**Attendance Policy**

**Introduction**

This policy document was drawn up to ensure and maintain a high level of attendance at school by all pupils. Establishing good attendance habits from the very beginning of a child’s time at school is very important.

**Rationale**

The main factors contributing to the formulation of an attendance policy can be summarized 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

• Levels of disadvantage

• Changing attitudes to education

**Aims and Objectives**

The aims and objectives of this policy are as follows

• 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 encouraging and supporting children in living their lives to the full, in a caring environment, where the welfare and interests of the children is paramount.

**The Education Welfare Act, 2000**

Under the terms of the Education Welfare Act, 2000 (amended by the Child and Family Agency Act 2013) schools are obliged to:

• Maintain a record of students attending school

• Record school attendance and notify the relevant Educational Welfare Officer of particular problems relating to attendance

• Support students with difficulties in attending school on a regular basis

• Prepare and implement a school’s attendance strategy to encourage, in a positive way, regular school attendance and an appreciation of learning within the school

• Prepare and implement a code of behavior, setting standards of behaviour and disciplinary procedures for the school

• Liaise with other schools and relevant bodies on school attendance issues

**Roles and Responsibilities**

All staff members have an input into the implementation of the policy. Class teachers record individual patterns of attendance and the school secretary/principal make returns to NEWB.

**Punctuality:**

School begins at 9 am. All pupils and teachers are expected to be on time. The school will contact parents/guardians in the event of pupils being consistently late. The Principal is obliged under the Education Welfare Act, to report children who are persistently late, to the Education Welfare Board.

• It is the responsibility of the class teacher to maintain a record of children who arrive late to school, leave school early or are collected late. This can be recorded electronically on the Aladdin school’s system.

• A child will be recorded as being late to school if they arrive after 9am.

• Where teachers see a pattern of poor punctuality emerging, they should bring this to the attention of parents/guardians at an early stage

• If there is still no improvement in punctuality, then a letter should be sent home notifying parents / guardians of the issue. If punctuality continues to be an issue then teachers should bring the issue to the attention of the Principal

**Recording and Reporting Attendance**

The school attendance of individual pupils is recorded on the DES electronic role book (Aladdin system) of each class on a daily basis. An electronic copy of the Leabhar Tinrimh (Attendance Book) is maintained on the Aladdin system.

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 by 10.10 a.m. each morning. Any pupil not present will be marked absent for the day. Aladdin may not be altered once it has been filled in.

The main means of communication between home and school is the School Homework Journal. There is a specific section in the journal, Explanation of Absence, which parents are asked to use. Such notes will be retained by the class teacher. These notes are dated and kept by the class teacher. Teachers will input the information into Aladdin. Late arrivals and early departures are recorded by the class teacher on Aladdin.

Individual notes and other written communication around attendance, such as Medical Certificates and other explanations for student absences should be kept in the pupil files. These will be retained for possible inspection by the National Educational Welfare Officer.

When a child is marked absent on Aladdin, teachers should ensure that they enter the reasons for the absence in the appropriate section, (i.e. under Edit Absence Reasons tab) as soon as that information becomes available. This allows teachers to categorise the absence, such as Unexplained, Illness, Urgent family reason etc. This information will form part of the reporting procedure to the Educational Welfare Services section of the Tusla- Child and Family Agency.

Contact will be made with parents/guardians (through telephone or letter), drawing parents’ attention to poor attendance, after 10, 15 & 20 days absence.

If a child misses school and a written explanation is not sent in, the class teacher must send home a note requesting this.

Each class teacher has a responsibility to monitor the attendance of the children in their care. Teachers should be aware of emerging patterns in relation to poor attendance.

Parents/guardians are made aware of the requirements of the NEWB 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 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.

**Actions to be taken when a child reaches 20 days absence**

When a child has been absent for 20 days we notify the Educational Welfare Services section of Tusla- Child and Family Agency. The School has no discretion over handing this information on to Tusla Child and Family Agency, regardless of the reason for absence. However, Tusla, Child and Family Agency will take account of absences due to illness, bereavement or other such circumstances.

There are four periods during the year when we are obliged to report information to Tusla, Child and Family Agency. Class teachers will be responsible for providing information on these absences. Additionally, Tusla, Child and Family Agency request an Annual Report at the end of each school year.

**Annual Attendance Report (AAR)**

The Annual Attendance Report is submitted at the end of each academic year and provides information on levels of attendance. Schools are required to provide the following data in the AAR

• Total number of days lost through student absence in the entire school year.

• Total number of students who were absent for 20 days or more during the school year.

• Total number of students expelled in respect of whom all appeal processes have been exhausted or not availed of during the school year.

• Total number of students who were suspended for any number of days during the school year

**Transfer to Another School / Communication with Other Schools 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 with other Schools**

• When a child transfers from Scoil Aonghusa CNS 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 Scoil Aonghusa CNS confirmation of transfer will be communicated to the child’s previous school, and appropriate records sought.

• Pupils transferring from Scoil Aonghusa CNS to a post primary school will have their records forwarded on receipt of confirmation of enrolment.

• Strategies to Promote and Support Good Attendance As already stated, there is a need for regular review of school attendance in each class. The primary responsibility for this lies with the class teacher. Teachers should therefore actively review the attendance patterns of all children in their care.

**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 during Attendance month

• By acknowledging excellent attendance at the end of the school year, with certificates for excellent attendance

**Whole School Strategies to Promote Attendance**

Scoil Aonghusa CNS endeavours 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.

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 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 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.

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 Education Board 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.

**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 are also contacted when their child has missed 10 and 15 days respectively.

**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 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 achievement

• 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

• 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

**Evaluation**

The success of the Attendance Policy is measure through:

• Improved attendance levels as measured through Aladdin records and statistical returns

• Happy confident well-adjusted children

• Positive parental feedback

• Teacher vigilance

**Implementation/Ratification and Review**

This policy has been drawn up and ratified in February 2020 and reviewed in November 2020.It will be reviewed again on/before November 2021

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

Chairperson of the Board of Management

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Principal