

School Attendance Policy

Introduction

There is a very strong tradition of good attendance in St Michael's N.S. However, we are anxious that parents be aware of the absolute necessity for regular and punctual attendance at school. As a result, this policy document was drawn up 2007 and reviewed in 2014, 2017 and 2022 to ensure and maintain a high level of attendance at school by all pupils.

Rationale

The main factors contributing to the formulation of this policy are:

- 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
- To highlight the role of the NEWB

Aims

The aims of the attendance policy in St. Michael's National School are to:

- Encourage pupils to attend school regularly and punctually.
- Ensuring that pupil's attendance is recorded daily, encouraging full attendance where possible
- Share the promotion of school attendance amongst all in the school community.
- Inform the school community of its role and responsibility as outlined in the Education Act.
- Identify pupils who may be at risk of developing school attendance problems.
- Ensure that the school has procedures in place to promote attendance/participation.
- 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.

Relationship to the Characteristic Spirit of the School

St Michael's N.S. endeavours to enable every pupil to actively participate in all school activities. Regular attendance helps to create a stable learning environment for all pupils, and the school hopes to promote co-

operation among pupils, parents/guardians and staff in maintaining a high level of regular attendance through the school year.

Our school will ensure that:

- The importance of school attendance is promoted throughout the school.
- Children are registered accurately and efficiently.
- Individual children's attendance is recorded daily.
- Parents or guardians are contacted when reasons for absences are unknown or have not been communicated.
- Pupil attendance and lateness is monitored.
- School attendance statistics are reported as appropriate

Legislative Requirements

The Education Welfare Act 2000

Under the terms of the Education Welfare Act 2000 (amended by the Child and Family Agency Act 2013) schools are obliged to

1. Maintain a record of students attending school
2. Record school attendance and notify the relevant EWO
3. Support students with difficulties attending school on a regular basis
4. Prepare and implement a school attendance strategy to encourage, in a positive way, regular school attendance and an appreciation of learning within the school
5. Prepare and implement a Code of Behaviour, setting standards of behaviour and disciplinary procedures for the school.
6. Liaise with other schools and relevant bodies on school attendance issues

Punctuality

School buses arrive is at 9.10 a.m. and children are required to be in their classrooms not later than 9.20 a.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 Act, to report children who are persistently late to TÚSLA Child and Family Agency. Children's punctuality is recorded on Aladdin and is included on end of year report.

The roll will be called at 9.45 a.m.

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. However, it is essential that parents inform the school of such arrangements.

Reasons for pupils’ absences must be communicated in writing or via email, by parents/guardians to the school and will be retained by the school. To facilitate this, such communications should **not be in the homework journal**, but on a separate page or sheet of paper or on slips of paper provided at back of homework journal or via email to the class teacher. If, a child is absent, when the child returns to school the class teacher will require either an email or a written note which contains the child’s name, the dates of absence and the reason for the absence. These notes will form a record which may be inspected by the Education Welfare Officer on a visit to the school.

Procedures for ongoing Monitoring of Attendance Recording Attendance

The school attendance of individual pupils is recorded on 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. Any pupil not present will be marked absent for the day. Any pupil not present at roll call, 9.45am, will be marked absent for the day unless the teacher has been informed in writing beforehand that the child is due to attend school later that day. The child will need to attend school for at least one and a half hours to be marked present on the roll. The roll may not be altered once it has been filled in. Late arrivals and early departures are discouraged by the staff unless absolutely necessary. They are monitored by the class teacher and records are kept on the Aladdin school administration software. The annual attendance of each individual pupil is recorded by Aladdin and included on end of year reports.

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 TUSLA Child and Family Agency to resolve any attendance problems
- Making sure their children understand that parents support school attendance;
- Discussing planned absences with the school.
- The calendar for the coming school year is published annually during Term 3. It is given to all parents and is available 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.
- 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 are to be collected by someone not known to the teacher.

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 responsible for promptly passing on absence notes from parents to their class teacher.

Pupils are responsible for passing school correspondence to their parents, on the specified day.

TUSLA Child and Family Agency 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.

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 Michael's N.S., confirmation of transfer will be communicated to the child's previous school via P.O.D., and appropriate records sought.

Communication with parents

- Parents/guardians are made aware of the requirements of TUSLA Child and Family Agency particularly the by-law relating to absences of more than 20 days per school year.
- When a pupil has accumulated 20 absences in any one school year, a standard letter informing the pupil's Parents/Guardians is sent. This states the school's obligation to inform TUSLA Child and Family Agency of all pupils who accumulate an aggregate of 20 school days in any one school year.
- Parents 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 and are informed of the school's concerns.
- This policy is available on our school website

A strategy for promoting good school attendance

The Board of Management is committed to providing a positive school atmosphere which is conducive to promoting good school attendance. In this regard:

Promoting Attendance

The school promotes good attendance by:

- creating a safe and welcoming environment
- ensuring children are happy
- developing mutual trust and respect with students
- facilitating children to have a voice in school matters via the Student Council
- listening to students' concerns
- having high expectations of students' attendance
- displaying kindness, compassion and understanding
- collaborating in the planning and implementation of the primary school curriculum, so as to provide a stimulating learning environment for all pupils
- being vigilant so that risks to good attendance are identified early for individual children
- addressing personal (e.g. parent-child conflicts) and practical issues (e.g. access to health / mental health care)
- reminding Parents/Guardians (during September information evenings for all classes) of the importance of regular school attendance from Junior Infants onwards and the Board's obligations to report absences during September meetings each year
- publishing the calendar for the coming school year annually in June and that this information 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)
- involving parents in discussion and reflection about attendance
- requesting parents to participate in reviews of attendance strategy
- escalating the response by the school in proportion to the complexity of the child's needs
- engaging with TUSLA's Educational Welfare Services.

Class teacher

The class teacher will:

- Maintain attendance records utilising Aladdin in accordance with procedure.
- Keep a record of explained and unexplained absences.
- Contact parents in instances where absences are not explained in writing.
- Encourage pupils to attend regularly and punctually.
- Inform the Principal of concerns s/he may have regarding the attendance of any pupil.

Evaluation

The success of this Attendance Policy is measured through:

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

Implementation/Ratification and Review

This policy was initially ratified by the Board of Management of St Michael's N.S. during 2007 and 2014. It was reviewed again in 2014, 2017 and 2022.

Review date

2024

Signed: Fr Dan O Mahoney
Chairperson

Signed: Deirdre Kelly
Principal

Ratified by Board of Management 2014,2017,2022.

Signed Fr Peter Gallagher
Chairperson, Board of Management