



## **Attendance Policy**

### **Introductory Statement**

In St. Mary's Boys' National School, we aim to promote the good attendance and punctuality of our pupils. The BoM through the Principal, the Staff and the Parents' Association first drafted this Attendance policy in May 2012. This policy was revised and updated by the school staff in November 2019. It will be presented to the Board of Management for ratification and will be circulated to parents.

The principal and teaching staff expressed concern at the amount of time that children were absent from school. A major factor for our particular school is that many of our parents often arrange family trips abroad during school/term time for family reasons.

### **Rationale**

The school wishes to ensure that each child will get an opportunity to realise his/her potential and regular attendance at school is a prerequisite of this. Regular attendance is recognised as a priority by the staff. The main factors contributing to the formulation of this policy can be summarised as follows;

- The pupil profile of our school (i.e. a significant percentage of children from international families)
- The role of the NEWB
- Levels of language deficit and the consequences of absenteeism to progress in this and other areas
- Legislative requirements such as the Education Welfare Act 2000
- Changing attitudes to education

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

Our vision for our school is that children will develop a sense of personal responsibility and an appreciation of the importance of punctuality and regular attendance in achieving their full potential as learners and individuals. This policy compliments the school ethos of nurturing potential in a caring environment where the welfare of children is paramount.

### **Aims**

The aims of the attendance policy in St. Mary's Boys' National School are to:

1. Encourage pupils to attend school regularly and punctually.
2. Develop parents' understanding of the need for good attendance and punctuality.
3. Share the promotion of school attendance amongst all in the school community.
4. Inform the school community of its role and responsibility as outlined in the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000.
5. Identify pupils who may be at risk of developing school attendance problems.
6. Ensure that the school has procedures in place to promote attendance/participation.

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7. Develop, subject to resources, links between the school and the families of children who may be at risk of developing attendance problems.
8. Identify and remove insofar as is practicable, obstacles to school attendance.
9. Establish behaviour that will serve children well in the future.
10. Ensure children do not become alienated from the Education System through poor attendance.
11. Have clear procedures in dealing with problems of poor attendance.

### **The school will ensure that:**

- The importance of school attendance is promoted throughout the school.
- Pupils are registered accurately and efficiently.
- Pupil attendance is recorded daily.
- Parents or guardians are contacted via Aladdin (automated texting service via school administrative system) when reasons for absences are unknown or have not been communicated.
- Pupil attendance and lateness is recorded and monitored via Aladdin (school administrative system).
- School attendance statistics are reported as appropriate to:
  - ✓ The Education Welfare Board (Túsła)
  - ✓ The Education Welfare Officer.
  - ✓ The Board of Management.

### **Punctuality**

- School begins at 9.20 am
- All pupils and teachers are expected to be on time.
- Pupils line up when the bell rings at 9.20am and are received by their class teacher in the playground. The children are then escorted to their classrooms by their class teacher at 9.20am to commence classes. Children are required to be in their classrooms not later than 9.30am.
- The Principal is obliged under The Education Welfare Act, to report children who are persistently late. The school will contact parents/guardians in the event of pupils being consistently late and are obliged to contact the Education Welfare Board.
- In the event of a pupil arriving late parents must sign the pupil in, in the Sign In/Sign Out Book, located in the office at the school entrance. Date, child's name, name of adult dropping child to school & time must be recorded in the Book.

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- All children who arrive to class after 9.20am have their arrival time logged on Aladdin by class teachers. This will indicate the number of minutes the child is late.
- If a child is persistently late, the class teacher will organise a meeting with parents/guardians and an Action Plan may be put in place.
- If there is no significant improvement in punctuality within the agreed timeframe of the action plan, a meeting is held with parents/guardians, class teacher and principal.

### **Promoting Punctuality:**

The school will promote punctuality by:

- Informing parents on enrolment of school times, expectation of punctuality and attendance and the reasons for this.
- Reminding parents at the start of the school year of school times, expectation of punctuality and the importance of school attendance.
- Ensuring that school starts and finishes punctually.
- Varying the morning timetable to motivate pupils.
- Informing parents that a note is required if a child has an appointment and needs to leave school early before the end of the school day. Parent/guardian must sign out the child in the Sign In/Sign Out book in the school's office.

