

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

Introduction

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

The Board of Management, in consultation with staff and parents/guardians drew up this Policy on Attendance.

Rationale

The 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 BOM also wishes to comply with our Child Protection policy and to follow procedures as laid down by the DES and the HSE.
- The BOM wishes to promote and encourage regular attendance as an essential factor in our pupils' learning.

Relationship to the Characteristic Spirit of the School:

The Mercy School endeavours to enable every pupil to actively participate in all aspects of school life 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.

Whole School Strategies to Promote Attendance

The following strategies have been put in place to help foster an appreciation of learning and good attendance:

1. Rewards (eg Attendance Certs, photos of top "attenders" on the school Web-site) in accordance with the Code of Behaviour.

2. The school works closely with the families of at risk children through the "Home Support" coordinator employed by the School Completion Programme.

3. 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.
4. Our school's homework policy, drawn up in consultation with parents/guardians, clearly outlines the school's expectations in terms of the quantity of homework assigned and in the quality of homework presented. There is a consistent approach to homework throughout the school.
5. As stated in the Code of Behaviour parents are expected to write notifying the teacher of the reason for a child's absence upon the child's return. The teacher notes the reason for the absence, and this is also recorded in the daily "Rolla Copy" and in the software package that records all attendance information.
6. The calendar for the coming school year is published annually in September and a reminder is published in January. 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.
7. Pupils are expected to wear the correct school uniform.
8. Parents/guardians are informed if a child has no lunch, and if one cannot be provided for him/her, the school will provide some fruit and a drink.
9. The question of equality of access is addressed through the school's policy on Equal Opportunity and Gender Equity.
10. Identification of students who are at risk of developing school attendance problems. These are categorised as follows;
 - a) Irregular Absentee: 2/5 days absent in a 20-day period without a valid reason.
 - b) Seriously Irregular Absentee: 6/10 days absent in a 20-day period without a valid reason, and/or 15+ days in one school year.

- c) Chronic Absentee: 11+ days absent in a 20-day period without a valid reason, or 20+ days in a school year.

11. Appropriate contact will take place between the school and parents/guardians of these children.

- a) For Irregular Absentees the teacher/principal will inform the parents by letter of her/his concerns about the child and seek to meet the parents to discuss the matter.
- b) For Seriously Irregular Absentees the Principal will write to parents inviting them to a meeting to discuss the problem.
- c) For Chronic Absentees the Principal will inform the Education Welfare Officer and notify parents of this by letter.

12. 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.

13. Attendance, behaviour and academic records of children who transfer into The Mercy School will be sought directly from the previous school, if not already provided by the parent/guardian.

14. Attendance, behaviour and Academic records of pupils transferring to Secondary School will be sent to the school, if requested, once enrolment has been confirmed.

15. Recording and Reporting of Attendance and Non-Attendance

The school attendance of individual pupils is recorded in the Leabhar Rolla (Roll Book) of each class on a daily basis. Class attendance data is recorded daily in the Leabhar Tinrimh (Attendance Book). The annual attendance of each individual pupil is recorded in the Clár Leabhar (Register), together with information provided in enrolment forms (Pupil's Name, Date of Birth, Address, Religion, Parents' Names and Parents' Occupations). All information regarding attendance is also recorded on our School Data software and this is kept secure on the office computer.

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 between 9.30am and 9.50am 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.

Late arrivals are recorded by the class teacher in the "Rolla Copy".

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/class teacher to discuss the reasons for the absences and to plan for immediate improvement and support, where necessary.

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.

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.

Success Criteria

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

- An increase in annual attendance rates
- 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' Council.