



SCHOOL ATTENDANCE POLICY

Meán Scoil Mhuire

Chairperson: Ms. Karen Clabby

Acting Principal: Ms. Mairéad Lyons

Date: 06/12/2022

Meán Scoil Mhuire School Attendance Policy

Mission Statement

Meán Scoil Mhuire is a voluntary Secondary Catholic School. It is a centre for the holistic formation of girls and young women.

- (1) We respect the dignity of each person with her unique background, talents, traditions and beliefs.
- (2) We provide a pleasant disciplined atmosphere in which students can grow spiritually, morally, academically, socially and culturally.
- (3) We expose all to a rich cultural heritage and help them to acquire the knowledge and skills, which enables them to understand, appreciate and respect themselves, others and their environment.
- (4) We foster positive Christian values and self-esteem so that our students leave school with a sense of self-worth and self-esteem and are well equipped for the challenges of life.
- (5) We encourage partnership at all levels between the management, staff, parents, students and the local community.
- (6) Meán Scoil Mhuire has not only a highly respected academic tradition. We also develop creativity, leadership and social skills by promoting involvement in extra-curricular activities.

Attendance

Regular attendance at school is essential for all students. We promote a culture of high expectations, encouraging each student to take responsibility for her own learning and achieve her full potential through regular presence in class. We seek to identify and support those students who are experiencing problems with attendance at school. The provisions of the Education Act 1998 and the Education Welfare Act 2000 inform and support the policy.

Rationale

The policy is considered necessary because:

1. There are a number of legislative requirements arising from the Education Welfare Act 2000.
2. The requirements of the National Education Welfare Board.
3. The requirements of the Department of Education and Skills.
4. There is an established link between attendance and achievement. Aside from the holistic development of the individual, each student must be in school to achieve.

5. It clarifies the roles and responsibilities of each partner in education in relation to attendance.
6. Meán Scoil Mhuire's Statement of Strategy for School attendance (Section 22(1) and 22(2) of the Education Welfare Act 2000) complements this policy.

Aims & Objectives

- To encourage full attendance throughout the school.
- To recognise good attendance.
- To identify and support students at risk of developing attendance problems and non-attendees.
- To raise awareness of the importance of school attendance.
- To foster an appreciation of learning.
- To improve communication with parents and develop links between school and home.
- To support those who are not in attendance through the use of our school pastoral care systems e.g. Home-School Community Liaison (HSCL)

Application of the Policy

This policy applies to all students of Meán Scoil Mhuire regardless of age.

Roles and Responsibilities

B.O.M.

- Ensure that the statutory obligations of the school with regard to school attendance and participation are adhered to.
- Ensure that all information is collected and issued in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.
- Ensure that an evaluation of the effectiveness of the process, strategy and policy regarding attendance is carried out regularly.

Principal

- To maintain a register of all pupils attending the school.
- To ensure that adequate systems are in place to record attendance or absence of students.
- To oversee the implementation of the attendance policy.
- To maintain a record of late arrivals, early departures and returns to the school.
- To notify Tusla as follows:
 - Where a student is suspended for a period of not less than 6 days
 - Where the aggregate number of school days on which a student is absent during the school year is not less than 20 days

- Where a student's name is removed from the register
- Where in the opinion of the principal, a student is not attending school regularly.
- To make a referral to the EWO in cases of attendance concern.

The principal may delegate duties regarding attendance to other professionals working in the school.

Deputy Principal

- Liaise with Principal on all issues and procedures regarding students including attendance.

Year Head

- Monitor and record attendance in Year Group and make students aware of the importance of regular attendance.
- Ascertain reasons for non-attendance.
- To seek and file written explanations for student absences from parents/guardians and note same on the official roll.
- When necessary make referrals to the Care Team, Guidance Counsellor, Attendance Officer, HSCL, Deputy Principal and Principal.
- To liaise with the Principal/Deputy Principal/Attendance Officer/HSCL on matters relating to attendance.
- To send 10/ 15/20 days attendance concern letters to parents/guardians (see Appendix 1).
- To meet with parents/guardians regarding initial attendance concerns.

