

# **Holy Family Junior School**

**17957N**



## **Attendance Policy**

**June 2021**

### **The purpose of this statement is**

- To foster an appreciation of learning among students in the school.
- To encourage regular attendance at school.

People responsible for the implementation and on-going monitoring of the statement

Board of Management

Principal : Miriam Lowe

Deputy Principal : Jane Phillips

Class Teachers

HSCL Teachers: Marina Mulqueen and Orla Gannon

Education Welfare Officer : Martina Hogan

Parents

### **Introductory Statement**

Regular attendance by pupils at school is key to educational attainment and success and must be actively encouraged within the school environment. Holy Family Junior School aims to foster a culture of regular attendance at school for all pupils. We aim to identify and support those pupils who are experiencing problems with attendance at school. Formal and informal structures are in place in our school to monitor, report and evaluate patterns of non-attendance amongst pupils. The provisions of The Education Welfare Act (2000) informs and supports the policy on attendance in our school.

Research findings are clear that the overall school climate where there is a welcoming atmosphere, positive teacher-student relationships and a supportive teaching and learning environment is at the core of success in every aspect of school life and work, including attendance. The quality of the whole-school ethos and culture is the most important school influence on students' attendance and engagement in learning. A whole-school approach to attendance will mean that:

- school ethos, policies and practices work consistently together to support good attendance
- attendance is a regular part of development planning and school self-evaluation
- management and staff work as a team, with a consistent approach to attendance
- parents and students are part of an inclusive school community and have opportunities to contribute to and take appropriate responsibility for the attendance policy and strategy
- Opportunities are provided through which staff members as a team can focus on attendance, update their knowledge about effective practice, and share experience and expertise on managing attendance.

Holy Family Junior School is committed to providing a learning environment that will foster all children's learning and encourage them to attend school regularly. Our aim is to provide a stimulating day, with clear guidelines and structures, so that children feel welcome and nurtured while attending school.

We believe that our pupils will benefit from their education through regular attendance. Casual absences (for whatever reason) are discouraged as they have a direct impact on children's learning. We aim to support children and parents in achieving good attendance. We aim to ensure that the pupils in our school attend regularly and on time. The performance indicator by which we

judge the success of our efforts is set each year by our average attendance which is recorded in the on line Leabhar Tinnreamh and on the on line Aladdin. We are seeking to improve our average attendance figure for this and subsequent years. Attendance is a priority area identified by the staff/parents/pupils. It is a requirement under Education Welfare Act 2000.

### **Aims of the policy**

- To foster an appreciation of learning.
- To raise awareness of importance of school attendance.
- To encourage consistent and punctual attendance at school by our pupils.
- To enhance the learning environment where children can make progress in all aspects of their development.
- To promote positive attitudes to learning.
- To ensure that the system of rules, rewards, and sanctions are implemented in a fair and consistent manner that encourage pupils to attend school.
- To comply with requirements under Education Welfare Act 2000/Guidelines form NEWB.

### **Defining and Recording Non-Attendance**

At Holy Family Junior School, we define non-attendance as not being present in school at roll call at 9.50am.

(Exceptions are made for absences authorised by the Board of Management e.g. school tours departing early, children attending an appointment such as Speech and Language Therapy having informed us that they will come to school after the appointment.)

A record is maintained of the attendance or non-attendance on each school day of every student registered in Holy Family Junior School for each school year.

Attendance details are recorded on Aladdin, the on line roll book. The class teacher also records the reason for absence (as provided by the parent) in the "Reasons for Absence" section of the school's online roll book. Parents must write a note and give it to the teacher or fill in the online 'Return to Educational facility Parental Declaration form' on the child's return to school. They may provide a medical certificate to the class teacher explaining the reason for absence. All absences must be accounted for. Parents may also phone the school secretary and she will request them to fill out the online parental declaration form. The medical certificates/parental declaration forms are retained in the school file as record of absences.

If a child arrives to school late or leaves school early the teacher also records the punctuality on Aladdin. Aladdin retains a record of time missed by the child and accumulates the time. It is easy to see the pattern of punctuality.

Environment: The Board of Management strives to create a safe and welcoming environment for our pupils and their parents. Pupils who are late are welcomed by the School Secretary at reception and by the class teachers and if any child is persistently late the issue is raised with his/her parents. The pupil is always made to feel welcome if he/she arrives late for school.

