

School Attendance Policy

Introduction:

This policy document was drawn up to ensure and maintain a high level of attendance at school by all pupils. Establishing good attendance habits from the very beginning of a child's time at school is very important. We are anxious that parents be aware of the absolute necessity for regular punctual attendance at school.

Aims:

The aims and objectives of this policy are as follows:

- Ensuring that pupils are registered accurately and efficiently
- Ensuring that pupil's attendance is recorded daily, encouraging full attendance where possible
- Identifying pupils at risk of poor attendance and at risk of leaving school early
- Promoting a positive learning environment
- Enabling all pupils to avail fully of learning opportunities
- Raising awareness of the importance of school attendance
- Ensuring compliance with the requirements of the relevant legislation
- Developing, subject to available resources, links between the school and the families of children who may be at risk of developing attendance problems
- Identifying and removing, insofar as is practicable, obstacles to school attendance.

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 the school will endeavour to ensure that

- 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 positive self-concept and self-worth in the children
- supports for children, who have special educational needs, are in place in accordance with Department of Education & Science guidelines
- internal communication procedures are in place to inform teachers of the special needs of children
- the assistance of the Education Welfare Officer will be utilised
- children with a poor attendance record will, insofar as is practicable, be supported in an effort to improve their attendance

Defining and Recording Non-Attendance:

"A parent is obliged to cause a child between the ages of 6 and 16 to attend at 'a national school or other suitable school' on each day that the school is open for instruction." Education Welfare Act 2000

- A child is expected to attend each day.
- Non-attendance is recorded in the roll book.
- A letter is provided by parents explaining the absence in accordance with the Education Act 1998.
- All explanatory notes from the parents are kept in the child's file.
- Each student's absence is recorded in the Student Absence Report book.
- The category of absence is also identified.
- If a child misses a half day a verbal or written explanation is required.
- If a note isn't forthcoming the school secretary will contact the parents requesting a letter of explanation.

If there is a difficulty with punctuality or poor attendance:

- Class teacher will talk to the parent about the matter and remind them of their statutory duty as parents to ensure that their child is sent to school.
- When a child has missed 12 days a letter is sent home to parents highlighting this and encouraging improvement.
- If there is still no improvement the principal along with the class teacher will have a further discussion.
- The principal would formally meet the parent outlining that the Board of Management of the school will be informed about the poor attendance, and/or the Welfare board office will be contacted.

- Túsla will be contacted regarding any child who has missed 20 days or more. The EWO and Principal will work together to support families of children with particularly poor attendance.
- A letter will be sent to parents when pupils have missed 20 days or more.
- All attendance is reported in the end of year school reports to parents.

Procedures in relation to the Removal from Register/Transfer from another school:

The school is aware that *'A principal may only remove a pupil's name from a school register where they have been informed that the child has been enrolled in another school or when the Welfare Board notifies them that the child has been registered by it as in receipt of out-of-school education.'*

The Board of Management may in exceptional circumstances suspend a child. (see Code of Behaviour)

Transfer to another school:

Where parents remove a child from a school the principal is obliged to give them and the new school a certificate stating child's record of attendance and absences in the school, the last class the child attended, and any other relevant information pertaining to the education of the child.

Transfer from another school:

When Saplings Special School receives a new student, the principal will notify the principal of the child's last school attended that the child is now registered in our school "as soon as may be". 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.

Communication

- Parents who fail to send in a letter of explanation of absence will be contacted by the school secretary. Failing this, the absence will be reported 'unexplained'.
- When a child reaches 12 days absence, a letter will be automatically sent to parents informing them of this and the responsibility of the school to report to Túsla should the child reach 20 days absence.
- A report is sent to the Túsla as required.
- A letter will be sent to parents when pupils have missed 20 days or more.

- All attendance is reported in the end of year school reports to parents.

Removal of a Pupil during the School Day

Aims:

- To highlight the importance of remaining in school for a full school day
- To ensure the safety of all pupils in our school by having all visitors and parents report to the school office
- To ensure the accountability of all pupils during any emergency evacuations
- To retain a record of pupils regularly leaving school early

Rationale:

Pupils are expected to remain in school for a full school day. Pupils should only be removed early from school in cases of emergency or unavoidable medical appointments.

