



ATTENDANCE POLICY

Introductory Statement

Regular attendance at school is essential to ensure uninterrupted progress and to enable students to achieve their full potential. This document is a statement of the aims and objectives, principles and strategies for attendance in St. Clare's Primary School, Harold's Cross, Dublin 6W. It was drawn up in collaboration between teachers, Principal, Parents' Association and the Board of Management. All staff, members of Parents' Association, pupils in 5th & 6th classes and the Board of Management was involved in discussions and consultations as to how regular attendance could be best delivered in St. Clare's. The Board of Management approved the policy on 19th January 2006. St. Clare's Primary School is conscious that a high level of school attendance is of utmost importance. Therefore, this policy was reviewed and updated during the academic year 2016/2017 in an effort to further improve overall school attendance.

Rationale

The purpose of this policy is to provide an overview of attendance in our school and to set out our general aims and goals in ensuring good attendance. St. Clare's Primary School recognises that punctual and regular attendance alongside high standards of behaviour are essential prerequisites to effective learning and therefore we are committed to maintaining high levels of attendance, punctuality and positive behaviour.

Vision and Aims

Relationship to Characteristic Spirit of the School

St. Clare's Primary School endeavours to enable every student to actively participate in all school activities and achieve their full potential. To this end we in St. Clare's actively promote a teaching and learning ethos which promotes a positive attitude towards good attendance and punctuality.

Aims

The policy aims to:

- Encourage full attendance where possible;
- Identify students at risk;
- Promote a positive learning environment;
- Maximise learning opportunities;



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- Raise awareness of the importance of school attendance;
- Foster an appreciation of learning;
- Ensure compliance with St. Clare's Enrolment Policy; and
- Ensure compliance with the requirements of the relevant legislation;

Punctuality

School commences each day at 08:50. The school accepts students from 08:20. Wake Up, Shake Up takes place at 08:35. All students are expected to be on time. **No student should arrive later than 08:45.** It is understandable that a student may be late in some exceptional circumstances. However, we strongly object to the chronic late-comer who regularly arrives late, sometimes on a daily basis. He/she disrupts the work of the class, his/her teacher and the whole school. The class teacher will contact the parents/guardians in the event of students being consistently late. If there is no improvement the Principal/Deputy Principal will contact the parents/guardians. If there is still no improvement the matter will be brought to the Board of Management. Persistent latecomers will be reported to Education Welfare Services TUSLA, as students must not be deprived of their full education.

Recording and Reporting Attendance

Individual school attendance is recorded in the Leabhar Rolla at **9:30 each day**. As per circular 28/13, the school will use an excel version of The Daily Attendance Book (Leabhar Tinrimh Laethúil). This will be printed off each month and kept in a folder in the school office. Relevant data on all students attending is recorded in the School Register. Students arriving at school after 9:30 will be marked absent in the roll book, unless a note is given to the class teacher on the previous day explaining the reason their child will be late to school. These notes are retained in the student file. **The roll may not be altered once it is filled in.**

Daily figures are also recorded electronically, which facilitates the collation of data and highlights student whose attendance is a cause for concern.

Parents/guardians are informed in writing at the end of each month of the total number of absences during the month.



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Parents/guardians are made aware of the requirements of Education Welfare Services (TUSLA) 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. Students whose non-attendance is a concern are invited to meet with the Principal/Deputy Principal and are informed of the school's concerns.

The school informs the Education Welfare Services TUSLA 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.

Absence

- When a student is absent, parents must inform the school of the reason for the absence every time **which must be in writing on your child's return;**
 - ✓ Such communication should **not be in the homework diary**, but on a separate page/sheet of paper.
 - ✓ When the student returns to school the written note should be given to the class teacher, which contains the child's name, the dates of absence and the reason for the absence.
 - ✓ The notes will form a record of the child's absence.
 - ✓ The school will contact parents when a written explanation for the child's absence is not received by the class teacher.
- Appointment cards for dentist and/or other medical appointments must be submitted the previous day so a copy can be retained in the student's file;
- A record of punctuality and attendance is kept for each student and is available for inspection by the Department officials;
- The school shall inform TUSLA Educational Welfare Services if your child has missed 20 days or more in the school year or if it is concerned that your child is missing too much school; and
- If a student fails to bring a note explaining the reason for the absence on returning to school, they will be reminded about the importance of bringing it in and reminder letter will be sent to the



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parent. Students who persistently fail to bring absence notes will be brought to the attention of the Principal/Deputy Principal who will make contact with the parent.