Home School Community Liaison Coordinator (HSCL)

- To encourage improved attendance, participation and retention of students.
- To identify students most at risk of leaving school early.
- To initiate links with other schools and relevant bodies, such as the School Completion Programme on school attendance issues
- To notify Tusla's education welfare service and the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) of particular problems in relation to attendance and ensure support for the work of the EWO with students who have chronic attendance difficulties.

Class Tutor

- Ensure that students are aware of the importance of good attendance and the procedures involved in recording partial and full day absences.

Class Teacher

- To take the official roll call for the day during first class each morning and submit it to the office on the vsware system or manually and submit to the office in the event of IT problems.
- To take attendance during every class on the vsware system for monitoring purposes.
- Bring any concerns regarding student absence to the appropriate Year Head.
- Teachers discuss attendance records of students with parents/guardians during parent/ teacher meetings.

Student

- To punctually attend all scheduled classes every day unless there is a valid reason for not doing so.
- To present an explanation of absence on the day of return to school.
- To sign in at reception and get a late stamp in school journal prior to proceeding to class, if arrival is later than 9am on any school day.
- Students leaving school for any reason during the school day must be signed out by a parent/ guardian at reception. The student must sign in at reception on her return.

Parents/ Guardian

A student is marked present if she attends a minimum of four of the six classes in any given day.

- As the primary educators parents/guardians have a legal responsibility to ensure that their daughter attends school unless there is an unavoidable and legitimate reason for their absence.
- It is the parents/guardians responsibility to provide the school with a written and dated explanation to the school regarding the nature and cause of student absence. Telephone messages must be confirmed in writing.
- To acknowledge and reply to communication from the school in relation to attendance.
- To check and monitor student journal each week for attendance issues.

Outside Agencies

Liaison is maintained with outside agencies that support the school in promoting full attendance e.g. H.S.E, Tusla, N.E.P.S, CAHMS, LEAP etc.

The Guidance Counsellors liaise with Primary feeder schools to discuss possible issues regarding attendance being highlighted before transitioning to First Year.

Procedures

- Every student is expected to be in attendance from 9.00 a.m. until 4.00 p.m. on every school day, with the exception of Friday when school finishes at 1.10pm.
- Students may not be absent from school except when the absence is unavoidable due to illness, urgent family reasons or for other legitimate and unavoidable reasons.
- It is the responsibility of the Parent(s)/ Guardian(s) to provide the school with a signed and dated note outlining the reason for every recorded absence. Such notes will be collected and filed. They will be used in the returns to the National Education Welfare Board (N.E.W.B.) as outlined in the Education Welfare Act (2000). School management communicate regularly with parents/guardians outlining their concerns regarding holidays; medical and dental appointments etc. being scheduled during term time. Parents/guardians are requested to ensure that all discretionary absences occur outside school time. School management furnishes parents/guardians with a calendar of the school year to assist them in this regard.
- Students arriving late to school, after 9.00 a.m. must sign the '*Late Book*' in the office before proceeding to class. The student's journal will then be stamped "LATE" accordingly. Such students are expected to produce a note from their parent/ guardian explaining the reason they were late. Late arrival to school on a repeated basis may be viewed as a breach of discipline and appropriate sanctions may apply.
- In the event of a student becoming ill or getting injured during the day, she should inform the class teacher, the student may be sent to the Principal or Deputy Principal to obtain permission to go home. If such permission is granted, contact with their parents/guardians will be made through the school office. Students should not contact home via a mobile phone prior to getting permission to leave the school premises. Parents/guardians are expected to make arrangements for collection of their daughter at the school office in the event of a student being ill or injured. Parent/ guardians must collect and sign the appropriate book '*Leaving School Early Book*' in the office to indicate that they are taking their daughter home. When a student returns to school after such absence a note of explanation should be presented.
- During the school day every student must attend every class according to her timetable. Prior permission may be sought from the Principal, Deputy Principal or Year Head to leave class if presented with a note from the parent/guardian. The student must be collected and signed out by the parent/guardian at reception. The unauthorised absence of a student from any class during the school day will be viewed as a breach of discipline and appropriate sanctions may apply.
- On occasion students may be absent from class due to school related activities such as sport, drama etc. Such absences are sanctioned on the understanding that students ensure all homework is sourced and carried out to a satisfactory standard.

