



# ST. PATRICK'S NATIONAL SCHOOL

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# ATTENDANCE & PUNCTUALITY



## school policy

**REVISED: 2020**

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## 1. Introduction

In accordance with the *Education Welfare Act 2000*, parents have an obligation to send their children to a recognised school. *Section 23 (2) (e)* states that the *Code of Behaviour* must specify, 'the procedures to be followed in relation to a child's absence from school.' *Section 18* stipulates that parents must notify the school of a student's absence and the reason for this absence. The Board of Management is obliged to have an *Attendance Policy* that promotes attendance awareness and good practice, and provides for monitoring and reporting of same. Parents are made aware of the terms of the *Education Welfare Act* and its implications through in-school correspondence, class meetings, and 1:1 consultations, as required.

This policy is based on the principles of consideration and respect for self, each other, the school and its environment.

## 2. Aims

St Patrick's NS is committed to providing a learning environment that will foster all children's learning and encourage them to attend school regularly. We aim to provide a stimulating and rewarding school day, with clear guidelines, structures and routines, so that all children feel welcome and nurtured while attending school.

We believe that children's academic and social development benefit from regular attendance and punctuality. We urge all parents to encourage and facilitate the highest standards in these aspects of school engagement.

## 3. Content of policy

This policy addresses the practices and procedures relating to the promotion of the highest standards of attendance and punctuality at St Patrick's National School.

### 3.1 Background

The Education (Welfare) Act 2000 provides a framework under which attendance at school can be dealt with by law.

Under the regulations of the Act, the school is obliged to:

- keep a record of pupils' attendance, (this is done in the class roll books);
- submit to the NEWB the names of all pupils who miss 20 or more days from school;
- keep a written record of pupils' absences.

Parents are required to:

- send their children to school each day;
- notify the Principal, in writing, the reason for a child's absence.

Parents are made aware of the terms of the *Education Welfare Act* and its implications for school through in-school correspondence, at class meetings, and in 1:1 consultations, as relevant.

### **3.2 School procedures regarding attendance**

Individual pupil attendance is recorded electronically on *Aladdin* each day by Class Teachers and is also recorded on the official Roll Book. The calling of the roll is done each day at 9.00am. If the school is aware that a child is attending an approved appointment (medical, examination, etc), his/her roll will not be taken until 10.20am (ie 1<sup>st</sup> break). If a child attends in school on time and has a note of a medical appointment after which he/she will be returning to school, then the child will be marked present (✓). It is important to note that a completed Roll Book record cannot be altered. Children will only be allowed to leave the school earlier than the official times, if they are collected by a parent/guardian or another nominated adult. On collection, the details must be recorded in the Sign-In/Out Book in the Secretary's office.

The school keeps a record of all pupil absences, using the codes as set down by TUSLA (the Child Protection Agency). To facilitate both parents and teachers in the maintenance of such records, the school has designed a standard *Absence from School Form* (ref Appendix 1) that is to be returned to the child's Class Teacher after missed day(s). Each family is given four blank forms at the beginning of the school year and additional copies are available through the school office should they be required.

In line with TUSLA procedures, the codes for the category of absence are:

- A. *Illness*
- B. *Urgent Family Reasons (eg Bereavement)*
- C. *Expelled*
- D. *Suspended*
- E. *Other (eg holidays, religious observance, etc)*
- F. *Unexplained*
- G. *Transfer to another school (written confirmation received from other school)*

Appropriate agencies such as the Inspectorate of the Department of Education and Science (DES) and officers of TUSLA, etc may inspect school attendance figures of individual pupils and the

school's registers and roll books show an accurate record of all such information. Attendance figure for each pupil are included in each pupil's annual End-of-Year Report.

### **3.3 Positive strategies**

High standards of school attendance are encouraged by

- creating a stimulating and attractive school environment;
- acknowledgement of good or improved attendance;
- adapting curriculum content and methodologies to maximise relevance to pupils;
- adapting the school timetables to make it as attractive as possible for families to attend and to be on time.

