



"Scoil Íosaf N.S.
Castlemartyr, Co. Cork"

*Scoil Íosaf National School,
Castlemartyr, Co. Cork*

Tel: (021) 4667689 Email: castlemartyrns@gmail.com
Roll No: 13647B Charities Registration Number: 20201003

Scoil Íosaf N.S. Attendance Strategy

June 2021

Authors: Barra Ó Tuama and Anne Marie Barry

Introduction:

Scoil Íosaf National School staff and Board of Management believe attendance is of paramount importance in primary education. In Scoil Íosaf there is a strong tradition of good attendance. 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 important.

The aims of the attendance policy in Scoil Íosaf National School are to:

- To raise awareness of the importance of regular school attendance
- Encourage pupils to attend school regularly and punctually;
- Identifying pupils at risk of poor attendance and at risk of leaving school early
- To foster an appreciation of learning by having good attendance practises.
- Ensuring that pupil's attendance is recorded daily, encouraging full attendance where possible
- Promoting a positive learning environment
- Identifying and removing, insofar as is practicable, obstacles to school attendance.
- To ensure compliance with the requirements of the relevant legislation and to comply with requirements under Education Welfare Act 2000
- Inform the school community of its role and responsibility as outlined in the Education Welfare Act 2000;
- Share the promotion of school attendance amongst all in the school community.

The Education Welfare Act 2000:

Under the terms of the Education Welfare Act 2000 (amended by the Child and Family Agency Act 2013) schools are obliged to:

- Maintain a record of students attending school
- Record school attendance and notify the relevant Educational Welfare Officer of particular problems relating to attendance
- Support students with difficulties in attending school on a regular basis
- Prepare and implement a school attendance strategy to encourage, in a positive way, regular school attendance and an appreciation of learning within the school
- Prepare and implement a code of behaviour, setting standards of behaviour and disciplinary procedures for the school.
- Liaise with other schools and relevant bodies on school attendance issues.

National Education Welfare Board (NEWB):

The NEWB is furnished with the total attendances in the school year through the annual Report Form which is completed online.

The school must inform the Education Welfare Officer 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 expelled or suspended for 6 days or more.

Scoil Iósaf's vision and values in relation to attendance:

The staff of Scoil Iósaf aim to promote the full and harmonious development of all aspects of the person of the pupil: intellectual, social, physical, cultural, moral and spiritual. We believe that in order for pupils to reach their full potential in these areas they must attend school punctually each day. We recognise the importance of having in place strategies to both encourage pupils to attend school and to reward them for their attendance.

Roles and Responsibilities:

It is the responsibility of the Principal, Deputy Principal and class teacher to implement this policy under the guidance of the school's Board of Management.

The Deputy Principal has undertaken the responsibility of monitoring school attendance and policy development in this area. He will be available to support, advise and remind staff on an ongoing basis of how these procedures are being implemented. He is also responsible for making returns to NEWB.

The Principal will ensure that the school register for pupils on Aladdin is maintained in accordance with regulations. Parents will receive a call from the Deputy Principal to inform them if their child has reached 10 days of absence. They will receive a letter from the school (See Appendix A) if their child has accumulated 15 days of absence. The Principal or Deputy Principal will inform the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) when a pupil has been absent for 20 or more days during the course of a school year, and parents will be informed of this. See Appendix B for letters that parents may receive if the school is not overly concerned about the pattern of absence and Appendix C for a letter expressing concern. The Principal or Deputy Principal will also inform the EWO if a pupil is not attending school regularly or when a pupil's name is removed from the school register.

The class teacher will maintain the Aladdin school software programme for recording attendance in accordance with procedure. They will keep a record of explained and unexplained absences. They will inform the Principal or Deputy Principal of concerns s/he may have regarding the attendance of any pupils.

Recording Attendance – Covid 19:

Pupils who are **medically certified** as being at very high risk to Covid-19 and who are engaging with learning through adapted education provision should be marked as present in school attendance records.

The Health Protection Surveillance Centre has advised that children with immediate family members, including parents, in both the 'high risk' and 'very high risk' categories can return to school and it is important for the child's overall wellbeing.

The Board of Management of Scoil Iósaf may deem it necessary to advise a class to remain at home in the absence of detailed advice from Public Health. In this instance, children who are advised to stay at home, and are available for distance learning, are to be marked present.

