

**Attendance Policy**

**2015+**

**Board of Management Scoil Bhríde Nurney**

**2015+**



**Scoil Bhríde**

**Attendance Policy**

**Introduction**

The schools attendance policy was originally drafted in 2007. This redraft was necessary in light of changes in the NEWB and attendance reporting periods.

**Rationale**

The main factors contributing to the formulation of a revised policy can be summarised as follows:

* To promote and encourage regular and punctual 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
* 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.

**Compliance with 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 and the Principal makes returns to the Educational Welfare Services of the Child and Family Agency TUSLA.

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 assembly begins at 9.20am. All pupils and teachers are expected to be on time. The school will contact parents/guardians in the event of pupils being consistently late (arrival or collection). The Principal is obliged under the Education Welfare Act, to report children who are persistently late (arrival or collection), to the Education Welfare Services of the Child and Family Agency.

**Late arrival to school**

Children should be assembled in school at 9.20am each day. A child who is not in his/her class at 9.40am is officially late for school. Parents must send in a note to explain the reason for the late arrival or accompany the child to do so. Punctuality is recorded in the electronic roll book ‘Aladdin’. Children who are late are welcomed by teachers and if any child is persistently late (arrival or collection), the issue is raised with the relevant parents as described below. The child is not made to feel unwelcome if he/she arrives late for school.

If a child is 10 days officially late (arrival or collection), a letter is to be sent by the Principal to the parents stating same and informing them again of the consequences under the Education Welfare Act 2000. If a child is 20 days officially late (arrival or collection), their case is automatically referred to the Education Welfare Officer and parents are notified.

**Late collection from school**

Children should be collected from school at 2pm each day (infant classes) and 3pm each day (1st – 6th classes). A child who is not collected at this time is officially late being collected. Punctuality is recorded in the electronic roll book ‘Aladdin’.

If a child is 10 days officially late (arrival or collection), a letter is to be sent by the Principal to the parents stating same and informing them again of the consequences under the Education Welfare Act 2000. If a child is 20 days officially late (arrival or collection), their case is automatically referred to the Education Welfare Officer and parents are notified.

* If children remain uncollected after 2pm or 3pm, the school always ensures that a duty of care is provided until a parent/guardian calls
* At all other times each teacher is responsible for the supervision of all children under their care.
* *The Principal supervises the playground for the ten minutes preceding admission time each day. This is done without prejudice, as the school does not officially take responsibility for children before admission time.*
* At dismissal time in the evening the Principal supervises the outside of the school to see children safely off the premises. No supervision is provided outside the school gate.

**Recording and Reporting Attendance**

The school attendance of individual pupils is recorded as per Circular 0028/2013 as follows: In the Electronic Leabhar Rolla (Roll Book) of each class on a daily basis. Class attendance data is recorded daily in the Electronic Leabhar Tinrimh (Attendance Book). The annual attendance of each individual pupil is recorded in the Dept. of Education Pupil Online Database (POD), 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 10.20am each morning in line with rules for National Schools. Any pupil not present will be marked absent for the day. The electronic 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 to form a record which may be inspected by the Education Welfare Officer on a visit to the school. Parents/guardians must sign the ‘Sign Out Book’ in school reception if a child departs early during the school day. Consistent/Persistent lateness (arrival or collection) and early departures will be recorded by the class teacher.

Parents/guardians are made aware of the requirements of the Education Welfare Services of the Child and Family Agency, particularly the by-law relating to absences 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. Pupils whose non-attendance is a concern are invited to meet with the Principal during Parent/Teacher meetings and are informed of the school’s concerns.

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.

**Guidance for parents**

Section [(21) (9)] of the Education Welfare Act states that: “a pupil’s absence can only be authorized by the principal when the child is involved in activities organized by the school or in which the school is involved”. The school principal cannot authorize a child’s absence for holidays during school time. However, it is essential that parents inform the school of such arrangements.

**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 Education Welfare Service 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**

Scoil Bhrídeendeavours 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.

Children who are late are welcomed by teachers and if any child is persistently late the issue is raised with the relevant parents. The child is not made to feel unwelcome if he/she arrives late for school.