#### Attendance

There is a positive attitude within the school to good attendance and the range of strategies used to promote and support regular good attendance includes:

- the school strives to provide a warm, welcoming and supportive learning environment for all pupils, one in which they are valued and respected and in which provision is made for their individual learning needs;
- the school's Code of Behaviour takes a positive approach to fostering good behaviour, attendance and punctuality;
- parents are made aware of the terms of the *Education Welfare Act* and its implications through in-school correspondence, at class meetings, and in 1:1 consultations, as relevant, and they are urged to refrain from taking their children on holiday during the school term;
- the importance of attendance is reiterated in the Term 1 introductory newsletter, placing focus on encouraging full attendance by all pupils;
- each Class Teacher attempts to promote good attendance in their own class and regular open class-level discussions are held with the children on the importance of regular attendance;
- in situations where concerns have arisen, regular communication with parents is maintained;
- those who make a serious effort to improve attendance and/or punctuality receive acknowledgement and praise;
- Children whose attendance is exemplary are acknowledged at the end of each school year, and are presented with a small reward from the Principal to mark the achievement. Also, during the first assembly of the new school year, children with full attendance from the previous year will be given an official certificate from TUSLA, thus encouraging the same and ensuring the children know that their efforts did not go unnoticed.

#### Punctuality

Strategies used to promote and support good punctuality include:

- parents are urged to value every moment that their child(ren) spend at school (ref *Code of Behaviour*, 3.2.3, which includes parental commitment 'to ensure that their children come to school on time, refreshed, appropriately dressed, equipped and prepared for the day, and ready to start work');

- children who arrive at school after 8.45am must call to the school office to sign in, giving their name and arrival time (children in Infant classes should be signed in by a parent);
- parents are asked not request that their child(ren) leave school early, unless for a specific appointment - on such occasions parents, guardians, etc should complete the relevant details in the Sign-Out Book in the office, as this record is required in case of emergency;
- parents of children who will arrive late, due to a doctor or dental appointment must inform the Class Teacher in writing in advance.

### **3.4 Illness and absence from school**

It is advised that a child who is ill in the morning or has been ill during the night should remain at home from school. A child who is unwell may be miserable at school. If a child becomes ill during the school day, every effort is made to contact parents (or other names contacts) immediately. Ultimately the child's doctor will be contacted directly. If necessary the child will be taken to a hospital emergency department.

Should any contagious illness be diagnosed within the school community, the principal must be informed immediately so that notification may be circulated as a matter of urgency.

#### Medication

(ref *Administration of Medication Policy*)

#### Absence from school

Parents must acknowledge pupil absences from school by fully completing the *Absence from School form* provided by the school, specifying the relevant dates and explaining the reason for the absence. The form should be returned to the Class Teacher. If relevant, a medical certificate should be supplied. Such correspondence is filed at the school for reference purposes, particularly with TUSLA (Child Protection Agency) to whom such data is regularly provided.

### **3.5 Monitoring**

Non-attendance and poor punctuality are monitored in correlation with signs of neglect, or of physical or emotional abuse. Abnormal patterns are followed up initially with parents, and subsequently by TUSLA, if necessary.

School attendance is monitored on an ongoing basis, and parents are required to fill in a standard form to explain all absences. Information from the forms is stored on the school's

database (Aladdin), which is password-protected for security. Such information may be required by TUSLA.

We aim to identify poor attendance at an early stage, and the following steps are taken:

1. Children who have been reported to TUSLA in the previous academic year are highlighted to the new Class Teacher so that attendance can be monitored from an early stage.
2. When a child has been absent for a period of 15 days during a school year, parents are informed.
3. Continued poor attendance is monitored and, in a situation where attendance does not improve, parents are invited to a meeting with the Class Teacher and the Principal to address causes for the poor attendance and to agree strategies for improvement.
4. Every reasonable effort will be made to resolve the issue of persistent absenteeism through consultation with parents/guardians, school staff and TUSLA.
5. Allowances will be made for children with serious illness/specific reasons for poor attendance at the discretion of the school.

### **3.6 Record keeping**

Record keeping for attendance and punctuality are kept in both informal and formal ways.

#### **3.7.1 Pupil records**

##### Individual tracking of attendance and punctuality

Pupils track their own attendance and punctuality as part of their individual self-evaluation programme and these records are kept in each child's AfL file. They are prompted by their Class Teachers to review and assess their own track record (and senior pupils may also integrate this with Maths as the data may be converted to percentages, etc).

##### Procedure for official notification and recording of a pupil's absence from school

(ref *Code of Behaviour* 2015)

The *Education Welfare Act, 2000, Section 23 (2) (e)* states that the *Code of Behaviour* must specify, 'the procedures to be followed in relation to a child's absence from school.' *Section 18* stipulates that parents must notify the school of a student's absence and the reason for this absence.

