

**ST. ATTRACTA'S SENIOR NATIONAL SCHOOL
MEADOWBROOK, DUBLIN 16**



PUPIL ATTENDANCE STRATEGY



SCOIL SHINSIREACH NAOMH ATHRACHT

CLUAIN GHLAISE, ÁTH CLIATH 16

UIMHIR ROLA: 19716B

Scoil Shinsireach Naomh Athracht, Cluain Ghlaise, Áth Cliath 16
Pupil Attendance Strategy
St. Attracta's Senior National School, Meadowbrook, Dublin 16.

INTRODUCTION

St. Attracta's Senior National School is committed to providing a happy, caring and secure learning environment in which the individual student is enabled to achieve his/her full potential. We value the individuality of all our children and respect their right to access all areas of learning. We work to enable them to develop the knowledge, skills, understanding and attitudes that are necessary for their development into active and responsible adults.

In order to achieve this, St. Attracta's Senior National School promotes excellence in teaching and learning. We believe that our pupils can only benefit from the education we provide through regular school attendance.

Our aim is to provide a stimulating day, with clear guidelines and structures, so that children feel welcome and nurtured while attending school. We aim to support children and parents in achieving excellent attendance and casual absences (for whatever reason) are discouraged as they have a direct impact on children's learning.

We provide a warm, welcoming, supportive learning environment for our pupils, one in which they are valued and respected and in which provision is made for their learning needs. Our school's code of behaviour takes a positive approach to fostering good behaviour so that the school environment is a pleasant place for a child to spend his/her time.

We hold regular and open class-level discussions with the children on the importance of regular attendance. The class teacher regularly communicates with parents and if it is a cause for concern, provides them with updates on their child's attendance. Attendance is generally discussed at the parent teacher meetings in November or during the year if the need arises. It is also reported to parents in the end of year school report card.

We publicly and positively affirm those children who have excellent attendance. They are awarded at the end of the year with attendance certificates. We also praise and reward those who are making a serious effort to improve their attendance.

Every effort is made to ensure daily attendance and punctuality is also valued as a good habit for life.

The deputy principal has a Special Duties Post which includes the monitoring and promotion of good attendance. The principal and/or deputy principal meets parents who may need encouragement and support in ensuring the regular attendance of their child/children.

STRATEGIES TO ENHANCE THE SCHOOL EXPERIENCE and ENCOURAGE GOOD ATTENDANCE

Parental Support: It is the policy of St. Attracta's Senior National School to encourage and maintain open communication between home and school and to encourage parents in their role as primary educators of their children. The Principal and teachers are always available, on an appointment basis, to meet parents.

Caring Environment: We try to create a welcoming environment for pupils and parents. Teachers consistently try to encourage good attendance in their respective classrooms. The pastoral care of pupils is important to the teaching staff and our Pastoral Care policy elaborates on the strategies which encourage improved pupil attendance.

Learning Support: Our class teachers and support teachers seek to ensure that children who may be experiencing learning difficulties are identified as early as possible and actively supported and encouraged with appropriate teaching. Homework is tailored to the individual needs of these pupils. Given the acknowledged link between failure in school and poor attendance, teachers regularly liaise with parents as difficulties arise.

Homework Support: We are aware that for some students not having homework done might give rise to avoiding school. We work in conjunction with the St. Vincent de Paul Society to provide Homework Club for children whose home circumstances dictate that there is neither the environment conducive to completion of homework nor the expertise at home to help with homework.

Lunches - Teachers are mindful of the fact that some children regularly come to school without breakfast and/or lunch. In these circumstances we provide breakfast and lunch for children whose parents experience some difficulties in providing for the children. These measures enhance the school experience for those children who might otherwise be at risk of poor attendance.

Encouragement: We emphasise positive achievements and do all we can to enhance self-esteem. End of Year awards recognise excellent school attendance and at the end of the school year certificates are awarded to pupils for perfect attendance or for those who have only missed one day throughout the year. At the end of 6th class, pupils who have never missed a day from school receive a special pen.

Extra Curricular Activities & Events: We try to meet the holistic needs of the children by providing a range of after school activities and by encouraging pupils to get involved in these activities. We also encourage the children to get involved in quizzes, sport, etc. during and after school. All of this encourages good attendance.

Pastoral Care Programme: In St. Attracta's Senior School, pastoral care is a priority and we support the pupils in a great many ways. When attendance and absenteeism become an issue, we implement aspects of our pastoral care programme as outlined in Appendix 1.

COMMUNICATIONS WITH PARENTS

- ✚ We assure parents that we provide a happy, caring and secure learning environment for pupils thus giving them an incentive to attend school and to enjoy success on a more regular basis.
- ✚ The importance of good attendance and punctuality is highlighted regularly in the school's newsletters and these issues are also discussed at parent teacher meetings if they are a cause for concern.
- ✚ We request that parents do not take children on family holidays during the school year, as this leaves gaps in learning which are very difficult to make up.
- ✚ We ask parents to value every minute that the children spend at school and to recognise the embarrassment of the child arriving late for school. Therefore parents are asked to make sure that the children are standing outside their classroom doors by 8.50a.m.
- ✚ We advise parents that children should not be taken out of school early except in very exceptional circumstances. If it is absolutely necessary to collect a child early, the parent must go to the office to sign the child out. A record is kept of all such absences.
- ✚ Parents of children absent for part of a day or a full day must give an explanation in writing to the class teacher. These notes are stored in registration folders until the end of the school year. Attendance records are stored in school for 10 years.
- ✚ With the publication of *Circular 0028/2013: Simplified arrangements for the maintenance of the Register (Clárleabhar), Roll Book (Leabhar Rolla) and Daily Attendance Book (Leabhar Tinrimh Laethúil); Clarification in relation to the Register to be maintained under the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000,*
‘a pupil will be marked either present or absent at the time of roll call and there will be no provision for adjusting the Leabhar Rolla where a pupil subsequently does not complete the full school day or arrives after the roll call’.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF HOME AND SCHOOL