Absence for Medical Reasons

Parents/guardians are requested, where possible, to make appointments outside of school hours. If an appointment has to be made during school hours a written explanation must be provided stating clearly the time of the appointment. Appointment cards for dentist or other medical appointments must be submitted and a copy will be retained by the school. If, there are frequent absences for medical reasons, parents/guardians may be asked to provide medical evidence in the form of a doctor's certificate. Students are expected to return to school following their appointment whenever possible.

Leaving School Early

- Permission for a student to be released early from school will only be granted when a written request, dated and signed by a parent/guardian, is presented to the Principal of the school together with a copy of the appointment, where applicable. Telephone requests will not be accepted (unless in an emergency). In such instances the school authorities will phone the parent/guardian back to verify the call and the request.
- In accordance with our Child Protection Policy a parent/guardian or the person nominated by parent in the letter of request shall report to the Principal and or Deputy Principal and must sign the student out in the Early Collection Record Book. This Register is kept in the Principal's Office. Students shall only be released by the school personnel to the student's parent/guardian or to an authorised person nominated by the parent and the name of the nominated person is duly notified in advance to the school authorities by the parent/guardian. The authorised person nominated by the parent must have Photo ID. Refusal by the school personnel to release a student without authorisation and identification is in keeping with our Child Protection Policy.

Absence 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 activities organised by the school or in which the school is involved can be authorised by the Principal"* (Section 21(9))



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of Education (Welfare) Act 2000). **Therefore, St. Clare's cannot give permission for holiday absences during term time.**

- St. Clare's Primary School does not support and strongly discourages students being taken out of school during term time. We have 14 weeks of holiday each year and students should be in school for the remaining 38 weeks of term time. It is our belief that all students benefit from the full curriculum and that good attendance is of great importance.
- If a parent decides to take a child out of school for holidays, parents must provide a letter to the Principal Mrs. Spring to say that they are doing so and are fully aware of the implications. Where there are regular holiday absences, parents will be reminded of the educational and potential legal impact of removing students from school for periods of time. The letter will form part of the student's attendance record.

Strategies to Promote Attendance

- St. Clare's Primary School endeavours to create a safe, welcoming environment for students and their parents/guardians. The teaching staff collaborate in the planning and implementation of the primary school curriculum, thus providing a stimulating learning environment for all students;
- So far, school attendance is very good in our school. However, the staff remain vigilant so that 'at risk' students are identified early. If there is a noticeable absence the Principal texts the parent and requests him/her to phone the school;
- Casual absences (for whatever reason) are discouraged as they have a direct impact on children's learning;
- 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;
- The calendar for the coming academic year is published annually in March; it is issued to all families and available on the school website. A reminder is published in September. This approach will enable parents/guardians to plan family events around school closures;



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- Monthly reporting to whole school at assembly to highlight classes which need targeting;
- At the beginning of each academic year parents are informed of their responsibility under the Education (Welfare) Act 2000.
- Pupils are expected to wear the correct school uniform;
- The End of Year Reports and Mid-Year Progress Reports (3rd – 6th) state clearly the amount of days missed;
- Pupil of Month Certificate presented to the class with best attendance for the month;
- Pupil of Month Certificate presented to the class with best improved attendance for the month;
- All students will receive a written report of their monthly attendance;
- End of Year Certificates presented for full attendance;
- The class teacher informs Principal or Deputy Principal of persistent/unexplained/regular absences;
- Displays of students names and classes with good attendance in the hall;
- The school maintains communication with local pre-schools and second-level schools in order to make the transition for students as easy as possible;
- Regular updates on the school's attendance on the website;
- Parents will be informed by letter if absence is persistent/unexplained/regular. A clearly laid out system of letters are sent to parents on their child missing days from school. The letter also informs them whether the Education Welfare Services (TUSLA) has been notified of the unacceptable amount of days absent/pattern of days; and
- Attendance regularly features on the agenda of staff meetings and Board of Management meetings.



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Strategies in the event of Poor 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 Services (TUSLA) 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.

Non-attendance is an important issue that is treated seriously. However each case is different and the school acknowledges that no one standard response will be appropriate in every case. Consideration is given to all factors affecting attendance before deciding what intervention strategies to apply.

In every case, early intervention is essential to prevent the problem from worsening. It is essential that parents keep the school fully informed of any matters that may affect their child's attendance.

Absences are monitored and where a pattern or significant number of absences exists, the Principal contacts the parents by letter with a response requirement shall be sent to parents following **5 days** absence in a 20 day period.

Attendance targets for improved attendance will be set in collaboration with the parents and monitored with them.

