

Rathgar National School

Attendance Policy

Introduction

Whilst there is a very strong tradition of very good or good attendance in Rathgar National School, it is important that parents/guardians are fully aware of their obligations to ensure that their children have consistent and punctual attendance at school. Regular attendance and punctuality at school is essential in order for each child to fulfil his/her educational potential. The Board of Management and school staff promote and support regular attendance and punctuality at school and consider it an essential factor in maximizing pupil progress in school.

The drafting of this school's Attendance Policy was a collaborative school process involving staff and Board of Management. It was adapted to comply with requirements under the Educational Welfare Act 2000, and the guidelines from the Child and Family Agency (Tusla); Developing a Strategy for School Attendance 2015.

Rationale

The main factors contributing to the formulation of this policy are as follows:

- To promote and encourage regular attendance as an essential factor in our pupils' learning
- Legislative requirements such as the Education Welfare Act 2000, amended by the Child and Family Agency Act 2013 and the Education Act, 1998
- The role of the Education Welfare Service
- Changing attitudes to education.

Aims and Objectives

The policy:

- Ensures that pupils are registered accurately
- Ensures that pupil attendance is recorded daily
- Encourages full attendance where possible
- Identifies pupils at risk of irregular/chronic absences
- Promotes a positive learning environment
- Promotes a school culture where every child feels valued, trusted, respected and welcomed
- Enables learning opportunities to be availed of
- Raises awareness of the importance of school attendance
- Fosters an appreciation of learning
- Ensures compliance with the requirements of the relevant legislation

Compliance with School Ethos

This policy complements the school ethos of nurturing potential in a caring environment where the welfare of children is paramount. The Board of Management recognises the importance of the legislation enacted in the Educational Welfare Act, 2000. Our primary objective is to promote our values of nurturing potential in a harmonious teaching and learning environment for all our employees and pupils. This requires the co-operation of all staff, parents and pupils.

Roles and Responsibilities

All staff have an input into the implementation of the policy. Class teachers record daily attendance on Aladdin Connect and the deputy principal with the school administrator makes returns to Education Welfare Service/Tusla online.

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

Punctuality

School gates open at 8:20am and remain open up to 8:40 am when formal instruction begins. Younger pupils, in particular, should be accompanied by a parent/guardian/responsible adult coming to school. All pupils and staff are expected to be on time. The school will contact parents/guardians in the event of pupils being consistently late. If punctuality continues to be an issue, class teachers should bring this to the attention of the Principal/Deputy Principal. The Principal is obliged under the Education Welfare Act, to report cases of concern about school attendance, to the Education Welfare Officer/TUSLA.

Recording and Reporting Attendance

The school attendance of individual pupils is recorded on a daily basis on Aladdin Connect.

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 electronically on the Aladdin Connect School Management System on a daily basis in accordance with Circular 33/2015, no later than 40 minutes after the commencement of formal instruction (8:40 am) i.e. not later than 9:20am each morning. Parents/guardians must note a reason for absence on the school's computerised Aladdin Connect application system. All absence reasons, advance absence notes and late arrival/early leaving notes are mandatory and are required to be recorded online by parents/guardians on the school's Aladdin Connect system. The school's principal, school administrator and child's class teacher will be able to view all absence explanatory notes on line.

Education Welfare Service

The school will notify Tusla, Child and Family Agency,

- if a child is absent for 20 days or more or when the absences give rise for concern
- where a child has been suspended for 6 days or more
- where a child is expelled

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

Promoting Attendance

The school promotes good attendance by:

- creating a safe and welcoming environment
- ensuring children are happy
- displaying kindness, compassion and understanding
- being vigilant so that risks to good attendance such as disadvantage, bullying etc. are identified early

Whole School Strategies to Promote Attendance

Rathgar National School endeavours to create a safe, 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.

Traditionally, school attendance is strong in our school. However, the staff remains vigilant. At risk students can be categorised as those who miss more than 10 days (irregular absences) or 15 days (chronic absences) in a 20-day period. Appropriate contact takes place between the school and parents/guardians via an email from the school office when this occurs. A meeting between parents and the Principal may be set up if deemed necessary.

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. All parents are made aware of the school's obligations of regular reporting of attendance to Tusla. This will be done in a timely manner. There is a focus on the value of regular attendance and on the importance of developing good attendance habits from Junior Infants onwards. The leaflet on school attendance information for parents "Don't let your child miss out" (TUSLA) is included in the information pack provided to all new enrolments in the school.

The calendar for the coming school year is published annually in Term 3 and placed on the noticeboard on Aladdin Connect as well as published on the school website. A reminder is sent to parents 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.

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 Service 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.

Reasons for absence are recorded and reported to the EWS during the school year through an online system. An annual report is submitted detailing the overall level of attendance at the school during that school year.

Where deemed necessary, the Principal will refer cases of ongoing chronic absences and poor punctuality to the Education Welfare Officer/TUSLA. In such cases the Education Welfare Officer (following all reasonable efforts by TUSLA to consult with the child's parents and with 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 a parent/guardian may result in a monetary fine and/or imprisonment.

The current Education Welfare Officer assigned to the school is Gary Harding.

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

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

- When a child transfers from *Rathgar NS* to another school, the school's records on attendance, academic progress etc will be forwarded by post on receipt of written notification of the transfer
- When a child transfers into *Rathgar NS* confirmation of transfer will be communicated to the child's previous school, and appropriate records sought
- Pupils transferring from *Rathgar NS* to a post primary school will have their records forwarded by email on receipt of an Information Receipt Form (NCCA) as part of the 3 phase Education Passport school transfer of information from primary to post-primary schools.
- A child's total school attendance for an academic year will be displayed on their end of year school report, using the mandatory School Reporting Template from NCCA.

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 school 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 children's 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 via the school's electronic system of the reasons for absence from school.
- ensuring, insofar as is possible, that children's appointments (with dentists etc), 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 the teacher.

Evaluation

The success criteria of this Attendance Policy is measured through:

- Maintained and continued high attendance levels and punctuality as measured through records and statistical returns. Good practice and procedures in relation to the electronic recording of daily pupil attendance (Aladdin Connect system).
- Happy confident well-adjusted children
- Positive parental feedback
- Increased Parent/Guardian awareness of their legal obligations in relation to school attendance and punctuality under the Education Welfare Act 2000.
- Teacher encouragement/Positive reinforcement of very good and improved school attendance at all class levels.
- Monitoring and tracking of pupils who are at risk of patterns of poor school attendance by principal, school administrator and class teachers. Emphasis on early intervention to address identified concerns regarding school attendance.
- Ongoing liaison with the Educational Welfare Officer/TUSLA to address cases of concern at an early stage.

Implementation/Ratification and Review

- Ratified by BOM on 4th March 2024
- Signed on behalf of BOM A. J. Sheehan
- Review as necessary or as legislation requires.

Appendix

Developing the Statement of Strategy for School Attendance – Guidelines for Schools
Child and Family Agency (TUSLA) 2015

Don't let your child miss out - leaflet

January 2024