

# **Holy Family Junior School**

**17957N**



## **Attendance Policy**

**June 2025**

**The purpose of this statement is to highlight the strategies and measures in place in Holy Family Junior School:**

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

**Introductory Statement and Rationale**

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) and the Education ACT 1998 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/guardians 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 and nurture all children's learning in a caring and inclusive environment. Our aim is to encourage and support daily attendance and provide a stimulating day, with clear guidelines and structures, so that children feel welcome, nurtured and valued 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/guardians 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 and outlined in our DEIS plan for Attendance. The online Leabhar Tinrimh and Aladdin inform this planning. Aladdin (Schools) is an online Management Information System (MIS)/Student Information System (SIS) specifically designed for Irish primary schools.

Attendance is a priority area identified by the staff/parents/guardians/pupils. It is a requirement under Education Welfare Act 2000.

### **Aims and Objectives:**

This policy focuses on

- Ensuring that pupils are registered accurately and efficiently.
- Ensuring that pupil attendance is recorded daily.
- Encouraging full attendance where possible.
- Promoting a positive and inclusive learning environment.
- Enabling learning opportunities to be availed of by all.

- Raising awareness of the importance of school attendance.
- Fostering an appreciation of learning.
- Identifying 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.
- Fostering an appreciation of learning.
- Raising awareness of importance of school attendance.
- Encouraging consistent and punctual attendance at school by our pupils.
- Enhancing the learning environment where children can make progress in all aspects of their development.
- Promoting positive attitudes to learning.
- Ensuring that the system of rules, rewards, initiatives and sanctions are implemented in a fair and consistent manner that encourage pupils to attend school.

### **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.

All staff have an input into the implementation of the policy. Class teachers record individual pupil attendance electronically daily. The Deputy Principal makes returns to NEWB. The annual school attendance record is sent to TUSLA by the Deputy Principal at the end of each school year. The Leabhar Tinrimh is recorded on Aladdin. The HSCL Teacher maintains strong links with 'at risk' families, offering support and making home visits. Regular meetings are held between the Principal/Deputy Principal and the HSCL teachers to discuss improvements/ deterioration in attendance.

## **Recording and Reporting Attendance**

The school attendance of individual pupils is recorded daily on Aladdin. Class attendance data is recorded daily in the Leabhar Tinrimh section of Aladdin. The annual attendance of each individual pupil is also recorded on Aladdin.

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 from after 9.20 each morning and must be taken before 11. Any pupil not present will be marked absent for the day (unless otherwise informed by parents/guardians). A note from parents/guardians is required to explain each absence. Such notes will be recorded on Aladdin by the parent/guardian or class teacher. If a child arrives after 9.15 they are recorded as being late and the adult who accompanies them usually signs them in with the school secretary. If a child departs early/returns during the school day details are also recorded by/with the secretary.

Parents/Guardians are made aware of the requirements of the NEWB particularly those relating to absences of more than 20 days per school year. They are notified in writing in the end of year report of the total number of days the child was present during the school year.

The school will inform the EWO (TESS) through the available channels (portal or paper);

- Where a child has missed 20 or more days in a school year by submitting a Student Absence Report (SAR) twice a year.
- The total number of days lost through absence by submitting an Annual Attendance Report (AAR) at the end of the academic year
- Where the school has a concern in relation to school attendance of a pupil and school interventions have been exhausted
- If a student is being placed on a reduced day
- When a student has been suspended for a period of 6 consecutive days or a cumulative total of 20 days
- When there is an intention to expel a student and when the expulsion is confirmed

**Promoting Attendance:**

Holy Family Junior School promotes good attendance by:

- Creating a safe space for pupils
- Being kind, compassionate and welcoming at all times
- Fostering a positive school culture and a welcoming environment
- Prioritising the quality of relationships between all partners
- Being vigilant so that the risks to good attendance are identified and addressed as soon as possible

**Whole School Strategies:**

- Holy Family Junior School prioritises the creation of a safe and welcoming environment for our pupils and their parents/guardians. We start the day with a warm welcome, some interesting playful activities and we have a breakfast club if an early morning snack is needed.
- Attendance is acknowledged every morning at drop off by school staff at the classroom door and by the Principal, Deputy Principal and HSCLs who are on the yard in the morning.
- Pupils who are late(who arrive after 9.15) are welcomed by the School Secretary at reception and by the class teachers. If any child is persistently late the issue is raised with his/her parents/guardians. 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.
- Initiatives to promote attendance initiatives are held at least twice yearly.
- Parents/guardians are consulted in drafting and reviewing policies with the aim of promoting a high level of cooperation among the school community. The

teaching staff collaborate in the planning and implementation of the primary school curriculum to provide a safe, stimulating, inclusive and happy learning environment for all pupils.

