St. Patrick’s N.S.

Drumshanbo,

Co. Leitrim.

Roll No: 19423J

**Attendance Policy**

**Reviewed:** October 2020

**Ratified:** December 2020

**Full review:** 2021

**Appendices:**

1. Statement of Strategy for School Attendance

2. Promoting Good Attendance 2017 - 2018

**St. Patrick’s National School**

**Attendance Policy 2020**

**Introduction**

A review of the Attendance Policy of St. Patrick’s was undertaken in November 2016 following the publication of **Developing the Statement of Strategy for Attendance** by TUSLA and as a precursor to the drawing up and publication of our strategy for attendance.

This policy is being updated again in October 2020 to reflect current practice. Sections in green relate to Covid and will be adhered to for as long as the pandemic remains. Thereafter they will be removed from the policy.

**Rationale**

The main factors contributing to the formulation of this revised policy can be summarized as follows:

* To continue to promote and encourage regular attendance as an essential factor in our pupils’ learning
* The publication of Developing the Statement of Strategy for Attendance
* Legislative requirements such as the Education Welfare Act 2000 and the Education Act, 1998
* The role of the NEWB
* The ongoing Covid pandemic

**Aims and Objectives**

The revised policy seeks to

* Ensure that pupils are registered accurately and efficiently
* Ensure that pupil attendance is recorded daily
* Encourage full attendance where possible
* Acknowledge the effect of Covid on attendance
* Promote a positive learning environment
* Raise awareness of the importance of school attendance
* Foster an appreciation of learning
* 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.

**Compliance with School Ethos**

The motto of St. Patrick’s NS is ***Friendship and Learning***. We seek to nurture potential in a caring environment where the welfare of children is paramount. For children to reach their potential they need to attend school and avail of the educational and social opportunities we provide for them.

**Roles and Responsibilities**

Parents and teachers have key roles in implementing this policy and ensuring best possible attendance of children in school.

**School Community**

While the Covid pandemic is ongoing, parents, pupils and teachers have a responsibility to ensure the safety of the school community.

Teachers and pupils should not attend school if

* They have Covid-like symptoms such as
* A new cough
* A temperature
* Loss of taste or smell
* Shortness of breath or breathing difficulties
* They have been in contact with someone who has tested positive for Covid 19
* They have been living with someone who is unwell and may have Covid 19
* They have travelled from a country not on the green list (isolate for 2 week)
* They have been contacted by the HSE and asked to self-isolate.

**Parents**

* It is the responsibility of parents to ensure to ensure that children are in school each day, as far as possible.
* It is the responsibility of parents to ensure that children are on time for school
* When children are absent from school/late for school, parents should provide a note to the school with an explanation for that absence for school records.

**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.

1. Making sure their children understand that parents support good school attendance;
2. Discussing planned absences with the school.
3. Refraining, if at all possible, from taking holidays during school time
4. Showing an interest in their children’s school day and their children’s homework.
5. Encouraging them to participate in school activities.
6. Praising and encouraging their children’s achievements.
7. Instilling in their children a positive self-concept and a positive sense of self-worth.
8. Informing the school in writing of the reasons for absence from school.
9. Ensuring, insofar as is possible, that children’s appointments (with dentists etc), are arranged for times outside of school hours.
10. Contacting the school immediately, if they have concerns about absence or other related school matters.
11. 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.

* Working with the school and education welfare service to resolve any attendance problems;

**Each teacher**

* Encourages and commends good attendance
* Implements any whole school plan to promote good attendance (***See Promoting Good Attendance Plan 2017 – 2018 (Appendix 2).* For the duration of Covid we are suspending the Promoting Good School Attendance plan; we will revisit and review it when the pandemic is over.**
* Provides a busy and stimulating classroom where children feel valued
* Calls the roll in his/her classroom both in the Leabhar Rolla and electronically, using the Aladdin data system, no earlier than 10:30 each day. **Absences that are Covid related will be recorded as such.**
* Collects any notes/medical certs regarding absence
* Notes any queries or concerns re absence
* Records individual patterns of attendance
* Consults with parents where there are concerns around attendance or where parents have not provided records re absences
* Makes principal aware of concerns with regard to the attendance of individual children, specifically when a pupil’s absences exceed 10 days.

