



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 document is being reviewed to strengthen work on attendance and to ensure the school's practice is in line with:

- Arrangements for management of rolls and registers to conform to Circular 0028/2013
- Maintaining pupil enrolment and attendance records (Clárleabhar, Leabhar Rolla and Leabhar Tinrimh Laethúil) following the introduction of the Primary Online Database (POD), to conform to Circular 0033/2015
- Developing the Statement of Strategy for School Attendance: Guidelines for Schools (Educational Welfare Services, Túsla – Child and Family Agency 2015)

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
- conform to the requirements of Circular 0028/2013
- conform to legislative requirements such as the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 and the Education Act 1998
- submit a Strategy for School Attendance to Túsla's Educational Welfare Services (EWS).

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, 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
- to give all the partners in the school community a sense of responsibility for school attendance
- identify pupils at risk of learning disadvantage, through poor attendance
- identify pupils at risk 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 Laethúil) 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.

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 on Aladdin software. The roll call must be taken at 9:50am each morning (no later than 10.00am). 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 Record of Attendance, 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 by phoning the school office or by completing a designated note in the student's journal. 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. 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.
- Summary information in relation to daily and monthly attendance of pupils is recorded in the Electronic Leabhar Tinrimh Laethúil (Daily Attendance Book). The Leabhar Tinrimh Laethúil 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.
- Individual information on each pupil will be recorded on the Primary Online Database (POD). A pupil's enrolment records on POD is regarded as the 'register' for the purpose of Section 20 of the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000.
 - a) A pupil's PPSN is recorded on POD. POD generates a pupil ID number as the unique identifier. This unique identifier is used to identify each pupil in the electronic record of daily attendance.
 - b) POD will be kept accurately and up to date, to reflect any changes in the pupils attending the school.
 - c) A hardcopy of the registered pupils' enrolment data from POD will be available, if required by the Educational Welfare Service of TUSLA.
 - d) A pupil will be removed from the school register where the school has been notified that
 - i) the pupil is registered in another school or

- ii) registered with TUSLA as receiving education in a place other than a school or separately for any other reason will be met by means of updating the status of the pupil on POD.

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 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 principal is concerned about a student's attendance
 4. 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. These reports must include the student absences from the start of the school year and will be submitted online to the Educational Welfare Services, Child and Family Agency (TUSLA).
 2. An Annual Attendance Report (AAR) on the attendance level is submitted to the Educational Welfare Services, TUSLA at the end of each school year.
- If the school is concerned about a student's attendance, a formal written and signed Referral will be made to the Educational Welfare Service (EWS). The school is required to complete a pre-referral checklist as part of a formal Referral. The Referral Form (encompassing the pre-referral checklist) is available online at www.tusla.ie

Whole School Strategies To Promote Attendance

The school promotes good attendance by:

- creating a safe and welcoming environment
- implementing programmes to support student engagement e.g. anti-bullying
- rewarding students with good attendance through certificates at the end of each academic year
- being vigilant so that risks to good attendance such as disadvantage, bullying, etc., are identified early
- monitoring children at risk of low attendance
- 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)
- reminding children of the attendance requirements through school assemblies
- informing parents that notification of unplanned absences should be put in writing in the child's journal on return or by phone call to the school office
- 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 and that they have a legal duty to notify the principal about the reasons for their child's absence, Section 18 of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000. A letter will be required.
- 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 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/From Another School

- Once a child has been offered a place in St. Mochta's National school, he/she will be accepted in to the school via the Primary Online Database (POD), once the child has been released from their previous school.
- In relation to a child leaving the school, notification in writing from a parent/guardian informing St. Mochta's National School of their child's transfer to another school must include the child's last day in school and the roll number or school name of the child's new school. Once this has been received, the child can be released to their new school via the Primary Online Database on the appropriate date.
- In relation to a child leaving 6th class, the school is informed that the pupil has been enrolled in a second-level school, their Personal Education Passport is forwarded from St. Mochta's NS. The passport comprises of three sections as follows: My Profile (for the student to complete), My Child's Profile (for the parent(s)/guardian(s) to complete) and the pupil's sixth class report. The Education Passport shows the student's attendance and punctuality 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. A follow-up text is sent as a reminder after 15 days of absence;
- 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 from taking holidays during school time
- writing a letter of explanation to the Principal 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 or by phone, of the reasons for unplanned 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 in line with GDPR regulations.
- Child Safeguarding Statement
- Health and Safety Policy

As a consequence of the Health and Safety Policy, a class list is used in the event of an evacuation of the school building (e.g. fire drills, fire) and the roll is called by the class teacher, to confirm pupils present.

Evaluation

The success of our Attendance Policy will be measured through:

- Improved attendance levels as measured through Record of Attendance 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 2020. The Attendance Policy is available on the school's website www.stmochtas.ie.

This Attendance Policy was formally approved by the Board of Management at its meeting on Tuesday 29th May 2018.

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**

29th May 2018

Date

Appendix 1: Principal's Letter of Response to Planned Absence Letter

Dear _____,

I acknowledge receipt of your letter on _____ seeking permission for your son/daughter to be absent from school from _____ to _____.

In accordance with our Attendance Policy, this absence will be recorded as an unauthorised absence.

The school cannot give permission for holiday absences during term time because it is the duty of each parent to ensure that their child attends school on every day that school is open, unless there is an exceptional circumstance that prevents attendance.

Please note extra classwork will not be provided by the teacher.

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

Yours faithfully,

(Principal)

Appendix 2: Blurb for Text after 10/15 days of Absence

Our records to date indicate that the cumulative absences for your child are a total of 10/15 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, TUSLA (Child and Family Agency).