Our Lady of Lourdes N.S.



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**Attendance Policy**

**Introduction**

The drafting of this policy was a collaborative school process involving staff, Board of Management, Parent’s Association, Student Council and SCP. This process started in November 2016.A review took place in September 2018 and most recently in 2021.

**Rationale**

The main factors contributing to the formulation the 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
* Levels of disadvantage
* Changing attitudes to education.

**Aims and Objectives**

The revised policy is geared towards:

* 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
* raising the awareness of the importance of punctuality
* 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

**School Ethos**

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

**Roles and Responsibilities**

All staff have an input into the implementation of the policy. Class teachers record individual patterns of attendance. The Principal and the HSCL review the attendance records weekly and the SCP Officer joins them once a month for an Attendance Pastoral Care Team Meeting. The Principal has responsibility for sending back the quarterly returns. The AP2 1 Post Holder is responsible for POD.

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 8.50am. Covid Guidelines have lead to staggered start and end times. This will be reviewed regularly. All pupils and teachers are expected to be on time.

**Recording and Reporting Attendance**

The school attendance of individual pupils is recorded on the Aladdin system. The Roll Book is printed off monthly. Class attendance data is recorded daily on Aladdin also. The annual attendance of each individual pupil is recorded digitally 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 before 9.50 am each morning. Any pupil in after this time will be marked present but the number of minutes late will be recorded. . The roll book may not be altered once it has been filled in. A note from parents/guardians 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. If children need to leave school early a slip needs to be obtained from the secretary on which is recorded the time, date and reason for leaving. The class teacher keeps these in the child’s individual Late arrivals and early departures are recorded by the class teacher.

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. This is highlighted in all our newsletters and in our Class Meetings in September. Pupils whose non-attendance is a concern are invited to meet with the Attendance Pastoral Care Team(APCT) at very regular intervals. Parents are notified by text as soon as their child misses 5 daysand for every day thereafter. Parents of children who have missed 5 days by October, 12 days by January and 15 days by March receive an appointment to meet with the APCT. If the team deem it appropriate then the EWO may be invited to attend these individual meetings.

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 or expelled for 6 days or more. This is also reference in our Code of Behaviour.

**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 monthly and through our other attendance strategies.

**National Education Welfare Board**

The Education Welfare Officer is informed if:

* A child is expelled
* A child is suspended for ore than 6 days
* A child has missed more than 20 days.

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

**Whole School Strategies to Promote Attendance**

The following strategies are used on a regular basis particularly when we focus on attendance for a month: ( These will return when the school is fully operational and Covid Guidelines are lifted)

* Pizza Party for full attendance
* Ice-cream party
* Zumba Class
* Mention at assembly
* Certs at assembly
* Principal’s random raffle for children on the line in time
* Names in the news letter
* Full attendance breakfast at the end of the year
* All children with an attendance or punctuality issue are encouraged to attend Breakfast Club and Homework Club
* Morning soccer takes place on a Friday morning and is another incentive for the children to be in on time.

Our Lady of Lourdes endeavors 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, 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 receive a text 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.

Our homework policy, drawn up in consultation with parents/guardians, clearly outlines the school’s expectations in terms of the quantity of homework assigned and in the quality of homework presented. There is a consistent approach to homework throughout the school.

The calendar for the coming school year is published annually in June and a reminder is published in September. The calendar is also available on our website. 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.

Pupils are expected to wear the correct school uniform.

The question of equality of access is addressed through the school’s Special Education Needs Policy.

*All strategies and attendance targets are set out in the DEIS Plan.*

**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 attend 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 EWB 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.

*School based strategies are referenced above.*

**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 school maintains communication with local pre-schools and second-level schools to make the transition for pupils as easy as possible.

The SCP team complete a Transition to Secondary School programme with 6th Class every year.

**Communication with other Schools**

* When a child transfers from Our Lady of Lourdes 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 Our Lady of Lourdes confirmation of transfer will be communicated to the child’s previous school, and appropriate records sought
* Pupils transferring from Our Lady of Lourdes to a post primary school will have their Passport filled in on receipt of enrolment

**Communication with Parents**

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
1. making sure their children understand that parents support good school attendance
2. discussing planned absences with the school
3. refraining, if possible, from taking holidays during school time
4. showing an interest in their children’s school day and their children’s homework
5. encouraging them to participate in school activities
6. praising and encouraging their children’s achievements
7. encouraging Parents to attend assemblies when their child has full attendance
8. instilling in their children a positive self-concept and a positive sense of self-worth
9. informing the school in writing of the reasons for absence from school
10. ensuring, insofar as is possible, that children’s appointments (with dentists etc), are arranged for times outside of school hours
11. contacting the school immediately, if they have concerns about absence or other related school matters
12. 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

**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 was ratified by the Board of Management November 2022. It will be reviewed in December 2024.

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

**Chairperson**

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

**Principal**

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

**References:**

*Don’t let your Child Miss Out* - NEWB 2004

Education Welfare Act 2000

Education Act 1998

Section 29 Education Act