

Scoil Íosagáin

Policy on: School Attendance

School Attendance Policy

Introduction

This policy document was drawn up to ensure and maintain a high level of attendance at Scoil Íosagáin by all pupils.

The Board of Management, in consultation with staff and parents reviewed this Policy on Attendance in December 2014.

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
- To comply with legislative requirements such as:
 - The Education Act 1998
 - The Education Welfare Act 2000
- The role of the NEWB
- Changing attitudes to education

Relationship to school Ethos:

Scoil Íosagáin 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.

This policy complements the school ethos of nurturing potential in a caring environment where the welfare of children is paramount.

Aims & Objectives:

The aims of the Attendance Policy in Scoil Íosagáin are to:

1. Ensure that pupils are registered accurately & efficiently
2. Ensure that pupil attendance is recorded daily
3. Encourage pupils to attend school regularly and punctually
4. Promote a positive learning environment
5. Enable learning opportunities to be availed of
6. Foster an appreciation of learning.
7. Raise awareness of the importance of school attendance.
8. Inform the school community of its role and responsibility as outlined in the Education Welfare Act 2000
9. Ensure compliance with the requirements of the relevant legislation

10. Identify pupils who may be at risk of developing school attendance problems
11. Ensure that the school has procedures in place to promote attendance/participation
12. Develop, subject to available resources, links between the school and the families of children who may be at risk of developing attendance problems
13. Identify and remove, insofar as is practicable, obstacles to school attendance.

Punctuality

Scoil Íosagáin is open from 9.00am and children are required to be in their classrooms not later than 9.15am. Formal instruction begins at 9.20am. 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 National Education Welfare Board (NEWB).

Recording & 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). 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 and Parents' Occupations).

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 by 10am 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 which contains the child's name, date(s) of absence and the reason for the 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 in each classroom filing cabinet.

Pupil absence statistics are recorded daily on a Pupil Absences information template and collated by the school secretary to assist with NEWB returns and to monitor attendance patterns.

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. Parents of pupils whose non-attendance/punctuality is a concern are informed of the school's concerns during Parent/Teacher Meetings.

Promoting attendance – Roles & Responsibilities

Parents/Guardians

- Ensure regular and punctual school attendance.
- Notify the School if their children cannot attend for any reason.
- Work with the School and Education Welfare service to resolve any attendance problems.
- Make sure their children understand that parents support and approve of school attendance.
- Discuss planned absences with the school.
- Refrain, if at all possible, from taking holidays during school time.
- Show an interest in their child's school day and their child's homework.
- Encourage children to participate in school activities.
- Praise and encourage their child's achievements.
- Instil in their child, a positive self-concept and a positive sense of self-worth.
- Inform the school in writing of the reasons for absence from school.
- Ensure, insofar as is possible, that their child's appointments (with dentist, doctor etc) are arranged for times outside of school hours.
- Contact the school immediately if they have concerns about absences or other related school matters.
- Notify the school in writing or by phone if their child/children are to be collected by someone not known to the teacher or not previously stated on child's enrolment form.

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 on school correspondence to their parents on the specified day.

Board of Management

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

- The school will create a safe & welcoming environment and will strive to ensure children are happy.
- The school curriculum, insofar as is practicable, is flexible and relevant to the needs of the individual child.
- The school will promote the development of good self-concept and self-worth in the children.

- Support for pupils who have special educational needs are in place in accordance with Department of Education & Science guidelines.
- The school will be vigilant so that risks to good attendance such as disadvantage, bullying etc...are identified early.
- Internal communication procedures are in place to inform teachers of the special needs of pupils.
- The calendar for the coming school year is published annually in September. 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.
- The assistance of the Education Welfare Officer will be utilised.
- The attendance rates of pupils will be monitored by the class teacher in the first instance, and the class teacher will notify the Principal of any concerns regarding the attendance of any child.
- Pupils with a poor attendance record will, insofar as is practicable, be supported in an effort to improve their attendance.

