



St. Peter's National School

Attendance Policy

The Staff of St. Peter's National School compiled this document in
February 2018

Rationale

This statement was prepared in consultation with the staff, PTA and Board of Management in order to highlight the strategies and measures in place in St. Peter's National School to foster an appreciation of learning among pupils and encourage regular attendance at school.

Reasons for policy development:

- To promote and encourage regular attendance as an essential factor in our pupil's learning
- Legislative requirements such as the Education Welfare Act 2000 and The Education Act, 1998
- The role of TUSLA
- Levels of disadvantage
- Changing attitudes in education
- School recording of attendance strategies

Relationship to Characteristic Spirit of the School

Attendance at school is a requirement under law. Our strategy aims to continue to promote attendance and to encourage parents and children to see that good attendance helps children to become fully involved in school life. This also supports the holistic development of the child.

Compliance with School Ethos

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

Aims

In St. Peter's National school we aim to:

- Foster an appreciation of learning in the school community
- Raise awareness of
 1. the importance of school attendance
 2. forming good patterns of attendance in early years
- Identify pupils at risk of leaving school early and reporting this to TUSLA
- Enhance the learning environment where children can make progress in all aspects of their development
- Promote positive attitudes to learning
- Ensure that the system of rules, rewards, and sanctions are implemented in a fair and consistent manner that encourage good attendance
- Make parents aware of their responsibilities, around attendance, under the Education Welfare Act 2000
- Comply with the requirements under the Education Welfare Act 2000/Guidelines from TUSLA

Roles and Responsibilities

- All staff members have an input into the implementation of this policy. Class teachers record individual patterns of attendance on Databiz (administration software programme used by the school) and the Post Holder with responsibility for attendance makes returns to the Education Welfare Services at TUSLA four times a year. The school has the responsibility for maintaining the Leabhar Tinreamh and keeps up to date records of registrations within the school.
- Attendance will be discussed at each staff meeting in order to keep parents informed.
- It is the responsibility of the Principal and staff to implement the policy under the guidance of the school's Board of Management.

Punctuality

- School begins at 8:30 a.m. All pupils and teachers are expected to be on time.
- Morning registration will take place at the start of school at 8.30am. The registers will remain open for 10mins. After which, arrivals will be marked late, a recording of which will be made on Databiz, including the time of arrival.
- The school will contact parents/guardians in the event of pupils being consistently late or leaving early.
- The Principal is obliged under the Education Welfare Act, to report children who are persistently late, to the Education Welfare Board.
- A record will be kept of the children who are late in the form of a sign in/sign out/latecomers book in each individual class.
- From 8:40 onwards names will be written in the sign in book which will be easily accessible for pupils and parents.
- This information is forwarded to parents in the annual report/end of year report.

Recording and Reporting Attendance

- The school attendance of individual pupils is recorded on Databiz daily. The annual attendance of each individual pupil is also recorded on Databiz, together with information provided in enrolment forms (Pupils name, Date of Birth, Address, Religion and parents' names) This information is also recorded in the Clár Leabhar (Register)
- If a pupil does not attend a day when the school is open for instruction, his/her absence will be recorded by the class teacher on Databiz. The roll call is taken between 8:30a.m and 9:10a.m each morning. Any pupil not present during roll call will be marked absent for the day (if not otherwise informed by parents/guardians). This will not be altered once it has been filled in. Parents/guardians will be required to explain each absence by communicating through e-mail, a letter or a note in the homework journal. Such notes will be retained by the class teacher and kept in the child's class file. These notes are dated and kept until the end of the school year.
- If a child is absent for more than twenty days in a year, that child will be reported to TUSLA during that school year. The absent notes

for these children will be collected at the end of the year and sorted by the school. These notes will be kept for five years.

- As stated, late arrivals and early departures will be recorded by class teachers.
- Parents and guardians are made aware of the requirements of TUSLA particularly the by-law relating to absences of more than twenty days per school year. The school informs parents/guardians when their child is approaching being absent for twenty days and again when they exceed twenty days absence (This is done by a letter forwarded to the parents by the class teacher). The class teacher also records in the class file that these letters have been distributed. Parents/guardians are also 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 is a concern are invited to meet the Principal and are informed of the school's concerns.
- The school must inform the Education Welfare Officer/TUSLA, where a child has missed twenty or more days in a school year, where attendance is irregular, where a pupil is removed from the school register and where a child is suspended or expelled for six days or more.

Whole School Strategies to Promote Attendance

- St. Peter's National School endeavours to create a safe, welcoming environment for our pupils and their parents/guardians. The teaching staff collaborate in the planning and implementation of the primary school curriculum, to provide a stimulating learning environment for all pupils. Where it is applicable, parents/guardians are consulted in the drafting and reviewing of policies with the aim of promoting a high level of co-operation among the school community
- The staff will remain vigilant of school attendance so that "risk" students are identified early. Risk students can be categorized as those who miss more than five days in a twenty day period without any accompanying note of explanation from parents/guardians. Appropriate contact takes place between the school and the parents/guardians either via a letter or phone call when this occurs. A meeting between parents/guardians and the Principal may be set up if deemed necessary. Absences of more than twenty days are automatically referred on to TUSLA.

