the principal by the class teacher if there is cause for concern.
- Communication to the parent of the non-attendance of their child in the school is undertaken verbally at 15 absences and in written form via the NEWB template at 20 absences. All absences recorded on Aladdin generate an automatic text to the parents informing them of the absence. This is both a deterrent against absenteeism and a safeguard against truancy.
- We communicate the non-attendance of a child to the Education Welfare Officer via the NEWB reporting guidelines.
- Children First Guidelines are also adhered to in relation to concerns about non-attendance.
- Teachers support the child to "catch up" on work missed at home and/or during revision depending on the duration and nature of the absences.

Procedures in relation to the Removal from Register/Transfer from another school

The principal will only remove a pupil's name from a school register where they have been informed that the child has been enrolled in another school or when the Welfare Board notifies them that the child has been registered by it as in receipt of out-of-school education.

- All communication with the Education Welfare Officer in relation to the following matters is by phone:
 - intended expulsion of the child,
 - notification from another school that the child has been enrolled in that school,
 - notification by the Education Welfare Officer that the child is in receipt of education outside of the regular school system (e.g. home) or
 - has enrolled in a special school.
- Transfer to another school: Where parents remove a child from the school the principal will, if asked, give them and the new school information in relation to 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. When the principal receives notification that a child has been registered elsewhere he/she will 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/she considers appropriate.
- Transfer from another school: Where a family make an approach to transfer a pupil to our school, the principal may contact the principal of the school that the child is currently attending and make him/her aware of the situation and may also ask for any relevant information pertaining to the proposed transfer. In cases where a transfer proceeds, we will communicate to the previous school that the child has been registered in this school by phone as soon as possible.

■ Annual Report

The level of attendance at the school for each school year is reported to the NEWB via the standard report generated by Aladdin. This is done “*within six weeks of the end of the school year*”.

■ Success Criteria

Our success criteria will be based on the achievement of our objectives. We will use attendance data from Aladdin, staff observation and parental feedback as our benchmark for success or otherwise of the policy.

■ Roles and Responsibility

Attendance Officer: Roy Mitchell

The Attendance Officer and the school principal will be responsible for the implementation and evaluation of the policy. Any feedback received will be recorded and any problems that arise will be taken into account for the purposes of evaluation and review.

■ Timeframe for Implementation

The policy will be implemented in September 2014.

■ Timeframe for Review

The policy will be reviewed in 2016.

■ Responsibility for Review

The school principal and Attendance officer will be responsible for reviewing the policy.

■ Ratification and Communication

The Board of Management ratified this policy on the _____ of _____.

Signed: _____, (Chairperson, BOM)

Scoil Ursula does not have adequate resources to disseminate all of its policies to all the concerned members of the wider school community. The policy is communicated to the members of the BOM and is available to the wider school community through the parents’ representatives on the BOM. All Scoil Ursula policies are available for inspection in the school.

Appendix 1

___/___/___

Re.: Attendance

Dear _____,

I am writing to let you know that I am concerned about _____'s attendance at school. He/she has now missed ___ days out of ___ and, as a result, is losing out on valuable learning and finding it difficult to keep up in class. I would be grateful if you would address this issue urgently. When a child's number of absences reaches 20 days the school must report this fact to the National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB), who will then investigate the matter.

If there is anything I or the school can do to support your efforts to encourage improved attendance, please contact the school to make an appointment with me.

Yours sincerely,

(Class Teacher)