

# **Scoil Mhuire Clarinbridge Policy on Attendance**

## **Introduction**

This policy document was drawn up:

- To ensure and maintain a high level of attendance at school by all pupils.

The Board of Management, in consultation with staff, pupils and parents/guardians drew up this Policy on Attendance.

## **Rationale**

The policy was drafted for the following reasons:

- The Board of Management wishes to comply with legislation, such as:
  - The Education Act, 1998
  - The Education (Welfare) Act, 2000
- The Board of Management wishes to promote and encourage regular attendance as an essential factor in our pupils' learning.

## **Relationship to the Characteristic Spirit of the School**

Scoil Mhuire Clarinbridge 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.

## **Aims**

- To raise awareness of the importance of regular school attendance.
- To identify pupils at risk of leaving school early.
- To promote and to foster positive attitudes to learning.
- To ensure compliance with the requirements of the relevant legislation.

## **Content**

### **Defining Non-Attendance**

Our school defines non-attendance as not being present in school at roll-call at 10.50am. Exceptions will be made for absences authorised by the Board of Management for events such as School Tours, Religious Services arranged through the school, participation in sports arranged by the school etc.

### **Recording and Reporting of Attendance and Non-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).

### **Notes re Absences**

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 no later than 10.50 am each morning. Any pupil not present will be marked absent for the day. A note from parents/guardians is required to explain each absence. Such notes will be retained by the class teacher. The Class Teacher keeps a record of the reason for non-attendance if one has been provided.

Parents/guardians are informed in writing on the end of year report of the record of attendances during the school year. Pupils whose non-attendance is a concern may be invited to meet with the Principal and are informed of the school's concerns.

### **Collection during the School Day**

If a pupil has to be collected during the school day a note must be provided to the pupil's Class Teacher that morning. All pupils should be collected from their classrooms by their parents/guardians. The parent or designated person who collects the pupil is required to sign out their son/daughter from the school, using the Class Teacher's Sign Out Notebook which is stored inside the Class Roll Book.

### **National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB)**

Parents are made aware that children who miss 20 days or more are reported to the National Educational Welfare Board and that the school must provide reasons for those absences.

The school must inform the Education Welfare Officer in the NEWB in writing, 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.

### **General Points re Attendance**

- Every pupil is encouraged to attend school every day and arrive on time.
- A pupil is marked absent if he/she is not present at roll call in class which is normally called at 10.50am break each school day.
- When a pupil is absent for a day or part of a day, a written note explaining the reason for the pupil's absence must be given to the Class Teacher when the pupil returns to school.
- Parents will be informed in writing that their child has missed 15 days by the School. The Principal will inform parents / guardians that their child has missed 20 days.
- A School Year Calendar will be provided to all families from the start of the school year which should be of assistance to parents when planning holidays.
- Parents are asked to note mid-term breaks and end of term closures when planning family holidays. It is inadvisable for pupils to miss time out of the school term due to holidays.

## **"Late" for School**

Late arrivals are also recorded by the Class Teacher. School opens at 9.20am. All pupils are expected to be in their classrooms no later than 9.30am each school day. If a pupil is late for school i.e. arriving into the classroom after the 9.30am bell has gone, then the Class Teacher records that child as having been "late" that day. The exceptions to this are if a pupil arrives late due to an emergency such as the car breaking down or if the pupil was attending an appointment with a dentist, doctor, etc. that morning. A note to explain this should always be sent in with the pupil. Families will be notified at the end of each term if their children had an excessive number of "Lates" (as determined by the Principal but usually set as being equal or more than one per month) during the term. The number of "Lates" (if any) for each pupil in the school year will be entered in the End of Year Report Card that is posted to families.

## **Whole School Strategies to Promote Attendance**

- **Environment** Scoil Mhuire Clarinbridge endeavours to create a safe, friendly 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. Each teacher endeavours to provide a warm, welcoming, appealing classroom environment for all pupils.
- **Good Relationships** All who work in Scoil Mhuire endeavour to establish a happy school atmosphere involving excellent relationships between staff, parents\carers, and pupils.
- **High Expectations** The School Staff will have high expectations for pupils' attendance.
- **New Entrants \ Early Awareness** New entrants and their parents/guardians are invited to engage in an induction process (both at the June Open Day and on Information Night for New Entrants in September each year), 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.
- **Punctuality** Every Class Teacher will teach the importance of regular and punctual attendance to the pupils in their class. Every teacher will teach this at the start of each term and when appropriate.
- **Uniform** Pupils are expected to wear the correct school uniform. However, children who arrive to school without a uniform/complete uniform will still be welcomed and the issue of uniform will not be addressed upon their arrival to school if late.
- **Lunches** If a child arrives to school without a lunch, the Class Teacher will arrange for the School Secretary to contact the parents \ carers so that a lunch can be brought to school for the child.

