



## **Policy Statement**

This document sets out the Attendance Policy for St Killian's School.

## **Scope**

This policy has been drawn up in consultation with the Board of Management and Staff of St Killian's School and has been approved and adopted by the Board of Management. The policy applies to all staff/parents/pupils within the school.

## **Relationship to the School's Mission Statement**

"If this child doesn't learn the way we teach, can we teach him/her the way he/she learns, and can we extend his learning options?"

Dr. Harry Chasty

## **School Philosophy**

Each child's uniqueness is valued within the school, which fosters a secure, caring and positive environment, to enable each child to develop to their full potential.

## **Introduction**

St. Killian's provides a co-educational, inter-disciplinary educational service to children who are diagnosed with a Specific Learning Difficulty, including Dyslexia, Dyspraxia and Speech and Language Difficulties, and children who have educational difficulties in one or more school based areas.

The school depends on grants provided by the Department of Education and Skills and the school operates within the regulations laid down, from time to time, by the Department.

Within the context and parameters of the Department regulations and programmes, the rights of the patron as set out in the Education Act (1998) and the funding and resources available, the school supports the principles of:

- Equality of access and participation
- Parental choice in relation to enrolment
- Respect for diversity of values, beliefs, traditions, language and ways of life.

The Department of Health and Children currently provide the services for Speech and Language and Occupational Therapy.

The psychological services are provided by National Educational Psychological Services.

## **Aims and Objectives**

The policy is geared towards:

- ensuring that pupils are registered accurately and efficiently
- ensuring that pupil attendance is recorded daily
- encouraging full attendance where possible
- identifying pupils at risk
- promoting a positive learning environment
- enabling learning opportunities to be availed of
- raising awareness of the importance of school attendance
- fostering an appreciation of learning
- identify pupils at risk of leaving school early



- ensuring compliance with the requirements of the relevant legislation
- developing, subject to available resources, links between the school and the families of children who may be at risk of developing attendance problems
- identifying and removing, insofar as is practicable, obstacles to school attendance.

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

All staff have an input into the implementation of the policy. Teachers record individual patterns of attendance and the Deputy Principal makes returns to TUSLA. The Deputy Principal has responsibility for maintaining the Leabhar Tinrimh.

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

## **Punctuality**

School begins at 9.20 am. Most pupils arrive by school transport. Escorts/Drivers liaise with school to inform them of delays. Where parents/guardians bring pupils to school they will be contacted if the child is frequently late. The Principal is obliged under the Education Welfare Act, to report children who are persistently late, to the Education Welfare Board.

## **Recording and Reporting Attendance**

The school attendance of individual pupils is recorded in the Leabhar Rolla (Roll Book) of each class on a daily basis. Class attendance data is recorded daily in the Leabhar Tinrimh (Attendance Book). The annual attendance of each individual pupil is recorded in the Clár Leabhar (Register), together with information provided in enrolment forms (Pupil's Name, Date of Birth, Address and Parents' Names).

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 at 11 am 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. A note from parents/guardians is required to explain each absence. Such notes will be retained by the class teacher. Parents/guardians must also provide a note if a child departs early during the school day. These notes are dated and kept in a central location (administration office). Late arrivals and early departures are recorded by the class teacher. For safety, early collections are recorded in a central diary, detailing time of collection and person collecting. In the event of collection being any other than pupil's guardian, parents are asked to give written/verbal permission for collection.

Parents/guardians are made aware of the requirements of the TUSLA as part of the enrolment pack, in particular the by-law relating to absences of more than 20 days per school year. They are notified in writing on the end of year report of the total number of absences during the school year. Interventions for pupils whose non-attendance causes concern are listed below:

- An in-school discussion with pupil
- 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.)

The school is required to inform **TUSLA** of the following:

- a student has been absent from school for a cumulative total of twenty days or more
- a student's name is to be removed from the school register for any reason
- a student has been suspended for a cumulative total of six or more days
- the school has expelled a student
- a principal is concerned about a student's attendance

This is done using [www.schoolreturn.ie](http://www.schoolreturn.ie) or using forms as outlined on TUSLA website

### **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
- rewarding good attendance with certificates.

**TUSLA** is furnished with the total attendances in the school year through the Annual Report Form which is completed on-line.

### **Whole School Strategies to Promote Attendance**

St Killian's endeavours to create a safe, welcoming environment for our pupils and their parents/guardians. Staff liaise closely with parents/guardians through the use of the daily red folder, phone calls and meetings as appropriate to the need of the pupil, and parental or school concerns over their well-being. The teaching staff collaborates in the planning and implementation of the primary school curriculum, so as to provide a stimulating learning environment for all pupils.

Traditionally, school attendance is strong in our school. However, the staff remains vigilant so that 'risk' students are identified early. Risk students can be categorised as those who miss more than 5 days in a 20-day period without an accompanying note of explanation from parents/guardians. Appropriate contact takes place between the school and parents/guardians either via a letter or a note in the homework diary, or a phone call to the school office, when this occurs.

New entrants and their parents/guardians are invited to engage in an induction process, through which the school's policies and procedures in relation to attendance are explained. There is a focus on the value of regular attendance and on the importance of developing and maintaining good attendance.

The calendar for the coming school year is published annually. Parents/Guardians are also reminded of school closures through the newsletter. 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.

Certificates are available to pupils who have unbroken attendance, improve their attendance over a short period of time, and to pupils with consistent and regular attendance.

### **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 recognised school on each school day'.

Section 21 of the Act obliges schools to inform the Education Welfare Officer if a child is suspended from school for more than 6 days, 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 he/she concludes is failing or neglecting to cause the child to attend the school and is not co-operating with the TUSLA. A successful case taken against the parent may result in a fine and/or imprisonment.

Schools report individual student absences and expulsions by submitting Student Absence Reports up to four times each year. Schools also report the total number of days lost through absence by submitting an Annual Attendance Report (AAR) at the end of the academic year. This will be communicated to the BOM at the BOM at the end of each academic 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 he/she 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.

### **Communication**

The school maintains good relationships with the National Education Welfare Board (NEWB), parents and other professionals, and there is ongoing communication in relation to children who are at risk.

The school also maintains communication with schools pupils transfer from and to, in order to make the transition for pupils as easy as possible.



## **Communication with other Schools**

- When a child transfers from St Killian's to another school, the schools records on attendance, academic progress etc. will be forwarded on receipt of written notification of the transfer.
- When a child transfers into St Killian's confirmation of transfer will be communicated to the child's previous school, and appropriate records sought.
- Pupils transferring to a post primary school will have their records forwarded on receipt of confirmation of enrolment.

## **Communication with Parents**

The school also informs all parents of the implications of non-attendance as per the *Education Welfare Act 2000*. Through communication of this policy on enrolment, at the start of the year, on the website and throughout the school year should the need arise.

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 good 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.

## **Related Documents/Policies**

*Don't let your Child Miss Out* - NEWB 2004

Education Welfare Act 2000

Education Act 1998

Section 29 Education Act

Circular 0028/2013

## **Additional Resources/Information**



## **Definitions / Acronyms**

NEPS	National Educational Psychological Services
BOM	Board Of Management
DES	Department of Education and Skills
TUSLA	Child and Family Agency

## **Policy Approval**

This policy has been reviewed and accepted by the school Board of Management

Chairperson of BOM – Sean Oakes

Date – February 2016

## **Policy Review**

It is acknowledged and accepted by all parties that this policy may be revised/modified annually or more frequently as required in light of on-going evaluation of statutory requirements or situations that arise during the school year.

Next Policy Review Date – Spring 2017