

Attendance Policy

Introduction:

Changing social habits and patterns necessitated the updating of the schools Attendance Policy. The redrafting was a collaborative school process involving staff, Board of Management and parents, following initial drafting by the school principal. The average attendance for boys in 2011 was 93.8%; girls 93.6%. In 2012 94.8% and 94.3%.

Rationale.

The main factors contributing to the formulation of a revised 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 and the Education Act 1998
- The role of the NEWB
- Changing attitudes to education
- A recent incidental visit from the school Inspector stated that attendance in rural schools should be close to 95%. We are falling a little short of this figure.

Aims & 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, in so far as is practicable, obstacles to school attendance
- To move our attendance figures in line with the recommendation of the school Inspector.

Compliance with School Ethos.

This policy compliments the school ethos of nurturing potential in a caring environment where the welfare of children is paramount.

Rules and Responsibilities.

All staff have an input into the implementation of the policy. Class teachers record individual patterns of attendance and the Deputy Principal makes returns to NEWB. The Deputy Principal has responsibility for maintaining the school's register. The school secretary has responsibility for the Leabhar Tinreamh.

It is the responsibility of the Principal and staff to implement this policy under the guidance of the school's Board of Management.

Punctuality

School begins at 9.20 a.m. 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 Reporting Attendance:

The school attendance of individual pupils is recorded in the Leabhar Rola (Roll Book) of each class on a daily basis. Class attendance data is recorded daily in the Leabhar Tinreamh (attendance Book). The annual attendance of each individual pupil is recorded in the Clár Leabhar (Register), together with information provided in enrolment forms (Pupil's Name, Date of Birth, Address, Religion, Parents' Names and Parents Occupations).

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 at 10.55a.m. each morning. Any pupil not present will be marked absent for the day. The roll book may not be altered once it has been filled in. A note from parents/guardians taken from the school diary is required to explain each absence. Such notes will be retained by the class teacher. Parents/guardians must also provide a note if a child departs early during the school day. These notes are recorded by the class teacher.

Parents/guardians are made aware of the requirements of the NEWB, particularly the bye-law relating to absence of more than 20 days per school year. They are notified in writing on the end of year report of the total number of absences during the school year. Once a child has reached 15 days the school will send a letter to parents informing them of this and that if they miss 5 further days the school is obliged to inform the Welfare Board. The School must inform the Education Welfare Office, in writing, where a child has missed 20 days or more 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.

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
- Rewarding good attendance with certificates

National Education Welfare Board.

The Education Welfare Officer is informed if:

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

The NEWB is furnished with the total attendance in the school year through the Annual Report Form which is completed on-line.

Whole School Strategies to Promote Attendance.

Kilchreest N.S. endeavours to create a safe, welcoming environment for our pupils and their parents/guardians. 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 teaching staff collaborates in the planning and implementation of the primary school curriculum, so as to provide a stimulating learning environment for all pupils.

Traditionally, school attendance is strong in our school. However, the staff remains vigilant so that “risk” students are identified early. Risk students can be categorised as those who miss more than 5 days in a 20-day period without an accompanying note of explanation from parents/guardians. 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.

New entrants and their parents/guardians are invited to engage in an induction process, through which the school’s policies and procedures in relation to attendance are explained. 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 organised annually in June and is published in September. It is hoped that this approach will enable parents/guardians to plan family events around school closure, thus minimising the chances of non-attendance related to family holidays during the school term.

Children are encouraged to complete full school days particularly if there are matches or swimming and to come to school when there is a half day.

Pupils are expected to wear the correct school uniform.

Parents/guardians are informed if a child has no lunch, and if one cannot be provided for him/her, siblings or other children will be asked to share lunch.

The school awards certificates to pupils who have full attendance at the end of each term and at the end of year.

Strategies in the Event of Non-Attendance

Section 17 of the Education (Welfare) Act (2000), states that the parent of a child shall cause the child concerned to a recognised school on each school day.

Section 21 of the Act, obliges schools to inform the Education Welfare Officer 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 and reported to the NEWB five times during the school year through an online system. An annual report is submitted – 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 secondary 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 school will endeavour to work with the local Foróige group, the local area partnership/the local sports partnership and other bodies in developing programmes to promote school attendance. These programmes aim to minimise the risk of irregular or non-attendance and to maximise the opportunities provided to all pupils.

The school maintains communication with the local pre-school 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 Kilchreest N.S. 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 Kilchreest N.S. confirmation of transfer will be communicated to the child's previous school, and appropriate records sought
- Pupils transferring from Kilchreest N.S. to a post primary school will have their records forwarded on request.

Communication with Parents.

The school circulated the NEWB information booklet 'Don't Let Your Child Miss Out' to all parents in Kilchreest N.S. 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.

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 good 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
- Instilling in their children a positive self-concept and a positive sense of self-worth
- 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
- Collecting children unnecessarily early from school.

Evaluation

The success of any Attendance Policy is measured through:

- Improved attendance levels as measured through Leabhar Rola 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 Kilchreest N.S. since 2012 and was updated in 2013. It will be reviewed again in 2016.

References

Don't let your Child Miss Out – NEWB 2004

Education Welfare Act 2000

Education Act 1998

Section 29 Education Act.

Empty Desks – CDU Mary Immaculate.