

Approved Date:	October 2020
Review Date:	30/09/2023

School Attendance Strategy

Introduction

Scoil Cholmcille, Mount Hanover through its Board of Management, Staff and Parents/Guardians affirm the school's commitment to its student's attendance as an important aspect of the school ethos and school policy.

Rationale

The policy was drafted for the following reasons:

The Board of Management wishes to comply with legislation such as:

1. The Education Act 1998
2. 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 Cholmcille, Mount Hanover 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 cooperation among pupils, parents/guardians and staff in maintaining a high level of regular attendance through the school year. Scoil Cholmcille, Mount Hanover aims to build and maintain a culture of high expectations amongst all staff and students for the student's learning, participation and attendance.

Punctuality

School begins at 9.05 am. All pupils and teachers are expected to be on time. The school will contact parents/guardians in the event of pupils being consistently late. The Principal is obliged under the Education Welfare Act, to report children who are persistently late, to the Education Welfare Board. It is the responsibility of the class teacher to maintain a record of children who arrive late to school, leave school early or are collected late. This can be recorded electronically on the Aladdin school's system. A child will be recorded as being late to school if they arrive after 9.30 am. Where teachers see a pattern of poor punctuality emerging, they should bring this to the attention of parents/guardians at an early stage. If there is still no improvement in punctuality, then a letter should be sent home notifying

parents / guardians of the issue. If punctuality continues to be an issue then teachers should bring the issue to the attention of the Principal

Recording and Reporting

It is the responsibility of the school principal to keep an accurate record of the students' attendance at the school and the reasons for any failure to attend. Teachers should maintain accurate class rolls and take responsibility for student absences within their classes. Late arrivals and early departures should also be recorded. Teachers will alert the principal if there are concerns about student absences.

The school attendance of individual pupils is recorded on the DES electronic roll book (Aladdin system) of each class on a daily basis. An electronic copy of the Leabhar Tinrimh (Attendance Book) is maintained on the Aladdin system. 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 by 10.30 a.m. each morning. Any pupil not present will be marked absent for the day. Aladdin may not be altered once it has been filled in.

When a child is marked absent on Aladdin, teachers should ensure that they enter the reasons for the absence in the appropriate section, (i.e. under Edit Absence Reasons tab) as soon as that information becomes available. This allows teachers to categorise the absence, such as Unexplained, Illness, Urgent family reason etc. This information will form part of the reporting procedure to the Educational Welfare Services section of the Tusla- Child and Family Agency.

A note from parents/guardians is required to explain each absence. Such notes will be retained by the school. Parents/guardians must also provide a note if a child departs early during the school day.

Parents/guardians are informed in writing at the end of year report of the total number of absences during the school year. Pupils whose non-attendance is a concern, are invited to meet with the Principal/Teacher during Parent/Teacher meetings and are informed of the school's concerns.

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 suspended or expelled for 6 days or more.

Target Setting a Whole School Approach

Scoil Cholmcille, Mount Hanover promotes and encourages full attendance by all our students.

This ethos is communicated to all members of our school community and promoted through:

1. Parent Teacher meetings.
2. B.O.M. meetings.
3. Staff meetings.
4. Our monthly newsletter.
5. Our website.
6. The daily recording of attendance/non attendance by school staff.

Strategies to Promote and Support Good 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
- acknowledging excellent attendance at the end of the school year, with certificates and a photograph for the school website and a mention in the school newsletter.

Procedures for Notification of Student absences to the School

When a student is absent from school during part of a school day or for a school day or for more than a school day, section 18 of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 places a legal duty on parents to notify the principal about the reasons for the child's absence. Section 23 of the Act requires that the procedures to be followed by a parent for notifying the school about absence must be formalised by the school and form part of the school's Code of Behaviour.

Guidance regarding notification of absences will be put in writing and communicated to all parents and to other members of the school community, including students. Among the main requirements/procedures to be set out are:

- School opening times: 9.05 am – 1.45 pm (Infant Class).
- 9.05 am – 2.45pm (1st – 6th class).
- Parents should advise the school about absence prior to the event (if possible) or when the student returns to school (when absence is unexpected or unforeseen) or during the absence (if longer than 1-2 days).
- Class Teachers are to be informed either by phone call, or note, or note in the students homework journal.
- The time/date of the students return to school should be communicated to the class teacher (if possible/known).
- Explanation of a student's late arrival to school.

- Communication/explanation if a student needs to leave school early/before the end of the school day.

Responding to Poor Attendance

Section 17 of the Education (Welfare) Act (2000) states: ‘The parent of a child shall cause the child concerned to attend a recognised school on each day’.

Section 21 of the act obliges schools to inform the Education Welfare Officer if a child is absent for 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 through the online system. 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.

Strategies used in the Event of Poor Attendance

- Contacting parents on an informal basis when a child is absent regularly.
- Discussing school attendance with the student (where appropriate), with a view to finding an explanation for the absence and thereby a solution.
- Supporting pupils through the school Care Team (Principal, Deputy Principal, Class Teacher).
- In the event of prolonged absence/irregular attendance the school will request a meeting with the child and parent to try to identify and resolve any barriers to attendance.
- Contacting the N.E.W.B.

School Roles and Responsibilities

1. It is the responsibility of the Principal and class teachers to implement this policy under the guidance of the school’s B.O.M.

2. School Principal / Deputy Principal

The school Principal will:

- Ensure that the school register of pupils is maintained in accordance with regulations.
- Inform the Education Welfare Officer

- o If a pupil is not attending school regularly.
- o When a pupil has been absent for 20 or more days during the course of a school year.
- o When a pupil's name is removed from the register.
- Inform parents of a decision to contact the Education Welfare Officer of concerns regarding a pupil.
- Insofar as is practicable, promote the importance of good school attendance among pupils, parents and staff.

3. Class Teacher

The Class Teacher will:

- Maintain the school roll-book in accordance with procedure.
- Keep a record of explained and unexplained absences.
- Promote a reward system for pupils with exceptional attendance.
- Encourage pupils to attend regularly and punctually.
- Inform the principal of concerns he/she may have regarding the attendance of any pupils.

Implementation

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

Monitoring of Statement of Strategy

The strategy will be monitored:

- By teaching staff at school meetings.
- By school principal.
- By B.O.M.

Review Process

The policy will be reviewed regularly by the school Principal and B.O.M.

Date the Statement of Strategy was approved by the Board of Management:

20/10/2020

Date the Statement of Strategy submitted to Túsla:
