



Cliffoney National School

Attendance Strategy Statement

Introductory Statement:

The Board of Management, Principal, teaching staff and the Parents' Association, representing parents of children attending Cliffoney N.S., recognise that regular school attendance and punctuality is essential if children are to engage fully in the curriculum and to avail of all learning opportunities which will enhance their holistic development. This policy was formulated by the Board of Management, Principal and staff of the school in October 2016. The Parents' Association were consulted about its content and invited to make submissions.

Rationale:

Cliffoney N.S. decided to develop its attendance policy because the existing statement was due for review and amendment. It is also a requirement under the Education Welfare Act 2000. The school endeavours to encourage pupils to be in attendance on each day the school is open.

Relationship to Characteristic Spirit of the School:

In Cliffoney N.S., we strive to provide a well-ordered, caring, happy and safe environment for our pupils. We are concerned with the holistic development of each pupil and seek to provide our pupils with opportunities to develop their gifts and talents to the best of their abilities. We recognise that regular attendance at school is essential if children are to engage fully with the curriculum and to make the most of every learning opportunity. Furthermore, we recognise that parents and teachers, as partners in education, have a duty to ensure that children attend school on a regular basis and that they are punctual for class.

Aims:

- To encourage pupils to attend school regularly and punctually
- To ensure that pupil attendance is recorded daily
- To raise awareness of the importance of school attendance
- To identify pupils at risk of developing school attendance problems
- To identify and remove, insofar as is reasonably possible, obstacles to school attendance
- To foster an appreciation of learning
- To enhance the learning environment where children can make progress in all aspects of their development
- To promote positive attitudes to learning

- To ensure that the system of rules, rewards, and sanctions are implemented in a fair and consistent manner that encourage pupils to attend school
- To comply with requirements under Education Welfare Act 2000/Guidelines from Tusla's Educational Welfare Services.

Guidelines (Content of the Policy):

Defining and Recording Non-Attendance

- We define attendance as the obligation of a parent 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.
- The school attendance of individual pupils is recorded in the Leabhar Rolla (Roll Book) on a daily and cumulative basis. Class attendance is recorded daily on a hardcopy of the electronic excel document from the website of the Department of Education and Skills. On a regular basis (weekly), the school secretary uses this completed document to update the electronic excel version of this document which records class attendance. This system has replaced the Leabhar Tinrimh (Attendance Book).
- 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. Rolls will be called by 10a.m. each morning and entered in the roll book. Any pupil not present will be marked absent for the day. A note from parents/guardians is required to explain each absence. Such notes will be retained in an envelope at the front of the roll book. The Principal and/or Secretary will inform the class teacher when a parent contacts the school by telephone or emails to explain an absence. We are also obliged to report certain non-attendance matters to Tusla's Educational Welfare Services (i.e. pupils absent for 20 days or more or where a principal is concerned about a pupil's attendance) and this is also communicated to the parents, verbally after 15 absences and in written form after 20 absences, as per Tusla requirements. We also communicate the effects of non-attendance on pupil learning by means of parent/teacher meetings, school reports and letters/notes home.
- Late arrivals are recorded by the class teacher. The school will contact the parents/guardians in the event of the pupils being consistently late.
- In relation to half-day absences, the Education Welfare Act (2000) requires a parent to notify the school when a child is absent for part of a school day, a school day or more than a school day in the above manner.

Punctuality

School is open from 9:10am and the children are required to be in their classrooms not later than 9:20am. All pupils and teachers are expected to be on time. Rolls will be called within forty minutes of the commencement of class¹ (i.e. 10a.m.). A pupil will be marked either present or absent at the time of roll call and there will be no provision for adjusting the Roll Book where a pupil subsequently does not complete the full school day or arrives after the roll

¹ Rule 55 (4) d – Rules for National Schools – An Roinn Oideachas

call². The Principal is obliged under the Education Welfare Act (2000), to report children who are consistently late to Tusla's Educational Welfare Services.

Whole school strategies to promote attendance

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

- We endeavour to create a safe, welcoming environment for our pupils and their parents with warm bright colours and a friendly atmosphere. The school will promote development of good self-concept and self-worth in the children.
- The school curriculum, insofar as it practicable, is flexible and relevant to the needs of the individual child.
- We cater for the learning needs of "at risk pupils" by adapting our curricular delivery to meet the needs of all pupils.
- Support for pupils, who have special educational needs, are in place in accordance with the Department of Education and Skills guidelines.
- Internal communication procedures are in place to inform teachers of the special needs of pupils and any other issues which may present themselves.
- If a child arrives to school without a lunch, parents are contacted by telephone.
- Improvements in attendance and excellent attendance records will be rewarded by means of an Attendance Certificate. This certificate will be awarded to pupils with 5 or less absences per annum or a pupil whose attendance has improved significantly. A prize will also be awarded to pupils with full attendance.
- The total amount of days missed in a year is not reported to parents in the end of year reports/parent teacher meetings. Instead, we give a general comment on attendance e.g. 0-5 absences = excellent, 6-10 = VG, 11-15 = Good, 16-20 = Fair, >20 = Of concern
- The class teacher will monitor the attendance rates of pupils and record punctuality concerns in the first instance and the class teacher will notify the Principal of any concerns regarding the attendance or punctuality of any pupil.
- Pupils with a poor attendance record will, insofar as it practicable, be supported in an effort to improve their attendance.
- The calendar for the upcoming school year is published annually in June and sent home with the school reports. It will also be available on the school website in due course. 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.
- In relation to non-attendance of events due to religious considerations, parents are encouraged to inform the school in line with our ethos statement and make their own supervision arrangements.
- New parents/guardians will be targeted to inform them of procedures in relation to attendance and the importance of attendance.
- We will communicate the requirements of schools and the obligation of parents under the Education Welfare Act (2000) to parents by including *Don't Let Your Child Miss Out* (leaflet for parents NEWB 2004) in our enrolment pack.