Where improvements have been recorded, a letter will be sent to parents acknowledging the improvement. Where no improvement is noted the Principal/Deputy Principal will follow up with the parents and seek to re-establish their commitment.

Where there is no improvement in attendance following the interventions by the school the parents will be advised by the Principal/Deputy Principal of their legal obligation under the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 and the likelihood of a referral to TUSLA's Educational Welfare Services.

In such cases TUSLA's Education Welfare Services (following all reasonable efforts by the Education Welfare Services to consult with the student's parents and the Principal of the school) may serve a



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'School Attendance Notice' on any parent who he/she concludes is failing or neglecting to cause their child to attend the school.

Reasons for absence are recorded and reported to the Education Welfare Services (TUSLA) five times during the school year through an online system. An annual report is submitted on or before the second Friday in July detailing the overall level of attendance at the school during that school year.

Communication with other Schools

- When a student transfers from St. Clare's Primary 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 student transfers into St. Clare's Primary School confirmation of transfer will be communicated to the student's previous school and appropriate records sought.
- Students transferring from St. Clare's Primary School to a post primary school will have their records forwarded on receipt of confirmation of enrolment. (Education Passport)

Communication with Parents

- The school informs all parents of the implications of non-attendance in accordance with Education (Welfare) Act 2000 regularly through school communication letters.
- Parents of new entrants are informed of the Attendance Policy at the Induction Meeting in April/May each year.

Rewarding Good Attendance and Punctuality

St. Clare's rewards students for good attendance and punctuality so they understand the importance of both in order to take full advantage of the education on offer to them.

- Our **Attendance Cup** is awarded weekly to the class with the highest attendance.



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- Our **Early Bird Cup** is awarded weekly to the class with the highest level of punctuality.
- Students with 100% attendance over a term will be presented with a certificate during an **Achievement Assembly**.
- Students with 100% attendance over a year will be presented with a certificate and a plaque during our **Annual Achievement Award Ceremony**.
- Weekly class attendance and punctuality figures are displayed in the school.

Reference to other Policies

The following policies have a bearing on our Attendance Policy and should be referred when reading this policy.

- ✓ Admissions Policy
- ✓ Code of Behaviour
- ✓ Anti-Bullying Policy
- ✓ Educational Trips Policy
- ✓ Homework Policy
- ✓ Authorisation to Collect Students Policy

Implementation

Roles and Responsibilities

Board of Management

- to agree attendance targets in consultation with the Principal and staff.
- to ensure attendance data is reported to TUSLA's Educational Welfare Services
- to review the attendance policy every 2 years



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Principal

- Distribute TUSLA's Educational Welfare Services' leaflet entitled *Don't Let Your Child Miss Out*.
- Ensure that the school register of students is maintained in accordance with legislation and DES regulations.
- Inform Education Welfare Services TUSLA:
 - If a student is not attending school regularly;
 - When a student is absent for 20 or more days in a school year;
 - If a student is suspended for a period of six days or more; and
 - When a student is expelled.
- Inform parents of a decision to contact TUSLA's Educational Welfare Services of concerns regarding a student.
- Promote the importance of good school attendance among students, parents and staff.

Class Teacher

It is a statutory duty for class teachers to call and maintain accurate Roll Books; these are legal documents, and may be called for as evidence by the court. Class Teachers are legally responsible for marking their class Roll Book daily, complete the quarter and end of year totals.

The class teacher is responsible for:

- Accurately record attendance in the class Leabhar Rolla;
- Record those students present and absent accordingly on the Roll at 09:30 and insert the details in the 'Rolla Sheet';
- Positive affirmation of attendance when the Rolla is being taken;
- Ask "Have you got a note?" when a student returns from absence;
- Record reasons for past absences given in notes or explained verbally by the parent/guardian, to insert the appropriate code in the 'Monthly Absence Recording Sheet' and to keep any absence notes in the folder at the front of the Leabhar Rolla;
- Write in the absence sheet the reason given by child when no note or verbal explanation is given by the parent/guardian (but not to insert code);
- Ensure that the Leabhar Rolla, which is a legal document is kept accurately and neatly;
- Record the number of absences on the End of Year Report and the Mid-Year Progress Reports (3rd -6th classes); and
- Record attendance in a student's Education Passport.



