

# Statement of Strategy + Attendance Policy

## Introduction

Changing social habits and patterns necessitated the updating of the schools attendance policy. The redrafting was a collaborative school process involving Staff and Board of Management and Parents Representatives following initial drafting by a representative group. The updated policy reflects the implications of Circular 0028/2013 which allows for simplified arrangements for the maintenance of the Register, Roll Book and Daily Attendance Book. Circular 0033/2015 which allows for further simplification where all pupil data is uploaded onto the Primary Online Database. Circular 00/342011 Standardisation of the school year. Circular 11/95 Time in School. Rules for National schools- Rule 55 and Circular 0039/2012. It is linked with the school's Code of Behaviour, Anti Bullying Policy and Child Protection Policy.

## Rationale

The main factors contributing to the formulation of a revised policy can be summarised as follows:

- Attendance rates are consistently high at above 95%.
- Most pupils arrived in time on a regular basis.
- All absences are explained by a written note which is retained by the class teacher.
- Patterns of non attendance are evident only in relation to a small number of families.
- To promote and encourage regular attendance as an essential factor in our pupils' learning.
- Legislative requirements such as the Education Welfare Act 2000 Sections 17, 20, 21, 22, & 25 and the Education Act, 1998 Sections 26, 27, 29.
- The role of the TUSLA.
- Changing attitudes to education.

## Aims and Objectives

The aims of the revised policy are:

- Ensuring that pupils are registered accurately and efficiently
- Ensuring that pupils 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
- 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

## 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 staff has an input into the implementation of the policy. Teachers are fully aware of all the aspects of school life which may influence attendance. Efforts are made to differentiate the curriculum and instructional practices to meet individual needs. Pastoral Care teachers organise class assemblies to promote positive attitudes to school and link in with pupils in need of support.

Class teacher's record individual patterns of attendance and Nora Leamy, (Teacher with Special Duties Post) makes returns to Tusla. The School Secretary has responsibility for maintaining the daily attendance record.

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 **9.00am**. 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.

## Recording and Reporting Attendance

The school attendance of individual pupils is recorded on the Aladdin Schools' system. Class attendance data is recorded daily in the online Attendance Book. The annual attendance of each individual pupil is recorded online on the Aladdin System, together with information provided in enrolment forms (Pupil's Name, Date of Birth, Address, Religion, Parents' Names and Parents' Occupations).

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 10.30am each morning. This data will be then transferred to the school office. Any pupil not present will be marked absent for the day. A note from parents/guardian is required to explain each absence...

Parent/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 during Parent/Teacher meetings and are informed of the school's concerns.

The school must inform the Education Welfare Officer 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.

## 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.

Tusla Educational Welfare Services, Child and family Agency

The Education Welfare officer is informed if:

- A child is expelled
- A child is suspended
- A child has missed more than 20 days.
- Tusla Educational Welfare Services, Child and family Agency

furnished with the total attendances in the school year through the Annual Report form which is completed on-line.

## **Whole School Strategies to Promote Attendance**

Caragh National School endeavours to create a safe, welcome 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.

Traditionally, school attendance is strong in our school. However, 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 each term is published in the CNS newsletter and on the school website. Dates for school holidays and closures are published each term. It is hoped that this approach will enable parents/guardians to plan family events around school closures, thus minimising the chances of non-attendances 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 in 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 five 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 the school community through the school’s newsletter.

## **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 pupils 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 has developed a good relationship with the local Education welfare Board (EWB) personnel and there is ongoing communication in relation to children who are at risk.

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 Caragh National School to another school, the schools records on attendance, academic progress etc will be forwarded on receipt of written notification of the transfer
- When a child transfers into Caragh National School confirmation of transfer will be communicated to the child’s previous school, and appropriate records sought
- Pupils transferring from Caragh NS 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 by regular school circulars. 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 dentist etc) are arranged for time outside of school hours.
- Contacting the school immediately, if they have concerns about absence or other related school matters
- Notifying 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 Attendance records and statistical returns
- Happy confident well adjusted children
- Positive parental feedback
- Teacher vigilance

## Implementation/Ratification and Review

This policy has been in operation in Caragh National School since 2014. It will be reviewed again in 2017

## References:

Don't let you Child Miss Out – NEWB 2004  
 Education Welfare Act 2000  
 Education Act 1998  
 Section 29 Education Act  
 Empty Desks – CDU Mary Immaculate  
 Developing the Statement of Strategy for School Attendance TUSLA 2015

Ratified by Board of Management.

Dec. 2<sup>nd</sup> 2014.

Reviewed October 2017.