**The principal**

* Promotes good attendance at school assemblies, meetings with parents, end of year events.
* Updates the BOM about attendance in the school
* Ensures that the electronic version of the Leabhar Tinreamh is filled - prints, signs and files it monthly
* Follows up (as stated in this policy) on any issues regarding attendance
* Makes the quarterly and annual return to the NEWB
* Makes referrals to the NEWB when necessary

It is the responsibility of the Principal and staff to implement this policy under the guidance of the school’s Board of Management.

**Punctuality**

Standards of punctuality are very good in the school. All pupils and teachers are expected to be on time. Doors open to receive children at 9:10. Teachers should be in their classrooms from 9:20. Class begins at 9:30 by which time children should be ready to begin work.

A teacher is deemed to be late if he/she is not in the classroom by 9:20. A child is deemed to be late if he/she is not ready to begin class when the bell goes at 9:30.

If a parent is aware that a child is going to be late because of an appointment, he/she should send a note to the class teacher before the day in question.

No child should be marked present on the roll if he/she is not present in the classroom/learning support class at the time. In the case where a teacher has been made aware in writing that a child is going to be late, he/she may hold the roll until 12:30, after which the child will be marked absent.

The school will contact parents/guardians in the event of pupils being consistently late. Teachers will communicate with parents to try to resolve the situation. If there is no improvement, they will report to the principal. Principal is obliged under the Education Welfare Act, to report children who are persistently late, to the Education Welfare Board.

From January 2017, all teachers will be asked to record all instances of lateness in the Aladdin data system.

**Recording and Reporting Attendance**

The school attendance of individual pupils is recorded in the Leabhar Rolla (Roll Book) of each class on a daily basis. It is also recorded using the school data base, Aladdin. Class attendance data is electronically 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).

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 at 10.30am each morning. Any pupil not present will be marked absent for the day unless a parent has informed the teacher of an appointment which may cause the pupil to be unable to attend until after 10:30. Such appointments may be of a medical/therapeutic nature.

A note from parents/guardians is required to explain each absence. Such notes will be retained by the class teacher and the information provided in the note is used to fill in reasons for absence on Aladdin. Aladdin categorises absences as follows: illness, urgent family reasons, holidays and other. **Where a child is not ill but is staying at home for Covid related reasons, we will record this as : other; Covid related.** This information is collated and used if reports are being made to the NEWB.

Teachers will be asked to inform the principal when any child misses 10 days and to inform each day thereafter that the child misses. Where there are patterns of poor attendance from previous years, teachers are asked to keep the principal informed of any absences from the beginning of the school year. The principal will make contact with the parents concerned and will keep a record of interactions with parents. **However, where the school has been made aware that children have been absent for Covid-related reasons, no such call will be made.**

Parents/guardians must also provide a note if a child arrives late/departs early during the school day. These notes are kept by the class teacher. Regular late arrivals and early departures are recorded by the class teacher.

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. If a child has missed more than 10 days when the quarterly returns are being sent to the NEWB, parents will be informed by a standard letter; **however, we will suspend the sending of these letters for the duration of the Covid pandemic.** Parents will be asked to sign a slip acknowledging the absences. They are notified in writing on the end of year report of the total number of absences during the school year at the time of writing the report and therefore no attendance letters will be issued at the end of the school year except in the case of referrals to the NEWB.

Parents of pupils whose non-attendance is a concern are invited to meet with the principal during Parent/Teacher meetings and are informed of the school’s concerns. Where possible, a strategy to promote and encourage attendance may be drawn up with the child, parent, class teacher and, if necessary, the principal. The focus of this will be to promote and reward improved attendance.

The school must inform the Education Welfare Board, where a child has missed 20 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 6 days or more.

The principal will make referrals to the NEWB where a pupil’s attendance has exceeded 20 days and there is not sufficient evidence of illness/urgent family business to account for this. The class teacher and principal will try to work with the pupils at risk of referral and with their parents to try to avoid such referrals. Parents will be kept informed of concerns around attendance using the standard letter re attendance. They may also be phoned if the pupil is absent and the parent has not called the school. A meeting may also be arranged, with, or without the Education Welfare Officer.