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

- General awareness raising and setting high expectations e.g. discussion at parent-teacher meetings, highlight the importance at school enrolment meetings, positive affirmation when roll is being taken, records of attendance in student's school reports, records of attendance in a student's Education Passport.
- **Involving parents in high expectations** e.g. high levels of parental involvement in all aspects of school life, involving parents in decision making.
- **Providing support programmes** to enhance attendance e.g. art, music, drama and sporting activities, Green Schools initiatives, SPHE programmes.
- **Reward Systems** e.g. Attendance certificates.
- **Building community support** for attendance through links with other schools and community groups e.g. Local secondary schools, local GAA club, Green Schools Programme, Swimming Pool, local principal's network to share practice/experience, joint school holiday planning to support attendance from families with children attending different local schools etc
- **We promote a warm, open, happy environment.**

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- The school curriculum, insofar as is practicable, is flexible and relevant to the needs of the individual child.
- The school will promote development of good self-concept and self-worth in the children.
- Support for pupils, who have special educational needs, are in place in accordance with Department of Education & Skills guidelines.
- Internal communication procedures are in place to inform teachers of the special needs of pupils.
- The assistance of the Education Welfare Officer will be utilised.
- The attendance rates of pupils will be monitored by the class teacher in the first instance, and the class teacher will notify the Principal of any concerns regarding the attendance of any child. Aladdin will automatically notify the Principal and relevant Class Teacher when a pupil misses 15 and/or 20 days.
- Pupils with a poor attendance record will, insofar as is practicable, be supported in an effort to improve their attendance.
- Attendance will form part of the Principal's report at each Board of Management Meeting.

### **Recording and Reporting Attendance**

- Attendance and non-attendance is recorded on Aladdin (an electronic on line system for recording and monitoring attendance). The school attendance of individual pupils is recorded on Aladdin in the Leabhar Rolla (Roll Book) of each class on a daily basis. Class attendance is automatically recorded in the Leabhar Tinrimh (Attendance Book). The annual attendance of each individual pupil is automatically recorded in the Clár Leabhar (Register).
- Roll will be called at the same time each day, normally within the first hour after the commencement of the five hour forty minute day (Circular 33/2015).
- Roll call is taken daily at 10.30am.
- Under Circular 0028/2013, Section 3.3 (b) "A pupil will be marked either present or absent at the time of roll call and there will be no provision for adjusting the Roll Book (Leabhar Rolla) where a pupil subsequently does not complete the full school day or arrives after the roll call." Parents should make the teacher aware in advance when a pupil has an appointment (e.g. medical, dental etc) and subsequently provide this information in writing.
- Children arriving to school after 10.45am are marked "late and absent." All children who arrive to class late have their arrival time logged on Aladdin by class teachers. This will indicate the amount of minutes the child is late.
- If a child is absent at the time of roll call he/she will be marked absent for the day.
- If a child arrives in after roll is called he/she must be signed in in the sign in/sign out book in the school office.

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- In the event of a late arrival parents should notify the school in writing.
- If a child has been absent for 15 days or more, the school will inform parents in writing of their child's absence.
- Once a child has reached 20 days absences this will then be reported to Tusla (Child and Family Agency) and parents will be informed in writing.
- In the event of a class teacher being absent the substitute teacher will inform the principal of the attendance and the principal will record the attendance on Aladdin.
- In the event of the principal being absent the substitute teacher will inform the school secretary of the attendance for that day. The school secretary will then record the attendance on Aladdin.

Absences can be characterised as the following:

- **Irregular Absentee:** 5/10 days absent without a valid reason on return. For irregular absenteeism, the teacher will inform the parents of her/his concerns about the child and seek to have explanation of absence returned in writing or if deemed necessary to meet the parents to discuss the matter. If necessary, an Action Plan will be put in place.
- **Seriously Irregular Absentee:** 10/15 days absent without a valid reason on return. For seriously irregular absenteeism, the Principal will write to the parents inviting them to a meeting to discuss the problem. An Action Plan will be put in place, and a review meeting occur within a month.
- **Chronic Absentee:** Over 20 days absent in an academic year. For chronic absenteeism the Principal will inform the Education Welfare Officer and notify the parents of this by letter.

### **Explanation of Absence**

Reasons for pupils' absences must be communicated by parents/guardians to the school and will be retained by the school. To facilitate this, parents can:

- email the school
- use the school Explanation of Absence template (See Appendix 1),
- use templates provided in child's homework journals

These absence notes will be retained by the school. **Please note that even if a parent informs the school by phone that a child was/is/will be absent we still require an explanation in writing.** The Explanation of Absence Form is accessible on the school website. A hard copy of the Explanation for Absence Form is available in the school office. These notes/communications will form a record which may be inspected by the Education Welfare Officer on a visit to the school.

