

Scoil an Spioraid Naoimh

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Scoil an Spioraid Naoimh Senior Primary School

Attendance Policy
2021

Attendance Policy & Strategies 2022-2023

Introduction and Rationale:

Research has shown that absenteeism has negative implications for academic achievement as well as the social development of the child (Thornton et al 2013). Establishing good attendance habits from the very beginning of a pupil's time at school is vital. This policy document sets out the procedures in place to encourage and maintain a high level of attendance and punctuality by all pupils and staff of Scoil an Spioraid Naoimh. In pursuit of this objective and being cognisant of the requirements under the Education Welfare Act 2000, school management and staff aim to:

- Foster an appreciation of learning within our school.
- Raise awareness of the importance of school attendance and punctuality.
- Identify pupils at risk of regular unnecessary absences.
- Enhance the learning environment where pupils can make progress in all aspects of their development.
- Promote positive attitudes to learning.
- Ensure that the system of rules, rewards and sanctions are implemented in a fair and consistent manner that encourages pupils to attend school.
- Conform to legislative and statutory requirements.
- Recognise the role of the National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB).
Section of.

Statutory Requirements:

Under the terms of the Education Welfare Act 2000 (amended by the Child and Family Agency Act 2013) schools are obliged to:

- Maintain a record of attendance for each pupil.
- Notify the relevant Educational Welfare Officer of particular problems relating to attendance.
- Support pupils experiencing difficulties in attending school on a regular basis.
- Prepare and implement a school attendance strategy to encourage, in a positive way, regular school attendance and punctuality. Prepare and implement a code

of behaviour and set standards of behaviour and disciplinary procedures for the school.

- Liaise with other schools and relevant bodies on school attendance issues

Scoil an Spioraid Naoimh, at all times, aims to ensure that pupils are taught in a safe, secure and caring environment which caters for their spiritual, intellectual and physical needs. We endeavour to create a welcoming environment where pupils, parents/guardians and teachers work consistently to encourage good attendance and punctuality in their respective classrooms.

Pupils needing support are identified as early as possible and the appropriate support systems are put into place. We celebrate achievements across all aspects of school life and do all we can to enhance the self-esteem of our pupils. Our Discipline For Learning (D.F.L) system recognises the importance of good attendance. Improved and good attendance will be acknowledged at Christmas, Easter and at the end of the school year.

- **Lunches** - A discrete scheme is in place to provide all pupils who have arrived at school without lunch with food and drink. Emergency breakfasts and lunches are available when required. These measures enhance the school experience for those pupils who might otherwise be at risk of poor attendance.
- Identifying ‘**at risk**’ pupils: While actively reviewing attendance patterns of pupils in their care, teachers should be vigilant so that ‘at risk’ pupils are identified early.

Roles and Responsibilities:

Responsibilities of Parents/Guardians:

Parents/Guardians have a vital role in helping their children maintain high attendance levels at school and can make a significant difference to their child’s attendance record by:

- Fostering a positive attitude to school and learning in the home.
- Refraining from taking holidays during school time.
- Encouraging regular and punctual school attendance.
- Ensuring, insofar as is possible, that their child’s appointments (with dentists etc.), are arranged for times outside of school hours.
- Providing explanations for absences via school Journal or databiz app within three days of a child’s return to school after an absence or as early as possible.

Responsibilities of Class Teacher & Promotion of Good Attendance:

- Maintain the school on-line attendance record in accordance with school procedure and complete attendance daily by 9.45 am on the school administrative system, Databiz.
- Record explained and unexplained absences on Databiz.
- Record latecomers and early leavers on Databiz.
- Encourage pupils to attend regularly and punctually.
- Lead by example by being present to greet the children each morning as they arrive to class.
- Contact parents where there is a pattern of poor attendance and/or punctuality emerging, discuss continuing poor attendance and/or punctuality with the Principal or Attendance Monitors.
- Complete the Pre-Referral Checklist (Appendix 3) where an ‘at risk’ pupil is identified by the class teacher
- Follow a series of progressive steps, as per EWS Pre-Referral Checklist when concerned about a pupil’s attendance (A PDF copy of the checklist is saved to the school server.)
- Report the number of days missed on the end of year reports.
- At the beginning of each school year, we discuss the importance of attendance with parents at our September Parent Meetings. We encourage parents to read the Attendance Policy on our website.
- We highlight the importance of good attendance with pupils at the beginning of the school year and again on the last Friday of every month, in tandem with Friendly Friday.
- If teachers have concern with regard to a pupil’s attendance they follow the checklist Appendix 2A (on Databiz and at the end of this document)
- Where needed, self assessment of attendance and a monthly (discreet) reward system may be used to encourage improved attendance.
- Teachers may need to adjust their morning timetables to facilitate teaching subjects of interest to a child with poor attendance. (This can be noted in the log of actions)

