

Scoil Mhuire
Ballymore Eustace
Co. Kildare.
18055B



Scoil Mhuire
Attendance Strategy

Introduction & Rationale

This strategy document was developed by the Board of Management, in consultation with staff and parents, to ensure a high level of attendance at school by all pupils as an essential component of effective pupil learning.

Establishing good attendance habits from the very beginning of a child's time at school is very important. A considerable volume of research demonstrates the positive impact that high levels of attendance has on teaching and learning. Pupils who develop good attendance habits at an early age are more likely to achieve well in school and stay in formal education for longer. Poor school attendance is linked to risks of engagement in anti-social activity

This strategy was also developed in response to legislation, such as, but not limited to:

- The Education Act, 1998
- The Education (Welfare) Act, 2000
- The Child and Family Agency Act, 2013

Relationship to the Characteristic Spirit of the School

Scoil Mhuire, Ballymore Eustace endeavours to enable every pupil to actively participate in all school activities. Regular attendance helps to create a stable learning environment for all pupils, 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 & Objectives

This attendance strategy will guide and support the school community in its efforts to:

- raise awareness of the importance of regular school attendance
- ensure that pupils are registered accurately and efficiently
- ensure that pupil's attendance is recorded daily, encouraging full attendance where possible
- identify pupils at risk of poor attendance and of leaving school early
- promote and foster positive attitudes to learning
- ensure compliance with the requirements of the relevant legislation
- enable all pupils to avail fully of learning opportunities
- identify and removing/ minimising, insofar as is practicable, obstacles to school attendance.

Recording and Reporting of Attendance and Non-Attendance

The school attendance of individual pupils is recorded in the Leabhar Rolla (Roll Book Online on Aladdin) of each class on a daily basis. Class attendance data is recorded daily on Aladdin. The annual attendance of each individual pupil is reported on the annual Pupil Report.

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 **10.10am** each morning. Any pupil not present will be marked absent for the day unless the teacher has received a note **in advance** that the pupil will be attending school following an appointment. In such a case the Roll Book is updated after the late arrival of the pupil.

As per Túsła advice and guidelines, a **written** note from parents/guardians is required to explain each absence. Such notes will be retained by the class teacher or in the school office. If an explanatory note is not provided the child's absence will be recorded on Aladdin as 'unexplained'. The school secretary will request notes for all unexplained absences. These notes are vitally important as the school must notify Tusla – Child and Family Agency if a child is absent for 20 days or more or where the absence gives rise to concern. If the child is sick or has been absent for other good reasons, no action will be taken by Tusla - Child and Family Agency. However, if there is concern about your child's attendance at school or **about the reasons given**, you may be visited by an Educational Welfare Officer who will discuss your child's education with you. The Officer will work with you and take full account of the circumstances of the child and the family before deciding what further action is necessary to ensure that the child receives his/her entitlement to an education.

Parents/guardians must also provide a note if a child departs early during the school day.

Where teachers see a pattern of poor attendance emerging, they should bring this to the attention of the parents/guardians at an early stage. If there is still no improvement in attendance then a letter should be sent home notifying parents / guardians of the issue.

Where a child has been absent for 12 days, the Principal will send a note to parents/guardians informing them of this and encouraging good future attendance (see Appendix 1).

Where a child has been absent for 20 days, the Principal will send a note to parents/guardians explaining that Túsła are to be notified (see Appendix 2).

Legal Requirements Summary

The principal must inform Túsła Child and Family Agency Education Welfare Officer:

- where a child has missed 20 or more days in a school year,
- where the pupil's attendance is a cause of concern,
- where a pupil is removed from the school register;
- and where a child is suspended for 6 days or more.

POLICY FOR ABSENCES DUE TO TERM-TIME HOLIDAYS:

Parents have a legal duty to ensure that their child who is attending a recognised school is at school on every day that the school is open, unless there is a genuine reason for him or her not to attend (Section 17 of Education (Welfare) Act 2000). Only absences relating to activities organised by the school or in which the school is involved can be authorised by the principal (Section 21(9) of Education (Welfare) Act 2000). Therefore, the school cannot give 'permission' for holiday absences during term time.

The Board of Management of Scoil Mhuire discourages parents from taking students on holidays during term time. If a parent decides to take a child out of school for holidays, the principal will request the parent to provide a letter/email to the school to say they are doing so and to confirm that they are aware of the implications. Where there are regular holiday absences, the principal will remind parents of the educational and potential legal impact of removing students from school for periods of time. (See Appendix 3).

Punctuality

Late arrivals are recorded by the class teacher on Aladdin. Any child entering the school after 9.10am is deemed to be late.

- Parents/guardians should provide an explanatory note to the class teacher if a child needs to depart early during the school day.
- The parent must also complete an 'Early Leave' form that is available at the school office.
- Where teachers see a pattern of poor punctuality emerging, they should bring this to the attention of the parents/guardians at an early stage
- If there is still no improvement in punctuality then a letter should be sent home notifying parents / guardians of the issue.
- If punctuality continues to be an issue the teacher and/or Principal may request a meeting with the parent(s)/guardian(s).

Strategies to Promote Attendance

Parents/guardians are consulted in drafting and reviewing policies (including this strategy) with the aim of promoting a high-level of co-operation among the school community. We believe that a culture of co-operation can assist in promoting positive attitudes towards and the school and, therefore, have a positive impact on attendance.

Teachers are required to note absences and are encouraged to note any emerging patterns of absences from children in their class. Teachers are also asked to be vigilant with regards to the number of days that pupils in their class are missing. Any concerns that the teacher notes are to be raised with the parents/guardians in a timely manner and/or with the Principal.

Teachers set high expectations for attendance and punctuality in their classrooms and provide a classroom climate and classroom management that support participation and engagement, especially with students who may be at risk of poor attendance.

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.

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.

Initiatives in Scoil Mhuire to enhance pupil attendance and participation:

- Encouragement from the class teacher and principal regarding the importance of good school attendance;
- Awarding of a certificate to any pupil who has not missed a day at the end of each term; Certificates are awarded at assembly in the hall; Group photograph is taken for display on wall in foyer, published in school newsletter and published on school website;
- At end-of -year an engraved medal is presented by a member of the school's board of management to any pupil with an excellent attendance at the Graduation ceremony at the end of June---group photograph of medal-winners is displayed and published.
- Active participation by pupils in interesting activities throughout all stages of the school year is one of our vital methods for encouraging willing attendance by pupils; All pupils are actively encouraged to participate in all organised activities and this gives pupils something to look forward to all during the year;
- A Student Council is established annually. The council meets regularly. They organise student events; represent student views; collect student suggestions (written and oral); and they greet important visitors to the school.
- We encourage activities which are organised by pupils, for pupils, e.g. the annual Talent Show; Dress up days; Non-Uniform days; Charity events; Storytelling for junior pupils by senior pupils. These types of activities are highlights of the school calendar and as they are held close to the end of terms, they help ensure good attendance right to the end of each term.

- Pupil consultation regarding the policies which affect them is an important aspect of the relationship between pupils, staff and management at Scoil Mhuire. Pupils are consulted weekly at school assembly on planned events. They are asked for their opinions and suggestions on improvements. For a pupil who does not want to give his/her opinion/suggestion orally they may place a note in either of the pupils' post boxes and these suggestions will be considered.
- There is an annual formal meeting between the Student Council and members of the Board of Management at the board's June meeting. The pupils, having first consulted with their peers, make a presentation of their ideas and suggestions to the board. The board discusses and explores the proposals with the pupil-representatives. These are recorded in the B.O.M. minutes and acted upon as the board sees fit.
- Note to parents of pupil about whom there is a concern regarding attendance at school.

The calendar for the coming school year is published annually in June and is displayed on the school's website www.bmesch.ie and a written format 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

The school maintains communication with local pre-schools and second-level schools in order to make the transition for pupils as easy as possible.

