

ST MOCHTA'S NATIONAL SCHOOL

ATTENDANCE POLICY

INTRODUCTION:

This Attendance Policy was a collaborative school process, involving teachers, staff, parent representatives, Principal, the Deputy Principal and Board of Management.

This updated document was drawn up to implement changes:

- To recording procedures to conform to [Circular 0028/2013](#)
- To reporting procedures for the school year 2014-2015, following the transfer of the Educational Welfare Services to the new Child and Family Agency (Túsla).

RATIONALE:

The main factors contributing to the formulation of our revised school policy are as follows:

- To promote and encourage regular attendance as an essential factor in our pupils' learning
- To conform to legislative requirements such as the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 and the Education Act 1998
- To conform to the requirements of Circular 0028/2013
- To recognise the role of the Educational Welfare Services (EWS). This service has been transferred to the Child and Family Agency (Túsla) on January 1st, 2014.

AIMS:

The aims of this Attendance Policy are to:

- ensure that pupils are registered accurately and efficiently
- guarantee that pupil attendance is recorded daily in roll books and by using Aladdin software
- raise awareness of the importance of regular school attendance
- promote full attendance where possible
- ensure compliance with the requirements of the relevant legislation
- identify pupils at risk of learning disadvantage, through poor attendance
- 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.

COMPLIANCE WITH MISSION STATEMENT:

This policy complements the mission of St Mochta's National School which is; *for every child to learn, develop and grow in a safe, secure and stable learning environment.*

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. Class Teachers record individual patterns of attendance and the assigned Assistant Principal makes the returns to the Educational Welfare Services, Túsla (Child and Family Agency). The Deputy Principal has responsibility for monitoring daily attendance on Aladdin. The Daily Attendance Book (Leabhar Tinrimh) records summary information in relation to daily and monthly attendance of pupils. The Leabhar Tinrimh is printed through Aladdin at the end of each month and signed by the Principal. It is the role of the delegated Assistant Principal to maintain the Clár Leabhar (Register).

PUNCTUALITY

School begins at 8:50am. All pupils are expected to be on time. The school will contact the parent(s)/ guardian(s) in the event of pupils being consistently late. The staff monitor pupils who are persistently late. The Class Teacher will remind the child's parents of the importance of punctuality. If the situation persists, the teacher will report this issue to the Principal. If there are ongoing concerns, the Principal may report them to the Educational Welfare Services, if deemed necessary.

RECORDING ATTENDANCE

- Class Teachers keep a daily record of pupils' attendance, in the class Leabhar Rolla (Roll Books) and on Aladdin software. The roll call is taken at 9:50am each morning. Regularly, the Principal reminds teachers of this requirement using the Aladdin software. A pupil will be marked either present or absent at the time of the roll call and there will be no provision for adjusting the Roll Book, where a pupil subsequently does not complete the full school day or arrives after the roll call (in accordance with Circular 0028/2013). Parents/Guardians are required to communicate each absence. The reason for the absence is recorded by the Class Teacher on Aladdin software.
- The Class Teacher will liaise with the Deputy Principal in the event that a pupil's name needs to be struck off the class Roll Book. According to Circular 0028/2013, this is necessary for the following reasons:
 - a) as soon as the Teacher becomes aware that the pupil has left the school;
 - b) on the first Monday following the absence of 20 consecutive school days.

The procedure for striking a pupil's name from the Roll Book (Leabhar Rolla) is by inserting the capital letter "B" and drawing a line through the relevant row of the Roll Book (Leabhar Rolla).

- All Roll Books are collected and monitored by the Deputy Principal at least once a term.
- Summary information in relation to daily and monthly attendance of pupils is recorded in the Leabhar Tinrimh (Daily Attendance Book). The Leabhar Tinrimh is updated automatically each day on the Aladdin software and

monitored by the Deputy Principal. It is printed and signed by the Principal at the end of each month. This is available for the Department of Education if requested.

- The purpose of the Register (Clárleabhar) is to preserve a permanent record of the school history of each pupil and to present it in a clear and precise form. The pupil's name, date of birth, address, religion and names of parent(s)/guardian(s) are recorded in the Register. It is the role of the designated Assistant Principal to look after the Clárleabhar as follows:
 - a) on enrolment, each pupil is registered with a Clár Uimhir;
 - b) two registers are maintained, one for boys and one for girls;
 - c) the name recorded for a pupil in the Register (Clárleabhar) is the name as recorded on the pupil's birth certificate or other appropriate legal document;
 - d) details of the religion or the belief or, where relevant, none, as indicated by the parent or guardian to the school is recorded in the column headed "Religious Denomination as stated by Parent (or Guardian)";
 - e) the column headed "Additional Information" is used to record instances where a child's name has been "removed" from the Register (Clárleabhar) in accordance with the requirements of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000. Under the Act, a child's name may not be 'removed' from the school other than the following circumstances:
 - i. where the principal receives a notification that a child has been registered in another school;
 - ii. where the principal receives a notification that a child had been registered by NEWB (now Túsla) and is receiving an education in a place other than a school.This fact will be noted in the column headed "Additional Information" for the relevant child concerned, detailing the date of removal from the register and the relevant provision of the Act.
- A pupil's details may not be erased, redacted or physically removed from the Register or Clárleabhar.

REPORTING ATTENDANCE

- The end of year student's report provides the pupil's parents with his/her school attendance record for that year.
- The school (Assistant Principal/Principal) must inform the Educational Welfare Services, when:
 1. a student has been suspended for 6 days or more cumulatively
 2. a student has reached 20 days absence cumulatively
 3. a student's name is to be removed from the school register for whatever reason
 4. a principal is concerned about a student's attendance
 5. the Board of Management decides to expel a student.

- School Attendance Reporting to the Educational Welfare Services involves two separate elements:
 1. A reduced Student Absence Report requirement now applies. The Student Absence Reports for Period 2 (end-Dec) and Period 4 (end-June) are mandatory with Period 1 (end-Oct) and Period 3 (end-March) optional. However, in St Mochta's NS, the assigned Assistant Principal will report our student absences at the end of each of the periods. These reports must include the student absences from the start of the school year and can be submitted by post or online to the Educational Welfare Services, Child and Family Agency (Túsla).
 2. If the school is concerned over a student's attendance, a formal written and signed Referral will be made to the Educational Welfare Service (EWS). Postal referrals must be clearly marked 'REFERRALS'. The school is required to complete a simple pre-referral checklist as part of a formal Referral. The Referral Form (encompassing the pre-referral checklist) will be available online at www.tusla.ie
- An Annual Attendance Report (AAR) is submitted to the Educational Welfare Services, Túsla on the attendance levels at the end of each school year.

WHOLE SCHOOL STRATEGIES TO PROMOTE ATTENDANCE

The school promotes good attendance by:

- creating a safe and welcoming environment
- being vigilant so that risks to good attendance such as disadvantage, bullying etc are identified early
- informing the parents/guardians of incoming Junior Infant children about the attendance requirements at the induction information meeting
- reminding parents/guardians of the attendance requirements through Scéalta (school newsletter)
- sending the Parent(s)/Guardian(s) a text activated by Aladdin, when their child has missed 10 days. They are reminded of the school obligation to inform the Educational Welfare Services if the child misses 20 days
- sending Parent(s)/Guardian(s) a letter (generated from Aladdin Software), that according to our records their child has missed 20 days from school and that we are obliged to report this fact to the Educational Welfare Services
- preventing pupils leaving the school during school hours unless they are collected by a parent/guardian and signed out at reception
- discouraging Parent(s)/Guardian(s) from taking holidays during school time. The Parent(s)/Guardian(s) are reminded that their child will miss schoolwork. The Planned Absence Forms (available from the school office) need to be completed by parents before the planned absence.
- publishing the calendar for the coming school year annually in June and making it available on the school website. Next to the calendar online, Parent(s)/Guardian(s) are reminded to try to plan family events around school

closures, thus minimising the chances of non-attendance related to family holidays during the school term

- reporting monthly high school attendance percentages on Scéalta (school newsletter)
- celebrating excellent attendance in the school. At the end of the year, the principal presents certificates to those with the best record.