**Promoting Attendance**

In general, the school promotes good attendance by:

* creating a safe and welcoming environment, where every child is valued
* providing stimulating and engaging lessons in organized and well-resourced classrooms
* displaying kindness, compassion and understanding
* being vigilant so that risks to good attendance such as disadvantage, bullying etc. are identified early
* rewarding good attendance with certificates.

Where there are concerns about attendance, a strategy may be drawn up for an individual child to encourage improvement in this area. Such a strategy may involve

* A reward system to earn homework passes/Golden time
* A public recognition of improved attendance – e.g. a certificate presented at assembly
* Giving a child special responsibilities in school to encourage attendance

**Whole School Strategies to Promote Attendance**

St. Patrick’s N.S. endeavours to create a safe, welcoming environment for our pupils and their parents/guardians. 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 or those who have a history of missing more than 20 days annually. Pupils who miss one or two days regularly, which cannot be accounted for by a medical condition are also regarded as at risk of failing educationally since their attendance is inconsistent. Appropriate contact takes place between the school and parents/guardians either via a letter or a note in the homework diary or a call from the teacher/principal 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 Board.

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.

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 school awards certificates to pupils who have full attendance during the school year. Certificates are also available to pupils who improve their attendance over a short period of time, and to pupils who improve their overall attendance.

**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.

In such cases the Education Welfare Officer (following all reasonable efforts by the Education Board to consult with the child’s parents and the Principal of the school) 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. A successful case taken against the parent may result in a fine and/or imprisonment. Reasons for absence are recorded and reported to the NEWB four times during the school year. 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.

***\*See also Promoting Good Attendance Plan 2017 – 2018 (Appendix 2)***

**National Education Welfare Board**

The Education Welfare Officer is informed if:

* A child is expelled
* A child is suspended
* A child has missed more than 20 days
* A pattern of poor attendance re-occurs
* A child has a pattern of absences without an explanation from home

The NEWB is furnished with the total attendances in the school year through the Annual Report Form.

**Transfer to another school**

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 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.

**Communication with other Schools/Educational establishments**

* The school maintains communication with local pre-schools and second-level schools in order to make the transition for pupils as easy as possible
* When a child transfers from St. Patrick’s N.S. to another school, the school’s records on attendance, academic progress etc. will be forwarded on receipt of written notification of the transfer
* When a child transfers into St. Patrick’s N.S*.* confirmation of transfer will be communicated to the child’s previous school, and appropriate records sought
* Pupils transferring from St. Patrick’s N.S. to a post primary school will have their education passport forwarded on request, once enrolment is confirmed.

**Communication with Parents**

The school also informs all parents of the implications of non-attendance as per the *Education Welfare Act 2000*. Parents are informed of this information by the Principal during the induction day for Junior Infants and when she addresses the A.G.M. of the Parents Association.

This policy will be published on the school website when it has been ratified.

***\*See also Reporting and Recording attendance***

**Evaluation**

The success of this Attendance Policy is measured through:

* Maintaining or improving the current good attendance levels in the school
* Improving attendance for the children who have unexplained absences
* Fostering happy confident well-adjusted children who want to have high attendance rates
* Positive parental feedback
* Teacher vigilance

**Implementation/Ratification and Review**

This policy will be presented to the Board of Management in December 2020. If ratified, it will become school policy and will be published on the school website. It is reviewed annually and this annual review will take account of the situation in regard to Covid. A full review will take place in the autumn term of 2025. However, changes in legislation or in patterns of attendance may precipitate an earlier review.

The Statement of Strategy for School Attendance for 2017 – 2018 is in place **but will be suspended for the duration of the Covid pandemic.**

**(See Appendix 2)**

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**Ratification of policy for St. Patrick’s NS**

**Martin McGowan 09/12/2019**

**Chairperson Date**

**Máirín O’Keeffe 09/12/2019**

**Principal Date**

**References:**

Developing the Statement of Strategy for Attendance

*Don’t let your Child Miss Out* - NEWB 2004

Education Welfare Act 2000

Education Act 1998

Section 29 Education Act

*Empty Desks* - CDU Mary Immaculate