Traditionally, school attendance is strong in our school. However, the staff remains vigilant so that ‘risk’ pupils are identified early. Pupils who are at risk of developing school attendance problems are catergorised as follows:

* **Irregular Absentee:** 4/5 days absent in a 20-day period without a valid reason
* **Seriously Irregular Absentee:** 6/10 days absent in a 20-day period without a valid reason
* **Chronic Absentee:** 11+ days absent in a 20-day period without a valid reason

Appropriate contact will take place between the school and parents/guardians of these children;

* For **irregular absenteeism**, the teacher will inform the parents by letter of her/his concerns about the child and seek to meet the parents to discuss the matter
* For **seriously irregular absenteeism**, the Principal will write to the parents inviting them to a meeting to discuss the problem
* For **chronic absenteeism** the Principal will inform the Education Welfare Officer and notify the parents of this by letter

If a child has missed 15 days a letter is to be sent by the Principal to the parents stating same and informing them again of the consequences under the Education Welfare Act 2000 of missing 20 days or more. 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 published annually in June and a reminder is published in September. 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. Children who arrive to school without a uniform/complete uniform will still be welcomed and the issue of uniform will not be addressed upon arrival in the classroom.

If a child arrives to school without a lunch, the class teacher will arrange for the school secretary to contact the parents so that the lunch can be brought to school.

The school awards certificates to pupils who have full attendance each term and during the school 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 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 Child and Family Agency 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 Education Welfare Services of the Child and Family Agency twice 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.

**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 working relationship with the Education Welfare Services with ongoing communication in relation to children who are at risk.

The school works with local sports groups and local organisations and other bodies in developing programmes to promote school attendance. These programmes aim to minimise the risks of irregular or non-attendance and to maximise the opportunities provided to all pupils.

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 Scoil Bhrídeto another school, the school’s records on attendance, academic progress etc will be forwarded on receipt of written notification of the transfer
* When a child transfers into Scoil Bhrídeconfirmation of transfer will be communicated to the child’s previous school, and appropriate records sought
* Pupils transferring from Scoil Bhrídeto a post primary school will have their records forwarded on receipt of confirmation of enrolment.

**Communication with Parents**

If a child has missed 15 days a letter is to be sent by the Principal to the parents stating same and informing them again of the consequences and implications of non-attendance under the Education Welfare Act 2000 of missing 20 days or more. Absences of more than 20 days are automatically referred to the Education Welfare Officer. This information is disseminated by regular school circulars. Parents of new children are informed on enrolment. The Department of Education makes it mandatory for all school summer reports to inform parents of their child’s attendance and punctuality record.

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 at all possible, from taking holidays during school time particularly in the first term.
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. instilling in their children a positive self-concept and a positive sense of self-worth.
8. informing the school in writing of the reasons for absence from school.
9. ensuring, insofar as is possible, that children’s appointments (with dentists etc), are arranged for times outside of school hours.
10. contacting the school immediately, if they have concerns about absence or other related school matters.
11. 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.

**School Refusal**

In the event of School Refusal, Scoil Bhríde will be guided by the NEPS “Good Practice Guide for Schools on School Refusal” which can be accessed on the following link <https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/National-Educational-Psychological-Service-NEPS-/NEPS-Guidelines-Handouts-and-Tips/School-Refusal/School-Refusal.pdf>

**Evaluation**

The success of any Attendance Policy is measured through:

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

Dear Parent/Guardian Date:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Since the start of the school year [ ] has missed [ ] days of school.

Please see attached your child’s school attendance record for the current school year according to our school attendance record system. If you find any inaccuracies in your child’s attendance records please help us by letting us know what they are in writing or by email, so that the school can take note and adjust your child’s school attendance record accordingly for future records.

As you may be aware, missing school for any reason has an impact on your child’s education. Key areas of learning in Literacy and Maths are covered daily by your child’s teacher. If your child misses out on something which is taught, it is often very hard for them to catch up.

If your child misses some school it is important to let us know why in writing/email for The National Education & Welfare Board NEWB (Part of TUSLA – The Child and Family Agency). The NEWB monitors the attendance of children in our school by checking the roll books. We must report the number of days missed by any child. **This is a legal requirement of the NEWB**. If this number **exceeds twenty** then you may experience a visit or letter from this board.