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Parents

- Ensuring regular and punctual school attendance;
- Notifying the school if their child cannot attend for any reason;
- Working with the school and Education Welfare Service (TUSLA) to resolve any attendance problems;
- Making sure their child understands that parents support good attendance;
- Discussing planned absences with the school;
- Refraining from taking holidays during school time;
- Showing an interest in their child's school day and their homework;
- Encouraging them to participate in school activities;
- Praising and encouraging their child's achievements;
- Instilling in their child a positive self-concept and a positive sense of self-worth;
- Informing the school in writing of the reasons for any absence from school;
- Ensuring, insofar as is possible, that child's appointments are arranged for times outside of school hours;
- Contacting the school immediately, if they have concerns about absence of other related school matters; and
- Notifying the school if their child is to be collected by someone other than parent.

Students

We expect the following from all students:

- That they will attend school regularly – 94% is a minimum requirement
- That they will arrive at school in good time
- That they are appropriately dressed and prepared for the school day
- That they are picked up promptly at the end of the school day **infants: 13:30 and 1st – 6th class 14:30**
- Inform their class teacher if there is a problem that may lead to their absence.
- Be responsible for promptly passing on absence notes from parents to their class teacher.
- Be responsible for passing on correspondence to their parents on the specified day.



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Success Criteria

The success of the whole school plan for attendance will be measured using the following criteria:

- An improvement in the overall attendance levels are measured through Leabhar Rolla records and statistical returns.
- The procedures outlined in the policy are consistently followed.
- Positive parental feedback.
- Staff feedback

Implementation and Review

This policy is an updated version of the policy drawn up in the school year 2006, updated and reviewed in April 2017. This revised version of the policy is effective from September 2017. This policy will be reviewed every two years and amended as necessary by means of a whole school collaborative process. The Board of Management may, however, review this policy earlier than this, if Department of Education & Skills or TUSLA Education Welfare Services introduce new regulations, or if the Board of Management receives recommendations on how the policy might be improved.

Any amendments will be communicated in writing to all members of the school community outlining the rationale for the change.

Ratification and Communication

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management at a meeting on 3 May 2017. Copies of the policy will be circulated and communicated to all members of the staff, parents and guardians. A copy will be available on the school website.

Signed: *Sr. Mercedes Boen*
Chairperson Board of Management

Dated: 3rd May 2017

Next review: September 2020



APPENDIX 1

PUNCTUALITY

Poor punctuality or leaving before the end of the school day **is not** acceptable.

School data shows **a link between poor attendance and underachievement**



Pupils who arrive late **disrupt lessons** which can be embarrassing for the child.

It is also extremely disruptive for the rest of their class.

How you can help?

Aim for 10 hours sleep for your child. This will make the following day at school easier for them to cope with.

Develop a routine that involves checking their homework, reading and bed. Get the school bag and uniform ready the night before.

REMEMBER

School starts at 08:50 and end at 13:30 (infants) and 14:30 (1st – 6th)



Gate opens at 08:20

Wake Up, Shake Up 08:35

Run a Mile 8:00: Wednesday (2nd – 6th)



APPENDIX 2

EVERY SCHOOL DAY COUNTS

Every single day a child is absent from school equates to a day of lost learning

100% Attendance	0 days Missed
95% Attendance	9 Days of Absence 1 Week and 4 days of Learning Missed
90% Attendance	18 days of Absence 3 Weeks and 3 days of Learning Missed
85% Attendance	27 Days of Absence 5 weeks and 2 days of Learning Missed



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APPENDIX 3

_____ (Date)

RE: School Day

Dear Parent/Guardian,

The Board of Management wishes to inform you the school opens to receive pupils **daily at 08:20** and at 07:30 a.m. on Tuesday for pupils who are members of the choir and at 07:45 on Wednesday for Run a Mile. No responsibility is accepted for pupils arriving before that time. The school day commences each morning with 'Wake Up, Shake Up' at 08:35 and classes at 08:50. No pupil should arrive later than 08:45.

Classes will end each day at 13:30 for pupils in the infant classes and at 14:30 for pupils in classes from 1st to 6th classes.

The teacher will escort his/her class down the pedestrian path to the school gate. Parents who wish to have their children escorted home should make their own arrangements to have them met at the school gate. The person authorised by the parent to escort them should be at the school gate not later than 13:30 for the infants and not later than 14:30 for pupils in classes from 1st – 6th.

Only staff cars and vehicles with permits sanctioned by the Board of Management are permitted access onto the school grounds at any time. Observance of these measures is mandatory and must be complied with.

Permit holders **must display a current valid permit at all times, otherwise access will be denied.**

Yours sincerely,

Sr. Mercedes Coen OSC
Chairperson ~ Board of Management



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APPENDIX 4

_____ (Date)

RE: ATTENDANCE AND ABSENCES DURING TERM TIME

Dear Parent/Guardians,

As it is the start of a new term, I would like to take this opportunity to inform new parents and remind existing parents of our expectations as a school in regard to attendance.

