



Introductory Statement:

This policy was reviewed in November 2015. The policy was formulated through consultation with the Board of Management, the teaching staff and the Parents' Group.

Rationale:

This policy was devised following a review of our current school's policy re: Attendance.

Relationship to the characteristic spirit of the school:

To provide for the holistic development of all our pupils by creating a secure and happy environment where each child is enabled to realise her full potential in all dimensions of her life – spiritual, moral, cognitive, emotional, imaginative, aesthetic, social and physical. We aspire to this vision in collaboration with all the partners in education - the Board of Management, school staff, parents and the wider community.

The aims of the attendance policy in Holy Family G.N.S are to:

- Encourage pupils to attend school regularly and punctually.
- Inform the school community of its role and responsibility as outlined in the Education Welfare Act.
- Identify pupils who may be at risk of developing school attendance problems.
- Ensure that the school has procedures in place to promote attendance/participation.
- Develop, subject to available resources, links between the school and the families of children who may be at risk of developing attendance problems.
- Identify and remove, insofar as is practicable, obstacles to school attendance.

The school will ensure that:

- The importance of school attendance is promoted throughout the school.
- Pupils are registered accurately and efficiently.
- Pupil attendance is recorded daily.
- Parents or guardians are contacted when reasons for absences are unknown or have not been communicated.
- Pupil attendance and lateness is monitored.
- School attendance statistics are reported as appropriate to:
 - The Principal
 - Home School Community Liaison Co-ordinator



- School Completion Project Worker
- The Education Welfare Office
- The Board of Management
- Tusla

Complete Daily Attendance:

School is open from 9.15a.m. and children are required to be in their classrooms not later than 9.20a.m. All pupils are expected to be on time. The school will contact parents/guardians in the event of pupils being consistently late and will keep a record in the "Late Arrivals" Book.

A 'Sign Out' book is also in operation. The school will contact parents/guardians in the event of pupils being regularly signed out before end of school day.

Guidance for Parents:

Section [(21) (9)] of the Act states that: "a pupil's absence can only be authorised by the Principal when the child is involved in activities organised by the school or in which the school is involved". The school principal cannot authorise a child's absence for holidays during school time. However, it is essential that parents inform the school of such arrangements. See Appendix 1.

Reasons for pupils' absences must be communicated in writing, by parents/guardians to the school and will be retained by the school in accordance with Data Protection legislation. If a child is absent, when the child returns to school she should give/send a written note to the class teacher which contains the child's name, the dates of absence and the reason for the absence. These explanation notes will form a record which may be inspected by the Education Welfare Officer on a visit to the school. In addition, explanations for absences are recorded on a daily basis on the school's administrative software package Aladdin.

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, insofar as is possible, that children's appointments are arranged for times outside of school hours.
- Notifying the school in writing if their children cannot attend and the reasons for this absence.
- Working with the principal, HSCL Co-ordinator, SCP Project Worker, NEPS and Education Welfare Officer to resolve any attendance problems.
- Showing an interest in their children's school day and their children's homework.
- Encouraging them to participate in school activities.
- Praising and encouraging their children's achievements
- Contacting the school immediately, if they have concerns about absence or other



related school matters.

Pupils:

- Pupils have the clear responsibility to attend school regularly and punctually.
- Pupils should inform staff if there is a problem that may lead to their absence.
- Pupils are responsible for promptly passing on absence notes from parents to their class teacher.
- Pupils are responsible for passing school correspondence to their parents, on the specified day.

A strategy for promoting good school attendance:

The Board of Management is committed to providing a positive school atmosphere which is conducive to promoting good school attendance. In this regard:

- The school curriculum, insofar as is practicable, is flexible and relevant to the needs of the individual child.
- The school will promote development of good self-concept and self-worth in the children, through SPHE curriculum and other specialised programmes. i.e. Friends For Life, Zippy's Friends, Social Skills programmes, etc.
- Support for pupils, who have special educational needs, are in place in accordance with Department of Education & Skills guidelines.
- Internal communication procedures are in place to inform teachers of the special needs of pupils.
- A special reward system is in operation to promote good attendance.
- The assistance of the Education Welfare Officer will be utilised.
- The attendance rates of pupils will be monitored by the class teacher in the first instance. The class teacher will notify the Principal, the HSCL co-ordinator and/or School Completion Project Worker of any concerns regarding the attendance of any child. Attendance is also monitored through recording on Aladdin
- Pupils with a poor attendance record will, insofar as is practicable, be supported in an effort to improve their attendance.
- Regular monitoring of school attendance data by Class Teacher, Principal, HSCL Co-ordinator and SCP Project Worker.
- Target parents on a regular basis to meet them regarding attendance problems.
- Analyse 'sign out book' and principal will contact parents who are regularly taking children home early.
- End of year award ceremony with certificate and medals for children with full or good attendance.
- Class teachers to monitor attendance by: 1) insisting that notes for absences must be provided, 2) reporting to principal when children are absent 15 days
- Letter/Texts issued to parents following 15 and 20 days of absence.
- Front and back doors closed at 9.30am to improve late arrivals.



- A phone call is made to parents/guardians by HSCL Co-ordinator where a child is missing 5+ consecutive days, with unexplained reasons. However, these phone calls will be made on a daily basis for 2 weeks at the beginning of each school year.