- **Assessment** If a pupil misses school on a day when they know that there is a test, then the Class Teacher will arrange that the test is given to the pupil when he \ she returns to school.
- **School Calendar** The calendar for the coming school year is published annually in September. It is hoped that this approach enables parents/carers to plan family events around school closures and not take their children out of school during term-time. This should minimise the chances of non-attendance related to family holidays during the school term.
- **Learning Needs** The school provides a comprehensive support service to try to cater for children experiencing learning difficulties.
- **SPHE Policies** The school has a full range of programmes under the umbrella of SPHE (Social Personal & Health Education) to raise the self-esteem of pupils including the Walk Tall, Bi Follain, Circle Time and Stay Safe Programmes.
- **Bullying Awareness \ Anti Bullying Policy** The school has a written bullying awareness policy and procedures in place to investigate all incidents of alleged bullying.
- **Homework** Our homework policy 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. We acknowledge improvement with a note in the homework journal, by praising children for their positive behaviour on attendance and by rewarding them. Teachers are very willing to help pupils who are experiencing difficulties completing homework and are available to discuss this with parents \ guardians.
- **Parents \ Carers** are welcome in our school and staff consult with them where necessary. Teachers will be mindful that parents / guardians wish to know from an early stage if there are any difficulties regarding their children's attendance. That is why the school notifies parents \ guardians in writing when a child misses 15 days.
- **Certificates** NEWB Certificates are awarded to pupils who have full attendance during the school year and perhaps to those who have missed just 1 day. Certificates or other rewards may also be awarded to pupils who improve their attendance over a short period of time, and to pupils who improve their overall attendance.

### **Approaches to Rewards and Praise for Attendance**

Our school places greater emphasis on rewards than on sanctions in the belief that this will, in the long run, give best results. Our approach to rewards and praise include the following which may be used at the teachers' discretion:

- A quiet word or gesture to show approval;
- Stickers, smiley faces, ink-stamps and/or stars on pupils work
- A visit to another member of Staff or to the Principal for commendation;
- A word of praise in front of a group or class;
- Informing parent – written/verbal communication. This could include a note in the pupil's homework journal or a note home.
- Points, treats or stickers are awarded to individuals/teams/class for good and punctual attendance.
- Extra privileges like extended computer time; extra story time; extended PE
- Special Class treats – Golden-time; Free Play Time; a raffle; an extra break or

- extra PE; watch a DVD; Homework passes for a night free from homework;
- Positive comments to the Principal\ Invite the Principal to praise a student or the class
- Pupil of the Week Award based on improved attendance perhaps etc. Achievement Certificates may be included.
- Be allowed sit beside a friend for a day.
- Raffle Tickets for acts of kindness.

## **Communication**

The school has continuous communication with the NEWB and if needs be there will be ongoing communication in relation to children who are at risk with the local Education Welfare Board (EWB) personnel.

Scoil Mhuire Clarinbridge aims to minimise the risks of irregular or non-attendance and to maximise the opportunities provided to all pupils.

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

## **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 EWB five times during the school year. An annual report is submitted detailing the overall level of attendance at the school during that school year. Any important general information will be communicated to the school community through the school's newsletter.

## **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.

## Success Criteria

The following will provide some practical indicators of the success of this policy:

- An increase in annual attendance rates
- Board of Management, Staff and parent/guardian awareness of their legal obligations under the Education (Welfare) Act 2000

## Roles and Responsibilities

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

## Implementation

This policy will be implemented immediately following ratification by the Board of Management and communication to the Parents' Association.

## Ratification and Review

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on June 21<sup>st</sup> 2012

The policy will be reviewed every 2 years or as deemed necessary.

Signed: R. All NA for J. J. J. J. J. - Chairperson, BoM