### **Tusla**

The Education Welfare Officer is informed if:

- A child is expelled

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- A child is suspended
- A child has missed more than 20 days.

Tusla is furnished with the total attendances in the school year through the Annual Report Form which is completed on-line.

### **Strategies in the event of non-attendance**

- Working with groups or individuals who may need additional support
- Tailoring whole school approaches to group or individual needs
- Engaging in early dialogue with parents and students
- Using internal school processes to provide individualised support
- Using school led multi agency support processes
- Referral to Túsula's Educational Welfare Services

### **Guidance for Parents on Holidays during Term Time**

Section [(21) (9)] of the Education Welfare Act states that: "a pupil's absence can only be authorised by the Principal when the child is involved in activities organised by the school or in which the school is involved". The school principal cannot authorise a child's absence for holidays during school time. However, it is essential that parents inform the school of any such arrangements. Teachers are not under any obligation to set work for pupils that are away on holidays.

### **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.
- Subject to the restrictions of the Data Protection Act, when a child transfers from St. Mary's Boys' National School to another school, the school's records on attendance and academic progress

will be forwarded (in compliance with our Data Protection Policy) on receipt of written notification of the transfer.

- When a child transfers into St. Mary's Boys' National School, confirmation of transfer will be communicated to the child's previous school and appropriate records sought.
- Pupils transferring from St. Mary's Boys' National School to a Post Primary school will have their records forwarded (in compliance with our Data Protection Policy) on receipt of confirmation of enrolment. See [www.ncca.ie/transfer](http://www.ncca.ie/transfer) for further details of Education Passport requirements.

### **Procedures in relation to removal from register/transfer from another school**

We are aware of the procedures re transfer and removal from register and we follow the directives. In accordance with circular 33/2015

- Schools using an electronic system must ensure that it provides that a pupil's name will be recorded as removed from the roll on the electronic system on the next school day following 20 consecutive absences.
- Schools are reminded of the requirement under the Education Welfare Act 2000 that they must also notify the Education Welfare Service of TUSLA when the aggregate number of school days on which a pupil is absent during a school year reaches 20 days.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

#### **School Principal**

- Support parents and families where there is a concern about attendance.
- 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
- Provides leadership for the creation of a school ethos and climate that is supportive of high levels of engagement and attendance.
- Lead the review and implementation of the school's Attendance Strategy.
- Put arrangements in place for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the school's Attendance Strategy.
- Provide opportunities for staff to engage actively with the development and monitoring of the school's Attendance Strategy.
- Initiate links with other schools and relevant bodies on school attendance issues.
- Notify Tusla's Educational Welfare Services and the relevant EWO of particular problems in relation to attendance.

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- Furnish pertinent attendance documentation to officers of relevant government departments.
- Inform the Education Welfare Officer:
  - If a pupil is not attending school regularly.
  - When a pupil has been absent for 20 or more days during the course of a school year and/or their attendance level is of concern.
  - If a pupil has been suspended for a period of six or more days.
  - When a pupil's name is removed from the school register.

### **Teachers**

- Provide a classroom climate and classroom management that support participation and engagement especially with students who may be at risk of poor attendance.
- Actively use the school's Attendance Strategy to promote attendance.
- Set high expectations for punctuality and attendance in their classrooms.
- To agree punctuality and attendance standards with students as part of classroom rules.
- Set example by their own punctuality.
- Alert relevant staff if there are concerns about student absences.
- Support the attendance plan for students who have difficulty in attending school on a regular basis.
- Promote a class reward system for pupils with exceptional attendance.
- Encourage pupils to attend regularly and punctually.
- To support students on return when they have missed periods of schooling.
- To ensure attendance and punctuality data are recorded accurately on the Aladdin system, and in line with this policy, and reviewed in line with school procedures. Each teacher will:
  - Take roll call daily at 10.00am.
  - Record time of all "late" arrivals i.e. after 9.20am
  - Keep a record of explained and unexplained absences and record same on Aladdin.
  - Contact the parents in instances where absences are not explained in writing.

### **Parents**

- Parents have a legal duty to ensure that their child who is attending a recognised school is at school on every day that the school is open unless there is a genuine reason not to attend (Section 17 of Education Welfare Act 2000).
- To set high standards for their child in relation to attendance and punctuality.
- Engage with the school if there is a problem about their child's attendance and support plans to address the problem.
- Ensure that their child regularly attends and arrives at school on time.
- Avoid taking their child out of class unless there is a serious reason.
- Parents are strongly discouraged from taking students on holidays during term time.
- Parents are required to notify school in writing of reason for all absences.
- Discuss planned absences with the school.
- Show an interest in their children's school day and their children's homework.
- Encourage them to participate in school activities.