A standardised *Absence from school* form is used to record pupil absences. It includes all information that is required for completion of TUSLA records. Such forms should be returned to the Class Teacher on the first day following an absence, and should be accompanied by a medical certificate, if applicable. All such records are kept on file in safe storage. The information is uploaded to the on-line database, as required by the DES and TUSLA. While parents may have received communication from the school regarding attendance-related concerns, parents of all children who have been absent for 15 days receive a text from the school, noting this serious level of absenteeism.

#### **3.7.2 School records**

(ref *Record Keeping and Data Protection Policy*)

##### Attendance

Attendance records are stored within the school's password-protected data management system (Aladdin). This includes the information provided by parents regarding reasons for absence (ref *Absence from School form*). This system is very helpful in collating data relating to individual and whole-school attendance.

The school uses the standard procedures to report pupil absences to TUSLA.

A summary of annual whole-school attendance is appended to this policy at the end of each school year and is part of the annual SSE SIP record.

#### Punctuality

Children who are late for school are required to check in at the school office and the sign in the Record Book. This record is one reference point for records when consulting with parents regarding punctuality concerns.

#### Confidential records

Records of home:school communications, consultations, and correspondence with the Board of Management, outside agencies, etc are kept in individual confidential pupil files and securely stored in the Principal's office.

## **4. Communication**

Each year, parents are given the School Calendar at the beginning of Term 3 of the previous year and they are regularly made aware of the school's expectation of the fullest possible attendance and the highest standards of punctuality.

On reaching a situation where a child has been absent from school for 15 days since the start of the school year, a text is sent automatically to parents noting the seriousness of this situation. Parents are aware that the school is obliged to inform TUSLA of absences of 20 days or more within a school year.

## **5. Reference to other school policies**

The following school policies cross-reference with the *Attendance and Punctuality Policy*

- *Absence from School Policy*
- *Anti-Bullying Policy*
- *Administration of Medication Policy*
- *Arrival and Dismissal Policy*
- *Attendance at School Policy*
- *Code of Behaviour*
- *Enrolment Policy*
- *Equality of Access and Participation Policy*

- *Home / School Communication Policy*
- *Parents as Partners Policy*
- *Promotion of Healthy Living Policy*
- *Record Keeping and Data Protection Policy*
- *Safety Statement*
- *Special Educational Needs Policy*
- *SPHE plan.*

## **6. Roles and responsibilities**

The Board of Management is ultimately responsible for ensuring that the school's *Attendance and Punctuality Policy* is implemented. The Principal and the Deputy Principal are responsible for the day-to-day implementation of the policy and for informing staff, parents and pupils of the policy and their respective roles in its implementation.

## **7. Success criteria**

Practical indicators of the success of the policy include

- a high standard of attendance throughout the school, with a minimum annual average of 95% attendance - the performance indicator by which we measure attendance is by our average attendance figures (as recorded through *Aladdin*). While 100% attendance is clearly the ideal, illness and other factors dictate that this is not realistic.
- attendance and punctuality support and implementation practices and procedures being consistently implemented by teachers;
- individual sense of priority given to good attendance and to being punctual;
- positive feedback from teachers, parents, pupils and external agencies (as applicable).

## **8. Ratification and communication**

This policy was reviewed and ratified by the Board of Management. It is available to all the school's education partners on the school's website and in hard copy through the school office.

## **9. Implementation**

This policy was officially implemented throughout the school from the date of ratification.

## **10. Policy review**

This policy is scheduled for review in 2025, unless the Board of Management considers that a review is required at an earlier date. Co-ordination of the review is the responsibility of the SDP

co-ordinator, in consultation with the Principal. Those involved in review will include the Board of Management, the Principal, SDP co-ordinator, staff/ISM team, and parent representatives, and may include pupil input.

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**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_

Canon David Mungavin  
Chairperson  
Board of Management

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_

Rachel Harper  
Principal

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

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## Appendix 1

Absence from School form (standardised)



**ST. PATRICK'S NATIONAL SCHOOL**

**Greystones, Co Wicklow**

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### **ABSENCE FROM SCHOOL**

Pupil's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

Date(s) of absence: \_\_\_\_\_

Reason:

Please tick (as appropriate)	illness <input type="checkbox"/>	family reasons <input type="checkbox"/> eg bereavement	other <input type="checkbox"/> eg religious observance/ holidays
specific details			

Any other relevant information:

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Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian

Please attach medical/other certificates, where appropriate.

Incomplete forms will be returned, as full information is required by the school (and may be requested by the National Education Welfare Board (NEWB)/Tusla (Child & Family Agency).

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