

Sonas

Special Junior Primary School

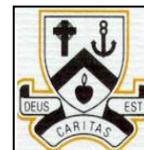
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Roll No. 201620

Attendance Strategy Policy

Introduction

This policy document was drawn up to ensure and maintain a high level of attendance at school by all pupils.

Rationale

The policy was drafted for the following reasons:

1. The Board of Management wishes to comply with legislation, such as:
 - The Education Act, 1998
 - The Education (Welfare) Act, 2000
2. The Board of Management wishes to promote and encourage regular attendance as an essential factor in our pupils' learning.

Relationship to the Characteristic Spirit of the School

Sonas Special Junior Primary School 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 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

In August 2016 the school began to record attendance electronically using the Student Management System (Aladdin). Data is kept in accordance with Department of Education & Skills guidelines.

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 10.30 each morning. Any pupil not present will be marked absent for the day. Parents/Guardians are required to explain each absence by a phonecall or through the Homeschool Communication Notebook.

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 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.

Whole School Strategies to Promote Attendance

Sonas Special Junior Primary School endeavours to create a safe, welcoming environment for our pupils and their Parents/Guardians. The teaching staff and Principal collaborate with Parents/Guardians 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.

The calendar for the coming school year is distributed to parents before the start of the new academic year and is also available to refer to on the school 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 wear the correct school uniform.

A strategy for promoting good school attendance:

The Board of Management is committed to providing a positive culture with regards to school attendance.

In this regard:

- Each child is entitled to a free school lunch and snack daily – this is funded by a grant provided by the Department of Social Protection.
- The attendance rates of pupils will be monitored by the class teacher in the first instance, and when necessary the class teacher will notify the Principal of any concerns regarding the attendance of any child. For example a pattern of non-attendance e.g. Every Friday, or on swimming day.
- The school curriculum, insofar as is practicable, is flexible and relevant to the needs of the individual child.
- The school will promote development of good self-concept and self-esteem in the children.
- Support for pupils are in place in accordance with Department of Education & Skills guidelines.
- Internal communication procedures are in place to inform teachers of individual circumstances that may affect attendance/punctuality from time to time.
- The assistance of the Education Welfare Officer will be utilised, if necessary.
- Pupils with poor attendance record, will insofar as is practicable, be supported in an effort to improve their attendance.

School Principal

The Deputy Principal, as part of her duties, will:

- Ensure that the school register of pupils is maintained in accordance with regulations.
- Inform the Education Welfare Officer:
 - If a pupil is not attending school regularly.
 - When a pupil has been absent for 20 or more days during the course of a school year.
 - If a pupil has been suspended for a period of six or more days.
 - When a pupil's name is removed from the school register.
- Inform parents of a decision to contact the Education Welfare Officer of concerns regarding a pupil.
- Insofar as is practicable, promote the importance of good school attendance among pupils, parents and staff.

Class Teacher

The class teacher will:

- Record school attendance.
- Keep a record of explained and unexplained absences.
- Contact parents in instances where absences are not explained in writing.
- Encourage pupils to attend regularly and punctually.
- Inform the Principal of concerns s/he may have regarding the attendance of any pupil.

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 recognized 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 s/he 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 absences are recorded and reported to the Education Welfare Board during the school year through the 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.

Communication

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

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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 Educational Welfare Officer will contact parents/guardians to discuss any issues regarding attendance with a view to resolving the matter. However, if no improvement is evident TUSLA has powers under legislation to pursue the matter through the legal system.

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/post-primary to special school.

Success Criteria

The following will provide some practical indicators of the success of this policy:

- An increase in annual attendance rates
- Reduction in numbers of pupils who are a cause of concern with regards to attendance
- Board of Management, Staff and parent/guardian - increased 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.

This policy was reviewed and ratified by the Sonas Board of Management on October 26th 2016.