A roll call is taken every day and should a child be absent, they are required to have an explanatory note from their parents when they return to school. The absence should be recorded in a note to the teacher. The Education and Welfare act ‘obliges the parents of an absent child to notify the school of the cause of absence not later than the third day of absence’. Notes or records of non-attendances are duly dated and kept by the class teacher.

Class teachers keep attendance in their classes in two ways:

1. By filling out their rolla book daily
2. By filling out the class attendance on the Aladdin system

When a child misses 15 days, the class teacher sends a letter to the parent informing them of this and offering any assistance the school might be able to give. (Letter to be co-signed by the principal, Muireann Máirtín)

When a child misses 20 days, the class teacher sends a similar letter, again offering assistance and requesting that the parent come to the school for a meeting.

Chronic low attendance also warrants a personalised attendance sheet, administered each day by the class teacher. This also tackles poor punctuality, as some children miss a huge block of the same subject every day by regularly coming to school late.

Poor punctuality is an inhibitor to learning. It is the parents' responsibility to ensure that their child is in time for school and it is difficult for teachers to reprimand a child as they are mindful of the fact that it is the child's parents who are responsible for bringing children to school on time. It is also quite distressing for children who are constantly late for school.

Recipients of learning support who are poor attenders often take up a valuable place which another struggling child could avail of. Therefore, non-attendance of this nature is reported to the deputy principal, who will follow up on it.

THE EDUCATION (WELFARE) ACT 2000

The Education (Welfare) Act 2000 provides a framework under which attendance at school can be dealt with by law. As a result of the Act, the National Education Welfare Board (NEWB) has been established and has appointed Education Welfare Officers.

Under the regulations of the Act, the school is obliged to

- keep a record of pupils' attendance, (this is done in the class roll books).
- submit to the NEWB the names of all pupils who miss 20 or more days from school in any given year.
- keep a written record of pupils' absences.

Under the Act, parents are required to

- send their children to school each day
- notify the principal, in writing, of the reason for a child's absence.

As required by the Education Welfare Act, where all of the strategies outlined in this document have been employed and attendance still does not improve, and where there is no medical or family reason for the poor attendance, the National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB) the absence is reported by telephone by Evelyn Doyle (Deputy Principal), where one of their officers will be expected to follow up on the matter. If the absenteeism persists, the school requests active intervention from the Education Welfare Officer.

The school keeps a record of all such absences, using the codes as set down by the National Education Welfare Board (see below). The Aladdin administration system used in school provides an ongoing profile of each pupil's attendance and absenteeism.

The Deputy Principal is responsible for liaison with the National Education Welfare Board and works with the principal and teachers when concerns arise.

NEWB Codes for Category of Absence

- A Illness
- B Urgent Family Reasons (eg: Bereavement)
- C Expelled
- D Suspended
- E Other (e.g. Holidays, Religious Observance, Emigration)
- F Unexplained
- G Transfer to another school (written confirmation received from other school)

The NEWB returns are administered three times per year. At the end of the year, letters are issued to all parents whose children have missed 20 days or more during the school year in question.

It is the duty of the Deputy Principal in this school to look after all the administration attached to attendance. She regularly checks the Aladdin system and the Rolla Books to make sure they are being filled in correctly. She also issues the letters and personalised attendance sheets to the class teachers, and often meets parents with the class teacher when the principal is unavailable.

MONITORING/EVALUATION/REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed occasionally and as deemed necessary. The views and opinions of the partners in education are welcome at all times.

Appendix 1: PASTORAL CARE INITIATIVES

- ✚ Access to extra-curricular activities for M15 pupils
- ✚ Access to breakfast, lunches for needy pupils
- ✚ Art Initiative for Children touched by Cancer
- ✚ Attendance at TUSLA conferences regarding support for families and children
- ✚ Attendance Strategies for poor attenders
- ✚ Book Rental Scheme
- ✚ Buddy Reading system for new pupils
- ✚ Buddy system for children with social needs in particular
- ✚ Children with specific 'jobs' in the school.
- ✚ Circle Time
- ✚ Free after school sports lessons
- ✚ Free use of books to those in need
- ✚ Friendship Week
- ✚ Happy Day
- ✚ Homework club
- ✚ IEPs and IPLPs
- ✚ Jobs around the school for children
- ✚ Kindness Counts
- ✚ Liaison with Church and Community
- ✚ M15 pupil support programme
- ✚ Pastoral Care 'Go To' Room
- ✚ Personal hygiene support for pupils
- ✚ Play Therapy
- ✚ Quiet Space
- ✚ Rainbows
- ✚ Resource teaching
- ✚ Social skills for certain pupils,
- ✚ St. Vincent de Paul support
- ✚ Stay Safe programme
- ✚ Subsidisation of school trips/outings
- ✚ Free Uniforms
- ✚ Worry Box in classrooms