



Corridor Echoes

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National School Attendance Campaign

This edition of the Corridor Echoes newsletter is focused solely on school attendance. The aim is to get students and parents/guardians to think about the importance of school attendance and encourage pupils to attend every day. We will look at why attendance is important/implications of poor attendance; the attendance data from our school in 2022/23; what we are going to do as a community to try and improve in this area.

While we speak a great deal about this area in school and the importance of being present every day, we need you the parents/guardians to support this drive for full attendance also. We are sharing attendance data from recent years in this newsletter, with a particular focus on last year (2022/23).

During Term 1 this year, the National School Attendance Campaign for 2023/24 was launched across all schools in Ireland. Since March 2019, schools right across the country have seen a dramatic increase in the level of absenteeism presenting in schools. Understandably, this may have initially been down to the impact of Covid-19 e.g. having to remain at home when certain symptoms presented or someone in your household had Covid etc.

Unfortunately, the high level of absenteeism has remained and the impact of poor attendance in the last two/three years is becoming evident where ***progress, attainment levels in subjects like literacy and numeracy, reading ability, development of social skills, resilience, pupils ability to form and maintain friendships*** are all impacted due to missing so many days from school.

The National School Attendance Campaign is seeking to promote better attendance amongst all pupils. As part of this campaign, schools are encouraged to share their attendance data with parents to help better understand our context. On the next page we will share attendance statistics from our school for the 2022/23 school year so families can see how significant a problem this is and communicate what we hope to do this year to encourage pupils to attend school every day.

We want families to be aware that no matter what the barriers are that may lead to a pupil missing school regularly, we are here to find solutions to ensure each child presents in school every day and reaches their full potential by the time they leave us in 6th class.

What was attendance like in St. Mary's BNS in 2022/23?

In 2022/23, a total of **3283** days were missed due to absences, or **11.2%** of the total days in the school year. The breakdown of these absences are as follows:

Unexplained (where no reason was given) = **557** Illness = **1626**
 Urgent family reason = **165** Holidays = **643**
 Other = **292**

The total days missed so far this year amounts to **624** days.

Table outlining the attendance figures for each of the last 4 years.

Ideally, schools would aim to achieve an attendance rate of at **least 95% plus** every month. Please see below attendance statistics for the last 4 years.

Month	2020 / 2021	2021 / 2022	2022 / 2023	2023 / 2024
August				92.4%
September	91.4%	88.1%	92.0%	93.6%
October	95.0%	89.2%	88.2%	92.9%
November	90.7%	88.4%	90.5%	95.3%, partial, to date
December	93.0%	81.8%	84.3%	0%, partial
January		82.0%	86.6%	0%, partial
February		86.7%	88.0%	0%, partial
March	96.8%	89.9%	90.3%	0%, partial
April	96.3%	91.5%	91.9%	0%, partial
May	93.8%	91.0%	89.6%	0%, partial
June	91.4%	86.2%	86.2%	0%, partial
July				
Total	93.3%	87.6%	88.8%	93.4%

How does this level of absenteeism impact pupils in our school?

The DES, in recent communications, defined *Chronic Absenteeism* as “**missing 10% or more of school—for any reason, and is an indication that a student is academically at risk due to missing too much school.**” This equates to 18 days. Last year in 2022/23, **over 109 pupils, or 53% of students in our school**, fell into this category of chronic absenteeism. So this is a major issue that we need to address!

Chronic absenteeism is a red alert and students in this category ie missing 18 days or more in a school year (this is almost a full month of school), are ***much less likely to read proficiently*** by the time they reach middle classes in primary school. It also ***impacts on friendships, social skills development, pupil self esteem*** and more. Our records show that the attendance of pupils who fall into this category becomes progressively worse year after year and these pupils will often have significantly lower outcomes in literacy, numeracy and other areas of the curriculum.

What can parents/guardians do?

- Refrain from taking holidays during school time.
- Ensuring regular and punctual school attendance.
- Notifying the school if their children cannot attend for any reason (via Aladdin Connect)
- Working with the school and education welfare service to resolve any attendance problems or barriers to children attending school.
- Making sure their children understand that parents support good school attendance.
- Discussing planned absences with the school.
- 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.
- Ensuring, insofar as is possible, that children's appointments (with doctors, 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.

What are we doing in school to improve attendance?

- The school has formed an Attendance Team with 4 members of staff who will seek ways to promote attendance throughout the school; review attendance data regularly and identify pupils where attendance is a concern; assist families where there may be barriers to a child attending school and put a plan in place to support the child and family; put in place procedures to recognise good/improved attendance.
- This week we announced our whole school Attendance Race which will run for the next 6 weeks. Please see below for further information on our attendance race.
- Regular notifications: Parents will receive notifications if their child is absent for 10, 12, 15 and 20 days rather than a monthly message. Parents can also review their child's attendance on Aladdin Connect.
- Attendance will be discussed during parent teacher meetings in November. Please note, where parents feel there is a barrier to regular school attendance, please ensure you bring this to the teacher's attention and we will discuss measures which could be put in place to overcome this.



Attendance Race

We have two noticeboards in the school which will display the progress of each class over the next 6 weeks. The class that has the best attendance in the week moves on one place. At the end of week 1, Junior Infants have taken an early lead achieving an attendance rate of 99%! Well done boys. Even more pleasing was the fact that 4 out of 8 classes achieved an attendance rate of 95% or higher which is our goal!

When should my child stay at home/return to school?

Runny nose or head cold	Pupils can attend school
Chicken Pox	Return to school once scabs are dry and crusted.
Diarrhoea/Vomiting	Return to school after 48hrs have passed since last episode
Fever	Remain at home until high temperature has passed
Conjunctivitis	Attend GP who will advise about return to school
Impetigo	Attend GP who will advise about return to school
Ringworm	A child with suspected ringworm should be taken to their GP and, if ringworm is confirmed, treatment should begin as soon as possible. Once parents/guardians attend to this, the child may return to school.
Head Lice	It is important to avoid contact between an affected child and others. If parents/guardians notice head lice, or are advised that they have been noticed in the child's hair at school, treatment must begin before the child returns to school. So long as the treatment begins before bed-time, the child may attend school the next day.

Above are some of the common ailments that present in schools. It can be difficult for parents to know when they can send their child to school and when they should be kept at home, particularly given the messaging to families during Covid-19 when pupils were asked to remain at home for a variety of reasons. If you are ever in doubt as to whether or not your child can attend school please contact us and we'd be happy to assist. Parents can also visit the [HPSC website](#) or view the [Management of Infectious Diseases booklet](#) which offers excellent advice/guidance to parents and schools on this area.

WHAT HELPS IF YOU ARE HAVING DIFFICULTY GETTING YOUR CHILD TO SCHOOL



WHO CAN HELP

Class teacher/ Year Head
Principal
Home School Community Liaison (HSCL) Coordinator
School Completion Programme
Educational Welfare Officer
Educational Welfare Service Helpline: 01 7718815
www.tusla.ie