Students may be removed from such activities if they are having an adverse effect on their academic progress. Where a teacher is organising an approved activity which necessitates the absence of students from class, a list of such students is given to the secretary or senior management at least a day in advance to facilitate accurate recording prior to the event on vsware.

- A student wishing to leave the school premises for a legitimate reason during the school day must be collected by a parent or guardian and signed out at the office. The student is required to sign in on her return if coming back to school on that day. Any student who leaves the school premises without such authorisation will be deemed to have breached the school code of discipline and appropriate sanctions may be applied.
- On rare occasions a student may be absent from school due to suspension for a breach of discipline. In such instances parents/guardians will be consulted in advance and students are expected to use their time productively by applying themselves to their studies. In such instances, where a student is suspended, they should not be on the school premises or engaged in any school activity as there may be insurance implications.

Communication

- In the event of a student who goes home for her lunch taking ill during lunchtime while off the school premises, the school must be notified immediately by the Parent/Guardian.
- Teachers are requested to record, on the vsware system, all students in attendance for each class period on a daily basis.
- Parent/s Guardians may be notified via phone call, text messaging or letter if the school has a concern about a particular absence any time on any given date.
- The Parent/Guardian may be requested to make an appointment to discuss the matter with management of the school.
- School reports will include the number of absences in a given time period.
- Letters are sent to parents/ guardians by Year Heads to alert parents/ guardians to and accumulation of 10/15 and 20 day absences (Appendix 1).
- School Attendance Officer/ HSCL/ Year Head may contact parents/ guardians with concerns regarding repeated absence.
- School attendance returns are made to Tusla on a regular basis as required.
- The school works closely with the EWO. Parents/Guardians may be invited to participate in Attendance clinics or conferences to address chronic attendance issues.

Sanctions for Breaches of School Attendance Policy

- The student may be placed on Detention and or report card.

- Repeated unauthorised absence during the school day may lead to suspension.
- Absences will be notified to Tusla as per the Education Welfare Act 2000.

Rewards/ School Attendance Strategies

- Students from each year group with the best attendance over the course of a school year will receive a certificate at assemblies or awards ceremonies.
- Both students and parents of 'at risk' students are constantly reminded of the requirements of the Education Act 1998 with respect to school attendance.
- Weekly Care Team meetings, SEN, Guidance and HSCL meetings identify students at risk at the earliest opportunity.
- Winter and Summer School reports will indicate the number of days that a student has missed to date.
- Management identifies problems that may lead to absenteeism and provide supports where necessary e.g. differentiation of curriculum, subjects offered at a range of levels, L2LP programmes, RACE accommodations, SEN supports, School Completion Programme etc.

Policy Review

- This policy will be reviewed every three years or as required. It was ratified by the B.O.M. in December 2022.
- Review date: December 2025

APPENDIX 1

Letter to Parents/Guardians

ATTENDANCE CONCERN

Re: **Student name**

Date:

Dear Parent/ Guardian,

I am writing to you regarding your daughter's attendance at school. So far this year your daughter has missed _____ days. It is part of our legal responsibility to monitor student attendance and communicate our concern with parents/guardians if and when they arise.

When a student reaches 20 days of absence in an academic year, schools are legally obliged under the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000, to report the absence to TUSLA, the child and family agency. Reasons for cumulative absence may fall under any of the following categories:

- Illness
- Urgent family reason
- Holiday
- Suspension
- Other
- Unexplained

Our attendance policy states "*that it is the responsibility of the Parent(s) / Guardian(s) to provide the school with a signed and dated note outlining the reason for **every** recorded absence. Such notes will be collected and filed. They will be used in the returns to the N.E.W.B. as outlined in the Education Welfare Act (2000)*"

Research has shown, that poor school attendance can lead to poorer exam results, early school leaving, unsuccessful transfer from primary school and poorer life chances for children.

Attendance at school makes a significant contribution to a child's happiness, allowing her to experience success to the best of her ability. Please contact the school secretary to arrange a meeting to discuss an improved pattern of attendance for your daughter.

Yours sincerely,

Year Head Name

Year Group