Responsibilities of School Attendance Monitors (Ms. Maguire Principal, Ms Garry Assistant Principal 1, Mrs Doak Assistant Principal 11 and Mrs Marie D’Arcy)

- Monitor the attendance patterns of all pupils through regular reviews of records on Databiz and inform the Tusla Child and Family Agency of such absences, in order to seek to address the matter and deal with it as early as possible in the pupil’s school life.
- Liaise with families at different intervals in order to encourage or improve attendance.
- Set targets regarding attendance where necessary in consultation with the pupil’s parents/guardians. ‘Identify at-risk pupils’ in a timely manner. ‘At-risk pupils’ can be categorised as those who miss more than five days in a twenty-day period without an accompanying note of explanation from parents/guardians.
- Escalate efforts to engage parents where attendance continues to be problematic. When all efforts to collaborate with home have been exhausted to improve or resolve the issue, the Principal or Attendance Monitor must send a formal written and signed Referral to the Educational Welfare Service.
- Issue letter to parents/guardians once a pupil has been reported through the Annual Report Form which is completed on-line (The Education Welfare Services section of Tusla).
- Contact the Education Welfare Officer with ad hoc queries regarding attendance.
- Complete the three definite attendance reports each year required by Tusla.

It is imperative that all members of the school community know their roles and responsibilities and fulfil these to the best of their ability.

School Records

- Teachers record attendance/absences online daily on Databiz. This is completed by 9.45am.
- The Secretary, Principal and Deputy Principal will oversee and monitor the submission of attendance by class teachers.
- Absences: If a pupil is absent, it is school policy that the parent/guardian makes a note of absence and general reason in the “absent notes” section of the school journal or via Databiz app. This must be done within three days of returning to school. Where a note is hand-written the teacher must keep this record and input the reasons for absences on Databiz.

- Latecomers/Early Leavers; If a pupil leaves school at any time after morning roll call and after being marked present, a record of the early departure must be input onto Databiz. His/her parents/guardians must sign him/her out on the book outside the secretary's office. If he/she later returns, the parent/guardian must sign the pupil in again, noting the time in both cases. If a pupil arrives at school after the roll call, the teacher will amend the roll call to state that the pupil is present but must also input their late arrival on Databiz. Teachers will send a timely and advance notification of a pupil's planned early departure to the Secretary by phone call/email.
- Punctuality: All pupils and teachers are expected to be on time. Teachers are expected to be in school at 9am each morning.
- Official school start time is 9.15am and pupils are expected to be in their lines when the bell rings. The class teacher or Attendance Monitors will contact parents/guardians in the event of pupils being consistently late. Doors are locked after the last class line enters. All late comers (pupils) must enter through the main door, and be signed in by a parent/guardian or responsible adult. Parents/Guardians must inform the school that their child is going to be late. Parents/Guardians must also inform the teacher if their child is leaving the school for an appointment or other valid reason.

Reporting Obligations

Tusla Child and Family Agency requires three attendance reports each year as follows:

- Period 1 Student Absence Report
- Period 2 Student Absence Report
- End of Year Annual Attendance Report

The teacher with the post responsible for collecting attendance data will collate all attendance and absences data and submit such to Tusla. The reporting process will be overseen by the Principal .

This annual attendance report will include:

- a) Pupils absent 20 days or more to date.
- b) Pupils transferred to another school.
- c) Pupils expelled from the school.

- Once a pupil's name has been included on a general Tusla report, the class teacher or attendance monitors will forward letter(s) to inform the parents/guardians of the step we have taken. (This sample letter can be found in Appendix 1 and is also available on Databiz).

Letter 1 - Concerned (as absences are impacting on the child's learning).