Covid 19 related absences arising from pupils who have been requested to self-isolate by a medical professional, or restrict their movements, or for pupils who feel unwell with symptoms consistent with Covid 19 must be recorded in accordance with the school's procedures for the notification and recording of absences. These Covid 19 related absences should be noted by the school as explained absences.

Punctuality:

School begins at 9.10 a.m. each morning. All staff and students are expected to be on time.

Students are granted supervised access to the back yard from 8.55 am where they line up in their designated class areas. On wet mornings, children can enter the school building from 9.00 a.m. where they will be supervised by their class teacher. We encourage parents to send their children 5 minutes later than usual to facilitate this. Support teachers will help on wet mornings by directing children to the appropriate entry points.

Parents/guardians will be contacted in the event of pupils being consistently late. If there is no improvement in punctuality, the Principal is obliged, under the Education Welfare Act, to report children who are persistently late, to the Education Welfare Board.

Guidance for Parents:

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, 17 (1).

Reasons for pupils' absences must be communicated to the school. It is preferable that absences are communicated through the Aladdin Connect System, which will record the reason(s) for absence(s) electronically. Failing the ability to do this, parents can communicate absences in writing and these will be retained by the school. To facilitate this, the school journal has pages where parents/guardians may write reason(s) for absence(s).

The school would prefer if children are not taken out of school during term time for family holidays. If this is unavoidable, please inform the Class Teacher and the Principal. School holidays are governed by the standardised school year as agreed with the Dept. of Education & Skills. The school calendar is posted on the homepage of Aladdin Connect, and can also be found on the school website: www.castlemartyrns@gmail.com

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.
- Working with the school and education welfare service to resolve any attendance problems.
- Making sure their children understand that parents support good attendance.
- Discussing planned absences with the school.
- Refraining, if at all possible, from taking holidays during school time.
- Showing an interest in their children's school day and their homework.
- Encouraging them to participate in school activities.
- Praising and encouraging their children's achievements.
- Instilling in their children a positive self-concept and a positive sense of self-worth.
- Informing the school in writing of the reasons for 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 absence or other related school matters.

- Notifying the school if their child/children, particularly children in junior classes, are to be collected by someone not known to their teacher.
- *(input paragraph about child missing for extenuating circumstances owing to medical reasons, etc.)*

Keeping records of Absences:

The school attendance of individual pupils is recorded daily. Class attendance data is recorded on the school's "Aladdin" database system, together with information provided on enrolment forms (pupil's name, date of birth, address, religion, parents' names and occupations).

The rolla is a legal document and must be filled in correctly. Rule 55 in the Rules for National Schools under the Department of Education states that "Roll-call shall be completed no later than 40 minutes after the time fixed for the commencement of formal instruction." Our rolla, therefore, is taken by class teachers' each morning before 09.50 a.m. Any pupil not present at roll call will be marked absent for the day. Children who arrive between 9:10 and 9:50 will be marked as "late". If a child is consistently late the class teacher will speak to the parent/guardian about the matter. If the issue persists, the Principal or Deputy Principal will then make contact with the parent/guardian.

Medical Certificates and other certified explanations for student absences should be kept in the pupil files. These will be retained for possible inspection by the National Educational Welfare Officer. Written explanations for absences will be inputted to Aladdin system for storage.

This information will form part of the reporting procedure to the Educational Welfare Services section of the Tusla - Child and Family Agency.

Each class teacher has a responsibility to monitor the attendance of the children in their care. Teachers should be aware of emerging patterns in relation to poor attendance.

Reduced Days:

Reduced days are provided for individual pupils in exceptional circumstances. All mandatory requirements as per the EWO must be adhered to in such instances.

Whole School Strategies to promote attendance:

Strategies:

- Wolfhound Trophy- awarded to the class with the best attendance each month (post Covid).
- The staff of Scoil Iósaf aim to create a safe and welcoming environment for our pupils and their parents/guardians in order to encourage good attendance.
- Records of attendance in students' school reports.
- We promote attendance through ongoing praise.
- Class teacher will highlight good attendance in the classroom.
- At our 'Meet the Teacher' evenings in Term 1, all class teachers relay the importance of attendance and punctuality to parents/guardians (Post Covid).
- Teachers communicate with parents/guardians at parent teacher meetings on the importance and value of good attendance and punctuality.
- A log of late arrivals/early leavers is kept in the school office.

