

St. Joseph's N.S., Leitrim Village, Roll No: 01125B

Attendance Policy

1. Introduction

This policy was formulated by the staff of St. Joseph's N.S in February and March 2011 following a review of the school plan. Parents were asked for their thoughts on strategies for promoting attendance. This policy was reviewed again between June and September 2017 following the publication on the '*Developing the Statement of Strategy for School Attendance: Guidelines for Schools*' by TUSLA. A Statement of Strategy for School Attendance was also prepared for submission to the Child and Family Agency, TUSLA. This is included in Appendix 1. This policy was reviewed again in September 2019.

2. Rational

While there is a strong tradition of good attendance in St. Joseph's N.S. changing social fabric of the nation is altering attitudes to school and we are anxious that parents be aware of the absolute necessity for regular punctual attendance at school. Quite simply, children cannot learn if they are not in school. The Education Welfare Act (2000) requires all Boards of Management put in place measures to promote attendance. This policy will encourage regular attendance at school and foster an appreciation of learning.

3. Ethos

St. Joseph's N.S. is a Catholic primary school and aims to promote the full and harmonious development of all pupils; cognitive, intellectual, physical, cultural, moral and spiritual, including a living relationship with God and other people and promotes a Christian philosophy of life. While Catholic education and the ethos of the school permeates the school day, it is open to parents of children of other faiths or none.

The school supports the principles of: -

- *Inclusiveness*, particularly with reference to the enrolment of children with a disability or other special education need;
- *Equality* of access and participation in the school;
- *Parental choice* in relation to enrolment and
- *Respect for the diversity* of values, beliefs, traditions, languages and ways of life in society

Therefore, no child will be refused access to St. Joseph's N.S. for reasons of ethnicity, special educational needs, disability, accent, language, traveller status, asylum seeker, refugee status, religious or political beliefs or values, sexual orientation, family or social circumstances. (See school Admission Policy for more details)

Management and staff believe, 'The best gift that anybody can give a child is to offer a child the opportunity to fulfil his or her potential. Every day should be a day of wonder and learning for a child' (*Developing the Statement of Strategy for School Attendance: Guidelines for Schools*', (TUSLA, 2015, foreword page vi.). Unless sick, pupils are expected to be in school every day.

4. Aims and objectives

With the introduction of this policy St. Joseph's N.S. hopes to: -

- To foster an appreciation of and promote positive attitudes towards learning.
- To raise awareness of importance of school attendance with the entire school community.
- Encourage pupils to attend school regularly and punctually.
- Identify pupils who may be at risk of developing school attendance problems and perhaps be at risk of leaving school early.
- To enhance the learning environment where children can make progress in all aspects of their development
- To ensure that the school Code of Behaviour (rules, rewards, and sanctions) is implemented in a fair and consistent manner that encourages pupils to attend school.
- To comply with requirements under Education Welfare Act 2000/Guidelines form Tusla/ NEWB
- Inform the school community of its role and responsibility as outlined in the Act.
- Ensure that the school has procedures in place to promote attendance/participation.
- Develop, subject to available resources, links between the school and the families of children who may be at risk of developing attendance problems.
- Identify and remove, insofar as is practicable, obstacles to school attendance.

5. Content

5.1 Non Attendance

If, for any reason, a child is not in school by roll call on a day on which the school is open for instruction, the child is marked absent. If the child should arrive to school after roll call the class teacher will mark the child as arriving late and record the reason on Aladdin. A similar record will be kept, in writing, of any child that leaves the school before the end of the school and the reason for this. These pages will be kept by each class teacher and used to monitor patterns of early leaving which may be discussed with parents at parent teacher meetings or comments included on end of year reports.

5.2 Punctuality

St. Joseph's N.S. opens at 9:20 a.m. and children are required to enter the school and proceed to their classrooms at that time. All pupils and teachers, including substitute 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 (2000), to report children who are persistently late, to the Education Welfare Board.

5.3 Guidance for Parents

Section [(21) (9)] of the Education Welfare Act (2000) states that: "a pupil's absence can only be authorised by the principal when the child is involved in activities organised by the school or in which the school is involved". **The school principal cannot authorise a child's absence for holidays during school time.** Parents are discouraged for taking children on holidays during the school term. However, it is essential that parents inform the school of such arrangements.

