

# **Scoil Mhuire Maigh Cuilinn**



## **Polasaí Tinrimh Attendance Policy**

## **Introduction**

This policy was formulated by the staff and Board of Management of Scoil Muire, in consultation with Department of Education and Skills, INTO and TUSLA guidelines. The policy complements the school ethos of nurturing potential in a caring environment where the welfare of children is paramount.

Whereas there is a tradition of good attendance in Scoil Mhuire, the Board of Management desires that parents be aware of the necessity for regular, punctual attendance at school, and of their legal duties and responsibilities, and those of the school, in this regard.

## **Aims and Objectives**

By means of this policy, Scoil Mhuire seeks to

- ensure, insofar as possible, that pupils attend school regularly and punctually
- share the promotion of punctual school attendance amongst all in the school community
- comply with Legislative requirements such as the Education Welfare Act 2000 and the Education Act 1998
- inform the school community of its role and responsibility as outlined in the Education Welfare Act 2000
- cooperate with the Educational Welfare Service and the Education Welfare Officer in matters relating to school attendance
- ensure that pupils are registered accurately and efficiently
- ensure that pupil attendance is recorded daily
- identify pupils who may be at risk of developing school attendance problems
- ensure that the school has procedures in place to promote attendance/participation

## **Roles and Responsibilities with regard to School Attendance**

### **Roles and Responsibilities of Parents/Guardians**

Parents and guardians have a legal obligation to ensure that their child attends a school or otherwise receives an education. Under Section 17 of the Education Welfare Act 2000:

*“A parent is obliged to cause a child between the ages of 6 and 16 to attend at ‘a national school or other suitable school’ on each day that the school is open for instruction.”*

Parents/Guardians of an absent child are obliged to inform the school in writing of the cause of absence and to provide medical certificates where applicable.

Parents/guardians can promote good school attendance by:

- ensuring regular and punctual school attendance
- discussing planned absences with the school
- refraining, if at all possible, from taking holidays during school time
- ensuring, where possible, that children’s appointments (with dentists etc), are arranged for times outside of school hours
- notifying the school in writing if their child/children, particularly children in junior classes, are to be collected by someone not known to the teacher.

## **Roles and Responsibilities of the School**

Section 21 of the Education Welfare Act 2000 obliges schools to inform the Education Welfare Officer 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.

### **Role of the Principal**

- to ensure that the school register of children is maintained in accordance with regulations
- to inform parents/guardians of their responsibilities with regard to punctual school attendance.
- to inform parents/guardians in writing when a child exceeds 15 days absence
- to inform parents/guardians in writing when a child reaches 20 days absence and of the legal responsibility of the school to report this to the Education Welfare Officer.
- to inform the Education Welfare Officer:
  - if a pupil is not attending school regularly or punctually
  - when a pupil has been absent for 20 or more days over the course of a school year
  - if a pupil has been suspended for a period of six or more days
- to inform parents of a decision to contact the Education Welfare Officer of concerns regarding a pupil
- insofar as is practicable, to promote the importance of good school attendance among children, parents and staff

### **Role of the Class Teacher**

- monitor pupil attendance and punctuality
- monitor patterns of absence in respect of individual children about whom they may be concerned
- maintain the school roll-book in accordance with procedure
- note late arrivals and early departures
- keep a record of explained and unexplained absences (explanatory notes should be retained for the duration of the academic year) and hold medical certificates covering periods of absence due to illness.
- contact parents in instances where absences are not explained in writing
- encourage children to attend regularly and punctually
- inform the Principal of concerns s/he may have regarding the attendance of any pupil

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

## **Punctuality**

School begins at 8.50 a.m. All pupils are expected to be on time. Individual pupils should not be reprimanded by teachers for being late. Comments regarding a child's poor punctuality should be addressed to the child's parents and not to the child himself/herself. Punctuality is best addressed in a positive, general way in a whole class/school setting.

It is completely understandable that, from time to time, pupils will be late due to circumstances beyond their parents'/guardians' control. In such cases, a simple note to the child's teacher will suffice. If a child misses a half day, a verbal or written explanation is required. The school will contact parents/guardians directly in the event of pupils being **consistently late**. The Principal is obliged under the Education Welfare Act 2000, to report children who are persistently late, to the Education Welfare Officer.

## **Recording and Reporting 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).

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 9:50 am each morning. Any pupil not present when the roll is called will be marked absent for the day. The roll book may not be altered once it has been filled in. A note (attached as Appendix 1) from parents/guardians is required to explain each absence. Such notes will be retained by the class teacher. In cases where parents have not accounted for their child's absences, they may do so on a Retroactive Report of Absences Form.

