



St Patrick's N.S. Crowenstown Attendance Policy

Introduction

There is a very strong tradition of good attendance in St. Patrick's N.S.

Every child to whom the School Attendance Act applies is obliged by law to attend school every day that the school is in operation, unless there is a reasonable reason for not attending. The Education (Welfare) Act 2000 provides a framework for promoting regular school attendance, tackling the problem of absenteeism and early school leaving. All parents have a duty to have their children at school every day and on time, in accordance with Section 17 of the Education Welfare Act (2000).

Changing social habits and patterns necessitated the updating of the schools' attendance policy. The redrafting was a collaborative school process involving all school staff.

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 Tusla and the Education Welfare Officers
- Levels of disadvantage
- The maintenance of high attendance rates among our students

Aims and Objectives

The revised policy is geared towards:

- Encouraging full attendance where possible
- Ensuring that pupils are registered accurately and efficiently
- Ensuring that pupil attendance is recorded daily
- Identifying pupils at risk

- Promoting a positive learning environment
- Enabling learning opportunities to be experienced
- Raising awareness of the importance of school attendance
- Fostering an appreciation of learning
- Identifying 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 children is paramount.

Roles and Responsibilities

All members of staff have an input into the implementation of the policy. Class teachers record individual patterns of attendance and the principal and school secretary make returns to the Tusla Education Welfare Officer. The Principal has responsibility for maintaining the daily attendance records on the Aladdin system.

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 9.20am. All pupils and staff 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 Officer.

Recording and Reporting Attendance

The school attendance of individual pupils is recorded in the roll book on the Aladdin system on a daily basis. Class attendance data and the annual attendance of each child are also recorded daily on the system. Information provided in enrolment forms (Pupil's Name, Date of Birth, Address, Religion, Parents' Names).

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 10.10am each morning. Any pupil not present will be marked absent for the day. A note from parents/guardians is

required to explain each absence. Such notes will be retained by the class teacher. Parents/guardians must also provide a note if a child departs early during the school day. These notes are dated and kept by each classroom teacher. Late arrivals and early departures are recorded by the class teacher.

Parents/guardians are made aware of the requirements of the Tusla Education Welfare Officer 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. Parents of 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 for 6 days or more or expelled.

Removal of a Pupil during the School Day

It is expected that all pupils remain in the school for the full school day. It is also important so as to ensure the accountability of all pupils during any emergency evacuations.

1. Unavoidable medical appointments/withdrawing a sick child from school

If a pupil needs to leave early for an unavoidable medical appointment, a letter should be sent in beforehand from his/her parents or a phone call/email made to the school office.

If a child is sick during the school day, the class teacher will first ring the parent and, if uncontactable, will ring the emergency contact number. All relevant numbers will be kept up to date.

When collecting the child, the parent/guardian should report to the child's classroom and sign the sign out book there.

2. Arriving late for school due to an unavoidable medical appointment or emergency

School day begins at 9.20 am. If a child has a medical, dental or other unavoidable morning appointment or emergency, a letter should be sent in beforehand or an explanation given by way of a phone call or email to the school.

Late arrivals must be accompanied by an adult to the classroom door.

3. Emergencies

In this case, the parent should ring/email the school en-route and explain the situation if possible. The secretary/class teacher can have the child ready to be collected from their classroom.

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

Defining and Recording Non Attendance

'A parent is obliged to cause a child between the ages of 6 and 16 to attend at a national school or other suitable school on each day that the school is open for instruction' *Education Act 2000*.

The following applies:

- A child is expected to attend each day
- Non attendance is recorded in the roll book on the Aladdin system
- A note or phone call is provided by parents explaining the absence, in accordance with the Education Act 1998
- The category of absence is also identified and recorded
- Children are expected to be at the school at 9.20 am
- Children are expected to complete a full day at school.

National Education Welfare Officer (EWO) Tusla

The Education Welfare Officer (EWO) will be informed as a matter of procedure if

- A child is absent for more than 20 days in a school year.
- A child is suspended.
- A child is expelled.

This is in accordance with the Education Welfare Act 2000.

Tusla's EWO is furnished with the total attendances in the school year through the Annual Report Form which is completed on-line.

Whole School Approach to Promoting Attendance

The school promotes good attendance by:

- Maintaining a safe and welcoming environment for our pupils and their parents/guardians
- Developing mutual trust and respect with students
- Facilitating children to have a voice in school matters – class circle time
- Having high expectations of students’ attendance
- Displaying kindness, compassion and understanding to everyone
- Collaborating in the planning and implementation of the primary school curriculum, so as to provide a stimulating learning environment for all pupils
- Being vigilant so that risks to good attendance are identified early for individual children. 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 or a note in the homework diary 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(EWO) Tusla.
- Intervening early with personalised support and engagement with families and their children
- Inviting parents/guardians of new entrants to engage in an induction process, through which the school’s policies and procedures in relation to attendance are explained
- Reminding parents/guardians of the importance of regular school attendance from Junior Infants onwards and the Principal’s obligation to report to the National Education Welfare Officer (EWO) Tusla absences of 20 days or more.
- The calendar for the coming year is published annually in the summer term 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
- A special incentive system is in place to celebrate and reward good attendance and punctuality.
 - An Individual reward system in place for being in the line at 9.20am (If at the end of a month a child has been in the line by 9.20 am every morning they will be rewarded with a homework pass/lucky dip)
 - Achievement assembly to reward punctuality and attendance every month
 - Whole class reward for punctuality and attendance with an extra twenty minutes at break time
 - Termly attendance certificates ranging from excellent to very good
 - 0 days absent – excellent
 - 1 – 2 days absent – very good
 - 3-4 days absent - good

- A full attendance certificate along with a special award is presented to those who have full attendance for the school year
- A rota for playground games in the Senior Room will be drawn up by the pupils with their class teacher
- All necessary equipment will be on the yard and footballs will be replaced as needed to ensure that the playground rota for games can be followed

Responding to poor attendance:

- Talk to the child
- Parents of pupils whose non-attendance is a concern are invited to meet with the Principal and are informed of the school's concerns

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.

Reasons for absence are recorded and reported to the EWB at designated times 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 at the end of the school year.

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.

Communication

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

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 to all parents at the beginning of the school year. 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 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 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
- 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 any Attendance Policy is measured through:

- Improved attendance levels as measured through school attendance records and statistical returns
- Happy, confident and well-adjusted children
- Positive parental feedback
- Teacher vigilance

Implementation/Ratification and Review

This policy has been updated in March 2024. It will be reviewed again in 2027

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Chairperson, Board of Management