

Attendance Policy

St. Mary's NS, Knockbridge

Rationale

The main factors contributing to the formulation of a revised policy can be summarised as follows:

- To promote and encourage regular attendance as an essential factor in our pupils' learning
- Legislative requirements such as the Education Welfare Act 2000 and the Education Act, 1998
- The role of the NEWB
- Changing attitudes to education.

Aims and Objectives

The revised policy is geared towards:

- ensuring that pupils are registered accurately and efficiently
- ensuring that pupil attendance is recorded daily
- encouraging full attendance where possible
- identifying pupils at risk
- promoting a positive learning environment
- enabling learning opportunities to be availed of
- raising awareness of the importance of school attendance
- fostering an appreciation of learning
- identify pupils at risk of leaving school early
- 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 nurturing potential in a caring environment where the welfare of children is paramount.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Principal has overall responsibility for ensuring accurate records of attendance are maintained, however all staff have an input into the implementation of the policy. On enrolment, the Principal will enter the details of each pupil on the relevant clárleabhar (Pupil's Name, Date of Birth, Address, Religion, Parents' Names and Parents' Occupations). Class teachers record daily attendance in the leabhair rollaí and note any developing patterns. The school secretary prepares the monthly returns in the leabhar tinreamh and also makes returns to NEWB.

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

Punctuality

School begins at 9am. 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 Education Welfare Board.

Recording and Reporting Attendance

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 in the Leabhar Tinrimh (Attendance Book).

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 not later than 9.40 am each morning.** Any pupil not present will be marked absent for the day. The roll book may not be altered once it has been filled in. A note from parents/guardians is required to explain each absence. Such notes will be retained by the class teacher. Parents/guardians must also provide a note if a child departs early during the school day. These notes are dated and kept by the class teacher.

Parents/guardians are made aware of the requirements of the NEWB particularly the by-law relating to absences of more than 20 days per school year. They are notified 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 during Parent/Teacher meetings and are informed of the school's concerns.

The school must inform the Education Welfare Officer in writing, where a child has missed 20 or more days in a school year, where attendance is irregular and where a child is suspended or expelled for 3 days or more.

Promoting Attendance

The school promotes good attendance by:

- creating a safe and welcoming environment
- ensuring children are happy
- displaying kindness, compassion and understanding
- being vigilant so that risks to good attendance such as disadvantage, bullying etc. are identified early
- rewarding good attendance with certificates.

National Education Welfare Board

The Education Welfare Officer is informed if:

- A child is expelled
- A child is suspended
- A child has missed more than 20 days.

The NEWB is furnished with the total attendances in the school year through the Annual Report Form which is completed on-line.

Whole School Strategies to Promote Attendance

St. Mary's NS, Knockbridge endeavours to create a safe, welcoming environment for our pupils and their parents/guardians. The Board of Management is consulted in drafting and reviewing policies with the aim of promoting a high-level of co-operation among the school community. The teaching staff collaborates in the planning and implementation of the primary school curriculum, so as to provide a stimulating learning environment for all pupils.

New entrants and their parents/guardians are invited to engage in an induction process, through which the school's policies and procedures in relation to attendance are explained. There is a focus on the value of regular attendance and on the importance of developing good attendance habits from Junior Infants onwards.

The calendar for the coming school year is posted on the school website during Term 3 of the previous year. 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.

St. Mary's NS, Knockbridge awards certificates to pupils who have full attendance during the school year. Attendance certificates are downloaded from the NEWB website. The Chairperson of the BOM presents these at the end of year assembly in June. Certificates are also available to pupils whose attendance is praiseworthy and to pupils who improve their overall attendance.

Strategies 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 Education Welfare Officer 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 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) may serve a 'School Attendance Notice' on any parent who he/she concludes is failing or neglecting to cause the child to attend the school. A successful case taken against the parent may result in a fine and/or imprisonment.

Reasons for absence are recorded and reported to the EWB five times 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

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 schools in the area

- The school maintains communication with local pre-schools and second-level schools in order to make the transition for pupils as easy as possible.
- When a child transfers from St. Mary's NS, Knockbridge 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 St. Mary's NS, Knockbridge confirmation of transfer will be communicated to the child's previous school, and appropriate records sought

- Pupils transferring from St. Mary's NS, Knockbridge to a post primary school will have their records forwarded on receipt of confirmation of enrolment.

Communication with Parents

The school informs all parents of the implications of non-attendance as per the *Education Welfare Act 2000*. This information is disseminated by regular school newsletters. Parents of new children are informed on enrolment.

Parents/guardians can promote good school attendance by:

- ensuring regular and punctual school attendance.
- notifying the School if their children cannot attend for any reason.
- working with the School and education welfare service to resolve any attendance problems;
- making sure their children understand that parents support good school attendance;
- discussing planned absences with the school.
- refraining, if at all possible, from taking holidays during school time
- showing an interest in their children's school day and their children's homework.
- encouraging them to participate in school activities.
- praising and encouraging their children's achievements.
- instilling in their children a positive self-image and a positive sense of self-worth.
- informing the school in writing of the reasons for absence from school.
- ensuring, insofar as is possible, that children's appointments (with dentists etc.), are arranged for times outside of school hours.
- contacting the school immediately, if they have concerns about absence or other related school matters.
- notifying, in writing if necessary, the school if their child/children, particularly children in junior classes, are to be collected by someone not known to the teacher.

Evaluation

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.

Ratification

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on _____

Signed: _____
Chairperson of Board of Management

Signed: _____
Principal

Date: _____

Date: 24th March 2015