- New enrolments 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.
- The calendar for the coming year is forwarded to parents/guardians annually and updates are sent at regular intervals throughout the school year. It is hoped that this approach will enable parents/guardians to plan family events around school closures, thus minimizing the chances of non-attendance related to family holidays during the school term.

Encouraging School Attendance

- **Communication with parents/guardians:** When a difficulty regarding attendance arises parents are reminded of the importance of attendance and punctuality and of the obligation on schools to report non-attendance. Parents are also informed, of their responsibility, to send a note explaining absences to the teachers.
- **Phone Communication:** if a child's absence is of concern (even before the child has reached twenty days absence) the class teacher/Principal will contact the parents to ascertain a reason for the child's absence and if further school support is needed. If a child has exceeded the twenty days absence parents are requested to supply medical certificates from their General Practitioner. A reminder is given to parents that the school is legally obliged to report absences of twenty days or more.
- **Note-keeping:** Teachers keep notes received from parents with regard to all absences.
- **School Reports:** Pupils individual attendances are recorded in the annual school report which is forwarded to parents/guardians. When pupils are transferring to other primary schools attendance records are also forwarded.
- **TULSA:** Attendance reports are forwarded to TUSLA on a quarterly and annual basis.
- **SPHE:** As part of our Social, Personal and Health Education Programmed each class teacher teaches SPHE. This promotes self-esteem and encourages attendance through areas such as "Making Choices".
- **Homework:** Homework creates a good link between school and home and also helps nurture lifelong learning. Parents/guardians are

encouraged to approach the teacher if their child is experiencing difficulties with homework so that a more differentiated level of homework can be arranged.

- **Lunches:** If a pupil comes to school with no lunch efforts are made to contact the pupil's parents/guardians. If this happens regularly records are kept by the class teacher and this matter is brought to the attention of TUSLA. Every effort is made to ensure that a child is not hungry while attending school.
- **Assessment:** Individual teachers make arrangements for their own class tests. If lack of attendance is due to fear of tests parents/guardians are encouraged to talk to the class teacher. Tests generally reflect class work and homework. Encouraging children to do homework helps alleviate their fear of tests. In the case of pupils with special learning needs the teacher makes professional decisions in differentiating the teaching, learning and testing for those pupils.
- **Equality of Participation:** In St. Peter's National School we strive to make education available to all. School book lists are kept to a minimum.
- **Equality issues:** Our school is an equal opportunities employer and while being a school with a Church of Ireland ethos we welcome children of all faiths and nationalities.
- **Learning Needs:** At present, St. Peter's National School has a special Education Needs team of teachers who work with many of the children in our school, providing support for those children, to enable them to reach their full potential. Staff meet regularly to discuss pupils progress and to prioritise children who may be in need of learning support.
- **Learning needs and absences:** Extra support is offered to pupils who are long term absent due to illness or hospitalisation. Support is offered to pupils to encourage them to attend school more regularly or to allow them to catch up on work due to unavoidable absences.
- **Reward strategies for good attendance:** Pupils will receive a certificate of attendance for achieving 100% attendance at the end of each term and will be rewarded with a homework pass. Pupils who achieve 100% attendance will receive a small trophy at the end of the school year in recognition of their achievement.
- **Whole school assemblies** held throughout the school year will stress the importance of good attendance and pupil's efforts to

achieve good attendance will be acknowledged on a whole school level.

The Roles of Parents/Guardians

- Ensuring regular and punctual school attendance
- Working with the school and TUSLA Child and Family agency to resolve any attendance issues
- Making sure their children understand that parents support school attendance
- Discussed planned absences with the school
- Refraining from taking holidays during school time
- Showing an interest in their children's school day and their children's homework
- Encouraging their children to participate in school activities
- Praising and encouraging their children's achievements
- Instilling in their children a positive self-concept and a positive self-worth
- Informing the school in writing of the reasons for their children's absence from school
- Ensuring, insofar as is possible, that children's appointments are arranged for times outside of school hours
- Contacting the school immediately, if they have concerns about their children's absence or other matters related to school
- Notifying the class teacher if their child is to be collected by someone not known to the teacher

Communication with Parents

- The school informs all parents of the implications of non-attendance as per the *Education Welfare Act 2000*. This information is given on the policy section of the school website and distributed to parents of the new incoming Junior Infants at their induction meeting in May/June before the start of the new academic year.

The Role of TUSLA

TUSLA Child and Family Agency is informed if:

- A child is expelled for six days or more
- A child is suspended for six days or more

- A child has missed more than twenty 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. A copy of this return is kept by the Principal.

Communication with other Schools

- Under the 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 on-line 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 relevant.
- When a child transfers into St. Peter's National School confirmation of transfer will be communicated to the child's previous school via P.O.D and relevant records sought relating to attendance and educational progress.

Evaluation

The success of any Attendance Policy is measured through:

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

This policy has been reviewed by the PTA. The ratified policy will be emailed to all parents to raise awareness of St. Peter's N.S reviewed Whole School Attendance Policy.

Implementation/Ratification and Review

Ratified by the Board of Management

Signed John Clarke

Chairperson

Date 15th October, 2018

Signed Rachael Blennerhassett

Principal

Date 15-10-18

Review Date September 2019