- The school, in accordance with the SPHE programme, promotes the development of positive self-concept, and the holistic wellbeing of our pupils.
- Staff are vigilant so that 'risk' pupils are identified early, they communicate directly with the HSCLs and early interventions are put in place.
- Parents/guardians of new entrants are invited to an induction meeting prior to the commencement of the school year and the value and importance of developing good attendance and punctuality from Junior Infants onwards is stressed. Our policies and procedures in relation to attendance are also explained. This message is repeated when Junior Infant teachers meet with the parents/guardians of the pupils in their class during the year.
- We report to parents/guardians on a child's attendance in the end of year reports which are posted home.
- The calendar for the coming school year is published annually in term 3. It is hoped that this will enable parents/guardians to plan family events/ holidays around school closures, thus minimizing the chances of non-attendance
- Attendance is monitored by the class teacher in the first instance. Where there are concerns, they communicate with the HSCL who begin the early intervention process by making phone calls, meeting parent on the yard and discussing same at the regular attendance/care meetings with the Principal and Deputy Principal. Where unexplained absences continue or where there is a pattern of poor attendance, parents/guardians are contacted/met by with the Principal/Deputy Principal. If no improvement results from our interventions, an attendance referral may be sent to TUSLA (Education Welfare Services)
- Pupils at risk of developing school attendance problems are usually supported by the Schools Completion Programme

- Attendance targets are set at three levels (all, few, some) in the Attendance DEIS plan. Action plans are developed to meet these targets and they are regularly reviewed at attendance team meetings.
- Retention targets are set in the Retention DEIS plan. Action plans are developed to meet these targets and they are regularly reviewed at Retention team meetings.
- As part of the support for few a small number of 'at risk' pupils may have individual reward systems to encourage and acknowledge improvements in attendance.
- Attendance concerns are discussed at Attendance/Care Meetings, which are held regularly.
- Absences of 20 days or more are reported to TUSLA (Education Welfare Services) twice a year via the Student Absence Report.

**Monitoring Attendance/Strategies in the Event of Non-Attendance (in addition to those listed above)**

The Deputy Principal, Principal and HSCL teacher meet regularly to monitor attendance. This team endeavour to identify, at an early stage, pupils who may be at risk of developing school attendance problems and to decide on appropriate supports for the families in question. The Education Welfare Officer may be contacted when her assistance is required with particular absences. If attendance continues to be a concern and the schools interventions have been exhausted a referral may be made to TUSLA (Education Welfare Services) by the Deputy Principal.

Parents/Guardians receive notification (via letter or Aladdin Connect) three times a year informing them that their child has missed 5, 10 and 15 days or more. The letter also reminds them of supports available through the Home School and Community Liaison teachers, the Schools Completion Programme and the Education and Welfare Service to improve attendance. The letters also remind them that TUSLA (TESS) will be informed when their child misses 20 days or more.



**Communication:**

The school has developed a good relationship with the local Education Welfare Board (NEWB) personnel and there is ongoing communication in relation to children who are at risk.

The school maintains communication with our local pre-schools and Holy Family Senior School to make the transition for pupils as easy as possible.

Under section 20 of the Education (Welfare) Act (2000), when a child transfers to another school the principal of the child's new school must notify the principal of the child's previous school that the child is now registered in their school. In keeping with this legislation when a child transfers from Holy Family Junior School to another school, the school's records on attendance, academic progress etc may be forwarded on receipt of written notification of the transfer. The transfer will be recorded on the Pupil Online Database (POD) and imported by the new school via POD.

When a child transfers to Holy Family Junior School confirmation of transfer will be communicated to the child's previous school, and appropriate records sought. The transfer will be recorded on the Pupil Online Database and exported by our school via POD.

**Communication with Parents**

The school informs all parents/guardians of the implications of non-attendance as per the Education Welfare Act 2000. This information is communicated to parents/guardians at the annual induction meeting for incoming Junior Infants. It is also communicated to existing parents via the back to school newsletter, which is distributed early in term 1. Parents/guardians also receive regular reminders throughout the year, about the importance of good attendance and punctuality through the school newsletter.

*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 the Education Welfare Service to resolve any attendance issues
- discussing planned absences with the school
- refraining from taking holidays during school time
- ensuring that Aladdin Connect is actively installed on their phone, to receive communications from the school relevant to their child etc.
- showing an interest in their children's school day and their children's homework
- praising and encouraging their children's achievements
- instilling in their children a positive self-concept and a positive sense of self-worth
- 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 the school, by ringing the school secretary if their child/children, are to be collected by someone not known to the teacher

### **Evaluation**

The success of this Attendance Policy is measured through:

- Improved attendance levels as set out in the DEIS Attendance plan and measured through Aladdin records and statistical returns.
- Happy confident well-adjusted children
- Positive parental feedback
- Teacher vigilance.

### **Communication of Policy**

This policy will be communicated to all school staff and added to the school shared drive. A copy will be on the school website and a hard copy will be available in the school should any partner request to view it.

### **Implementation/Ratification and Review**

This policy will be implemented with immediate effect following ratification.

Ratified by the Board of Management

Date:

Signed:

Allen Flynn

Chairperson of the Board of Management

<https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-education/policies/education/>

<https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-education/circulars/time-in-school-primary/>