When a child is unavoidably late for school, an explanation by the Parent/Guardian, in verbal or written form, should be given to the Class Teacher.

Parents/Guardians wishing to withdraw their child early from school must call to the office prior to withdrawing their child from class. Parents/Guardians should notify the office and the Class Teacher in advance, where possible, of their intention to withdraw their child from class. Late arrivals and early departures are recorded by the Class Teacher.

Parents/guardians are notified 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 during Parent/Teacher meetings and are informed of the school's concerns.

## **Promoting Attendance**

The school promotes good attendance by:

- creating a safe and welcoming environment
- ensuring children are happy
- displaying kindness, compassion and understanding
- being vigilant so that risks to good attendance such as disadvantage, bullying etc. are identified early
- rewarding good attendance with certificates

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.

### **Education Welfare Service (TUSLA)**

The Education Welfare Officer (EWO) is informed if:

- a child is expelled
- a child is suspended
- a child has missed more than 20 days
- a child is not attending school regularly or punctually

TUSLA is furnished with the total attendances in the school year through the Annual Report Form which is completed on-line. If a school contacts the Education Welfare Officer with concerns in relation to a student's school attendance, he/she will talk to the school principal or designated school staff member and find out what efforts have been made to date to help the child. The Education Welfare Officer may then decide to contact the family and meet with them. Home visits are an essential part of an Education Welfare Officer's work and the first meeting with an him/her very often opens up a pathway of solutions for a child and family in need. Once underlying problems or issues are identified, the Education Welfare Officer can then seek to address the family's unique set of circumstances in conjunction with school staff and other local support services as necessary. The main work of an Educational Welfare Officer is around the welfare of the child and the family and on ensuring that concerns and problems are dealt with before school attendance becomes a crisis issue.

However, if a parent fails in his or her duty to ensure that their child attends school, then the Education Welfare Officer has the power to take legal action against the parent under the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000. Taking legal action against a parent or guardian is a very serious matter. It is an action of last resort when all other offers of support have failed and the parent has refused to co-operate with the Education Welfare Officer. Imposing a sanction on parents or guardians for non-attendance is the responsibility of the local District Court in each case, having heard all the evidence, including that of the Education Welfare Officer and the parent/guardian. The law provides that, upon conviction, either a fine or up to one month's imprisonment, or both, be imposed.

### **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. When a Principal receives notification that a child has been registered elsewhere he/she must notify the Principal of the pupil's new school of any problems in relation to attendance at the pupil's former school and of such matters relating to the child's educational progress as he or she considers appropriate. This applies to pupils who transfer between primary schools and to pupils who transfer from primary to second-level education.

### **Communication with other Schools**

- When a child transfers from Scoil Mhuire to another school, the schools records relating to attendance, academic progress etc will be forwarded on receipt of written notification of the transfer.
- The school maintains communication with local pre-schools and second-level schools in order to make the transition for pupils as easy as possible.
- When a child transfers into Scoil Mhuire, confirmation of transfer will be communicated to the child's previous school, and appropriate records sought.
- Pupils transferring from Scoil Mhuire to a post primary school will have their records forwarded on receipt of confirmation of enrolment.

### **Implementation/Ratification and Review**

The Board of Management will monitor the implementation of all aspects of this Policy and review it regularly in the light of experience.

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on 6<sup>th</sup> April 2016.

**Signed:**

*Joe Howley*  
**Chairperson,  
Board of Management**

*Terry Kavanagh*  
**Principal**

## APPENDIX 1

 <b>Scoil Mhuire Maigh Cuilinn</b> Nóta Asláithreachta <b>NOTIFICATION OF ABSENCE</b>							
Ainm an Pháiste NAME OF PUPIL					Rang CLASS		
Dátaí as Láthair (san áireamh) DATES ABSENT (INCLUSIVE)							
Ó FROM	Lá/DAY	Mí/MONTH	Bliain/YEAR	Go TO	Lá/DAY	Mí/MONTH	Bliain/YEAR
An méid lá scoile san iomlán a bhí an páiste as láthair TOTAL NUMBER OF DAYS ABSENT FROM SCHOOL							
Míniú (cur tic) EXPLANATION (TICK)							
Tinneas ILLNESS				Síniú Tuismitheora/Caomhnóra <b>PARENT'S/GUARDIAN'S SIGNATURE</b>			
Cúis Phráinneach Clainne URGENT FAMILY REASON							
Fionraí SUSPENSION							
Díbirt EXPULSION							
Fáth eile m. sh. Saoire Clainne OTHER REASON EG. FAMILY HOLIDAY							
Aistrithe go scoil eile TRANSFERRED TO ANOTHER SCHOOL				Dáta DATE	Lá/DAY	Mí/MONTH	Bliain/YEAR