



Merlin Woods Primary School

Statement of Strategy for School Attendance 2026

Name of school	Merlin Woods P.S.
Address	Doughiska Road, Galway
Roll Number	20350P
The school's vision and values in relation to attendance	Merlin Woods Primary School seeks to promote and support all aspects of our pupils' wellbeing as a core value of our ethos. We strive to ensure that all our students can flourish in an environment that is nurturing, supportive and progressive. We are guided by our mission statement, centred upon the integration of Commitment, Community, and Collaboration to educate pupils as happy, healthy and well-balanced individuals who will become responsible citizens. We believe that there is a clear and direct link between regular school attendance and pupil progress. We recognise the importance of parents/guardians and school staff working together to achieve optimal attendance for each child in our care.
The schools high expectations around attendance	Attendance is crucial to effective learning and the continuity of learning experiences. Therefore, the school places great emphasis on regular attendance in communications with parents and pupils. The Board of Management wishes to promote and encourage regular attendance as an essential factor in our pupils' learning. We expect children to have full attendance at school unless they are ill or have medical appointments. We fully understand that there may also be urgent family reasons why a child cannot attend school, especially in the case of bereavement and endeavour to offer our support in these instances.
Aims of the statement of strategy	The purpose of this statement is: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To meet the requirements of the Education Welfare Act 2000, section 22 with regard to our school attendance strategy • To support and sustain the positive attitudes to learning already evident in our school and to highlight their importance for all students • To underpin the importance of school attendance and punctuality and their impact on children's wellbeing • To clarify procedures around matters relating to registration, attendance, punctuality and recording • To ensure awareness of and compliance with the requirements of the relevant legislation • Document our approaches to promoting and sustaining good attendance and addressing related matters
School Roles and Responsibilities	All school staff members have an input into the implementation of the school attendance strategy. Class Teachers (supported by SET), are responsible for daily recording of attendance on the Databiz system. They must also record a reason for this absence. Where no reason has been forthcoming teachers must contact

	<p>the parent/guardian to establish the reason. It is also the responsibility of the teacher to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a positive class environment that supports participation and engagement being mindful of pupils who may be at risk of poor attendance. • Set high expectations around attendance and punctuality using supportive, inclusive and encouraging language • Ensure attendance and punctuality data is recorded accurately and reviewed in line with school procedures • Phone home after three days of unexplained absence • Make contact with parent/guardian of children identified as having concerning attendance after one day of unexplained absence. • Alert Principal/Deputy Principal if there are concerns around pupil absences • Stay vigilant and monitor class attendance data for patterns in absences of children • Support the attendance plan for students who have difficulty attending school on a regular basis • Support students on return when they have missed periods of schooling • Ensure the roll has been recorded by the office or SET on days where the teacher has been absent or on EPV
<p>Role of Parents/Guardians in supporting school attendance</p>	<p>We recognise parents/guardians as being the primary educators of their children and their important role in ensuring attendance at school. We seek to act in partnership with parents/guardians to promote and sustain regular attendance at school. In line with TUSLA’s guidelines for school (p.44), parents/guardians are expected to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Display positive attitude towards school and the school community • Set high standards for their child in relation to attendance and punctuality • Engage with the school if there is an issue around attendance and work in partnership with the school to achieve a solution that supports the wellbeing of their child. • Avoid taking family holidays during term time • Arrange for non-essential appointments to take place outside of school hours • Notify the school if their child is to be collected by a person not known to the teacher • Discuss planned absences with the school • Notify the school of any unplanned absences as soon as possible • Note the reason for their child’s absence on the Databiz/Eolas app • Notify the school via email if their child is to be picked up early
<p>Role of Principal</p>	<p>The principal has overall responsibility for the promotion and implementation of the school attendance strategy. Responsibilities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reporting on attendance to the Board of Management at each meeting. • Providing opportunities for staff to engage in professional development around the area of attendance

