

Scoil Mhuire gan Smal, Ballymote – Attendance Strategy

Introduction:

This Policy Document was drawn up:

- To ensure and maintain a high level of attendance at school by all pupils.

Rationale:

This policy was drafted for the following reasons:

- The Board of Management wishes to comply with legislation, such as:

The Education Act, 1998

The Education (Welfare) Act, 2000

- The Board of Management wishes to promote and encourage regular attendance as an essential factor in our pupils' learning.
- The attendance pattern of a small number of pupils continues to be a cause for concern.

Relationship to the Characteristic Spirit of the School

Scoil Mhuire gan Smál endeavours to enable every pupil to actively participate in all school activities. Regular attendance helps to create a stable learning environment for all pupils, and the school hopes to promote co-operation among pupils, parents/guardians and staff in maintaining a high level of regular attendance through the school year.

Aims:

- To raise awareness of the importance of regular school attendance
- To identify pupils at risk of leaving school early
- To promote and to foster positive attitudes to learning
- To ensure compliance with the requirements of the relevant legislation

Content:

Recording and Reporting of Attendance and Non-Attendance

The school attendance of individual pupils is recorded on the school roll daily. This is managed through the Aladdin Pupil Management System. The Leabhar Tinrimh is automatically collated once the roll has been called in all classes. The pupil management system can provide useful data on attendance patterns and also attendance returns for TUSLA.

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 10a.m. each morning. Any pupil not present by 10a.m. will be marked absent for the day. If a pupil arrives in school after the roll has been called, this should be noted on the system.

A note from parents/guardians is required to explain each absence. Parents/Guardian should submit all absences through the online absence form on our website (www.smsgsballymote.ie). Alternatively, a note can be sent to the class teacher outlining the date(s) of the absence and the reason for it. Such notes will be retained by the class teacher for the duration of the school year, after which they can be sent to the school office.

Parents/Guardians must also provide a note if a child departs early during the school day. The reason for an absence should be indicated on the roll call. Teachers can retrospectively insert a reason for absence if a note is presented on a pupils return to school after being absence. Pupil attendance is checked regularly.

Parents /guardians are informed 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 booklet 'Your Child's attendance in school' is available to download from our website and is a useful document for parents.

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.

Whole School Strategies to Promote Attendance:

Scoil Mhuire gan Smál endeavours to create a safe, welcoming environment for our pupils and their parents/guardians. 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.

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. There is an information meeting held annually in June with the parents of prospective enrolees. The

importance of good and regular school attendance, will be stressed at this meeting

The calendar for the coming school year is published annually in July and available on our website. 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 attend in the correct school uniform and have the necessary materials and books.

Certificates and trophies are awarded to pupils who have full attendance during the school year (appendix 1). Certificates will also be awarded for excellent attendance during the year (currently this includes pupils who have missed no more than two school days during the school year). Pupils who have full termly attendance, will be acknowledged at assembly.

Communication:

The school has developed a good relationship with the local Education Welfare Board (EWS) personnel and there is ongoing communication in relation to children who are at risk.

Home Youth Liaison Officer works in the school for a half-day each week 9.30a.m. – 12.30p.m. on Wednesdays. He/She works with pupils at risk of non-attendance.

The school maintains communication with local pre-schools and second-level schools in order to make the transition for pupils as easy as possible.

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 EWS twice 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.

It should be noted that the principal and staff will endeavour to address issues around attendance with parents at the earliest opportunity. This will be done informally and formally.

Late Arrival/ Early departure

Pupils are expected to be in school by the official starting time of 9.20am. Pupils arriving after this time should be recorded in the 'signing in' book in the office by their parent/guardian. Pupils who arrive after this time without a parent or guardian will sign themselves in and be issued with a letter to their parent/guardian reminding them of the school procedure. If a pupil goes directly to their classroom when arriving late for school their teacher should direct them to the school office in the first instance.

Pupil should remain in school for the full school day. On occasion, they may have an appointment that necessitates them leaving before the end of the school day. In such cases, their parent/guardian should report to the office and sign them out.

Temporary Absences:

Pupils shall only be allowed out of school on production of written consent of one of their parents, which specifies the following:

The time that the absence shall begin

The time that the absence shall end

Confirmation that the parent shall arrange for the collection and return of the pupil to the school and shall be responsible for the pupil's welfare during such absence.

Consent to such temporary absences shall only be given where good reason and cause is shown as to why such consent should be given.

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.

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;
- Talk positively about school and the day ahead;
- You know your child best. Please keep your child at home if he/she is 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:

- An increase in annual attendance rates
- The Board of Management, Staff and Parent/Guardian awareness of their legal obligations under the Education Welfare Act 2000

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' Association.

Ratification and Review:

This policy was reviewed by the Board of Management at a meeting on 24/1/19 and will be due for review in 2021.

Signed:

Date: