

St Anthony's Special School -Attendance Policy 2024

Introduction

Updated habits and student report procedures necessitated the updating of the schools attendance policy. The redrafting was a collaborative process involving staff and Board of Management, following initial drafting by a representative group.

Rationale:

The main factors contributing to the formulation of a revised policy could be summarized as follows:

- a) To promote and encourage regular attendance as an essential factor in our pupils' learning
- b) Legislative requirements such as the Education Welfare Act 2000
- c) The role of the TÚSLA, The Child and family agency
- d) Levels of disadvantage
- e) Changing attitudes to education

Aims and Objectives:

The revised policy is geared towards

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

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 have an input into the implementation of the policy. Class teachers record individual patterns of attendance and the school secretarial staff records all absences electronically on the Aladdin Student Management System (SMS). The Deputy Principal has responsibility for school returns to TÚSLA.

Policy Content

All children attending school are recorded in the school register and on the SMS. A note from parents/guardians is required to cover each absence and these are dated and kept in a central location (administration office). Parents are made aware of the requirements of the TÚSLA particularly absences of more than 20 days per school year.

School Strategies

- Traditionally, school attendance is strong in our school and has not been adversely affected by social changes. However, staff remain vigilant so that risk students are identified early.
- Risk students can be categorised as those who miss more than 5 days in a 20day period without an accompanying note of explanation from parents/guardians.
- Appropriate contact takes place between school and parent/guardians either via letter or note in the homework diary when this occurs.
- A meeting between parents and Principal may be set up if deemed necessary.
- Absences of more than 20 days are automatically referred to the TÚSLA.
- The calendar for the coming school year is published annually in June and a reminder is published in September. 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.

Communication with other Schools

- When a child transfers from St. Anthony's School to another school, school records on attendance, academic progress etc will be forwarded on receipt of written notification of the transfer.
- When a child transfers into St. Anthony's School confirmation of transfer will be communicated to the child's previous school and appropriate records sought. Communication with Parents The school circulated the TÚSLA information booklet The school also informs all parents of the implications of non-attendance as per the Education Welfare Act 2000. This information is disseminated by regular school letter or circulars. Parents of new children are informed on enrolment. Parents were all updated on the need for good attendance by children at school and the need for written explanations of absences by letter in September

2014 along with sample absence notes with the various categories of absences allowed. A further reminder will be sent to all families at the start of every school year.

Promoting Attendance

The school promotes good attendance by:

- Creating a safe and welcoming environment
- Ensuring pupil's wellbeing is fostered
- Displaying kindness, compassion and understanding
- Being vigilant so that risks to good attendance such as disadvantage, bullying, etc. are identified early

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.
- 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.

TÚSLA –Child and Family Agency

TÚSLA is informed if:

- a) A child is expelled
- b) A child is suspended for more than 6 days
- c) A child has missed more than 20 days.

TÚSLA is furnished with the total attendances in the school year through the Annual Report Form which is completed on-line or by hard copy.

Evaluation

The success of any Attendance policy is measured through

- Improved attendance levels
- Happy confident well-adjusted pupils
- Positive parental feedback
- Teacher vigilance

This policy has been in operation in St. Anthony's School since 2004 and was updated in 2014 and again in September 2024. This policy was updated, reviewed and approved by The Board of Management at a meeting on 27/9/2024.