As part of our legal obligation to have a school attendance strategy in place we monitor children’s attendance weekly to improve attendance levels. We notice that your child has missed **fifteen or more days**. As a school we *inform all parents when their child reaches fifteen or more days of absence in the school year.* We realise that sometimes these prolonged absences may be due to illness but we feel it is important for you as parents to be aware of the number of days being missed by your child. ***If your child is sick or is absent for other good reasons, no action will be taken by the NEWB (Tusla – The Child and Family Agency)***

Under the law, every child must attend school regularly up to sixteen years of age or complete at least three years post primary whichever comes later. When your child is absent, you as parent must let the school know the reason for this absence every time. It is school policy that you do this in writing as it is both unreasonable and unfair to expect a member of staff in a busy school environment to remember verbal messages or make notes of verbal messages.

We are keen to support you and to have your support in the education of your child. If for any reason you have a difficulty around attendance then we would like to help with that.

For more information on

* *Your child’s rights in relation to school attendance and punctuality*
* *your rights and responsibilities as parents in relation to school attendance and punctuality*
* *information on the work of the Education Welfare Service and TUSLA-The Child and Family Agency*
* *information on the Education Welfare Act 2000*
* *how to contact the Education Welfare Service*

Please visit the web link <http://www.tusla.ie/services/educational-welfare-services/information-for-parents-and-guardians/>

Yours sincerely,

Scoil Bhríde

Nurney

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As part of our legal obligation to have a school attendance strategy in place we monitor children’s attendance weekly to improve attendance levels. We notice that your child has missed **twenty or more days**. As a school we *inform all parents when their child reaches twenty or more days of absence in the school year.* Because your child has now been absent from school for 20 or more days, the school must now pass the information to the National Educational Welfare Board. We realise that sometimes these prolonged absences may be due to illness but we feel it is important for you as parents to be aware of the number of days being missed by your child. ***If your child is sick or is absent for other good reasons, no action will be taken by the NEWB (Tusla – The Child and Family Agency)***

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We are keen to support you and to have your support in the education of your child. If for any reason you have a difficulty around attendance then we would like to help with that.

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Yours sincerely,

Scoil Bhríde

Nurney

Dear Parent/Guardian Date:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Since the start of the school year [ ] has been late (arrival/collection) for school for [ ] days.

As you may be aware, missing any part of the school day for any reason has an impact on your child’s education. Key areas of learning in Literacy and Maths are covered daily by your child’s teacher. If your child misses out on something which is taught, it is often very hard for them to catch up.

If your child is late for school it is important to let us know why. The National Education & Welfare Board NEWB (Part of TUSLA – The Child and Family Agency) monitors the attendance of children in school by checking the roll books monthly. We must report persistent lateness by any child. **This is a legal requirement of the NEWB**. If the number of late days **exceeds twenty** then you may experience a visit or letter from this board.

As part of our strategy to improve school punctuality (arrival/collection) we monitor children’s punctuality (arrival/collection) weekly on our electronic roll system. We notice that your child has been late (arrival/collection) **fifteenn or more days**. As a school we *inform all parents when their child has been late (arrival/collection) fifteen or more days in the school year.* We realise that sometimes this lateness (arrival/collection) may be due to other appointments but we feel it is important for you as parents to be aware of the number of days your child is late (arrival/collection). ***If your child is late (arrival/collection) for other good reasons, no action will be taken by the NEWB (Tusla – The Child and Family Agency)***

Under the law, every child must attend school regularly up to sixteen years of age or complete at least three years post primary whichever comes later. When your child is late (arrival/collection), you as parent must let the school know the reason for this lateness every time. It is school policy that you do this in writing.

We are keen to support you and to have your support in the education of your child. If for any reason you have a difficulty around punctuality then we would like to help with that.

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Yours sincerely,

Principal

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As part of our strategy to improve school punctuality (arrival/collection) we monitor children’s punctuality (arrival/collection) weekly on our electronic roll system. We notice that your child has been late (arrival/collection) **twenty or more days**.

Because your child has now been late (arrival/collection) for 20 or more days, the school must pass the information to the National Educational Welfare Board. An Educational Welfare Officer may therefore be in contact with you to discuss the matter further. ***If your child is late (arrival/collection) for other good reasons, no action will be taken by the NEWB (Tusla – The Child and Family Agency)***

Under the law, every child must attend school regularly up to sixteen years of age or complete at least three years post primary whichever comes later. When your child is late (arrival/collection), you as parent must let the school know the reason for this lateness every time. It is school policy that you do this in writing.

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Yours sincerely,

Principal

**Ratification of Attendance Policy**

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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

Chairperson of Board of Management Principal

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

Date of next review: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_