If a pupil is withdrawn from school during the school day the parent/guardian must sign out the pupil at reception, stating the time of departure and indicate a reason for withdrawal. These records will be recorded on Aladdin by the secretary or the class teacher.

If a pupil is not present by 9.50 a.m. and the school has received no notification from parents/guardians, he/she will be marked absent whether or not the pupil arrives later. If the school receives notification from parents/guardians that a child will be late for school, that child will be marked present when he arrives.

If a pupil arrives in school on time and is subsequently signed-out after roll call which is 9.50 am he will be marked present.

If a pupil arrives in school on time and is subsequently signed-out before roll call and later returns to school, the child will be marked present.

Attendance returns are made to the National Education Welfare Board at the end of each reporting period by the Deputy Principal.

### **Monitoring attendance**

The Deputy Principal and HSCL teacher meet weekly to monitor attendance and punctuality and the DP reports to the Principal. The Education Welfare Officer is contacted when her assistance is required with particular absences. The attendance monitoring team identify, at an early stage, pupils who are at risk of developing school attendance problems. The EWO is informed of students who have irregular attendance.

Careful monitoring of attendance,

- 10 days absent positive support is offered by HSCL.
- 15 days absent the Deputy Principal consults with the class teacher to discuss the reasons for absence as reported by parents. The HSCL teacher will visit the home to liaise with the family and support the family with attendance issues and help them in improving attendance. A letter is sent to remind parents of their duties and the number of days absent.
- 20 days absent a letter is sent to parents (irrespective of reasons) to inform them that the NEWB has been informed. Referral to NEWB in extreme cases
- Punctuality is addressed by the HSCL teacher who walks the yard in the morning. She reminds parents of good practice, here every day at the classroom door at 9 am .

## **Effective Practices.**

Whole school strategies to promote attendance,

- We reward improvements in attendance on a whole class basis. Rewards are announced at assembly. At the end of each month the class with the best attendance go to the café for a treat.
- Parents are informed in the school newsletter which class had the best attendance each month.
- Children who have improved attendance get an individual reward certificate.
- We report to parents on a child's attendance in the end of year reports which are posted home.
- We have an induction meeting each May for the parents of New Entrants in preparation for beginning school in September. We make parents aware of the importance of regular daily attendance and we communicate the requirements of parents under the Education Welfare Act. We make them aware of their statutory duties as outlined in the Education Act.
- At the end of year assembly children who had full attendance during the school year are presented with a Gold Merit Certificate. Children who missed one day get a Silver Certificate. Children who missed 2 / 3 days get a Bronze Certificate. Children who had improved attendance during the year get a Certificate of Merit for Improvement
- The responsibility of attendance at school lies ultimately with the parents / guardians. Parents are urged to co-operate with the school to ensure that their child's education is unhampered. Persistent failure to attend school constitutes neglect. Parents are urged not to take family holidays during school term as this may have a detrimental effect on students' performance in school.

## **Procedures in relation to the Removal from Register/Transfer from another school**

We remove a pupil's name from the school register and POD when we have been informed that the child has been enrolled in another school or when a child has been marked absent for 20 school days.

Transfer to another school: Where parents remove a child from the school a letter

is sent to his/her new school stating child's record of attendance, the last class the child attended and a school report pertaining to the education of the child.

Transfer from another school: A letter is sent to the previous school where the child has been enrolled, stating that the child is currently enrolled and registered in our school and a request is made for relevant reports on the educational progress of the child. The child's details are then added to POD.

## **Reports to NEWB / TUSLA**

At the end of each school term an attendance report is submitted to the NEWB by the deputy principal.

At the end of the school year the Annual Report is submitted to the NEWB by the deputy principal.

## **Success Criteria**

- The success of this statement will be evaluated in June each year by the Deputy Principal.
- An increase in the overall percentage attendance levels recorded each month will be checked at the end of each month.
- Positive feedback from teachers, parents and pupils will indicate success



## **Implementation Date**

This revised policy will be reviewed at the next meeting of the Board of Management .

It will be available at reception, online and on the school website.

This policy will be reviewed by the Deputy Principal at the end of June each school year.

