



Merlin Woods Primary School

ATTENDANCE STRATEGY

The Education Welfare Act 2000 promotes school attendance and Section 17 of the legislation states that it is a statutory obligation on parents to ensure their child attends a recognised school once registered in the school.

Furthermore, where a child is absent from the school, the parent is required under the Act to notify the Principal of the school in writing of the reason for the child's absence.

The Act states that the relevant authorities will be informed of pupils who have been absent for twenty school days or more (this includes illness, holidays outside school holidays etc.)

Children deemed at risk will be registered with the National Educational Welfare and their attendance regularly monitored and recorded.

Encouraging Good Attendance:

- Efforts to promote attendance and attendance successes are given a high profile within the school. We will strive to continuously improve the overall level of School Attendance.

- Children will have the importance of regular school attendance and the need for a written note/email from their parents explaining all absences, emphasised to them at the beginning of each term by their class teacher.

- An Attendance Care Team is in place. This consists of The Overall Attendance Coordinator, The School Principal, The N.E.W.O. Contact between the members of this team with class teachers and each other is ongoing while formal meetings with the care team also take place during the year.

- Positive systems of reward for good attendance are in place as follows:

1. Annually those pupils with full attendance are rewarded with N.E.W.B. Full Attendance Certificates. * **We have decided this year due to students having to isolate that we will not be encouraging awards this year.**

2. Gold, Silver and Bronze School Attendance awards and prizes are issued to any child with full attendance at the end of each term. * **We have decided this year due to students having to isolate that we will not be encouraging awards this year.**

- Parents, as important stakeholders, are sent a reminder letter by the school in early September on the importance of punctuality and regular attendance in school. Parents are also reminded at the September Class Meetings about the important of full attendance and punctuality, and informed about school policy regarding absenteeism.

- School Calendar is communicated to parents at the beginning of each school year.
- Parents will be discouraged from taking holidays during school time and work will not be sent home with children, to do while they are on holiday.
- A positive attitude is fostered among children, towards coming to school. Non- attendance for trivial reasons is discouraged.
- Where School Refusal is an issue all reasonable accommodations will be considered within school setting and help will be sought from outside agencies such as N.E.P.S., C.A.M.H.S., (Child & Adolescent Mental Health Service), Social Workers, Family Support, Big brother/Big Sister,etc. to solve the difficulty.

Role of Parents:

- The parent shall ensure their child will attend a recognised school on each school day.
- Where a child is absent from the school, the parent of the child is required under the Education Act 2000, to notify the child's teacher, by means of email or a signed and dated written note detailing (a) **the dates absent** and (b) **the reasons for the child's absence**. Homework diary pull-out templates or absence notes available on our school website can be used. These notes should be given to the child's class teacher, on the day the child returns to school.
- In the interim where the absence exceeds 3 school days, the parent should communicate to the teacher, the reason for the child's absence. When the child eventually returns the written note of explanation is also required.
- Pupils must also be signed out by a parent if the child is leaving the school early.
- Holidays must be organised in accordance with regular school holidays and not during term.

Role of Class Teachers:

- Teachers call the roll at 10am (forename and surname). The roll cannot be changed after that time. If a child arrives in late after that time, a note is kept on the roll with a record of the time of arrival and the reason for being late, eg doctor's appointment.
- Teachers collect signed and dated written notes from parent/guardian detailing (a) the dates absent, and (b) the reasons for the child's absence when the child returns after an absence.

Where this note is not forthcoming the class teacher sends a request to the parent to remind them of their obligation.

- Where a child has 3 days of unexplained absences from school, parents are alerted to this, by phone call from class teacher or school secretary. Suspicion of truancy will also be communicated immediately to parents in similar fashion. Target children, who have been identified with a history of high absenteeism, are contacted on Day 1 of an absence.
- Teacher is required to meet with parents when a child has been absent for 10, 15, 20 days, and must inform the Attendance Co-Ordinator regarding details of these meetings. ***Due to covid 19, 20**

day meetings will occur when the absences are mostly unexplained and not covid related. Meeting may be online or socially distanced if in person. 10 and 15 day meetings will not be held.

- Standard letters for alerting parents are also available to teachers where the child is arriving late for school on a regular basis (after 9am).
- Teachers are responsible for sending letters to inform parents when a child has missed 10 days and 15 days school, and to alert them to the fact that they are close to breaching the 20 day guideline, which will necessitate the school to report the matter to the N.E.W.B. The letters are given to teachers by the attendance coordinator. *Due to covid 19, only 15 and 20 days letters will be sent.
- Teachers record absenteeism on the internal online system for the collection of this information to be passed on to the Attendance Co-Ordinator.
- Parents are informed immediately by class teacher, principal or school secretary if for some reason a child “runs away /leaves” the school during school hours. For Child Protection purposes the Gardaí may also be contacted by the principal in such instances.
- Class Teachers, in addition to recording absences through the online system, are required to record all absences for each day missed by pupils as per N.E.W.B. reasons for absence headings.
- Teachers are required to keep notes from parents re absences on file, particularly for pupils with a previous history of poor attendance. To facilitate this, notes from parents are requested on separate sheet of paper or on School Standard Absence Note provided specifically for this purpose, rather than in homework notebook, copy etc.

Role of the Overall Attendance Coordinator:

- To ensure that attendance and attendance successes are given a high profile and are seen as a priority within the school.
- To advise and encourage class teachers in their role in this Attendance strategy.
- To lead and co-ordinate the work of The Attendance Care team.
- To advise class teachers each September of children whose attendance the previous year was a cause for concern and children who have been alerted as Target Children.
- To contact parents by standard letter when concerns arise following 10, 15, and 20 days of absence and record same on online system. *Due to covid 19, 10 day letters will not be sent home.
- To gather information on level and reasons of absenteeism among pupils generally and especially, on those causing concern, in a continued and detailed manner.
- To communicate concerns, gleaned from such information, to appropriate members of the Attendance Care Team, so that effective interventions in serious cases can take place.
- Communicates to a school, to which a student is transferring any problem relating to school attendance.
- To organise the annual awarding of N.E.W.B attendance Certificates, to individual pupils with full attendance.

- To organise and present School Attendance Certificates and prizes to children with full attendance, on a termly basis.
- To implement individualised strategies to promote good attendance, eg sign-in sheet each morning for target children, with specific attendance targets and reward systems.
- To inform the N.E.W.B. where a student is absent in excess of twenty school days, where a student is suspended for a period in excess of 6 school days, where a student's name is removed from the register or where, in the opinion of the Principal the student's attendance is a cause for concern.
- To attend meetings with the N.E.W.O. and parents as they arise.
- To keep a register of all the pupils in the school specifically for Attendance purposes as required under The Education Welfare Act. As part of this exercise all reasonable efforts will be made to verify that pupils leaving the school have been enrolled in another school, to ensure their continued education.
- To communicate this strategy regularly to all the stakeholders - pupils, parents, teachers, Board of Management and the wider community.
- To annually review the overall success of this strategy and to suggest possibly worthwhile changes.

The attendance strategy will be reviewed in the school year 2024-2025.

Date of Ratification by the Board of Management: 25th of January 2022.

Signed: **Michelle Conneely**

Acting Principal

Michelle Conneely: Acting Principal.

Caitriona O' Donnell, Overall Attendance Coordinator

Linda Quinn, Education Officer, National Education Welfare Board.