Students are expected to arrive at school by 08:45. Any students arriving late (after their class has left the playground) must report to the office with their parents where the reason for lateness is recorded. It is understandable that a student may be late in some exceptional circumstances. However, we strongly object to the chronic late-comer who regularly arrives late, sometimes on a daily basis. He/she disrupts the work of the class, his/her teacher and the whole school. Persistent latecomers will be reported to the TUSLA Educational Welfare Services, as students must not be deprived of their full education.

The school monitors attendance and punctuality as required by the Education Welfare Act (2000). The school rewards our students for good attendance and punctuality so that every student understands the importance of both in order to take full advantage of the education on offer to them.

If you child is not at school what you need to know:-

- When your child is absent, you as parent must inform the school of the reason for the absence every time **which must be in writing on your child's return**;
- Appointment cards for dentist and/or other medical appointments must be submitted so a copy can be retained in the pupil's file;
- A record of punctuality and attendance is kept for each student and is available for inspection by the Department officials;
- The school must inform Tusla Educational Services if your child has missed 20 days or more in the school year or if it is concerned that your child is missing too much school;
- Attendance and punctuality are recorded each year on:
 - Mid-Year Report (3rd – 6th classes);
 - End of Year Report (all classes);
 - A copy of the end-of-year report card to the primary or second-level school to which a student transfers which includes records of attendance and punctuality.
- Permission for a student to be released early from school will **only be granted** when a written



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request, dated and signed by a parent/guardian, is presented to the Principal of the school together with a copy of appointment where applicable. **Telephone requests will not be accepted (unless in an emergency). In such instances the school authorities will phone the parent/guardian back to verify the call and the request.**

- In accordance with our Child Protection Policy a parent/guardian or the person nominated by parent in the letter of request shall report to the Principal and or Deputy Principal and must sign the student out in the Early Collection Record Book.
- Students shall only be released by the school personnel to the student's parent/guardian or to an authorised person nominated by the parent and the name of the nominated person is duly notified in advance to the school authorities by the parent/guardian. The authorised person nominated by the parent must have Photo ID. **Refusal by the school personnel to release a student without authorisation and identification is in keeping with our Child Protection Policy.**

St. Clare's Primary School does not support and strongly discourages students being taken out of school during term time. We have 14 weeks of holiday each year and students should be in school for the remaining 38 weeks of term time. We therefore ask that you plan any holidays carefully, ensuring that time away does not encroach on valuable learning time. We are very grateful to the vast majority of parents who continue to support the school and their child's education by not taking them out during term time and ensuring regular, prompt attendance.

If you have concerns about your child's attendance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

**Maria Spring
Principal**



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APPENDIX 5

_____ (date)

Dear _____,

I am concerned to note that _____ has been arriving late for school recently. According to our records, your child has been late _____ times this week and no satisfactory explanation was given. You will appreciate that regular lateness adversely affects not only your own son/daughter's education, but it disrupts other children's learning too.

When a child arrives late he/she misses the introduction to the lesson, when previous learning is revisited in preparation for the work to be covered that day and when objectives and activities are explained. The teacher cannot repeat the full introduction for the late-comer, but any time spent settling him/her to the set tasks means all the other students in the class are not getting the attention they deserve; this is unfair and everyone's education is damaged.

Please make every effort to ensure that _____ arrives at school promptly every day in future.

Thank you for you co-operation in this matter.

Yours sincerely,

Class Teacher



APPENDIX 6

_____ (date)

Dear _____,

I am concerned to note that despite my earlier letter, _____ punctuality has not improved. _____ has now been late on _____ occasions in the past four week.

As I have previously advised you, lateness adversely affects not only _____ education, but disrupts other student's learning.

Please come to school on _____ at _____ to discuss this situation with the school principal.

Yours sincerely,

Class Teacher



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APPENDIX 7

_____ (date)

Dear _____,

I am concerned to note that _____ was not collected until..... yesterday, this is not the first time that this has happened. School finishes at 14:30 and it is your responsibility to ensure that your child/children is/are collected promptly by a responsible adult.

It is upsetting for children to be left at school when everyone else has left and it is grossly unfair to staff who have to care for children who are not collected on time because they are prevented from carrying out their planned tasks. School staff are often at school long after the students have been dismissed from school, but they are there to work not to provide child-care.

I appreciate that emergencies do occur and you may be held up on occasions. Please ensure that you establish alternative collection arrangements that can be put into action if you are held up in future and will be unable to collect your child on time.

Yours sincerely,

Maria Spring
Principal