



Kilgarvan Central School

Attendance Policy

Introduction

This attendance policy was drafted by the school staff and the Board of Management.

Rationale

- To promote and encourage regular attendance as an essential factor in our pupils' learning
- Legislative requirements such as the Education Welfare Act 2000 and the Education Act, 1998
- The role of the Tusla Educational Welfare Service (EWS), Child and Family Agency

Aims and Objectives

This 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.

Compliance with School Ethos

This policy complements the school ethos of nurturing potential in a caring environment where the welfare of children is paramount.

Roles and Responsibilities

All staff have an input into the implementation of the policy. Class teachers on a daily basis, using the Aladdin On-line software programme, record individual patterns of attendance and the Deputy Principal/Secretary make returns to Tusla Educational Welfare Service. The Deputy Principal has responsibility for overseeing attendance records using Aladdin On-line software programme.

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 9.20am. All pupils and teachers are expected to be on time. Teachers must be in their classrooms by 9.10am. The school will contact parents/guardians in the event of pupils being consistently late. The Principal is obliged under the Education Welfare Act, to report children who are persistently late, to Tusla.

Recording and Reporting Attendance

The school attendance of individual pupils is recorded in the Aladdin On-line Software Programme.

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 is taken each morning. Any pupil not present will be marked absent for the day. The roll may not be altered once it has been recorded in Aladdin. 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 and the child must be collected in the classroom and early departure must be recorded in the sign-out book. These notes are kept by the class teacher. In line with Department of Education & Skills rules, children who arrive at school later than 10.30am will be marked absent on the school roll. Children arriving later than 10.30am must be signed into the "Sign In" book. Children who are not present in school at 10.30am will be marked absent on the school roll.

Parents/guardians are made aware of the requirements of Tusla particularly the by-law relating to absences of more than 20 days per school year. It is the policy of Kilgarvan Central School to inform parents in writing when their child has been absent for 20 days. All parents are notified in writing on the end of year report of the total number of absences during the school year. Pupils whose non-attendance is a concern are invited to meet with the Principal during Parent/Teacher meetings and are informed of the school's concerns.

The school must inform Tusla (The first report for Period 1, from school re-opening to December 31st needs to be submitted online on or before March 31st, the second report for Period 2 from January 1st to the end of the school year needs to be submitted online on or before October 31st) where a child has missed 20 or more days in a school year, where attendance is irregular, where a pupil is removed from the school register and where a child is suspended or expelled for 6 days or more.

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.

National Education Welfare Board

The Education Welfare Officer is informed if:

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

Tusla is furnished with the total attendances in the school year through the Annual Report Form which is completed online.

Whole School Strategies to Promote Attendance

Kilgarvan Central School endeavours 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.

Our homework policy, drawn up in consultation with parents/guardians, clearly outlines the school's expectations in terms of the quantity of homework assigned and in the quality of homework presented. There is a consistent approach to homework throughout the school.

The calendar for the coming school year is published in September. It is hoped that 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.

Pupils are expected to wear the correct school uniform.

Parents/guardians are informed if a child has no lunch, the teacher will contact the parents and if one cannot be provided for him/her, the school will provide crackers / digestive biscuits.

Certificates are awarded to pupils who have excellent attendance during the school year.

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 recognised school on each school day'.

Section 21 of the Act obliges schools to inform Tusla 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 yearly 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.

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 has developed a good relationship with the Tusla Educational Welfare Services personnel and there is ongoing communication in relation to children who are at risk.

The school maintains communication with local pre-schools and second-level schools in order to make the transition for pupils as easy as possible.

Communication with other Schools

- When a child transfers from Kilgarvan Central School 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 Kilgarvan Central School confirmation of transfer will be communicated to the child's previous school, and appropriate records sought
- Pupils transferring from Kilgarvan Central School to a post primary school will have their records forwarded on receipt of confirmation of enrolment.

Communication with Parents

The school informs all parents of the implications of non-attendance as per the *Education Welfare Act 2000*. This information is disseminated by regular school circulars. Parents of new children are informed on enrolment.

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.

Evaluation

The success of any Attendance Policy is measured through:

- Improved attendance levels as measured through Aladdin On-line Software Programme and statistical returns
- Happy confident well adjusted children
- Positive parental feedback
- Teacher vigilance.

Implementation/Ratification and Review

This policy has been in operation in Kilgarvan Central School since 5th March 2013 and was ratified by the BOM on May 8th, 2019.

It will be reviewed on an annual basis.

Signed : _____
(Chairperson, Board of Management)