



Attendance & Punctuality Policy

Introduction:

Scoil Mhuire is committed to providing a learning environment that will foster all children's learning and encourage them to attend school regularly. Our aim is to provide a stimulating day, with clear guidelines and structures, so that children feel welcome and nurtured while attending school. We believe that our pupils will benefit from this education through regular attendance. The policy was reviewed in line with our DEIS Action Plan 2023 - 2026.

Overall Aims:

- To foster an appreciation of learning by having good attendance practices.
- To comply with requirements under Education Welfare Act 2000
- To raise awareness of the importance of school attendance
- To identify pupils at risk of school leaving early
- To enhance the learning environment where children can make progress in all aspects of their development.
- As far as possible, we aim to have full attendance from all of our pupils. Casual absences (for whatever reason) are discouraged as they have a direct impact on children's learning.
- We aim to support children and parents/guardians in achieving good attendance. We want parents/guardians to be aware of the absolute necessity for regular punctual attendance at school.

Roles & Responsibilities:

All staff have an input into the implementation of this policy. It is the responsibility of the Principal and staff to implement this policy under the guidance of the school's Board Of Management.

Secretary:

Ensure that class details are updated annually on Aladdin.
Populate POD in advance of the new academic year and synchronise the date with Aladdin, to maintain complete data integrity.

Class Teacher:

- Record the daily attendance on Aladdin by 10:00am.

- Ensure a reason for absence is entered on Aladdin. If no reason is forthcoming, the absence is noted as unexplained.
- Enter 'late arrival' or 'early leaving' details on a child's attendance record on Aladdin as appropriate.
- Discuss the importance of punctuality through class discussions.
- Communicate with Parents/Guardians regarding poor attendance/punctuality.
- Communicate with HSCL if contact cannot be made with parents regarding reasons for absences and/or if inconsistent patterns are observed.
- Emphasise the importance of regular attendance in class through open class level discussions.
- Promote good attendance through ongoing praise.
- Emphasise the importance of attendance at parent teacher meetings.
- Note the number of days present on school reports.

HSCL:

The Home School Community Liaison Teacher will promote good attendance by

- Providing encouragement and support regarding school attendance during home visits.
- Discreetly recognising improved attendance where and when appropriate. (maybe a nice phone call home - we've noticed and appreciate)
- Organising Attendance Drives to promote regular and consistent attendance.
- Emphasising the importance of good attendance at formal/informal school meetings with parents e.g. Junior Infants induction.
- Emphasising to parents the importance of good attendance via our communication channels..
- Checking in with parents when inconsistent patterns of explanations are observed by teachers.
- Working with SCP and/or EWO to improve school attendance.
- Planning interventions at care team meetings for poor attenders.

Principal:

- Send TUSLA returns through the TUSLA portal.
- Inform EWO if attendance of a pupil has not improved after implementing all recommended interventions as a school.
- Inform EWO if a pupil has been suspended for a period of 6 days or more, when a pupil's name is removed from the school register.
- Oversee and ensure that the school register is accurate and maintained in accordance with regulations.
- Emphasise the importance of regular attendance at assemblies.
- Promote the importance of good school attendance among pupils, parents and staff.
- Ensure this policy is made available to the whole school community.
- Ensure that attendance is part of the agenda at each staff meeting.

Parents:

- Explain **all** absences on Aladdin.
- Notify the school of planned absences.
- Notify the school if their child cannot attend for any reason.

- Encourage children to achieve full attendance.
- Avoid absences for trivial reasons.
- Refrain from arranging holidays during school time.
- Fill in a form explaining their intentions and arrangements if they wish to take their child/children on a holiday during school time.
- Work with the school and TUSLA to resolve any attendance problems .
- Show an interest in their children's school day and homework .
- Praise and encourage their children's achievements.
- Ensure in so far as is possible, that children's appointments are arranged for times outside of school hours.
- Notify the school if their child/children is/are to be collected by someone not known to the teacher.

Ladder of Intervention

- The class teacher communicates with HSCL if there is a concern regarding a child's attendance.
- The class teacher will communicate with the Parent/Guardian and remind them of their statutory duty as parents to ensure that their child is sent to school.
- A text from Aladdin is sent to notify Parents/Guardians of 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30 absences.
- When a child has missed 15 days a letter is sent home to Parents/Guardians highlighting this and encouraging improvement. Another letter is sent at 20 days.
- If there is no further improvement at this point the HSCL will arrange follow up calls and home visits.
- If poor attendance continues, the principal will formally meet the parent outlining that the board of management will be informed about the poor attendance and/or Tusla Education Support Service (TESS) will be contacted.
- TESS will be contacted regarding any child who has missed 20 days or more. The HSCL, SCP, EWO and Principal will work together to support families of children with particularly poor attendance.
- A letter will be sent to parents/guardians when pupils have missed 20 days or more.
- All attendance is reported in the end of year school reports to parents.

Education Welfare Act/Legal Obligations:

The Education (Welfare) Act 2000 provides a framework under which attendance at school can be dealt with by law. As a result of the Act, TESS has been established and has appointed Education Welfare Officers.