Reasons for pupils' absences must be communicated in writing, by parents/guardians, to the school on the school **Absence Sheet** and this will be retained by the school. To facilitate this, such communications should not be in the homework diary, but on a separate page or sheet of paper. Once a child returns to school after an absence he/ she will be given an **Absence Sheet** which must be completed by the child's parents and returned to the school. This should contain the child's name, the dates of absence and the reason for the absence. These Absence Sheets

will be retained in the school and will form a record which may be inspected by the Education Welfare Officer on a visit to the school. The school will contact parents when a written explanation for the child's absence is not received by the school.

5.4 Strategies to Promote Attendance

- **Environment:** every effort will be made to create a safe, welcoming environment for our pupils and their parents.
- **Late arrivals** will be recorded by each class teacher on Aladdin, and a reason given, if supplied by the child or parent.
- **Early intervention:** All new parents to the school will be informed of procedures in relation to attendance and the importance of attendance at the annual Induction Day.
- **Homework:** See Homework Policy. Some pupils will have differentiated homework.
- **Uniform:** Children should arrive to school in full uniform every day. Parents are requested to write a note to explain why a child is not in full uniform. Children will not be punished for not wearing full uniform as the matter may be outside their control.
- **Lunches:** If a child arrives to school without a lunch every effort will be made to contact the child's parents and ask them to bring a lunch to the school for the child. If the parents cannot be contacted, then the school will provide a healthy lunch. If a child comes to school without a breakfast and very hungry the child will be facilitated to eat some of his/her lunch in a discrete manner.
- **Assembly:** The importance of regular and punctual school attendance will be discussed regularly at school assemblies.
- **Rewards:** Class teachers will praise pupils for excellent and good attendance. The principal will also praise pupils for good attendance. At the end of every school year the principal will issue a special certificate of '**Excellent Attendance**' and a prize (Medal, Book Voucher, pencil, sharpener, badge etc) to all pupils who had full attendance for the school year. Each class teacher will notify the principal in June of children who have full attendance up to that day. Likewise, children with good attendance will be rewarded with '**Good Attendance**' certificates. Children with improvements in attendance will also receive a certificate of '**Improvement in Attendance**'.
- **Best class attendance per month.** The class with the best overall attendance every month will be awarded a special certificate. Parents will be informed about this on the school website.
- **Reports:** The total amount of days missed in a year is reported to parents at the end of every year on the end of year school reports. It may also be discussed at parent teacher meetings during the year. When necessary absences will also be shown in terms of weeks of school.
- **Written notification to parents** when a pupil reaches 15 days of school absence
- **Communication to parents** via communication letter and this policy to highlight the importance of regular school attendance and that it is not appropriated to take pupils from school on holidays during the school term.
- **The principal cannot give 'permission' for holiday absences during term time. This will be clearly communicated to all parents.**
- **Parents:** Parents are informed as to their responsibilities and the responsibilities of the school under the Education Welfare (2000) on Induction Day, in the School Information Booklet and at regular intervals during the school year via communications newsletters, text messages and posts on the school website.

5.5 Responding to poor attendance

Accurate Records: Every class teacher, including substitute teachers, will record daily attendance accurately every day on Aladdin. A separate page, kept by the class teacher, will be completed for any pupil that leaves the school before the end of the school day. This page will be monitored to look for patterns and teachers may need to discuss any observed patterns with the pupil's parents.

Early Intervention: When necessary attendance and punctuality will be discussed at parent teacher meetings. Following this if there is no improvement the principal will discuss the matter with the pupil's parents.

Good clear communication with parents is essential and parents will be informed, in writing, when a pupil is absent 15 days in any school year.

Timetabling: Class teachers will distribute 'nice' subjects over the week so that every day has a balance of subjects to appeal to all pupils. Consideration will also be given to extra-curricular or after school activities, when and where possible.

Homework: Class teachers will differentiate homework according to the needs of pupils in the class.

Combination: a combination of the above together with strategies to promote good attendance will be employed to supporting the re-engagement of pupils that have missed a significant amount of time to help the pupil(s) settle back into the route of school.

5.6 Records/ Communication

Subject to the restrictions of the Data Protection Act attendance, behaviour and academic records of children who transfer to another primary school will be passed to the principal of the school, by post, as soon as we receive written notification of transfer. Attendance, behaviour and academic records of children who transfer from another primary school will be sought directly from the previous school. Attendance, behaviour and academic records of pupils transferring to a second level school will be sent to the school, as per the Educational Passport, once enrolment has been confirmed.