² Circular 28/2013 – Department of Education and Skills

- The assistance of the Educational Welfare Officer will be utilised.

Communication with other schools/other services

- In the case of transferral to other primary schools, we provide attendance information by way of the school report.
- Post-primary schools may access attendance information on request.
- The local Educational Welfare Officer is Sinead O'Neill (071 9300181/9300182). Meetings are organised with her where deemed necessary. In addition, the school will inform the EWO in writing:
 - *where a child is suspended or expelled for 6 days or more,*
 - *where the child has missed 20 or more days in a school year,*
 - *where attendance is irregular/of concern*
 - *and when the pupil is removed from the school register.*

Strategies in the event of non-attendance

- Parents are again made aware of their statutory duties outlined in Education Welfare Act (2000) in relation to causing their children to attend school via the *Don't Let Your Child Miss Out* (leaflet for parents NEWB 2004).
- Parents are also made aware of the schools duties outlined in the Education Welfare Act in relation to reporting the non-attendance of a child to Tusla's Educational Welfare Services, of the serving of a "school attendance notice" by the Educational Welfare Officer (following all reasonable efforts by the Education Board to consult with the child's parents and the principal of the school) on any parent who they conclude is failing or neglecting to cause the child to attend the school and of the possible consequence of a successful case being taken against the parent (fine and/or imprisonment).
- Parents are expected to communicate the reasons for the non-attendance of their child in the school by way of a written note from the parent outlining, date of absence, reason for absence and parent's signature.
- A teacher, with a concern about attendance, may communicate with a parent using the template letter included as Appendix 1.
- If a parent has a literacy problem, these details can be verbally communicated and recorded by the class teacher.
- If the parent refuses to explain the reason for the absence, this is documented and if repeated, reported to the EWO.
- Non-attendance of a pupil is communicated to the principal by the class teacher if there is cause for concern.
- Communication to the parent of the non-attendance of their child in the school is undertaken verbally at 15 absences and in written form via the Tusla template at 20 absences (Appendix 2).
- We communicate the non-attendance of a child to the Educational Welfare Officer via the Tusla reporting guidelines.
- Children First Guidelines are also adhered to in relation to concerns about non-attendance.

- Teachers support the child to “catch up” on work missed at home and/or during revision depending on the duration and nature of the absences.

Procedures in relation to the removal from register / transfer from another school

The principal will only remove a pupil’s name from a school register where they have been informed that the child has been enrolled in another school or when the Educational Welfare Services notifies them that the child has been registered by it as in receipt of out-of-school education.

- All communication with the Educational Welfare Officer in relation to the following matters is by phone and/or in writing:
 - intended expulsion of the child,
 - notification from another school that the child has been enrolled in that school,
 - notification by the Educational Welfare Officer that the child is in receipt of education outside of the regular school system (e.g. home) or
 - has enrolled in a special school.
- Transfer to another school: Where parents remove a child from the school the principal will, if asked, give them and the new school information in relation to the child’s record of attendance and absences in the school, the last class the child attended, and any other relevant information pertaining to the education of the child. When the principal receives notification that a child has been registered elsewhere he/she will 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/she considers appropriate.
- Transfer from another school: Where a family make an approach to transfer a pupil to our school, the principal may contact the principal of the school that the child is currently attending and make him/her aware of the situation and may also ask for any relevant information pertaining to the proposed transfer. In cases where a transfer proceeds, we will communicate to the previous school that the child has been registered in this school by phone as soon as possible.

Annual Report

The level of attendance at the school for each school year is reported to the TUSLA during July every year. The Deputy Principal has responsibility for this.

Success Criteria:

We will evaluate the success of this policy using the following criteria:

- Analysis of the success of our objectives
- Attendance data
- Staff Observations
- Parental feedback

- Pupil feedback

Roles and Responsibilities:

The principal and staff will be responsible for the implementation and evaluation of the policy. Any feedback received from staff, parents, Board of Management or relevant agencies such as Tusla or the Educational Welfare Officer (EWO) will be taken into account for the purposes of evaluation and review.

Timeframe for Implementation:

This policy will be implemented from December 2016.

Time frame for Review:

This policy will be reviewed in 2018.

Responsibility for Review:

- Board of Management
- Principal
- Deputy Principal

Ratification and Communication:

This policy was ratified by the BOM on: 30th November 2016

Signed : _____

Chairperson, Board of Management

Cliffoney N.S. does not have adequate resources to disseminate all of its policies to all the concerned members of the wider school community. The policy is communicated to the members of the BOM and staff of the school, and is available to the wider school community through the school office.

Appendix 1

___ / ___ / ___

Re: Attendance

Dear _____,

I am writing to let you know that I am concerned about _____'s attendance at school. He/she has now missed ___ days out of ___ and, as a result, is losing out on valuable learning and finding it difficult to keep up in class. I would be grateful if you would address this issue urgently. When a child's number of absences reaches 20 days the school must report this fact to Tusla's Educational Welfare Services, who will then investigate the matter.

If there is anything I or the school can do to support your efforts to encourage improved attendance, please contact the school to make an appointment with me.

Yours sincerely,

(Class Teacher)

Appendix 2

___ / ___ / ___

Re: Attendance

Dear _____

I am writing to you regarding _____'s attendance at school who has been has been absent on the following days:

Because _____ has now been absent for 20 days, the school must pass the information to the Educational Welfare Service of Tusla - Child and Family Agency. An Educational Welfare Officer may therefore be in contact with you to discuss the matter further.

Yours sincerely,

(Principal)