Under the regulations of the Act, the school is obliged to:

- Keep a record of pupils' attendance, (this is done on the Aladdin system).
- Submit to TESS the names of all pupils who miss 20 or more days from school.
- Keep a written record of pupils' absences.

Under the Act, parents/guardians are required to:

- Send their children to school each day.
- Notify the Principal, in writing, the reason for a child's absence. This is facilitated by use of the school app, Aladdin Connect.

The school keeps a record of all such absences on Aladdin, using the codes as set down by TESS (see below).

TESS Codes for Category of Absence

- A Illness
- B Urgent Family Reasons (e.g: Bereavement)
- C Expelled
- D Suspended
- E Other (e.g: Holidays, Religious Observance, Emigration)
- F Unexplained
- G Transfer to another school (written confirmation received from other school)

Procedures in relation to the Removal from Register/Transfer from another school:

The school is aware that *'A principal may only remove a pupil's name from a school register where they have been informed that the child has been enrolled in another school or when the Welfare Board notifies them that the child has been registered by it as in receipt of out-of-school education.'*

The Board of Management may in exceptional circumstances suspend a child. (See Code of Behaviour)

Transfer to another school:

Where parents/guardians remove a child from a school the principal is obliged to give them and the new school a certificate stating the child's record of attendance and absences in the school, the last class the child attended, and any other relevant information pertaining to the education of the child.

Transfer from another school:

When Scoil Mhuire receives a new student, the school will notify the student's last school attended that the student is now registered in our school. When a school receives notification that a student has been registered elsewhere they must notify the student's new school of any problems in relation to attendance at the student's former school and of such matters relating to the child's educational progress as appropriate.

Communication:

- Parents/Guardians who fail to send an explanation of absence will be contacted by the class teacher to prompt them to do so. Failing this, the absence will be reported 'unexplained'.
- If a class teacher is struggling to make contact with a parent/guardian, then the HSCL will attempt to contact.

- Calls, in school meetings and Home Visits are organised if there is a continuing attendance problem.
- A text from Aladdin is sent to notify Parents/Guardians of 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30 absences.
- When a child reaches 15 days absence, a letter will be sent to parents informing them of this and the responsibility of the school to report to Tusla should the child reach 20 days absence.
- A report is sent to Tusla as required.
- A letter will be sent to parents when pupils have missed 20 days or more.
- All attendance is reported in the end of year school reports to parents.

Removal of a Pupil during the School Day:

Aims:

- To highlight the importance of remaining in school for a full school day
- To ensure the safety of all pupils in our school by having all visitors and parents report to the school office
- To ensure the accountability of all pupils during any emergency evacuations
- To retain a record of pupils regularly leaving school early.

Rationale:

Pupils are expected to remain in school for a full school day. Pupils should only be removed early from school in cases of emergency/unavoidable appointments or in the event of special arrangements made as part of a specific behaviour plan.

Action:

Unavoidable medical appointments / Withdrawing a sick child from school

If a child is sick during the school day, the secretary will firstly ring the parent/guardian and if uncontactable, will ring the emergency contact number. Parents/Guardians should ensure that all phone numbers are up to date.

When collecting the child, the parent/guardian should report to the school office and the child will be signed out in the Sign-out Book. The parent/guardian can then wait in the foyer while the secretary calls the class teacher and the child walks up from the classroom.

If a child needs to leave early for an unavoidable medical appointment, the school should be contacted in advance.

No child will be allowed to leave the school with any other adult other than their parent/guardian unless the office has been contacted beforehand naming the person who is to collect the child.

Arriving late to school due to medical appointment or emergency

Our school day begins at 8.50am. If a child has a medical, dental or unavoidable morning appointment, a note/call/email/dojo should be sent in beforehand. The school roll is taken before 10.00am. In this case the roll will be kept open for this child until 12pm (maximum). After this time, the child has missed half of the school day and will be marked absent.

Emergencies

The parent/guardian should ring the school en-route and explain the situation. The secretary can then have the child collected from the class and ready to meet the parent/guardian. The child will be signed out in the Sign-Out Book.

No child will be allowed to leave the school with any other adult other than the child's parent/guardian unless the parent/guardian themselves has been in an accident. In such cases, the child will only be released to an immediate family member known to the Principal & staff, as named as the Emergency Contact person.

Punctuality

School starts at 8:50 am. For security reasons, all doors will be locked at 9.10am. The School Role will be taken before 10am. Late arrivals will be recorded on the Aladdin system.

If a child arrives late to school, the class teacher will record this on the Aladdin Schools system (in minutes) from 8.50am onwards.

The HSCL and Principal will meet with the parents/guardians of children who are continually late to discuss strategies to improve punctuality.

If, following school intervention & strategies punctuality does not improve, the principal will report the case to the Education Welfare Officer for further intervention and action.

A copy of the policy will be given to members of staff, Board of Management, and available to parents to view in the school and will be available on our website.

Ratified: Br. Phil Ryan
Chairperson of the Board of Management

Date: 22/5/24

Next Review: May 2025