

Solas Chríost National School

Attendance Policy & Strategy

Introduction

The redrafting of this policy was a collaborative school process involving staff, parents and the Board of Management of Solas Chríost National School, following initial drafting by a representative group.

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 Educational Welfare Services of the Child and Family Agency

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.

Relationship to School's Ethos

This Attendance Policy and Strategy reflects the school's ethos through its promotion of a 'child centred philosophy of education' as stated in the school's Mission Statement.

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.

Recording and Reporting Attendance

The school attendance of individual pupils is recorded in the Leabhar Rolla (Roll Book) of each class on a daily basis by the mainstream class teacher. Class attendance data is recorded daily in the Leabhar Tinrimh (Attendance Book) by the Principal. The Principal also records the annual attendance of each individual pupil in the Clár Leabhar (Register) together with information provided on the child's enrolment forms.

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 9:45am 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.

The school must inform the **Child and Family Agency** in writing when:

- a child has missed 20 or more days in a school year.
- the principal is concerned about a child's attendance.
- a pupil is removed from the school register.
- a child is suspended for 6 days or more.
- a child is expelled.

(The Board of management will also be informed by the school's Principal)

The school will submit the Child and Family Agency with Student Absence Reports four times each year as well as the total attendances at the end of the school year through the Annual Report Form.

Communication with Parents

- A **note** from parents/guardians is required to explain each absence. Notes will be retained by the class teacher. If a note is not provided continuously, a reminder will be sent home by the school principal.
- If a child is **absent for 10 or more school days** in a particular year, a reminder letter will be sent out to the parents of the child.
- If a child is **absent for 15 or more school days** in a particular year, a letter inviting the parents to meet with school principal will be sent out to the parents of the child.
- If a child is **absent for 20 or more school days** in a particular year, the school is legally obliged to inform the Child and Family Agency. In this case, a letter will be sent home from the school principal to the parents to keep them informed.
- If a child is **absent for 25 or more school days (and at intervals of 5 days thereafter)** in a particular year, a letter inviting the parents to meet with school principal will be sent out to the parents of the child.
All of the letters mentioned above must be signed and returned to the school.

Parents will be informed during **Parent/Teacher meetings** of the school's attendance concerns.

Parents will be notified in writing on the **end of year report** of the total number of absences during the school year.

Promoting Good Attendance

The school promotes good attendance by:

- creating a safe and welcoming environment
- being vigilant so that risks to good attendance such as children protection bullying etc. are identified early
- publishing the school calendar in June on the school's website for the following school year
- informing parents about the school's attendance policy and strategy at school induction meetings
- promoting positive attendance at school assemblies (termly)
- awarding certificates for excellent attendance (termly)
- awarding certificates for significantly improved attendance (termly)
- trophy for the class with the best attendance in each block (monthly)
- highlighting good attendance on the school's website

Parents/guardians can promote good school attendance by:

- ensuring regular and punctual school attendance.
- providing the school with a note to inform the school why a child was absent
- working with the school and education welfare service to resolve any attendance problems;
- discussing planned absences with the school.
- refraining, if at all possible, from taking holidays during school time
- encouraging them to participate in school activities.
- ensuring, insofar as is possible, that children's appointments 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.

Communication with other Schools

Transferring from Another School

As required under section 20 of the Education (Welfare) Act (2000), for children enrolling into Solas Chríost National School, the Principal will notify, in writing, the Principal of the child's previous school, that the child is now registered in Solas Chríost National. This correspondence will also request the principal of the child's previous school to forward on the child's attendance information, a copy of the child's most recent end of year school report card, information from standardised testing and any other necessary information, on the pupil.

Transfer to Another school

When the Principal of Solas Chríost NS receives written notification from another school that a child from Solas Chríost has been enrolled into another school, the school will provide the Principal of the pupil's new school with the child's attendance information as well as a copy of the child's most recent school report card, information from standardized testing and any other necessary information on the pupil. This also applies to pupils who transfer to second-level education.

Punctuality

School begins at 8:45am (Children attending the Speech and Language classes begin school at 8:30am). All pupils and teachers are expected to be on time. The school will contact parents/guardians in the event of pupils being consistently late. Late arrivals and early departures are recorded by the school secretary.

- If a child is **late for school on 3 or more occasions** a letter will be sent home from the school principal to the parents of the child.
If a child is **late for school on 6 or more occasions (and at intervals of 3 occasions thereafter)** a letter will be sent home from the school principal to the parents of the child inviting them to meet with the school principal. The school's Board of Management will also be informed.
All of the letters mentioned above must be signed and returned to the school.

Withdrawing Children Early from School

Parents are encouraged to refrain from withdrawing their child before the official closing time as it can disrupt the class. Parents are encouraged to make dental, doctor appointments etc. outside the official school day

Parents/guardians who wish to withdraw their child early from school must sign out at the secretary's office if a child has to leave early during the school day. Parents should not call down directly to the classroom.

- If a child is **withdrawn from school early on 3 or more occasions** a letter will be sent home from the school principal to the parents of the child.
- If a child is **withdrawn from school early on 6 or more occasions (and at intervals of 3 occasions thereafter)** a letter will be sent home from the school principal inviting them to meet with the school principal. The school's Board of Management will also be informed.
All of the letters mentioned above must be signed and returned to the school.

Evaluation

The success of any Attendance Policy and Strategy is measured through:

- Improved attendance levels as measured through leabhar rolla records and statistical returns
- Positive parental feedback

Education Welfare Officer Contact Details

The contact details for the school's Education Welfare Officer (EWO) are 01 4635516 / 01 4635510

Ratification of the Attendance Policy and Strategy

This policy will be reviewed by the Board of Management once in every school year.

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on March 4th 2014

Signed: _____
Chairperson of Board of Management

Date: _____

Date of next review: September 2014