School Principal

The School Principal will:

- Ensure that the school register of pupils is maintained in accordance with regulations
- Report school attendance statistics, as appropriate to:
 - The Education Welfare Board
 - The Education Welfare Officer
 - The B.O.M
- Inform the Education Welfare Officer:
 - If a pupil is not attending school regularly.
 - When a pupil has been absent for 20 or more days during the course of a school year.
 - If the Principal is concerned about a pupil's attendance.
 - If a pupil has been suspended for a period of six or more days.
 - If the school has expelled a student.
 - When a pupil's name is removed from the school register.
- Inform parents of a decision to contact the Education Welfare Officer of concerns regarding a pupil.
- Insofar as is practicable, promote the importance of good school attendance among pupils, parents and staff.

Class teacher

The class teacher will:

- Maintain the school roll-book in accordance with procedure.

- Keep a record of explained and unexplained absences.
- Encourage pupils to attend regularly and punctually.
- Monitor pupil attendance and lateness.
- Inform the Principal of concerns s/he may have regarding the attendance of any pupil.

7

Whole School Strategies to Promote Attendance

Scoil Íosagáin endeavours to create a safe, welcoming environment for our pupils and their parents/guardians. Parents/guardians are 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.

Traditionally, school attendance is strong in our school. However, the staff remains vigilant so that 'risk' students are identified early. Risk students can be categorised as those who miss more than 5 days in a 20-day period without an accompanying note of explanation from parents/guardians. Appropriate contact takes place between the school and parents/guardians either via a letter/a note in the homework diary or phone call when this occurs. A meeting between parents and the Principal may be set up if deemed necessary. Absences of more than 20 days are automatically referred to the Education Welfare Officer.

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.

Our homework policy, drawn up in consultation with parents/guardians, clearly outlines the school's expectations in terms of the quantity of homework assigned and in the quality of homework presented. There is a consistent approach to homework throughout the school.

The calendar for the coming school year is published annually in September. 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.

Pupils are expected to wear the correct school uniform.
Parents/guardians are informed if a child has no lunch.

The question of equality of access is addressed through the school's policy on Equal Opportunity and Gender Equity.

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.

Reasons for absence are recorded and reported to the NEWB 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 – Records/Communication

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 such as behaviour and academic records as he or she considers appropriate subject to the restrictions of Data Protection Act. This applies to pupils who transfer between primary schools and to pupils who transfer from primary to second-level education.

The school maintains communication with local pre-schools and second-level schools in order to make the transition for pupils as easy as possible.

Communication with other Schools

- When a child transfers from Scoil Íosagáin 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 Scoil Íosagáin confirmation of transfer will be communicated to the child's previous school, and appropriate records sought
- Pupils transferring from Scoil Íosagáin 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 circulars. Parents of new children are informed on enrolment.

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.

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 – Records/Communication

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 such as behaviour and academic records as he or she considers appropriate subject to the restrictions of Data Protection Act. This applies to pupils who transfer between primary schools and to pupils who transfer from primary to second-level education.

The school maintains communication with local pre-schools and second-level schools in order to make the transition for pupils as easy as possible.

Communication with other Schools

- When a child transfers from Scoil Íosagáin 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 Scoil Íosagáin confirmation of transfer will be communicated to the child's previous school, and appropriate records sought
- Pupils transferring from Scoil Íosagáin 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 circulars. Parents of new children are informed on enrolment.

Roles and Responsibilities

All staff have an input into the implementation of the policy. Class teachers record individual patterns of attendance and the school secretary makes returns to NEWB. The Deputy Principal has responsibility for maintaining the Leabhar Tinreamh. It is the responsibility of the Principal and staff to implement this policy under the guidance of the school's Board of Management.

Evaluation

The success of this 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.

Implementation

This policy will be implemented following ratification by the Board of Management. Written notification that the review has been completed will be made available to school personnel, published on the school website and provided to the Parent Teacher Association. A record of the review and its outcome will be made available, if requested, to the Patron and the Department.

Policy Review

This policy was re-ratified by the Board of Management with no changes in June 2017. It is subject for review during school year of 2017/2018.

Signed P. Harrington
Chairperson, Board of Management

Date June 6th 2017

Signed Alma Quinn
Principal

Date June 6th 2017