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing opportunities for staff to engage actively with the development and monitoring of the school's Attendance Strategy. • Initiating links with other schools and relevant bodies on school attendance issues. • Furnishing pertinent attendance documentation to relevant government departments.
Role of Overall Attendance Coordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liaise with class teachers and parents/guardians when issues around attendance arise and introduce attendance support strategies on a case by case basis • Monitor attendance through the Databiz system • Make termly and annual returns to the TUSLA Education Support System • Make referrals to TUSLA Education Support System (TESS) where attendance and punctuality of individual children is causing concern. • Ensure attendance and attendance success are given a high profile and seen as a priority within the school through ongoing promotions and initiatives • Establish an Attendance Monitoring Group with school staff in January 2026 in order to promote improved attendance and punctuality on a school wide basis and to track statistics using the Databiz system as evidence of a successful school attendance strategy • Devise individualised attendance supports for children whose attendance falls into the category of Chronic Attendance • Liaise with TUSLA Education Support Services Personnel when necessary
Role of Attendance Monitoring Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Attendance Monitoring Group will meet monthly to look at statistics and identify children and families who need support around attendance • The Attendance Monitoring Group will promote improved attendance and punctuality by setting smart targets having reviewed this current year and last year statistics • SMART targets for the 26/27 school year will be set in May 2025
National School Attendance Statistics and Targets	<p>Attendance will be monitored with reference to the following Attendance Tiers:</p> <p>Tier 1: Satisfactory/Regular Attendance Attending: 95% or more of the time Goal: At least 80% of students</p> <p>Tier 2: At-Risk for Chronic Absenteeism Attending: less than 95% but 90% or more of the time Goal: No more than 15% of students</p> <p>Tier 3: Chronic Absenteeism Attending: less than 90% of the time Goal: No more than 5% of students</p>

<p>Merlin Woods Primary School Attendance Statistics for the 2024/25 school year</p>	<p>The following data was collected from a review of the attendance figures for the last school year.</p> <p>The average attendance in the 2024-2025 school year was 90.9%.</p> <p>Tier 1 – 30.2% of pupils attended 95% or more of the time</p> <p>Tier 2 – 35.1% of pupils attended less than 95% but more than 90% of the time</p> <p>Tier 3 - 34.6% of pupils attended less than 90% of the time.</p>
<p>Punctuality</p>	<p>Merlin Woods Primary School is open to receive pupils from 8.40am. Formal instruction begins at 8.50am. This period is known as Informal Instruction Time. It is very important that children arrive into class before 8.50am as this reception time allows children to settle in, interact with their teachers, SNAs and friends and to engage in settling in activities.</p> <p>While we recognise the challenges around punctuality and that exceptional circumstances may arise, in general the school expects that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils and staff members are punctual for school • Class teachers record late arrivals through the Databiz system • Class teachers contact parent/guardians in the case of a pupil who is consistently late • Class teachers notify Principal/Deputy Principal of their concerns
<p>Roll Call Recording and Reporting Attendance</p>	<p>Roll Call is taken by class teachers as a whole class intervention <i>as Gaeilge</i> at 9.10am and recorded on the Databiz system</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A child who is not present by 9.10am will be marked absent. If a pupil arrives after roll call the teacher will record on Databiz that the child is late but it will remain marked as an absence. • Attendance Data is monitored by the class teacher and the attendance coordinator and is submitted to the National Education Welfare Board (NEWB) annually • Parents/Guardians are made aware of the requirements of the NEWB particularly the by-law relating to the reporting of 20 or more days of absence in the school year • Parents/Guardians of a child whose attendance is of concern are invited to meet with the attendance coordinator to discuss the issue and to work in partnership to find a solution which prioritises the wellbeing of the student • Parents and Guardians are made aware that the school can make a referral to the Educational Welfare Services at any point when there are concerns relating to the child’s attendance and/or punctuality • Each child’s attendance record is documented on their annual summer report
<p>Strategies to promote improved attendance and punctuality</p>	<p>The Board of Management, staff, students, parent body and wider community of Merlin Woods Primary School work in partnership to create a school culture that is welcoming, nurturing and inclusive.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School Management together with the Building Management Company direct energy and available resources towards maintaining and improving our school building and the general school

environment. This in turn creates a positive backdrop for school attendance

- As a staff we strive to provide a supportive learning environment in which all students are respected and valued and in which cognisance is taken of their learning needs. Students in Merlin Woods Primary School enjoy a broad and balanced curriculum. Provision is made for a wide range of co-curricular and extracurricular activities. The Student Council, Green Schools Committee and the Creative Schools Committee offer opportunities for students to express their views regarding enhancing the school climate. These opportunities impact positively on pupil engagement and can in turn have a positive effect on attendance.
- Supportive parish and community links further enhance the experience of Merlin Woods students and their families which is a positive factor in school attendance.