5.7 Annual Report

The details of pupils exceeding the 20-day absence limit will be notified to TUSLA in advance of the timeframes given during each academic year. At the end of every school year the principal will complete the Annual Report on attendance and return it to TUSLA's Education Welfare Service (EWB) the N.E.W.B. within the allocated timeframe.

5.8 Statement of Strategy

A Statement of Strategy for School Attendance was developed in September 2017 and forwarded to TUSLA. This was reviewed in September 2019 can be found in Appendix 1.

6. Success Criteria

The success of this policy will be evident in increased attendance by all pupils and a reduction in the number of absences of children with current high levels of absence from school. This will be evident in the class roll call statistics, in the daily attendance record and the Annual Report on Attendance to TUSLA, all available on Aladdin. Also positive feedback from pupils, teachers and parents will signify success.

7 Roles and Responsibilities

Various individuals have responsibilities in relation to attendance. These are outlined below.

7.1 Parents:

- 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 approve of 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.

7.2 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 promptly passing on absence notes from parents to their class teacher.
- Pupils are responsible for passing school correspondence to their parents, on the specified day.

7.3 The School/ B.O.M

The Board of Management of St. Joseph's N.S. is committed to providing a positive school atmosphere which is conducive to promoting good school attendance. In this regard:

- 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-worth in the children.
- Support for pupils, who have special educational needs, are in place in accordance with Department of Education & Science guidelines.
- Internal communication procedures are in place to inform teachers of the special needs of pupils.
- A special reward system will be introduced for promoting good attendance at school.
- The assistance of the Education Welfare Officer will be utilised.
- The attendance rates of pupils will be monitored by the class teacher in the first instance, and the class teacher will notify the Principal of any concerns regarding the attendance of any child.
- Pupils with a poor attendance record will, insofar as is practicable, be supported in an effort to improve their attendance.

7.4 School Principal

The School Principal 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. (N.E.W.B. returns)
 - 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
- Highlight the importance of attendance at assembly with pupils and staff, on Induction Day when meeting parents of new Junior Infant Pupils and in regular communication letters to parents.

7.5 Class Teacher

The class teacher will:

- Maintain the school roll-book accurately, in accordance with procedure, on Aladdin.
- Keep a record of children who arrive to school after roll call (on Aladdin) or leave before the end of any school day and the reasons for this, on a specific sheet, kept by the class teacher.
- Keep a record of explained and unexplained absences.
- Ask the school secretary to contact parents in instances where absences are not explained in writing.
- Promote a reward system for pupils with exceptional attendance.
- Encourage pupils to attend regularly and punctually.
- Differentiate homework, if necessary, for pupils where this may have a negative effect on pupil attendance.
- Structure their teaching timetable to promote good attendance, if necessary.
- Inform the Principal of concerns s/he may have regarding the attendance of any pupil.

8. Implementation

This policy will come into effect immediately after ratification by the B.O.M. and will replace the previous policy.

9. Review

This policy will be reviewed at regular intervals such as every two years or as issues arise. The policy will be amended if the teachers, parents, pupils or B.O.M. consider it necessary.

10. Ratification and communication

This policy was initially presented to and ratified by the B.O.M in September 2019. It will be uploaded to the school website and parents will be informed in the communication newsletter. Teachers will be given a copy of this policy on the school memory stick.

11. References

- Education Welfare Act 2000

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- ***'Developing the Statement of Strategy for School Attendance: Guidelines for Schools'*** by TUSLA (2015)
- Circular 22/02 Appeals Procedures under Section 29 of the Education Act, 1998. (DES website). Deals with appeals under the following headings:
 - (1) Permanent exclusion from a school
 - (2) Suspension
 - (3) Refusal to enrol
- Education Act, 1998 Section 15 (2(d)) (DES website, www.education.ie)
- Education (Welfare) Act, 2000 Section 23(1 -5), 24 (1-5) (DES website)
- Management Board Members' Handbook. Revised 2015. CPSMA.
- Governance Manual for Primary Schools 2015 – 2019 (DES)
- Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools, DES 2013.
- Guidelines for Developing School Codes of Behaviour (N. E. W. B.) 2007
- School's own SPHE Plan, Code of Behaviour, Admission Policy, Anti- Bullying Policy and Homework Policy
- DES website www.education.ie
- NPC website www.npc.ie
- IPPN website www.ippn.ie
- INTO website www.into.ie
- PDST website www.pdst.ie

Copies of the relevant legislation extracts can be made available on request.

