

Attendance Policy

Introductory Statement

This policy was developed by the Principal and staff of Knock National School in June 2016. The policy was formulated in order to promote and improve school attendance in Knock National School and to ensure compliance with the Education Welfare Act 2000.

Rationale

Aims

The school hopes to achieve the following:

- To foster an appreciation of learning amongst the student body.
- To raise awareness of the importance of school attendance.
- To identify students at risk of non attendance and implement early intervention strategies.
- To promote positive attitude towards school and enhance the learning environment whereby children can make progress in all aspects of their development.
- To comply with requirements under the Education Welfare Act 2000, Circular 0033/2015.

School Attendance

Recording Student Attendance in the Student Management System (Aladdin)

Class teachers are required to take attendance before 11:00am each day. Children who arrive in school after this time are recorded as late in Aladdin (Circular 0033/2015).

Attendance notes

All absences must be explained by note or verbal communication. The notes received from parents/guardians should be securely stored by teachers. Details of notes should also be entered appropriately on the student management system. If an absence note is not received, the absence is recorded as 'unexplained' on the student management system. At the end of the school year, absence notes are stored centrally. These notes will be stored for the current and previous school years and will be available to the Education Welfare Officer if requested.

Delivering Equality of Education in Schools (DEIS) Rural

Knock National School participates in the DES DEIS scheme. It is therefore required to have actions plans in place for literacy, numeracy, attendance, parental involvement and links with outside agencies. The schools current action plan for attendance is attached to this policy (Appendix D).

Promoting School Attendance

The following strategies will be used to improve and promote school attendance in Knock National School:

1. A warm welcoming and attractive environment will be provided for the children at school. Staff members will always display a strong sense of respect and empathy as they work with the children. Children will be nurtured and made to feel valued as they progress through the school. Teachers will use a wide and varied range of teaching methodologies and differentiation strategies in order to ensure that all learning styles and levels of ability are adequately catered for.

2. Each class teacher will promote school attendance by helping the children to understand the importance of avoiding unnecessary absenteeism. Class teachers are encouraged to employ appropriate incentive schemes to promote attendance e.g. lessons of greatest interest to pupils will be taught on those days when children are most likely to be avoidably absent.
3. School attendance will be promoted at assemblies, parent information evenings, and at parent-teacher meetings etc.
4. The Principal will inform parents/guardians at the parent information meetings, at the beginning of the school year, of their statutory duties as outlined in the Education Welfare Act.
5. School newsletters for parents/guardians will highlight the importance of consistent attendance.
6. Children with poor attendance will be targeted for additional support in an effort to reduce barriers to poor attendance e.g.
 - a. Additional support in literacy and/or numeracy.
 - b. After school activities – football, IT club, choir etc.

Procedures for dealing with poor attendance

The following procedures will be followed for children displaying poor patterns of attendance:

1. The class teacher will speak to the child in relation to his/her attendance at school and try to ascertain what the barriers to school attendance are. Depending on school resources, efforts will be made to eliminate some of these barriers.
2. When a child has missed a cumulative total of ten unexplained days from school, her/his parents/guardians will receive a copy of the letter in Appendix A. A copy of the letter will be placed on the pupil file.
3. When a child has missed a cumulative total of fifteen days from school, unexplained, her/his parents/guardians will receive a copy of the letter in appendix B inviting them to meet with the school principal to discuss the reasons for their child's absences. A copy of the letter and notes taken during the meeting with parent/guardian will be placed on the pupil file. A parent/guardian failure to attend the meeting will be recorded on the pupil file.
4. When a child has missed a cumulative total of twenty days, from school, explained or unexplained, her/his parents/guardians will receive a copy of the letter in appendix C inviting them to meet with the school principal to discuss the TUSLA referral process. A copy of the letter and notes taken during the meeting with the parent/guardian will be placed on the pupil file. A parent/guardian's failure to attend the meeting will be recorded on the pupil file.
5. At this point, the TUSLA referral will be made and copied to the pupil file. Information gathered in steps 1 – 4 will be included in the referral. The Principal meets with the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) on a regular basis. At any point she may seek advice from the EWO if there is a concern with regard to a child's/children's attendance. Once the referral has been made to TUSLA the Principal and the EWO Officer will organise a meeting with the parents of the child to discuss strategies to assist with attendance.
6. Throughout the process 1 – 5, the class teacher/learning support teacher/principal will liaise with parents/guardians in order to help them to address the challenges causing poor school attendance.

Roles and Responsibilities

All staff members can play a part in promoting school attendance. The specific roles and responsibilities are listed below:

Children

1. Make every reasonable effort to attend school punctually every day.
2. Request absence notes from their parents/guardians for days when they were absent and furnish the class teacher with same.

Parents/guardians

1. Make every reasonable effort to ensure their child attends school punctually every day
2. On their child's return to school after an absence, provide the class teacher with a note explaining the absence
3. Co-operate with school personnel in relation to measures taken to improve attendance e.g. attend meetings with the Principal relating to school attendance when requested

Class teacher

1. Mark the class roll on the student management system before 11am each day.
2. Insert the reason (i.e. illness, urgent family reason, suspended, unexplained, transfer to another school, other) for a pupil absence on the student management system
3. Securely store absence notes and file in the secretary's office by class and year.
4. Include details of each child's school attendance in their school report sent to parents/guardians in June.
5. At parent-teacher meetings, impress on parents/guardians the challenges presented for children by poor school attendance.
6. Inform the Principal and/or Deputy Principal of concerns in relation to pupil attendance e.g. repeated unexplained absences.
7. Make the Principal aware of pupil absences that may be due to the cost of school activities e.g. swimming or school tour.
8. Inform the Principal/secretary if information has been received in relation to a child transferring to another school.

School Secretary

1. In consultation with class-teachers and the Principal, send out the letters in Appendix A and B as appropriate and ensure a copy of the letters sent are recorded on Aladdin.
2. Process the TUSLA Student Absence Reports through Aladdin.
3. In consultation with principal and class-teachers, send out the letters in Appendix A, B and C as appropriate and ensure a copy of the letters sent are placed on the pupil file.
4. Process the TUSLA Student Absence Reports through Aladdin and submit returns at the end of each quarter and at the end of the year.
5. Remove a child's name from the class roll when confirmation has been received in writing that she/he has enrolled in another school, or when the child has missed 20 consecutive days (Circular 0033/2015).
6. Ensure that the pupil transfer form is sent to the new school of a child who is leaving Knock National School to enrol in another primary school.
7. Ensure that the child's details of leaving are recorded in the Pupil Online Database.

Principal

1. Review the policy in consultation with children, staff, Board of Management and parents/guardians.
2. Liaise with the TUSLA EWO
3. Meet with the parents/guardians of children who have been absent for more than fifteen days and again if the number of days exceeds twenty
4. Ensure new teachers understand the school's attendance procedures and are able to fill in the roll accurately.
5. Refer students to TUSLA who have been absent for more than twenty days
6. Inform the Board of Management of attendance issues

Success Criteria

The Principal is responsible for co-ordinating and monitoring the implementation of the strategies as outlined in this policy. Children, parents and staff all have a role to play in order to ensure school attendance.

Review

The policy will be reviewed on a bi-annual basis and/or as the need arises.

Communication and Ratification

This policy will be communicated to parents on the school website. New members of staff will be able to access the policy on the staff plan website. This policy was ratified by the Board of Management of Knock National School on 19th October 2016.

Appendix A: Letter re 10 day non attendance

Appendix B: Letter re 15 day non attendance

Appendix C: Letter re 20 day non attendance

Appendix D: Knock NS DEIS Attendance Plan