- Concerns: Where a pupil has not yet reached 20 days of absence or he/she has reached 20 days of absence after the report cut-off date, the teacher may request: a letter informing parents/guardians of the number of days absent to date, the importance of good attendance and the possibility of being reported to Tusla in the near future.
- It is advised that classroom teachers make a note of times they have worked with/spoken to/sent letters to the pupil/parent/guardian re: concerning absences (Appendix 2B- Attendance related Log of Actions). Teachers must follow the checklist to ensure steps have been followed. Where a pupil is to be referred to Tusla, such information will then be included in a Tusla Pre-Referral form. These forms and guidance will be provided by the attendance monitors and/or the Principal. A copy of these forms can also be found at the end of this policy.
- Following interventions and where pupil attendance is low & is still causing concern, the Principal, post-holder for Tusla Returns and Attendance Monitors will discuss the situation. If deemed necessary, a referral form will be completed and the Tusla Education Welfare Officer will be contacted as soon as possible.
- An interim audit will be carried out by the Principal and post-holder or attendance monitors responsible for Tusla Returns during the last school week of December. Letters will be sent to parents/guardians of pupils with 20 day absences. A copy of this letter is to be stored in the Attendance Records box which is stored in the secretary's office.
- In cases where a pupil's attendance record is of great concern, is deteriorating or has become non-existent, a Pre Referral Form will be completed. There is also a further possibility of a referral to Tusla's Education Welfare Officer.
- Upon written notification of transfer to another primary school, attendance, behaviour and academic records of pupils will be posted to the Principal of the new school.

- Attendance, behaviour and academic records of pupils who transfer into Scoil an Spioraid Naoimh will be sought directly from the previous school.
- Attendance, behaviour and academic records of pupils transferring to Secondary School will be sent to the school once enrolment has been confirmed.

Communication

- It is the policy of Scoil an Spioraid Naoimh to encourage and maintain open communication between home and school and to encourage parents in their role as primary educators of their children.
- The Principal and teachers are always available, on an appointment basis, to meet parents.
- Attendance is one of the issues addressed at our September Meetings for parents; the importance of regular attendance and parental obligations in relation to attendance under the Education Welfare Act are highlighted.
- Parents are reminded regularly of the importance of good attendance (i.e. newsletters, parent/teacher meetings etc).
- Reference to good attendance is also underlined in the school journal.
- Awareness of the importance of good attendance is fostered in the classroom and at school assemblies.

Success Criteria

The success of any Attendance Policy is measured through:

- Happy, confident, well-adjusted pupils
- Positive parental feedback
- Teacher vigilance.

Implementation/Ratification and Review

The Board of Management ratified this Attendance Policy & Strategies on 19/10/'22 and it will be reviewed in September/October 2023.

Appendix 1: Letter to Parents from Scoil an Spioraid Naoimh regarding absences

Letter 1 -

It is our policy at Scoil an Spioraid Naoimh to forward the letter below from Databiz to the parents/guardians of the pupil whose absences are being reported to Tusla in either Period 1, 2 or 3. Reports to Tusla will be communicated and explained to parents/guardians. Letters may also specify dates of absences and state where explanations have been received by the school.

The principal or attendance monitors may meet with reported pupils to discuss and to encourage improved attendance.

A copy of each letter is to be kept by the relevant class teacher with one copy also kept in the Attendance Records folder (in the secretary's office).

Communication with parents/guardians via phone call is sometimes made to parents prior to letters being sent. This can provide valuable support to families to improve future attendance.

Letter 1

Scoil an Spioraid Naoimh Senior Primary, Tara Road, Bettystown, Co Meath A92XK64

Principal: Bláithín Maguire

Deputy Principal: Ciara Winters

E-mail: principal@ssnlaytown.ie

Telephone/Fax: 041-9828091

E-mail: secretary@ssnlaytown.ie

School Roll No: 20017F

Date

Dear Parents/Guardians,

In Scoil an Spioraid Naoimh we wish to enable every pupil to actively participate in all school activities. Regular attendance helps to create a stable learning environment for all pupils. Parents have a vital role in ensuring regular school attendance. By making your child's school attendance a priority, you will be taking an important step in supporting your child's full potential and success at school. It is the responsibility of the parents/guardians to communicate the reasons for school absences in writing to your child's class teacher via the school journal.

We are obliged to report any children who have missed 20 days or more to Tusla. This is a national agency established to ensure that every child attends school regularly. An education welfare officer is attached to each school to provide support and advice to parents and school and to investigate absences from school.

We wish to inform you that your child _____ has missed _____ days from the 31-08-2021 to the 27-05-2022. We are concerned as we believe these absences are impacting on your child's learning.

Yours sincerely

Bláithín Maguire Principal & Orla Garry Assistant Principal 1

Appendix 2: **Checklist 1 for Teachers**

GENERAL CHECKLIST FOR TEACHERS	
1. Teachers are expected to be at school by 9am each morning. (Those currently beginning at 9.05 am are expected to arrive by 8.50 am each morning).	
2. Discuss the importance of attendance at the September Meeting with parents . Highlight the role of the parent in this regard with reference to the school attendance policy.	
3. Record rolla by 9.45 am each morning.	
4. <u>If a pupil arrives at school after the roll call, the teacher will amend the roll call to state that the pupil is present, but must also input their late arrival on Databiz</u> (Latecomers/Early Leavers)	
5. Input reasons for absences on Databiz . Teachers should remind Parents when necessary via journal/Class Dojo. Parents should explain reasons for absences in the pupil's school journal within 3 days of return to school.	
6. The class teacher or school will contact parents/guardians in the event of pupils' consistent late arrival to school.	
7. The class teacher should make a record of messages, interactions and letters to a parent re: concerning absences (Appendix 2B- Attendance Related Log of Actions).	
8. Monthly acknowledgement for the best attendance of a year group and/or class per year group.	

9. Teachers will work as a team to discuss possible rewards at their year level.	
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Checklist 2 for Teachers (when a pupil has missed more than 10 days).

CHECKLIST 2 FOR TEACHERS	
Databiz message is automatically sent after 10 days of absence. 1. Contact the parent/guardian if there is a concern.	
2. Discuss the importance of good school attendance and put relevant interventions in place if necessary. Inform the parent/guardian that 20 days absence will be reported to Tusla.	
3. Update the Attendance related log of Actions.	
4. Send Tusla leaflet ‘Don’t Let your Child Miss Out (on a Good Start to Life)’ to parents/guardians.	
5. Complete a follow up call/message if attendance has improved/poor attendance has continued.	
Databiz messages will be sent after 15, 19 and 20 days. 6. Discuss with Attendance Monitors/Principal	
7. Once 20 days of absences have been reached, send a letter to parents/guardians.	

8. Record on databiz that letter has been sent.	
9. Keep a copy of the letter in your files and place a copy in the secretary's office in the Attendance folder (Please discuss with Attendance monitors if you would like support or help in completing any of the above especially 7-10)	

Appendix 2B

Attendance Related Log of Actions

Pupil Name:		Teacher Name:	
Date	Comments		

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Appendix 3: Pre – Referral Form

EDUCATIONAL WELFARE SERVICES PRE-REFERRAL CHECKLIST

For School Referrals please complete pre-referral checklist and Sections 1 and 2

Prior to submitting a referral form to the statutory educational welfare service, it is expected that the school has made attempts to resolve attendance issues. The purpose of this checklist is to note the actions taken prior to referral to the EWS. **This checklist should always accompany a referral form.**

To be completed in discussion with the Class Teacher (Primary)/ Year Head (Post Primary) or a nominated teacher/principal.

Child's Name	*	Gender	Male <input type="checkbox"/>	Female <input type="checkbox"/>
Home Address	*			
Date of Birth	*	PPSN	*	
Ethnicity	*	Language Spoken at Home	*	
School Name	*	School Roll No.	*	
School Telephone No.	*			
Class/Year e.g. 1st class or 1st year	*			
Number of school days absent this school year out of a possible number of school days open	_____ days absent out of _____ school days to date			
Number of unexplained absences year to date	*			
What is the presenting issue for this child	*			
Checklist actions to address poor attendance	Date of Action Taken	By whom		

In-school discussion with pupil (where appropriate)		
Contact between school and parent/guardian to express concern e.g. phone call, letter, discuss at parents evening		
Specific meeting in school with parent/guardian to identify problems and agree interventions		
Concerns and agreements communicated in writing to parent/guardian		
Implementation of any appropriate in-school measures (e.g. change of class, 'contact person' in school, support in class etc.)		
Use of appropriate interventions with pupil (e.g. attendance charts/ attendance report, incentives, rewards etc.)		
Other school interventions (e.g. care team, Pastoral care team, student support team etc.)		
Previous EWS involvement in this case		

Does the school have....	If yes please attach any additional supports given other than outlined above (on a separate sheet if necessary)
.....Home School Community Liaison Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	
.....School Completion Programme Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	

Signature of Principal: _____

Name of Principal (Capitals) _____



An Ghníomhaireacht um
Leanaí agus an Teaghlach
Child and Family Agency

Date: _____

EDUCATIONAL WELFARE SERVICES

REFERRAL FORM

Section 1 Child and Family Details

(Schools should have already filled out child's other details in the pre-referral checklist)

Child's Name	*
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Family details

Mother's Name	*	Tel No.	*
Address if different from the child's	*		
Father's Name	*	Tel No.	*
Address if different from the child's	*		
Details of Guardian/Carer if child is not residing with parent/s	*		
Relationship to the child	*	Tel No.	*
Are other siblings known to EWS	*		

EDUCATIONAL WELFARE SERVICES REFERRAL FORM

Section 2

SCHOOL DETAILS

Child's Name	*		
School Name	*	Roll No.	*
School Address	*	Tel No.	*
School Email	*		

No. of school days absent this school year to date	*		
Total no. of school days absent last school year	*		
Date parents/guardian were informed of referral to EWS?	*		
If Post Primary – Year group of pupil	*	If Primary – Class group of pupil	*
Date pupil entered the school	*		
Summary or reason for referral to EWS	*		

Previous school/s	*
Does this child have special educational needs?	*
Has the child been assessed (or is assessment pending) by the National Educational Psychological Service?	*
What resources (if any) have been allocated to meet the child's needs?	*
Does the child have any health issues?	*
Does the school have knowledge of other agencies involved with the child or family? If so which?	*

Has the school referred the child or family to another agency? If so what agency?	*
Has the school made a referral to the Social Work Department of the Child and Family Agency in respect of child protection or welfare concerns?	*
Is there any additional information that you feel is relevant for this referral?	*

Note:

A referral received by the statutory educational welfare service does not replace the responsibility of the referring school continually to support the child as required and to work in collaboration with the service in that regard.

Signature of Principal: _____

Name of Principal (Capitals) _____

Date: _____

Referral forms, once completed and signed (and copied for school records), must be forwarded to EWS by post (**clearly marked 'EWS REFERRALS'**), to the appropriate EWS office. Details below: Referrals should not be sent directly to your EWO.

Southern Area: Cork, Kerry, Limerick, Clare, Tipperary.

Post: Referrals Region 1, Educational Welfare Service, Tusla, Block C, Heritage Business Park, Bessboro Road, Blackrock, Cork

South Dublin, Kildare, Wicklow, Waterford, Wexford, Carlow, Kilkenny.

Post: Referrals Region 2, Educational Welfare Service, Tusla, Floor 2, Brunel Building, Heuston South Quarter, Dublin 8

North Dublin City, Dublin South City, Clondalkin and Lucan

Post: Referrals Region 3, Educational Welfare Service, Tusla, Ground Floor, Brunel Building, Heuston South Quarter, Dublin 8

West/North-West: Galway, Mayo, Sligo, Donegal, Leitrim, Roscommon, Longford, Offaly, Laois, Westmeath.

Post: Referrals Region 4, Educational Welfare Service, Tusla, Unit 19, Sandyfort Business Centre, Grealishtown, Bohermore, Galway

Fingal, Louth, Meath, Cavan, Monaghan.

Post: Referrals Region 5, Educational Welfare Service, Tusla, C/O Louth & Meath ETB, Chapel Street, Dundalk, Co Louth

NOTE: For reasons of data protection, you are requested NOT to send Referral Forms by email under any circumstances.

Appendix 4: Managing Reluctant Attendance and School Avoidance Behaviour

School refusal is a challenging issue. Early recognition and intervention are key to prompt resolution. Where the problem persists or becomes complex, schools often seek the advice and support of outside agencies.

Whilst the suggestions and strategies outlined in this policy are not exhaustive, it is hoped that they will provide guidance and support to Pupils, Teachers, Parents and Guardians.

Appendix 5: Shortened School Day

Refer to gov.ie published on the 16th September 2021.

<https://www.gov.ie/en/circular/f49bd-0047-2021/>

Scoil an Spioraid Naoimh will be required to contact social services when a child is placed on a reduced school day from January 2022. Consent of parents is required prior to implementation. We will follow best practice and always ensure the interest of the pupil is central to the process.

Attendance Policy
2021