The School Principal will:

- Provides leadership for the creation of a school ethos and climate that is supportive of high levels of engagement and attendance;
- Leads on the review and implementation of the school's Attendance Strategy;
- Puts arrangements in place for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the school's Attendance Strategy;
- Provides opportunities for staff to engage actively with the development and monitoring of the school's Attendance Strategy;
- Initiates links with other schools and relevant bodies on school attendance issues;
- Notifies Tusla's Educational Welfare Services and the relevant EWO of particular problems in relation to attendance and ensures support for the work of the EWO with students who have chronic attendance difficulties;
- Furnishes pertinent attendance documentation to officers of relevant government departments.
- Ensure that the school register (POD) of pupils is maintained in accordance with Department of Education & Skills regulations.
- At beginning of school year, a letter will issue to parents/guardians of pupils who have missed 20+ days in previous school year. Meetings with parents/guardians of targeted pupils will be held where necessary.
- Issue texts to parents/guardians at 15 and 20 days absences.
- Inform Tusla if a pupil has been absent for 20 or more days during the course of a school year.
- Inform Tusla if a pupil has been suspended for a period of six or more days.
- Inform Tusla when a pupil's name is removed from the school register (POD).
- Inform parents of a decision to contact the Education Welfare Officer of concerns regarding a pupil.
- Insofar as is practicable, promote the importance of good school attendance among pupils, parents and staff.
- Regular reports to Board of Management on attendance issues

The Class Teacher will:

The class teacher will:

- Provide a classroom climate and classroom management that support participation and engagement, especially with students who may be at risk of poor attendance;
- Actively use the school's Attendance Strategy to promote attendance;
- Set high expectations for punctuality and attendance in their classrooms;
- Agree punctuality and attendance standards with students as part of classroom rules;



- Set example by their own punctuality;
- Ensure attendance data are recorded accurately and reviewed in line with school procedures;
- Alert relevant staff if there are concerns about student absences;
- Support the attendance plan for students who have difficulty in attending school on a regular basis;
- Support students on return when they have missed periods of schooling.
- Attendance recorded on a daily basis on Aladdin.
- Keep a record of explained and unexplained absences (absence notes are stored in locked filing cabinet in classroom) which should be noted on Aladdin.
- Inform the Principal, HSCL Co-ordinator and SCP Project Worker of concerns s/he may have regarding the attendance of any pupil.
- Termly/Quarterly/ Annual returns to TUSLA

Role of the HSCL Co-ordinator:

- Contact parents in instances where absences are not explained in writing.
- Phoning parents in September to ensure return of all pupils registered on roll.
- Promote a reward system for pupils with exceptional attendance.
- Encourage pupils to attend regularly and punctually
- Visiting classes - checking attendance/talking to children in regard to absences
- Monthly attendance rewards and class lists displayed of pupils with full monthly attendance
- Attending in school- attendance meetings at six week interval with principal and SCP Project worker.
- Attend weekly attendance meetings with SCP Project Worker regarding target pupils' attendance.
- Co-ordination of end of year award ceremony with certificate and medals for children with full or good attendance.
- Communicate with parents/guardians, i.e. phone call and/or home visits.
- Supporting pupils with poor attendance levels, through a) Talking to targeted pupils and b) Completing 'My Thoughts about School Checklist' and 'How Do You Feel?' documents from Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties. A Continuum of Support- NEPS
- Retention of attendance meetings records in accordance with One Child One Team One Plan- Tusla
- Completion of Pre-referral Checklist in consultation with Principal
- Completion of :
 - Understanding Needs- Assessment
 - Plan of interventions
 - Outcomes Record- to be completed in cases where a referral has been made to the EWO.



Role of SCP: SCP personnel play an integral part in attendance monitoring in the school.

- Attend in school meetings.
- Home Visits.
- Allocation of places for target pupils (in consultation with the principal) on Summer camps, Easter camps, etc.
- SCP Project Worker runs a transition programme for 6th class pupils.
- SCP Project Worker runs Social skills programme for targeted pupils.
- SCP Project Worker delivers Friends For Life programme to specific classes.

Record/Communication:

Subject to the restrictions of the Data Protection Act, and requirements of Education Welfare Act 2000, attendance, behaviour and academic records of children who transfer to another primary school will be passed to the Principal of the school, by post, as soon as we receive written notification of transfer, in accordance with DES Circular letter 56/11.

Attendance, behaviour and academic records of children who transfer from another primary school will be sought directly from the previous school.

Attendance, behaviour and academic records of pupils transferring to a second level school will be sent to the school, once enrolment has been confirmed in writing.

For additional information in relation to attendance: see DEIS plan

Success Criteria:

- Increase in attendance levels.
- Positive feedback from teachers, parents, pupils

Roles and responsibilities:

As outlined throughout policy

Implementation Date: 22.09.2016

Review date: September 2017

Ratified by Board of Management: 21.09.2016

Fr. Thomas Little
Chairperson



References:

- Education Act 1998
- Education Welfare Act 2000
- Equal Status Act 2000
- Data Protection Act 1988 & Data Protection (Amendment) Act 2013
- Education (Amendment) Act 2012
- EPSEN Act 2004
- Disability Act 2005
- Circular 22/02 Appeals Procedures under Section 29 of the Education Act, 1998. (DES website). Deals with appeals under the following headings:
 - Permanent exclusion from a school
 - Suspension
 - Refusal to enrol
- Rules 55, 64, 108 and 123, Rules for National Schools
- Circular P24/02
- Staffing arrangements for the 2013/14 school year Circular 13/2013
- Rule 64 Rules for National Schools, Circular 11/01
- Circular 25/2015
- Circular 33/2015
- Circular 32/2003
- Circular 34/2011
- Circular 56/2011
- Circular 0028/2013
- Circular 045/2013
- Developing a Code of Behaviour for schools, NEWB, 2008
- Developing the Statement of Strategy for School Attendance: Guidelines for Schools. Tusla. 2015