

St Canice's Co-Ed Primary School

Granges Road, Kilkenny.



Attendance Policy

Vision

St. Canice's Co-Ed Primary School, Kilkenny 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 each day. Research points to the benefits of good attendance. It is our aim to put in place procedures and strategies that will encourage optimum attendance, while complementing the school ethos of nurturing potential in a caring environment where the welfare of children is paramount.

Rationale

The main factors contributing to the formulation of an attendance policy can be summarised 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 (Section 22) and the Education Act, 1998
- To remove any possible disadvantage arising from poor attendance
- Highlight the responsibilities and duties of various parties in the promotion of good attendance.

Formulating the Policy

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. Parents/guardians and teaching staff are consulted in drafting and reviewing policies with the aim of promoting a high-level of co-operation among the school community.

Aims and Objectives

- Ensuring that pupils are registered accurately and efficiently
- Ensuring that pupil attendance is recorded daily
- Encouraging full attendance where possible
- Identifying pupils at risk
- Promoting a positive learning environment
- Enabling learning opportunities to be availed of
- Raising awareness of the importance of school attendance
- Fostering an appreciation of learning
- Identify pupils at risk of leaving school early
- Ensuring compliance with the requirements of the relevant legislation
- Developing, subject to available resources, links between the school and the families of children who may be at risk of developing attendance problems
- Identifying and removing, insofar as is practicable, obstacles to school attendance.
- working with outside agencies e.g.HSE, Tusla, N.E.P.S. C.A.M.H.S where relevant to improve attendance.

Roles and Responsibilities

School Principal

The School Principal will:

- Insofar as is practicable, promote the importance of good school attendance among pupils, parents and staff
- Ensure that the school register of pupils is maintained in accordance with regulations.
- Acknowledge pupils with exceptional attendance during Assembly.
- Inform parents by letter when a pupil has been absent for 12 days enclosing a letter outlining their role in ensuring good attendance and also explaining the role of the NEWB..
- Inform the NEWB when a pupil has been absent for 20 or more days during the course of a school year.
- Inform the NEWB if a pupil has been suspended for a period of six or more days.
- Inform parents of a decision to contact the Education Welfare Service of concerns regarding a pupil.

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 and approve of 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.
- Informing the school in writing 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 in writing, the school if their child/children, particularly children in junior classes, are to be collected by someone not known to the teacher.

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 and for passing school correspondence to their parents, on the specified day.

Class Teacher

- Maintain the school roll-book in accordance with procedure.
- Keep a record of explained and unexplained absences and lateness.
- contact parents in instances where absences are not explained. If no written or verbal explanation is forthcoming then the class teacher will note "unexplained" as the reason for the child's absence.
- Encourage pupils to attend regularly and punctually.
- Inform the Principal of concerns regarding attendance/punctuality of any pupil.
- Act in a professional manner with regard to personal attendance/punctuality.

Punctuality

- School begins at 8.50 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.

Recording and Monitoring Attendance

- The school attendance of individual pupils is recorded by the class teacher on a daily basis on Aladdin (eRolls -compliant with the DES circular) Class attendance data is recorded daily on Aladdin The annual attendance of each individual pupil is recorded on Aladdin
- 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 before 10:00am each morning. Any pupil not present will be marked absent for the day.
- A note from parents/guardians is required to explain each absence. To facilitate both parents and teachers in the maintenance of such records, the blank notes at the back of the pupils' homework notebook can be used. Such notes will be retained by the class teacher and the reason for absence recorded on Aladdin. Absence/lateness calls to the office are recorded and the class teacher is informed.
- Parents/guardians must sign the "Early Leaving Sheet" if a child departs early during the school day. This sheet will be kept in the teacher's classroom.
- Parents/guardians are made aware of the requirements of the NEWB particularly the by-law relating to absences of more than 20 days per school year. Parents will be notified in writing where a child has been absent for 12 days
- Pupils whose non-attendance is a concern are invited to meet with the Principal to discuss ways of improving attendance going forward.
- Improvements in attendance/punctuality are noted and acknowledged.
- The total number of absences during the school year will be recorded on the end of year report.
- 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 for 6 days or more or expelled.
- The NEWB (National Education Welfare Board) is furnished with the total attendances in the school year through the Annual Report Form which is completed on-line.

