

**Attendance Strategy for
St. Laurence's National School, Sallins, County Kildare, W91 AD80
Roll No. 08099P**

May 2017

In St Laurence's National School, we value the individuality of all our children and respect their right to access all areas of learning. We work to enable them to develop the knowledge, skills, understanding and attitudes that are necessary for their self-fulfillment and their development into active and responsible adults. Traditionally school attendance in our school has been strong and we continue to have high attendance expectations among our staff for the students of our school. Regular attendance helps to create a stable learning environment for all pupils. The school hopes to promote co-operation of pupils, parents/guardians with staff of our school in maintaining a high level of regular attendance through the school year.

Aims:

The aims and objectives of having an attendance strategy are to:

- Ensure that pupils are registered accurately and efficiently;
- Ensure that pupil attendance is recorded daily;
- Encourage full attendance where possible;
- Identify at an early stage pupils at risk;
- Promote a positive learning environment where children can make progress in all aspects of their development;
- Enable learning opportunities to be availed of;
- Raise awareness of the importance of school attendance;
- Foster an appreciation of learning;
- Identify and remove, insofar as is practicable, obstacles to school attendance;
- Comply with requirements under the Education Welfare Act 2000 and Guidelines from TUSLA (Child and Family Agency).

Recording Attendance:

Teachers accurately maintain the attendance patterns of all children in their care and alert the relevant staff if there are concerns about pupil absences. Attendance is recorded electronically, usually by the class teacher, each day before **10:30am**. Should a child be absent from school, they are required to have an explanatory note from their parents/guardians on the day they arrive back in school.

Children who arrive late to school or leave early are signed in or out at reception. Parents/guardians are informed in writing on the end of year report of the total number of absences their child had during the school year.

Procedures:

School attendance is co-ordinated by the Deputy Principal in consultation with the Principal and staff. Parents are informed of their and the school's obligations with regard to attendance during Junior Infants induction and in the school's Code of Behaviour. In addition parents/guardians are regularly reminded of these obligations through the school newsletter.

1. Class teachers monitor attendance and advise Deputy Principal/Principal of potential problems.
2. When a pupil has reached his/her 15th cumulative absence a letter is sent to the parents/guardians advising them of same and requesting, if deemed necessary, they arrange to meet their child's teacher to discuss any problems they have with regard to the Child's attendance. They are also

reminded that the school is obliged to inform TUSLA once the child has reached his/her 20th absence, or if a child does not attend school on a regular basis.

3. Details of absences are forwarded to TUSLA as required, four times during the school year. If the Principal deems it necessary in a particular case, direct contact may be made by the school with TUSLA.
4. Every reasonable effort will be made to resolve the issue of persistent absenteeism through consultation with:
 - Parents/guardians
 - School staff
 - TUSLA
 - NEPS (National Educational Psychological Service)
 - Naas Child and Family Services
5. In some cases where TUSLA does not resolve the issue of absenteeism, they may serve a 'School Attendance Notice' on any parent/guardian who they conclude is failing or neglecting to cause the child to attend school. A successful legal case taken against the parent/guardian may result in a fine and/or imprisonment.

Whole School Strategies to Encourage Good Attendance:

- **Caring Environment** – St Laurence's National School, at all times, aims to ensure that children are taught in a safe secure and caring environment where their intellectual, physical and spiritual development are catered for;
- We try to create a **welcoming environment** for pupils and parents. Teachers consistently try to encourage good attendance in their respective classrooms;
- **Special Needs – pupils needing support** are identified as early as possible and the appropriate support systems put into place. We emphasise positive achievements and do all we can to enhance self-esteem;
- **Homework Policy** - our homework policy, a copy of which is available in the school and on the school website, 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;
- **School Calendar** – is published early in the year. 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/events during the school term;
- **Good Communication** – between the home and school. Teachers are available, by appointment, to discuss any issues relating to attendance with parents/guardians;
- **Junior Infant Induction Meeting** - 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;
- **School Uniform** - all pupils are expected to wear the school uniform, thus eliminating peer pressure regarding clothes style or quality as a reason for non-attendance and also reduces the pressure, financially, on parents;

- **Book Rental Scheme** – this scheme, introduced in recent years, helps to eliminate pressure regarding school books as a reason for not attending and again reduces financial pressure on families;
- **School Letter** – the school issues a letter to the parents/guardians after a child's 15th absence and if they deem it problematic asks them to contact the school to discuss absenteeism.

It is important to note that we do not encourage students who are feeling unwell at home to attend school. This can lead to more infection in the classroom and quite often the child who presents him/herself as unwell is unable to partake in school activities and is sent home during the school day.

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 and promote 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 homework;
- Encouraging them to participate in school activities;
- Praising and encouraging their children's achievements;
- Instilling in their children, a positive self-confidence and a positive sense of self-worth;
- Informing the school in writing of the reasons for any 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;
- Ensure that pupils pass on absence notes from parents to their class teacher.

Practical Steps Parents/Guardians can take to improve School Attendance:

- Make sure that the homework is done as early as possible after school;
- Keep the school uniform for school wear only;
- Have ready for the following day, school bag, lunch and uniform;
- Get your child to bed at a reasonable hour every night – create a routine;
- Ensure your child is up early enough to have breakfast and arrives in school in good time;
- Don't allow your child to watch television in the morning;
- Talk positively about school and the day ahead;
- You know your child best. Only keep your child at home if he/she is really sick.

Pupils:

- Pupils have the clear responsibility to attend school regularly and punctually;
- Pupils should inform staff if there is a problem that may lead to their absence;
- Pupils are responsible for passing school correspondence to their parents, on the specified day;
- Pupils are responsible for promptly passing on absence notes from parents to their class teacher;

Success Criteria

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

- Improved attendance levels as measured through attendance records and statistical returns;
- Board of Management, staff and parents/guardians awareness of their legal obligations under the Education (Welfare) Act 2000;
- Happy, confident, well adjusted children;
- Positive parental feedback;
- Teacher input and vigilance;
- Improved academic performance.

Roles and Responsibilities:

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

Implementation:

This policy will be implemented immediately following ratification by the Board of Management and communication to the Parents' Council.

Ratification and Review:

This policy was reviewed by the Board of Management in May 2017.

It was ratified by the Board of Management on Date: _____

Signed: _____ Chairperson, Board of Management

Review Date: Term 3 2017/2018.