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Appendix 1. Statement of Strategy for School Attendance

Name of school	St. Joseph's N.S./ Leitrim Mixed N.S.
Address	Leitrim Village, Carrick-on-Shannon, Co. Leitrim. N41 CE81
Roll Number	01125B
The school's vision and values in relation to attendance	'The best gift that anybody can give a child is to offer a child the opportunity to fulfil his or her potential. Every day should be a day of wonder and learning for a child' Guidelines, foreword page vi. Ensure that children achieve their potential in all areas of learning and development. See School Admission Policy for more details.
The school's high expectations around attendance	Every pupil is expected to attend school every school day unless sick. Parents are asked to contact the school on the first day a pupil is absent and explain why the pupil is absent and give an indication of the duration of the absence. On return to school the pupils' parents are asked to complete an 'Absence Sheet' stating the duration and reason for the absence. These sheets are kept in each pupils file. Parents are asked not to take pupils on holiday during the school term.
How attendance will be monitored	Class Teacher: Will report any irregular or unexplained absences to the principal. If a pupil is absent for three consecutive days, without explanation, the secretary will contact the pupil's parents regarding the absence. Teacher will inform principal when pupil is approaching 15 days of absence. Principal: Monitor overall attendance, month by month, using the daily attendance record. Every month the class with the best attendance will be awarded a certificate.
Summary of the main elements of the school's approach to attendance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target setting and targets • The whole-school approach • Promoting good attendance • Responding to poor attendance 	Increase over all school attendance, every month. Decrease the number of pupils absent 20 or more school days. Accurate attendance records will be kept by each class teachers. Also records of pupils who arrive to school after rollcall or leave before the end of the school day will be recorded on separate pages. Monitoring and early identification of poor attendance. Phone calls to parents if a pupil is absent for three consecutive days without an explanation or if absences are not recorded, in writing, on school 'Absence Sheets'. Written communication sent to parents when a pupil has missed 15 school days (3 school weeks).

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	<p>Attendance and punctuality will be discussed at parent teacher meetings, if necessary. This will be followed by a meeting with the principal, if no improvement.</p> <p>Rewarding good attendance: Individual praise by class teacher and principal. Certs for best attendance per class every month. Certs for individual pupils for excellent attendance at the end of every school year. See attached policy for more information.</p>
<p>School roles in relation to attendance</p>	<p>Class teacher: Accurately record Roll every day at the appointed time. Also record pupils who arrive to school after roll call or leave before the end of the school day. Notify principal of any concerns, at an early stage. Ask secretary to phone parents, if child is absent three days and no communication from home. Give an 'Absence Sheet' to pupil on their return to school. Attendance is reported on the end of year school reports, number of days absent and these days converted into weeks, if necessary.</p> <p>Principal: Record overall class attendance accurately in the daily attendance record file. Monitor attendance. Write to parents when a child has been absent 15 school days. Issue certs/ awards for best class attendance every month, individual pupils' attendance award at the end of the school year. Highlight the importance of attendance at assemblies, on Induction Day and in communication letters to parents.</p>
<p>Partnership arrangements (parents, students, other schools, youth and community groups)</p>	<p>Communication Letters to parents, meetings with parents, such as Induction Day, texts and e-mails home will highlight the importance of regular attendance. Good attendance will be highlighted at assemblies with pupils. Parents will be telephoned, if a pupil is absent for three consecutive days and no explanation given. Letter will be sent home when a pupil is absent for 15 school days. Attendance will be recorded on the end of year school report and a breakdown of attendance will be given if a pupil is transferring to another primary school. Secondary schools will be forwarded an Educational Passport on 6th class pupils transferring to secondary school, on receipt of confirmation of enrolment in that school</p>
<p>How the Statement of Strategy will be monitored</p>	<p>Class teachers will monitor attendance, late arrivals and early leavers and report any concerns or improvements to the principal. Principal will monitor attendance every month in the daily attendance record file. Months will be compared and previous year's attendance will also be compared. The number of pupils receiving excellent attendance certs at the end of every school year will be recorded, with a view to</p>

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	increasing these numbers, year on year. The number of pupils absent 20 or more days will be recorded every year, with view to reducing this number, year on year.
Review process and date for review	Reviewed September 2019. Next Review September 2021 or sooner should the need arise.
Date the Statement of Strategy was approved by the Board of Management	October 26 th 2017 (Initially)
Date the Statement of Strategy submitted to Tusla	October 2017 (Initially)

This statement of Strategy for School Attendance must be read in conjunction with the School Attendance Policy.