

St. Patrick's Comprehensive School, Shannon, Co. Clare

School Attendance Policy

The Policy in Context

The school Attendance Policy is directed by:

1. The School Mission Statement
2. The Pastoral Care Policy
3. The Education (Welfare) Act 2000

Aim of the Policy

It is hoped that by constantly monitoring and tracking students' attendance records, absenteeism will improve and students will have a positive school experience.

Introduction:

The Education Welfare Act 2000 provides a comprehensive new framework for promoting regular school attendance and attending to problems of absenteeism. It was signed into law on July 5th 2000. The National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB) was set up under this Act to support regular attendance and the education of children and young people. The Board has appointed Educational Welfare Officers (E.W.O.) to provide advice and support to parents and schools and to follow up absences from school. Under the Act parents must notify the school when a child is absent and it is recommended that the explanation be in writing. It is incumbent on schools to notify the National Educational Welfare Board if a child has missed a total of twenty days in the school year.

The Education (Welfare) Act 2000 safeguards every child's entitlement to an appropriate minimum education by:

- Developing a national framework to promote regular attendance at school.
- Promoting a positive appreciation among students of the benefits to be derived from education and attendance at school.
- Identifying the causes of absenteeism and early school leaving and developing measures for its prevention.
- Providing support to children at risk and those who experience difficulties in school in order to resolve any difficulties or impediments to their regular attendance at school.

The Educational Welfare Board

The National Educational Welfare Board is given the lead role in implementing the provisions of the Act:

- The principal function of the Board is to ensure that every child in the State attends a recognised school or otherwise receives an appropriate minimum education.
- The Board also has an advisory and research role in the formulation of Government policy on school attendance and education provision.
- The Board will deploy educational welfare officers at local level throughout the country. These officers will work in close co-operation with parents, teachers, school managers, community bodies and other relevant agencies to promote regular school attendance and prevent absenteeism and early school leaving.

Educational Welfare Officer

The Educational Welfare Officers appointed by the Board will focus in particular on children at risk and those who are experiencing difficulties in school in order to resolve any impediments to their regular attendance at school. Alternative schooling will be sought for students who have been expelled, suspended or refused admittance to a school.

School Day

- All students must attend at the scheduled times every day:

Mon. & Tues. 9.00 – 12.30 1.20 - 4.00

Wed., Thurs.& Fri 9.00 – 12.30 1.20 – 3.20

- Students are expected to be present each day.
- Students are expected to maintain high standards of punctuality throughout the day.

Procedures for Monitoring Attendance

- Subject teachers take registration using E-portal at the start of each lesson. Period 1 and Period 6 each day are designated roll call classes and attendance or absence at these classes is recorded in the students' official records. Class teachers will report concerns regarding absences to Year Heads.
- A text message alerting parents to a student's absence will be sent once the absence has been verified.
- The Year Head of each year group tracks the attendance records of the students on a weekly basis. This helps to identify, at an early stage, students who are at risk of developing school attendance problems.
- The Year Head meets with the students who may be at risk to encourage them to attend. The Year Head may, at this early stage, invite the parents/guardians to the school, to discuss and attempt to resolve any difficulties or impediments to their regular attendance at school.
- After 10 days absence, a letter is sent to the parents/guardians by the Year Head inviting them to the school to discuss the situation.
- The Year Head communicates the names of students of concern to the Pastoral Care Team at their weekly meeting. The Pastoral Care Team may make recommendations to support the student e.g. referral to the Guidance Counsellor, Learning Support team or outside agency as appropriate.

- After 20 days absence, a letter is sent by the Year Head to the parents/guardians of students under 16 to inform them of the school's obligation to inform the EWB and inviting them to the school to discuss the situation if they wish.

Procedure for Recording Explanations for Absences

- Explanations for Absence notes are provided to students in the back of their journal.
- If a student is absent, an absent note must be completed and presented to the Year Head on the day of return.
- The counterfoil of the absent note must be shown to each subject teacher.
- The reason for the student's absence is entered by the Year Head on E Portal.
- The Year Head of each year group tracks the attendance records of the students on a weekly basis and if he/she notices that a student has a number of unexplained absences, a letter is sent to parents informing them of the unexplained absences and requesting further information re: same.

School Activity/Work Experience

- Absences from class due to participation in a school activity or work experience are recorded as school activity (SA) or work experience (WE).
- Teachers organising the school activity provide the administration staff with the list of students involved the day prior to the event. The administration staff pre-enter the students' absence under the category school activity (SA) or work experience (WE).
- The staff member accompanying or organising the event informs the administration staff on the morning of the activity to confirm the presence/absence of the students.

Late Policy

- Students are requested to get into the routine of being at school on time.
- Students who arrive late disrupt the class and miss important instruction time.
- Students who are late must sign the Late Book in reception and present their journal to the administration staff for stamping.
- Students who are late are expected to have a note explaining reason for lateness. This note must be presented to the Year Head.
- The subject teacher will enter Late on the E-Portal system.

Truancy

- Truancy is considered an extreme violation of the School Code of Behaviour and depending on the circumstances can result in immediate suspension.
- In school Truancy (where a student remains in the school building but does not attend a timetabled class) incurs lunchtime detention.

Medical/Dental Appointments

- Parents/guardians and students are requested not to make medical or dental appointments during school hours.
- Where this is not possible, a "Permission to Leave the School" note must be completed and handed into the office before 9.00a.m on the day in question.
- The administration staff will record the student's name on the Signing Out Book.
- When a parent/guardian arrives to collect their son/ daughter they must sign the Signing Out book and indicate whether or not the student is expected to return.
- The student is required to sign in on his/her return.

Communication with Parents

- A text message alerting parents to a student's absence will be sent once the absence has been verified.
- Parents are routinely informed of their sons/daughter's attendance and punctuality record through E Portal and school reports.
- A letter and a copy of the attendance record are sent to parents/guardians once a student has been absent for 10 days and again when a student is absent for 20 days.
- Individual subject teachers can track a student's attendance for their given subject using Facility E-portal and are encouraged to contact a parent/guardian if concern arises about absenteeism for a particular subject.
- When a Year Head has a specific concern about an individual student he/she may arrange a meeting with the Education Welfare Officer and parents/guardians to discuss strategies re same.
- When a Year Head notes that a student has not presented signed notes explaining his/her absences to the office, the Year Head will write to the parents/guardians bringing their attention to the matter and requesting that explanations be presented.

Communication with Teachers

- Teachers have access to the attendance records of all students through the use of E-portal.
- Teachers can access the specific attendance record for each of their teaching groups using E-portal.
- If information is received from parents in relation to a student's absence, teachers are notified of this through staff briefings and the noticeboard in the staff room.

- In the case of a prolonged absence and if requested by parents, teachers are encouraged to place classwork and notes into an envelope in the staffroom for forwarding to the absent student.

Rewarding Students for Attendance

- Students who have full attendance in any given year are presented with a Certificate of Attendance at the end of the year.

Ratified by BOM on 23/05/17

David Deighan

Chairperson