We recognise the link between regular, punctual attendance and the wellbeing of our students and engage in positive strategies such as:

- Providing a safe, secure, welcoming and enriching learning environment for all students
- Identifying early and responding to differing learning needs sensitively
- Resourcing additional learning materials and supports for some children
- All classes have clear entrance points into the school, with junior classes having their own designated doors and senior classes designated lining up areas. All classes are met by their teachers in these designated areas
- Staff members meet and greet students by name each morning to facilitate any student experiencing anxiety leaving a parent/guardian in a sensitive and needs based manner
- Students who need extra support transitioning to school in the morning are included in initiatives such as Soft Start and Nurture.
- Class teachers and SETs facilitate a calm and welcoming reception time by setting up play, reading or other activities and chatting informally to children until formal teaching time begins.
- In January an initiative 'Be in the line for 20 to 9' will begin. This initiative will see punctuality being promoted across the school through various activities and will allow teachers and the Attendance Monitoring Group to gather statistics and identify patterns in children's punctuality. It will identify families that need support in this area and seek to help these families to achieve improved punctuality.
- The Attendance Monitoring Group will meet with students and age appropriately discuss current statistics and get feedback on how improvements may come about. Improvements are always discussed on a whole school basis, never on a class or individual basis.
- Attendance initiatives and promotions will always be done in a positive and inclusive manner with the focus always on improvement over perfection.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Attendance Coordinator will attend a Junior and a Senior assembly once a month and improvements in attendance will be highlighted and rewarded. Small achievable targets will be set each month and improvements will be celebrated on a monthly basis. • Accurate and efficient daily recording of attendance and punctuality data at 9.15am as a whole class intervention as Gaeilge • Attendance and punctuality are discussed at all formal meetings with parents. Eg parent/teacher meetings, continuum meetings • Early intervention- matters relating to school hours, attendance and punctuality are discussed at the induction meeting for new parents and are published on the school website. They are discussed at September meetings at all class levels. • The school calendar for the coming year is agreed by staff as early as possible and shared with parents. This gives parents/guardians an opportunity to plan holidays and family breaks accordingly. The school urges parents not to take holidays during term time. • The school informs parents/guardians that standardised testing requires careful time-tabling and the deployment of school staff and as such we will mark the weeks of standardised testing on the school calendar. We ask parents to avoid arranging holidays during the period of standardised testing as re-scheduling tests puts a strain on available teaching resources.
Role of TUSLA	TUSLA Child and Family agency are informed if: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A child is expelled or suspended for 6 days or more • A child had been absent from school for 20 days or more • The school has unresolved concerns about the attendance or punctuality of a child after interventions at a school level have been made
Communication with other schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Under Section 20 of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000, the principal of a child’s current school must inform the principal of the child’s previous school, via POD (Primary Online Database), that the child is now registered in their school. • When a student transfers into Merlin Woods Primary School, confirmation of transfer will be communicated to their previous school via POD and the appropriate records sought. • When a child transfers out of Merlin Woods Primary School without providing a name of the school to which the child will be transferring, Merlin Woods will keep that child on their roll for 20 school days. If after 20 school days it has not been confirmed on POD that the child has registered in another school in the jurisdiction, the attendance coordinator will seek the advice of TUSLA Education and Welfare Services and if so directed will make a ‘missing in education’ referral.
Communication with parents/guardians	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents/Guardians are made aware of the requirements of TUSLA Child and Family Agency, particularly the by-law relating to absences of more than 20 days per school year. • When a child has been absent for 10 days within a school year the class teacher will inform the parent by phone, or email.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When a child has been absent for 15 days within a school year, parents/guardians will receive a notification via Databiz alerting them to the fact and that their child is approaching 20 days absence. • When a child has been absent for 20 days within a school year, parents/guardians will receive a notification via Databiz alerting them to the fact that this information will now be passed on to the education welfare services. If there is concern around the pattern of absenteeism the parent/guardian will be asked to meet with the Attendance Coordinator who will help to provide an individualised plan to support improving attendance. • Class teachers and the Attendance Coordinator communicate directly regarding absence rates of concern • When a child has been absent for three days without explanation the class teacher will phone home to seek explanation • When a child who has an absence rate of concern, is absent for one day without explanation the class teacher or the Attendance Coordinator will phone home to seek explanation • Parents are responsible for communicating the reason for their child’s absence on Databiz
Evaluation	<p>The success of the strategy for School Attendance will be measured through</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accurate data including absence reasons available to Attendance Monitoring Team on Databiz • Children’s positive dispositions toward attendance and punctuality • Improved attendance statistics with more children falling in Tier 1 – good attendance • Positive working relationships between home and school in finding solutions to problems around attendance and punctuality • Teacher observations and reports
Review	<p>The Statement of Strategy for School Attendance will be evaluated on an on-going basis by representatives for the Attendance Monitoring Group and will be reviewed annually by the Board of Management</p>
Ratification and Communication	<p>December 2025 and School Website</p>

This policy was ratified at the meeting of the Board of Management on 11th December 2025.

It will be reviewed in December 2026.

Pat Burke

Chairperson: Mr. Pat Burke

Date: 11th December 2025

Paula O’Connor

Principal: Paula O’Connor

Date: 11th December 2025