Action:

1. Unavoidable medical appointments / Withdrawing a sick child from school

If a pupil needs to leave early for an unavoidable medical appointment, a letter should be sent in beforehand from his/her parents.

If a child is sick during the school day (refer to Medical / Illness Policy) the secretary will firstly ring the parent and if uncontactable, will ring the emergency contact number. Ensure all phone numbers are up to date.

When collecting the child, the parent should report to the school office and the child will be signed out in the Appointments Record Book. The parent can then wait in the foyer while the secretary collects the child from the classroom.

On returning the child after the appointment, the return time will be recorded in the Appointments Record.

No child will be allowed to leave the school with any other adult other than his/her parent unless a letter has been received beforehand naming the person who is to collect the child.

2. Arriving late to school due to medical appointment or emergency

Our school day begins at 9.20am. If a child has a medical, dental or unavoidable morning appointment, a letter should be sent in beforehand from his/her parents. The school roll is

taken daily at 10am. In this case the rolla will be kept open for this child until 12pm (maximum). After this time, the child has missed half of the school day and will be marked absent. All late arrivals are recorded in the Late Arrivals/ Punctuality Record Book.

3. *Emergencies*

The parent should ring the school en-route and explain the situation. The secretary can then have the child collected from the class and ready to meet the parent. The child will be signed out in the Appointments Record Book.

No child will be allowed to leave the school with any other adult other than his/her parent unless the parent themselves has been in an accident. In such cases, the child will only be released to an immediate family member known to the Principal & staff, as named as the Emergency Contact person.

Punctuality

School starts at 9.20am. If a child arrives to school after 9.40am, they must be brought to the Office through the Reception Entrance. Pupils will be recorded in the Late Arrivals/ Punctuality Record Book. The secretary or other staff member will bring the student to the classroom to prevent disruption as class will have already commenced.

The Principal will meet with the parents of children who are continually late to discuss strategies to improve punctuality.

If following school intervention & strategies punctuality does not improve, the principal will report the case to the Education Welfare Officer for further intervention and action.

A copy of the policy will be given to members of staff, Board of Management, and available to parents to view in the school.

Ratified: _____



Chairperson of the Board of Management

Date: _____

20/6/18

Appendix 1

Letter template for Pupils missing 12 and 20 days

12 Days Absence

Dear Parents,

Under the terms of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000, the school is obliged to notify Túsla if a child is absent for 20 days or more, or where a child's absence gives rise to concern.

It is the school's policy to inform parents by letter of children's absences, when these absences are 12 days or more. While we understand that children may be absent due to illness or bereavement, we are just bringing the number of absent days to your attention.

This letter is to inform you that our records show that _____

has been absent from school on ____ days.

One of the factors ensuring success in education is regular school attendance and habits of attendance are set in the early years of schooling. Hence it is a policy of Saplings Special School to encourage children to attend school every day. Parents can help to develop a positive attitude to school attendance by encouraging children to come to school every day and also by ensuring that all absences are explained in writing. Our Attendance policy is available to view in the school reception area

We thank you for your cooperation in this.

Yours sincerely,

Michael Wood

Principal

Clodagh Mitchell

Deputy Principal

20 Days Absence

Dear Parents,

Under the terms of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000, the school is obliged to notify Túsła if a child is absent for 20 days or more, or where a child's absence gives rise to concern.

It is the school's policy to inform parents by letter of children's absences. You will have already received a letter when your child reached 12 days or more. While we understand that children may be absent due to illness or bereavement, we are legally obliged to report all absences of 20 days or more to Túsła. Following your notes, the categories of absence have also been recorded and Túsła may examine this data further.

This letter is to inform you that our records show that _____

has been absent from school on ____ days.

One of the factors ensuring success in education is regular school attendance and habits of attendance are set in the early years of schooling. Hence it is a policy of Saplings Special School to encourage children to attend school every day. Parents can help to develop a positive attitude to school attendance by encouraging children to come to school every day and also by ensuring that all absences are explained in writing. Our Attendance policy is available to view in the school reception area.

We thank you for your cooperation in this.

Yours sincerely,

Michael Wood

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