Monitoring the Attendance Strategy:

The Statement of Strategy of Attendance will be monitored in the following ways:

- School staff will be provided with opportunities to share experiences about how the strategy is working and to review progress towards attendance targets. This will primarily be facilitated at Croke Park meetings.
- The use of attendance data on Aladdin will be used to monitor the overall attendance and punctuality levels, to identify trends and patterns in attendance, to identify specific times in the year, week or day when attendance is low, and to monitor the attendance of vulnerable individuals.
- There will be an update on attendance levels at each Board of Management meeting, with reference to the school's attendance targets.

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.

Ratification of Policy:

This policy was reviewed and updated in June 2021.

Ratified by Board of Management on 18th Nov 2021 (Date)

Submission of Policy to Tusla:

This policy was submitted to Tusla on _____ (Date)

Signed: Frankie Nally

(Chairperson, Board of Management)

Appendix A

SAMPLE LETTER I (ACQUIRED FROM TUSLA WEBSITE)

LETTER TO PARENTS REGARDING A CHILD'S ABSENCE WHERE THERE NO CONTACT HAS BEEN MADE WITH THE SCHOOL

Dear Parents,

I am writing to you regarding <Insert name> attendance at school.

<Insert name> has now been absent on 15 days this year: <insert days>. If a child reaches 20 days of absence, the school must pass the information to the Educational Welfare Service of Tusla - Child and Family Agency.

If you wish to discuss < Insert name> attendance, please contact the school to arrange an appointment to meet with <name of teacher> as soon as possible.

Thank you for your co-operation in this matter.

Yours sincerely,

Appendix B

SAMPLE LETTER 4 (ACQUIRED FROM TUSLA WEBSITE)

LETTER REGARDING A CHILD'S ABSENCE WHERE THE SCHOOL IS NOT CONCERNED ABOUT THE PATTERN OF ABSENCES BUT WHERE THE CHILD'S NAME IS BEING PASSED TO TUSLA – CHILD AND FAMILY AGENCY

Dear Parents,

I am writing to you regarding <Insert name> attendance at school who has been absent on the following days <insert days>.

Because <insert name> has now been absent for 20 days, the school must pass the information to the Educational Welfare Service of Tusla - Child and Family Agency. An Educational Welfare Officer may therefore be in contact with you to discuss the matter further.

OR

Because <insert name> has been absent through illness, the school will be reporting the absence in the normal way but will not be informing Tusla – Child and family Agency that it is concerned about your child's educational welfare.

Under the law, every child must attend school regularly up to sixteen years of age or complete at least three years post primary education whichever comes later. When a child is absent, you as parent must let the school know the reason for the absence every time. It is school policy to do this in writing.

If you wish to discuss < Insert name> attendance, please contact the school to arrange an appointment to meet with <name of teacher> as soon as possible.

Thank you for your co-operation in this matter.

Yours truly,

Appendix C

LETTER REGARDING A CHILD'S ABSENCE WHERE THE SCHOOL IS CONCERNED ABOUT A CHILD'S NON ATTENDANCE AND THE CONCERN IS BEING PASSED TO TUSLA – CHILD AND FAMILY AGENCY.(ACQUIRED FROM THE TUSLA WEBSITE)

Dear Parents,

I am writing to you regarding <Insert name> attendance at school.

<Insert name> has been absent on the following days <insert days>.

The school has written to you about this matter but has not received a satisfactory explanation from you. The school is now very concerned that < Insert name> is not receiving an education and we will be writing to the Educational Welfare Service of Tusla - Child and Family Agency to pass on our concern. An Educational Welfare Officer may therefore be in contact with you shortly to discuss the matter further.

Under the law, every child must attend school regularly up to sixteen years of age or complete at least three years post primary education whichever comes later. When a child is absent, you as parent must let the school know the reason for the absence every time. It is school policy to do this in writing.

If you wish to discuss < Insert name> attendance, please contact the school to arrange an appointment to meet with <name of teacher> as soon as possible.

Thank you for you co-operation in this matter.

Yours truly,