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

- Traditionally, school attendance is strong in our school. Statistically our overall attendance is at 95% and over each year. However, the staff remains vigilant so that 'at risk' students are identified early. "At risk" students can be categorised as those who are continually absent without an accompanying note of explanation from parents/guardians or who are regularly absent on a Monday or on a Friday. Appropriate contact takes place between the school and parents/guardians either via a letter or a note in the homework diary when this occurs. A meeting between parents and the Principal may be set up if deemed necessary. Absences of more than 20 days are automatically referred to the Education Welfare Officer.
- There is a focus on the value of regular attendance and on the importance of developing good attendance habits from Junior Infants onwards. This will be communicated to parents at an induction night for Junior Infant parents, held in early September each year.
- In the first newsletter of a new school year, parents will be reminded of the importance of good attendance and their role in relation to this. The overall attendance for the previous school year along with other statistics deemed of interest to parents will be published in this newsletter. Parent will be reminded to submit a note in the case of their child being absent. Parent will be encouraged to have their children in school on time each morning. Parents will be discouraged from taking holidays during term time. In the event of parents taking children out of school for holidays, a letter to the principal must be provided, in which the parents state they are doing so and are aware of the implications.

- The calendar for the coming school year is published annually by June of the previously year and is distributed to all parents. 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.
- At the end of the school year, those children with full attendance for the year will be named over the intercom and presented with a certificate from the principal.
- At the first assembly of the year, a list of the children who achieved full attendance will be read out by the principal and the children will be reminded of the importance of good attendance.

Strategies in the Event of Non-Attendance

- 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.
- 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 by a post-holder and reported to the NEWB four times during the school year through an online system. An annual report is submitted by the principal – 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. This information will be communicated to the school community through the school's newsletter.

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 has developed a good relationship with the local Education Welfare Board (EWB) personnel and there is ongoing communication in relation to children who are at risk.
- The principal, when attending a case conference on a pupil in the school, will report on the child's attendance where applicable.
- The school maintains communication with local pre-schools and second-level schools in order to make the transition for pupils as easy as possible.

Communication with other Schools

- When a child transfers from St. Canice's Co-Ed. to another school, the schools records on attendance, academic progress etc will be forwarded on receipt of written notification of the transfer
- When a child transfers into St. Canice's Co-Ed. confirmation of transfer will be communicated to the child's previous school and appropriate records sought.
- Pupils transferring from St. Canice's Co-Ed. to a post primary school will have their records (Education Passport) forwarded after receipt of confirmation of enrolment and request from secondary school principal.

Communication with Parents

- The school also informs all parents of the implications of non-attendance as per the Education Welfare Act 2000. This information is disseminated by regular school circulars. Parents of new children are informed on enrolment and at the Junior Infant Information Meeting in October.

Evaluation

The success of any Attendance Policy is measured through:

- Improved attendance levels as measured through Aladdin records and statistical returns
- Happy confident well adjusted children
- Positive parental feedback
- Teacher vigilance.

Implementation/Ratification and Review

This policy has been in operation in St. Canice's Co-Ed. since 2011 and was updated in 2016. It will be reviewed again in 2018 or should new Department guidelines be issued prior to then.

References:

Don't let your Child Miss Out - NEWB 2004

Education Welfare Act 2000

Education Act 1998

Section 29 Education Act

Tusla – *Developing the Statement of Strategy for School Attendance: Guidelines for Schools*

Signed on behalf of the Board of Management:

Chairman: James Murray Date: 28.2.2017.

Principal: Maria Gmezford Date: 28/2/17.