Reasons for absence are recorded and reported to Túsla twice during the school year through assistance of an online system. An annual report is submitted each July, detailing the overall level of attendance at the school during that school year. This information is communicated to the school's Board of Management at first BOM meeting in the following September.

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. The school uses a school-designed transfer-form for this purpose.

Success Criteria

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

- Consistently good annual attendance rates
- Positive feedback on this strategy from relevant stakeholders.

- Board of Management, Staff and parent/guardian awareness of their legal obligations under various pieces of legislation and Department circulars.

Roles and Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the Principal and staff to implement this strategy under the guidance of the school's Board of Management.

It is the responsibility of the Principal to inform parents when their child has missed i) 12 days of school in a single year ii) 20 days of school in a single year.

It is the responsibility of teachers to monitor attendance in their class and to intervene informally when patterns of non-attendance or poor punctuality are noticed.

It is the responsibility of parents to ensure that their children attend school on-time as often as possible and to minimise disruptions to school attendance to the greatest possible extent.

Implementation

This strategy will be implemented immediately following ratification by the Board of Management and communication to the Parents' Association.

Ratification and Review

This updated strategy was ratified by the Board of Management in November 2020 is scheduled for review in March 2023 or earlier depending on future legislative, context or regulatory changes.

Signed:



John McCarville
Chairperson, Board of Management



Peter Roche
Principal

Date: 30/11/2020

Appendix 1: 12 Day Absence Letter

Insert Date Here

Dear parent(s) / guardian(s),

It is part of Scoil Mhuire's Attendance Strategy to inform you when your child has been absent for 12 days in the school year. ____ has missed ____ school days so far this school year.

We are legally obliged under the Education Welfare Act, 2000 and the Child and Family Agency Act, 2013 to inform Túsła's Education Welfare Service where a child misses 20 or more days. As you know, a good education gives your child the best possible start in life and therefore we encourage all children to attend school as often as possible.

A further reminder that you must let the school know if your child is absent and the reason why. On the advice of Túsła, it is school policy that reasons for absence must be given in **writing**.

Kind regards,



Peter Roche,
Principal.

Appendix 2: 20 Day Absence Letter

Insert Date Here

Dear parent(s) / guardian(s),

As per our Attendance Strategy, it is school policy that we inform you when your child has missed 20 or more days since the start of the school year. ____ has missed __ school days so far this year.

We are legally obliged under the Education Welfare Act, 2000 and the Child and Family Agency Act, 2013 to inform Túsla's Education Welfare Service where a child misses 20 or more days. Túsla may be in contact with you and/or the school over the coming months.

If a child is sick or is absent for other good reasons, no action will be taken by Túsla Child and Family Agency. However, if there is concern about your child's attendance at school or about the reasons given, you may be visited by an Educational Welfare Officer who will discuss your child's education with you. As you know, a good education gives your child the best possible start in life and therefore we encourage all children to attend school as often as possible.

A further reminder that you must let the school know if your child is absent and the reason why. On the advice of Túsla, it is school policy that reasons for absence must be given in **writing**.

Further information concerning the Túsla's education welfare service, and about school attendance matters generally, can be obtained from the national Lo-Call Education Helpline -1890 36 36 66.

Kind regards,



Peter Roche,
Principal.

Appendix 3: Holiday Absence Letter

Insert Date Here

Dear parent(s) / guardian(s),

As detailed in our school Attendance Strategy, the Board of Management of Scoil Mhuire requests that you provide a letter of your intention to take your child on holidays during the school term.

Please provide in the letter: Name of the pupil and dates of absence. This letter will be stored in your child's school file.

Please be advised that under the Education Welfare Act, 2000 and the Child and Family Agency Act, 2013, there may be legal consequences for parents / guardians of pupils who miss school due to holidays during school terms.

The Board of Management of Scoil Mhuire advises that, due to homework being an integral part of work that takes in the classroom, homework or additional work will not be set or provided to you owing to holiday related absences.

Our Attendance Strategy can be accessed in the 'policies' section of the school website (<http://www.bmesch.ie>).

Kind regards,



Peter Roche,
Principal.