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- Praising and encouraging their children's achievements.
- Ensuring, insofar as is possible, that children's appointments (with dentists etc.), are arranged for times outside of school hours.

### **Pupils**

- Pupils have the clear responsibility to attend school regularly and punctually.
- Pupils should inform staff if there is a problem that may lead to their absence.
- Pupils are responsible for promptly passing on absence notes from parents to their class teacher.
- Pupils are responsible for passing school correspondence to their parents, on the specified day.

### **Success Criteria**

- Roll Book indicating high levels of attendance will show success of policy.
- Positive feedback from staff and parents.

### **Timeframe for Implementation**

The policy will be implemented on ratification by the Board of Management. This policy was ratified by the Board of Management of St. Mary's Boys' National School on 26<sup>th</sup> November 2019.

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Chairperson, Board of Management**

**Appendix 1: Student Absence Explanation Form**



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Name of child: \_\_\_\_\_ Date(s) of absence: \_\_\_\_\_

Total number of days absent: \_\_\_\_\_

Reason for absence:  illness  urgent family reasons  
 holidays  religious observations  other

If 'other' please give details: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Date the child returned to school: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's/guardian's signature: \_\_\_\_\_



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Name of child: \_\_\_\_\_ Date(s) of absence: \_\_\_\_\_

Total number of days absent: \_\_\_\_\_

Reason for absence:  illness  urgent family reasons  
 holidays  religious observations  other

If 'other' please give details: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Date the child returned to school: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's/guardian's signature: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 2: Punctuality Letter

{{ address }}

{{ current\_date }}

Dear Parents/Guardians,

I am writing to you regarding {{ first\_name }}'s punctuality at school.

Our records indicate concerns in relation your child {{ first\_name }}'s punctuality.

{{ tardy\_table }}

When pupils arrive late, they miss out on essential instructions given at the beginning of the lesson. This can significantly reduce achievement, regardless of academic ability. Your child may also feel uncomfortable arriving to the classroom when everyone else is settled. Furthermore, when one pupil arrives late, it disrupts the entire class and the teacher – everyone's education is compromised.

{{ first\_name }}'s class teacher and Helena would like to discuss {{ first\_name }}'s punctuality with you as soon as possible.

**Please phone the office on 051 851399 and make an appointment.**

Because {{ first\_name }}'s punctuality record is concerning, the school must pass the information to the National Educational Welfare Board. An Educational Welfare Officer may therefore be in contact with you to discuss the matter further.

According to the terms of the Education Welfare Act, the school is obliged to submit details of all children in the school who were absent for 20 days or more and/or when there is a concern about attendance and/or punctuality , for whatever reason during that time.

Yours sincerely,

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James Robinson

Principal

### **Appendix 3: Letter for Parents when pupil has missed 15 days**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Dear Parents,

Under the terms of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000, the school is obliged to notify Túsla if a child is absent for 20 days or more, or where a child's absence gives rise to concern.

It is the school's policy to inform parents by letter of children's absences, when these absences total 15 days and 20 days. While we understand that children may be absent due to illness or bereavement, we are just bringing the number of absent days to your attention.

This letter is to inform you that our records show that \_\_\_\_\_ has been absent from school for \_\_\_\_\_ days.

It is the policy of St. Mary's Boys' National School to encourage children to attend school every day. Parents can help to develop a positive attitude to school attendance by encouraging children to come to school every day and also by ensuring that all absences are explained in writing.

We thank you for your cooperation in this.

Yours sincerely,

\_\_\_\_\_

James Robinson

Principal

## **Appendix 4: Letter for Parents when pupil has missed 20 days**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Dear Parents,

Under the terms of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000, the school is obliged to notify Túsła if a child is absent for 20 days or more, or where a child's absence gives rise to concern.

It is the school's policy to inform parents by letter of children's absences. You will have already received a letter when your child reached 15 days or more. While we understand that children may be absent due to illness or bereavement, we are legally obliged to report all absences of 20 days or more to Túsła. Following your notes, the categories of absence have also been recorded and Túsła may examine this data further.

This letter is to inform you that our records show that \_\_\_\_\_ has been absent from school for \_\_\_\_\_ days.

It is the policy of St. Mary's Boys' National School to encourage children to attend school every day. Parents can help to develop a positive attitude to school attendance by encouraging children to come to school every day and also by ensuring that all absences are explained in writing.

We thank you for your cooperation in this.

Yours sincerely,

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James Robinson

Principal