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Whitegate,
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Attendance Policy

Introduction:

Changing social habits and patterns necessitated the updating of the school's attendance policy

Rationale:

The main factors contributing to the formulation of an attendance 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
- The Role of Túsla
- Levels of disadvantage (both social and emotional)
- Changing attitudes to education
- Impact of shared custody of children

Aims and Objectives

The revised policy strives 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
- Creating learning opportunities
- 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 the children is paramount.

Roles and Responsibilities

All staff have an input into the implementation of the policy. Class teachers record individual patterns of attendance on Aladdin. Laura Hyde (deputy principal) has responsibility for maintaining the Leabhar Tinrimh and making returns to Túsla. 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 9:00 am. All pupils and staff are expected to be on time. Supervision is organised from 8:50 am to 9:00am. The school will contact parents/guardians in the event of pupils being consistently late. Aladdin has a facility for recording latecomers which is filled in by the class teacher. The principal is obliged under the Education Welfare Act, to report children who are persistently late, to Túsla.

Recording and Reporting Attendance

The school attendance of individual pupils is recorded on Aladdin in each class on a daily basis, 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. Attendance is taken at 10:10 am 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. A note from parents/guardians is required to explain each absence. Such notes will be retained. Parents/guardians must also provide a note if a child departs early during the school day. These notes are dated and kept by the Deputy Principal. Late arrivals and early departures are recorded by the class teacher. Early departures are signed out in the Office.

Parents/guardians are made aware of the requirements of Túsla, 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 Túsla 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 six days or more.

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 (School generated each of term/half terms certs and Túsla Gold/Silver/Bronze).

Túsla

Túsla is informed if:

- A child is expelled.
- A child is suspended.
- A child has missed more than 20 days.
- Túsla 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 Cholmáin Whitegate NS endeavours to create a safe, welcoming environment for our pupils and their parents/guardians. Parents/guardians will be consulted when 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. So far, school attendance is strong in our school.

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 either via a letter, a note or a telephone call 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 Túsla.

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. 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 and the Parents Association hold a ‘Preloved Uniform Sale’ each year.

Parents/guardians are informed if a child has no lunch, and the school always endeavours to make sure a child has a lunch in these circumstances.

Túsla annually forwards certificates. Certificates are also available to pupils who have full attendance over a short period of time, for example half-term.

The question of equality of access is addressed on an individual basis given the size of the school.

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 for more than 20 days in any school year, or if a child does not attend school on a regular basis.

In such cases Túsla (following all reasonable efforts by the Túsla 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 Túsla 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. This information will be communicated to the school community through the school’s newsletter.

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. From 2014/15 the NCCA Education Passport is also used.

Communication

The school has developed a good relationship with Túsla personnel and when the situation merits there is ongoing communication in relation to children who are at risk.

The school actively encourages participation in local sports’ groups to facilitate the modelling of regular commitment to a given organisation from an early age. Commitment is valued and celebrated.

The school maintains communication with local pre-school 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 Whitegate NS to 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 Whitegate NS, confirmation of transfer will be communicated to the child's previous school, and appropriate records sought.
- Pupils transferring from Whitegate NS to a post primary school will have their records forwarded on receipt of confirmation of enrolment by parents/carers.

Communication with Parents

The school informs all parents of the implications of non-attendance as per the *Education Welfare Act 2000*. This information is disseminated by regular school circulars. Parents of new children are informed on enrolment.

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 Túsla to resolve any attendance problems;
- Making sure their children understand that parents support good 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 children's homework.
- Encouraging them to participate in school activities.
- Praising and encouraging their children's achievements.
- Instilling in their children a positive self-concept and a positive sense of self-worth.
- Informing the school in writing of the reasons for absence from school.
- Ensuring, insofar as is possible, that children's appointments (with dentists etc), are arranged for times outside of school hours or if this is not possible as with HSE appointments that the school is notified in good time in case alternative arrangements need to be made in relation to school visitors or excursions.
- 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.
- Keeping in general regular contact with the school.

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.

References:

Don't let your Child Miss Out - NEWB 2004

Education Welfare Act 2000

Education Act 1998

Section 29 Education Act

Empty Desks - CDU Mary Immaculate

Implementation/Ratification and Review

This Policy has been in operation since 2009 in Whitegate NS and was updated in 2023. It will be reviewed again in 2024

Signed: _____

Chairperson of the board of management

Date: