



Our Lady of Good Counsel School
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Chairperson of the Board of Management: Harold Brooks

Policy: Pupils Attendance

Date of Issue: January 2012

Amendments / Reviews

Jan 16 – Chairperson change.
Sept 17- Chairperson change

Aim of Policy: To ensure and maintain a high level of attendance by all school pupils.

Introduction

This policy document was drawn up to ensure and maintain a high level of attendance at school by all pupils.

The Board of Management, in consultation with staff and parents/guardians drew up this policy on attendance.

Rationale

The policy was drafted for the following reasons:

- The Board of Management wishes to comply with legislation such as:
 - The Education Act, 1998
 - The Education (Welfare) Act, 2000
- The Board of Management wishes to promote and encourage regular attendance as an essential factor in our pupils' learning.

Relationship to the characteristic spirit of the school

Our Lady of Good Counsel School endeavours to enable every pupil to actively participate in all school activities. Regular attendance helps to create a stable learning environment for all pupils, and the school hopes to promote co-operation among pupils, parents/guardians and staff in maintaining a high level of regular attendance through the school year.

Aims

- To raise awareness of the importance of regular school attendance.
- To identify pupils at risk of leaving school early.
- To promote and to foster positive attitudes to learning.
- To ensure compliance with the requirements of the relevant legislation.

Recording & reporting of attendance and non-attendance

The school attendance of individual pupils is recorded in the Leabhar Rolla (Roll book) of each class. Class attendance is recorded electronically using the Student Management System (Aladdin). Data is kept in accordance with Department of Education & Skills guidelines.

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. The roll call is taken each morning. Any pupil not present will be marked absent for the day. The roll book may not be altered once it has been filled in. Parents are requested to use the homework journal to explain absences, all absences should be recorded in the journal. If a parent rings to explain an absence the teacher should record this in the journal when the child returns to school (notes can be copied periodically during the year and kept in the class file). The parents of pupils whose non-attendance is a concern are contacted by the Principal to discuss reasons for non-attendance and to work with parents to encourage attendance.

Whole school strategies to promote attendance

Our Lady of Good Counsel School endeavours to create a safe, welcoming environment for our pupils and their parents/guardians. Traditionally school attendance is strong in our school. The school practices an "Open Door" policy and is conscious of the strong support from parents and the Parents' Association.

Due to the category of pupils attending the school the special needs of our pupils may lead to non-attendance because of health or behavioural issues. It is the policy of the school that the Principal and staff will work with parents/guardians to put in place programmes to encourage attendance.

The teaching staff collaborates in the planning and implementation of the school curriculum, so as to provide a stimulating learning environment for all pupils.

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.
- Support for pupils 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.
- The assistance of the Education Welfare Officer will be utilised, if necessary.
- The attendance rates of pupils will be monitored by the class teacher in the first instance, and the class teacher will notify the Principal of any concerns regarding the attendance of any child.
- Pupils with poor attendance record, will insofar as is practicable, be supported in an effort to improve their attendance.

School Principal

The school Principal will:

- Ensure that the school register of pupils is maintained in accordance with regulations.
- Inform the Education Welfare Officer:
 - If a pupil is not attending school regularly.
 - When a pupil has been absent for 20 or more days during the course of a school year.
 - If a pupil has been suspended for a period of six or more days.
 - When a pupil's name is removed from the school register.
- 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.

Class Teacher

The class teacher will:

- Record school attendance.
- Keep a record of explained and unexplained absences.
- Contact parents in instances where absences are not explained in writing.
- Encourage pupils to attend regularly and punctually.
- Inform the Principal of concerns s/he may have regarding the attendance of any pupil.

Dual Attendance

Our school has a policy of dual attendance. For part of the week the pupil attends Our Lady of Good Counsel School and for the remainder of the week the pupil attends their local national school. The two schools meet regularly to develop programmes, monitor the child's progress and encourage attendance. The pupil is marked present on the days s/he attends Our Lady of Good Counsel School.

Strategies in the event of non-attendance

Section 17 of the Education (Welfare) Act (2000), states that the “parent of a child shall cause the child concerned to attend a recognized school on each school day”.

Section 21 of the act obliges schools to inform the Education Welfare Officer if a child is absent on more than 20 days in any school year, or if a child does not attend school on a regular basis.

In such cases the Education Welfare Officer (following all reasonable efforts by the Education Board to consult with the child’s parents and the Principal of the school) may serve a “School Attendance Notice” on any parent who s/he concludes is failing or neglecting to cause the child to attend the school. A successful case taken against the parent may result in a fine and / or imprisonment.

Reasons for absences are recorded and reported to the Education Welfare Board five times during the school year through the online system. An annual report is submitted – not more than six weeks following the end of the school year – detailing the overall level of attendance at the school during that school year.

Transfer to another school

Under Section 20 of the Education (Welfare) Act (2000), the Principal of a child’s current school must notify the Principal of the child’s previous school that the child is now registered in their school.

When a Principal receives notification that a child has been registered elsewhere s/he must 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 or she considers appropriate. This applies to pupils who transfer between primary schools and to pupils who transfer from primary to second level education.

Guidance for Parents

Section [(21) (9)] of the Acts 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 term. However, it is essential that parents inform the school of such arrangements.

Reasons for pupils’ absences must be communicated in writing, by parents/guardians to the school and will be retained by the school. If a child is absent, when the child returns to school s/he must give a written note to the class teacher which contains the child’s name, the dates of absence and the reason for the absence. These notes will form a record which may be inspected by the Education Welfare Office on a visit to the school. The school will contact parents when a written explanation for the child’s absence is not received by the school.

Parents / Guardians can promote good school attendance by:

- Ensuring regular and punctual school attendance.
- Notifying the school if their children cannot attend for any reason.
- Working with the school and education welfare service to resolve any attendance problems.
- Making sure their children understand that parents support and approve of school attendance.
- Discussing planned absences with the school

- Refraining if at all possible, from taking holidays during school time.
- 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.
- Instilling in their children, a positive self-concept and a positive sense of self-worth.
- Informing the school in writing of the reasons for absence from school.
- Ensuring insofar as is possible, that children's appointments (with dentists, etc.) are arranged for times outside of school hours.
- Contacting the school immediately, if they have concerns about absence or other related school matters.
- Notifying in writing, the school if their child/children are to be collected by someone not known to the teacher.

Promoting Attendance

The school promotes good attendance by:

- Creating a safe and welcoming environment.
- Ensuring children are happy.
- Displaying kindness, compassion and understanding.
- Being vigilant so that risks to good attendance such as disadvantage, bullying, etc. are identified early.

Success Criteria

The following will provide some practical indicators of the success of this policy:

- An increase in annual attendance rates.
- Board of Management, staff and parent/guardian awareness of their legal obligations under the Education (Welfare) Act 2000.

Roles and responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the Principal and staff to implement this policy under the guidance of the school's Board of Management.

Implementation

This policy will be implemented immediately following ratification by the Board of Management and communication to the Parents Association.