## **Ratification and Communication**

The Board of Management officially ratified the statement

on \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Allen Flynn

Chairperson of the Board of Management

## References

- Education Welfare Act 2000
  - “Empty Desks” 2000, Michael Finneran: Curriculum Development Unit, Mary Immaculate College, Limerick
  - INTO Q&A booklet Education Act & Education Welfare Act
  - Circular 20/90 on Discipline (DES website [www.irlgov.ie/educ](http://www.irlgov.ie/educ)). Also as Appendix CPSMA Handbook
  - Circular 22/02 Appeals Procedures under Section 29 of the Education Act, 1998. (DES website). Deals with appeals under the following headings:
    - (1) Permanent exclusion from a school
    - (2) Suspension
    - (3) Refusal to enrol
  - Education Act, 1998 Section 15 (2(d)) (DES website)
  - Education (Welfare) Act, 2000 Section 23(1 -5), 24 (1-5) (DES website)
  - Management Board Members’ Handbook. Revised 2007. CPSMA.
    - (1) Guidelines for School Behaviour and Discipline.
    - (2) A suggested Code of Behaviour & Discipline for National Schools
- \*These references apply until new guidelines are issued by the Education Welfare Board.
- Department of Education and Science Guidelines on Countering Bullying Behaviour in Primary and Post Primary Schools (1993) available on DES website
  - Report to the Minister of Education Niamh Breathnach, T.D. on Discipline in Schools. Maeve Martin Spring 1997. Ch. 4 p.56-61 Recommendations for Schools

- Discipline in the Primary School INTO August 2002
- Enhancing Self Esteem INTO 1995
- The Education Act 1998. The Education Welfare Act 2000. Questions and Answers INTO
- The Principal's Legal Handbook Oliver Mahon B.L. IVEA 2002 Ch. 2 School Discipline
- Quality Circle Time in the primary school. Jenny Mosley. LDA 2000
- Responding to Bullying. First Steps for Teachers. The Cool School Programme. NE Health Board
- Investigating and Resolving Bullying in Schools. The Cool School Programme. NE Health Board
- Stop it! Steps to Address Bullying. Wexford Education Network. Wexford Area Partnership. Phone: 053 23994
- Stay Safe and Walk Tall Programmes
- School's own SPHE Plan
- Anti Bullying Unit. Trinity College. Dr. Mona O Moore.
- NPC website [www.npc.ie](http://www.npc.ie)
- IPPN website [www.ippn.ie](http://www.ippn.ie)
- INTO website [www.into.ie](http://www.into.ie)
- SDPS website [www.sdps.ie](http://www.sdps.ie)

## Appendix 1.

### Guidelines for Teachers in Dealing with Pupil Absences in School.

- All absences from school are noted at 9.50am each day by the class teacher as outlined by Dept Of Ed, but the roll may be called up **to 10.50 am**.
- Punctuality - Pupils who arrive after 9.50 am or leave before 1.45 Juniors and Seniors, 2.45pm First Classes, will be recorded on Aladdin and Aladdin will accumulate the time missed and we can see a pattern .
- If a parent rings Ita to say that a child is absent Ita will request that they fill in the online 'return to educational facility declaration form'
- The teacher will give these notes to the deputy principal who will store them in the school file. These notes may be requested by the EWO in cases where absences are being investigated by the NEWB. ( TUSLA)
- Pupils who have been marked absent for 20 consecutive days will be removed from Aladdin by the deputy principal. The pupil will be re-entered on Aladdin on return to school.
- **10 days** absent **a support visit is made by HSCL. The HSCL teacher will visit** the home to liaise with the family and support the family with attendance issues and help them in improving attendance and punctuality.
- **15 days** absent the deputy principal consults with the class teacher to discuss the reasons for absence as reported by parents. **A letter** will be sent to remind parents of their duties and the number of days absent.
- **20 days** absent a letter is sent to parents (irrespective of reasons) to inform them that the NEWB has been informed. When a child over 6 years of age has 20 days absent the **parents are invited to a meeting with the EWO**
- The pupil is always made to feel welcome if he/she arrives late for school.
- If a pupil is withdrawn from school during the school day the parent/guardian must sign out the pupil at reception and indicate the reason