

# Scoil Fhionáin Attendance Policy

## A. Framework.

### 1. Rationale

Scoil Fhionáin bases its School Attendance Policy on the Education (Welfare) Act 2000.

While there is a strong tradition of good attendance in Scoil Fhionáin we wish to impress upon parents of the absolute necessity for regular punctual attendance at school. Quite simply, children cannot learn if they are not in school.

The Board of Management wishes to promote and encourage regular attendance as an essential factor in our pupils' learning.

### 2. Relationship to the Characteristic Spirit of the School

Scoil Fhionáin endeavours to enable every pupil to actively participate in all school activities. Regular attendance helps to create a stable learning environment for all pupils. The Board of Management promotes co-operation among pupils, parents/guardians and staff in maintaining a high level of regular attendance through the school year.

### 2. Aims

This policy aims to:

- a) Outline strategies to improve attendance.
- b) Encourage regular, punctual attendance at school.
- c) Identify students who are at risk with regard to school attendance.
- d) Ensure that appropriate contact will take place between the school and the parents/guardian of these children.
- e) To provide for legislation concerning school attendance, in particular the Education Welfare Act.

The success of this policy will be assessed against the above aims.

The Principal, teachers and parents, together with the BOM, will be responsible for the implementation of this policy.

It will be the responsibility of the Principal and the Deputy Principal to co-ordinate a review of this policy.

## B. School Attendance Policy

### 1. Recording and Reporting of Attendance and Non-Attendance

The school attendance of individual pupils is recorded on a daily basis.

The annual attendance of each individual pupil is recorded to the Department of Education and Skills through the Primary Online Database, together with information provided in enrolment forms.

Parents/guardians are informed, in writing in the end of year report, of the total number of absences during the school year where absences reach 20 (or more), or where absences give cause for concern. The school must inform the TÚSLA 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.

Deputy Principal Maura O'Connell makes returns to TÚSLA twice annually as required by law.

The Principal reports children who are persistently late and/or regularly have unexplained absences, to TÚSLA, as required by law. The Education Welfare Officer makes house visits to parents of reported pupils.

# Scoil Fhionáin Attendance Policy

## 2. Strategies.

The following strategies have been put in place to help foster an appreciation of learning and good attendance:

- Rewards and praise for good attendance. At the end of each school year the Principal issues certificates for excellent attendance.
- As stated in written communication sent to all homes, parents are required to fill out and return the school absence form notifying the teacher of the reason for a child's absence. The teacher will record the reason for the absence. All class teachers record pupil absences in the official DES class roll book. Any pupils who arrive after the 10 o'clock roll call are marked absent. Pupils who arrive late before roll call are recorded as late.
- Parents are expected to phone the Secretary who will pass on details of the reason for absence, on the first morning of pupil absence. Parents must provide the fully completed absence note within two days of the pupil's return to school. These are available at the office or to download from the school website.
- Parents/guardians must sign their child out at the office if a child must leave before the end of the school day. Late arrivals and early departures are also recorded by the Secretary at the office. Parents who frequently collect their children before the end of the school day are required to notify the class teacher as to the reason for doing so.
- The In-School Management Team (Principal, DP & AP II) meet regularly to review unexplained absences and persistent lateness or leaving early. Staff liaise regularly with the ISM Team if they have concerns around absenteeism and punctuality. Follow up phone calls are made and referrals to TÚSLA are made where deemed necessary.
- Pupils whose non-attendance/regular lateness is a concern are invited to meet with the Principal and are informed of the school's concerns.
- Communication:
  - ✓ The school has developed a good relationship with TÚSLA personnel and there is ongoing communication in relation to children who are at risk.
  - ✓ Parents/guardians are consulted in drafting and reviewing policies with the aim of promoting a high-level of co-operation among the school community.
  - ✓ The importance of good attendance/punctuality is regularly communicated to the school community through assemblies, P/T meetings, BOM meetings, formal and informal communication and newsletters.
  - ✓ There is a focus on the value of regular attendance and on the importance of developing good attendance habits from Junior Infants onwards.
  - ✓ The calendar for the coming school year is published on the website and sent to every family in September. It is hoped that this approach will enable parents/guardians to plan family events around school closures, thus minimizing the chances of non-attendance related to family holidays during the school term.
- Identification of students who are at risk of developing school attendance problems. These are categorised as follows;
  - a) Irregular Absentee: 5 days absent in a 20-day period without a valid reason.
  - b) Seriously Irregular Absentee: 10 days absent in a 20-day period without a valid reason.
  - c) Chronic Absentee: 11+ days absent in a 20-day period without a valid reason.

# Scoil Fhionáin Attendance Policy

- Appropriate contact will take place between the school and parents/guardians of these children.
  - a) For Irregular Absentees a member of the ISM Team will contact parents by phone to discuss the problem.
  - b) For Seriously Irregular Absentees the Deputy Principal/Principal will meet with parents with a view to ameliorating the situation.
  - c) For Chronic Absentees the Principal will inform TÚSLA and notify parents of this by phone or letter.

## 2. Strategies in dealing with Non-Attendance

At the beginning of each school year a list is compiled of names of pupils who have a history of poor attendance. This list may be added to as the year progresses.

- Pupils who exceed 15 days' absence, where this absence is not related to prolonged illness or another acceptable reason, will be placed on the list.
- If a pupil on the tracker list is noted as absent, a call will be made to parents / guardians by the attendance tracker.
- If attendance does not improve a letter will be sent to parents/ guardians requesting a meeting with school principal.
- If a parent does not respond, the TÚSLA pre-referral form will be completed and kept on record. This form will include all strategies to date.
- If a pupil exceeds 20 days absence, a further letter will be sent to parents/ guardians informing them that the TÚSLA Education Welfare Officer will now be contacted. A referral form to TÚSLA will then be completed and forwarded to the TÚSLA officer. Daily attendance tracking will be continued while the referral is being processed.
- In such cases the Education Welfare Officer (following all reasonable efforts by the TÚSLA Education Board to consult with the child's parents) may serve a 'School Attendance Notice' on any parent who is deemed to be failing in, or neglecting their child's right to attend 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 TÚSLA Education Welfare Board twice during the school year through an online system.
- An annual report is submitted to TÚSLA at the end of each 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 BOM end of year report..
- Attendance, behaviour and academic records of children who transfer to Scoil Fhionáin will be sought directly from the previous school through the Student Transfer Form.

# Scoil Fhionáin Attendance Policy

## **4. 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.

The principal maybe consulted by the home school liaison officer of Secondary schools regarding attendance, behaviour and academic records of pupils transferring to secondary schools.

## **5. Success Criteria**

The following will provide some practical indicators of the success of this policy:

- Annual attendance rates of 94% and upwards
- Board of Management, Staff and parent/guardian awareness of their legal obligations under the Education (Welfare) Act 2000.