

*St. Finian's N.S.,
Hill of Down,
Enfield,
Co. Meath*

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Attendance Policy for St. Finian's N.S., Killyon

This policy was drawn up by the Principal and staff of St Finian's N S, Killyon. The Parents' Association was also involved in the drafting of this policy.

Rationale

This policy was drawn up to promote and encourage regular attendance at school, which is seen by the school as an essential factor in helping pupils' learning.

The Education Welfare Act 2000 and the Education Act 1998 require that schools develop policies to encourage and promote regular attendance.

This policy acknowledges the role of the National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB) in the whole area of school attendance.

We hope by developing this policy that the school will act appropriately and promptly in cases of where disadvantage may be a factor in poor or falling levels of attendance.

We hope to promote positive attitudes to education among our school community.

Compliance with School Ethos and Mission Statement

This policy complements the school ethos of nurturing potential in a caring environment and promoting the welfare of all children equally.

Aims and Objectives

The purpose of this policy is:

- 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

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- fostering an appreciation of learning
- 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 had an input into the implementation of the policy. Parents have also been consulted through the P.A. committee. Class teachers record individual patterns of attendance and the Deputy Principal makes returns to the NEWB. The Deputy Principal is responsible for maintaining all records relating to school attendance including the roll books, Leabhair Tinreamh and Clár Leabhar.

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

Punctuality

The school day is as follows;

Infants 9.20am – 2.00pm

First class to Sixth class 9.20am – 2:50-3:00pm

The school will be open to receive pupils at 9.05am. No responsibility will be taken for children who arrive before that time. Children will line up in the yard, within their bubbles at 9.15am and proceed into class, which starts at 9.20am. All staff and children are expected to be on time.

All infants will go home at 2.00pm. The school must be informed of the identity of the person / people designated to collect the infants at the beginning of the year. The school must have a current mobile number for that person / people. If there is to be a late collection the school should be informed in advance or if they are to be collected by another person(s).

The children from 1st – 6th class will go home at staggered times from 2:50 to 3.00pm, to alleviate any congregation at the school gate with the current COVID regulations and restrictions. Children are escorted to the gate by their class teacher and depart through the gate in an orderly manner. For children being collected at 3.00pm, the person collecting them should be at the gate no later than 3pm, as the school cannot accept responsibility for children after that time. In the case of children travelling by bus, parents must make their own arrangements to ensure supervision is provided.

Recording and Reporting Attendance

In this school, the school attendance of individual children is recorded in the Leabhar Rolla (Roll book) which goes to each class on a daily basis. In the present circumstances with COVID restrictions in place the teachers will record their attendance on the Aladdin system and the Deputy Principal will record the attendance in the roll book (so that the roll book is not moving from class to class). Class attendance is recorded daily in the Leabhar Tinrimh (Attendance Book). The Primary online pupil database is now used to register children entering primary schools in addition to the Clár Leabhar, which was the traditional register for all primary school entrants. Returns to the NEWB / TULSA are made twice during the school year through the online system.

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 or before 10.30am each morning. Any

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pupil not present at this time will be marked absent for the day. The roll book may not be altered once it has been filled in. Section 18 of the Education Act (Welfare) 2000 places a legal duty on parents to notify the Principal about the reasons for the child's absence. A note from parents / guardians is required to explain each absence. These notes will be sent home at the beginning of the school year to each family and should be used for all absences. The parents should tick the category that covers their child's absence e.g. illness, bereavement etc. These notes will be retained by the class teacher and passed on to the Deputy Principal who will retain them in a confidential location. If a child has a long-term illness then the parent should ring the school to explain. Absences relating to COVID will also be recorded under two categories- 1. COVID- positive result or 2. COVID restrict movements. These COVID related absences will remain as part of the child's 20 days absences, however allowances will be made by TUSLA as the pupil has been following HSE advice.

Parents who intend to take their children out of school to go on a holiday are discouraged to do so due to the detrimental effect such absences have on their child's education. If they proceed with this however, they are obliged to inform the school in advance by way of a written letter which indicates that they are aware of the implications. Parents are responsible for their children's education when they are absent on holiday. Teachers will not be setting / correcting work for children to do during a holiday absence.

Late arrival and early departures were originally recorded by the class teachers. These will now be recorded at the main office as pupils must be signed in here. At the end of each term, the data is analysed to identify persistent offenders. Those arriving late or departing early must be signed in / out by a parent / guardian at the main entrance.

Parents are made aware of the legal requirement of the Principal to notify TUSLA of absences of more than 20 days. It is school policy to inform parents by letter when their child has been absent for 10 days. After 15 days' absences, the Deputy Principal will phone the parents. We expect absences to increase this year in response to the COVID guidelines and possible isolation periods for children. If there is a particular difficulty with non-attendance, the Principal will invite the parents / guardians to meet with her in the school to discuss the school's concerns. Every effort will be made by the school to resolve any particular issue that may unwittingly be causing a problem for any child or parent. The amount of children's absences are recorded on their end of year report.

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

TUSLA

TUSLA and the Education Welfare Officer is informed if:

- A child is expelled
- A child is suspended
- A child has missed more than 20 days

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

Whole School Strategies to Promote Attendance

St. Finian's N.S. endeavors to create a safe, welcoming environment for our pupils and their parents/guardians. Parents/guardians are consulted in drafting and reviewing policies with the aim of promoting a high-level of co-operation among the school community. 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 when this occurs. A meeting between parents and the Principal may be set up if deemed necessary. Absences of more than 20 days are automatically referred to TUSLA.