STRATEGIES IN THE EVENT OF NON-ATTENDANCE

In the event of consistent non-attendance:

- Parent(s)/Guardian(s) are reminded of Section 17 of the Education (Welfare) Act (2000), which states that ‘the parent of a child shall cause the child concerned to attend a recognised school on each school day’.
- In accordance with Section 21 of the Act, the school informs the Educational 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.
- The Educational Welfare Officer (following all reasonable efforts by the Education Board to consult with the child’s parents and the Principal of St Mochta’s) 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.

TRANSFER TO ANOTHER SCHOOL

- In accordance with Section 20 of the Education (Welfare) Act (2000), the Principal must notify the Principal of the child’s previous school that the child is now registered in St Mochta’s NS.
- When the Principal receives notification that a child has been registered elsewhere, he/she must forward the previous end of year report to the Principal of the pupil’s new school. This report will include the record of attendance for the previous school year.
- Pupils who transfer from St Mochta’s NS to second-level education will bring their Personal Education Passport. Children will complete a My Profile Sheet and parents will be invited to add any other relevant information. The traditional sixth class report will be included, which will report the student’s attendance record for the previous year.

ROLES OF EDUCATION PARTNERS

Communication with Parents

The school informs all Parents/Guardians:

- through Scéalta (the school newsletter) about the requirements of the Educational Welfare Services, particularly the by-law relating to absences of more than 20 days per school year;
- of incoming Junior Infant children about the attendance requirements during the induction information meeting;

- when their child has missed 10 days by an Aladdin-activated text. They are reminded of the school obligation to inform the Educational Welfare Services if the child misses 20 days;
- by letter, when their child has missed 20 days from school. This letter (generated from Aladdin Software), states that according to our records your child has missed 20 days of school and we are obliged to report this fact to the Educational Welfare Services.

Role of Parent(s)/Guardian(s):

Parent(s)/Guardian(s) 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
- refraining, if at all possible, from taking holidays during school time
- completing a Planned Absence Form before taking their child on planned leave
- 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-concept 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, the school if their child/children, particularly children in junior classes, are to be collected by someone not known to the teacher.

COMPLIANCE WITH RELEVANT SCHOOL POLICIES

This Attendance Policy corresponds with the following policies:

- Code of Behaviour
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Child Protection Policy
- Health and Safety Policy

As a consequence of the Health and Safety Policy, Roll Books are used in the event of an evacuation of the school building (e.g. fire drills, fire) to confirm pupils present.

EVALUATION

The success of our Attendance Policy will be measured through:

- Improved attendance levels as measured through Leabhar Rolla records and statistical returns
- Happy confident, well-adjusted children
- Positive parental feedback
- Teacher vigilance.

IMPLEMENTATION/RATIFICATION AND REVIEW

This policy is subject to review in Autumn 2017. The Attendance Policy is available on the school's website www.stmochtas.ie

This policy is open to review by the Board of Management.

Ratified and signed on behalf of the Board of Management of St. Mochta's National School.



Tony Rock
Chairperson



Maria Farrell
Principal

13th January 2015

Date

Appendix 1: Planned Absence Form

Appendix 2: Wording for Text after 10 days of Absence

Appendix 1:

Planned Absence Form

Please fill in the form below and return it to the school office at least one week prior to start of absence.

Name: _____

Class: _____

Class Teacher: _____

Dates for planned absence from: _____ to: _____

Reason for absence:

At St. Mochta's we encourage good attendance as it has been shown that it gives children a great start in life.

I acknowledge that the school is obliged to report all absences in excess of 20 days to the Educational Welfare Services, Túsla (Child and Family Agency).

Signed: _____
Parent/Guardian

Date: _____

Appendix 2:

Wording for Text after 10 days of Absence

Our records to date indicate that the cumulative absences for your child are a total of 10 days absent from school. We wish to inform you that St. Mochta's NS is obliged to report all absences in excess of 20 days to the Educational Welfare Services, Túsla (Child and Family Agency).