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 good attendance habits from Junior Infants onwards.

The calendar for the coming school year is published annually in June and a reminder is published in September. It is hoped that this approach will enable parents/guardians to plan family events around school closures, thus minimizing the chances of non-attendance related to family holidays during the school term.

The question of equality of access is addressed through the school's policy on Equal Opportunity and Gender Equity.

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 he/she 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 absence are recorded and reported to TUSLA twice during the school year through an 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. This information will be communicated to the school community through the school's newsletter.

Transfer to Another School

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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 communication with the second-level schools that children may be transitioning to.

Communication with other Schools

- When a child transfers from St. Finian's N.S., the school's records on attendance, academic progress etc. will be forwarded on receipt of written notification (when deemed necessary) of the transfer.
- When a child transfers into St. Finian's N.S., confirmation of transfer will be communicated to the child's previous school, and appropriate records sought.
- Pupils transferring from St. Finian's N.S. to a post primary school will have their records forwarded on receipt of confirmation of enrolment.

Communication with Parents

The school will circulate the NEWB information booklet *Don't Let Your Child Miss Out* to all new parents in September each year. The school makes the parents aware of the Attendance Policy which is put onto the school's website. The school also informs all parents every September.

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, particularly children in junior classes, are to be collected by someone not known to the teacher.

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Evaluation

The success of any Attendance Policy is measured through:

- Improved attendance levels as measured through Leabhar Rolla records and statistical returns
- Happy confident well-adjusted children
- Positive parental feedback
- Teacher vigilance.

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Review and Monitoring

This policy will be monitored and reviewed by the Board of Management on an annual basis and when the need arises.

Policy adopted by the BoM on:

Signed:

Date:

Chairperson

Principal

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St. Finian's N.S.

Killyon

Statement of Strategy for School Attendance

Name of school	St Finian's
Address	Killyon, Hill of Down, Enfield Co. Meath
Roll Number	07120V
The school's vision and values in relation to attendance	St Finian's values good attendance for every child. This year we had an average 95% attendance rate for the year. We would hope to maintain and indeed improve on this for next year. We have also noticed a significant increase this year in the numbers that are missing 10, 15 or more days while the number exceeding 20 days has not changed greatly.
The school's high expectations around attendance	St. Finian's expects all of its pupils to maintain a good record of attendance and punctuality. We encourage parents to ensure that their child attends every day for the full day. With the current COVID pandemic we will be expecting a higher percentage of absenteeism due to illness and HSE advice and guidance for children to isolate/ restrict their movements. St. Finian's understands that there will be exceptional circumstances such as illness, bereavement that will necessitate absence from school. At no time should a sick child be sent to school or be expected to do homework. In the case of a long-term illness, parents should contact the school to discuss and facilitate a mutually suitable arrangement. In the case of children restricting their movements where the pupil is fit and well, teachers will make contact with the pupil using the online platform google meet to continue teaching and learning. This will be arranged and finalised on a case by case basis and as required.
How attendance will be monitored	Attendance records are kept on a daily basis. The returns are made to TUSLA twice during the school year on the online system. Records of late arrivals and early departures are also kept in the office. These are examined at Christmas, Easter and Summer to detect any particular patterns that may be emerging, as is the daily roll.
Summary of the main elements of the school's approach to attendance: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Target setting and targets	The school aspires to have 100% attendance as much as possible for every day of the school year. Individual children's attendance that gives cause for concern will be monitored closely.

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The whole-school approach • Promoting good attendance • Responding to poor attendance 	<p>St Finian's prides itself on being an inclusive school and on having a welcoming, safe and caring environment where children, staff and all who visit the school can experience.</p> <p>There is a strong anti-bullying policy in the school and an understanding of the need to deal quickly with any issues that may arise and inform parents of outcomes and results of any investigations etc.</p> <p>Where there is an issue or a developing issue of falling attendance on the part of any pupil the school will contact the parents by letter/ email or phone to discuss this with them. Patterns of late arrivals/early departures will also be noted and discussions will take place with parents if necessary. Issues that may arise following these discussions will be dealt with in a professional yet caring manner.</p> <p>With regard to the increased number of absences exceeding 10, 15 or more days we will target these in September via the school's newsletter and will exercise vigilance in relation to these children.</p> <p>The BOM has drawn up a policy on School Attendance, which has been ratified.</p>
School roles in relation to attendance	<p>Parents are the primary educators of their children. The school works in tandem and as partners with parents. In St. Finian's the bulk of the parent body understand the importance of education in the children's lives and how absence from school adversely affects a positive educational experience for their children. The school sees its role as working positively and in partnership with all parents to achieve this.</p>
Partnership arrangements (parents, students, other schools, youth and community groups)	<p>As partners with parents, the school will communicate this strategy to all the parent body. It has collaborated with the PA committee in drawing up a school policy on attendance. These will be available on the school website for all parents to read.</p> <p>For those small number of children who may start to miss days there will be a strategy of positive engagement with them via teacher/child talk or by using My Thoughts about School from the NEPS literature.</p>
How the Statement of Strategy will be monitored	The strategy will be monitored annually
Review process and date for review	Will be reviewed by the staff in Sept 2021
Date the Statement of Strategy was approved by the Board of Management	29/09/20
Date the Statement of Strategy submitted to Tusla	29/09/20