



# Woodland National School

## Attendance Policy

### Introduction

This policy document was drawn up to ensure and maintain a high level of attendance at school by all pupils. Establishing good attendance habits from the very beginning of a child's time at school is very important.

### Aims and Objectives

The aims and objectives of this policy are as follows:

- Ensuring that pupils are registered accurately and efficiently
- Ensuring that pupil's attendance is recorded daily, encouraging full attendance where possible
- Identifying pupils at risk of poor attendance and at risk of leaving school early
- Promoting a positive learning environment
- Enabling all pupils to avail fully of learning opportunities
- Raising awareness of the importance of school attendance
- 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 encouraging and supporting children in living their lives to the full, in a caring environment, where the welfare and interests of the children is paramount.

## **The Education Welfare Act 2000**

Under the terms of the Education Welfare Act 2000 (amended by the Child and Family Agency Act 2013) schools are obliged to:

- Maintain a record of students attending school
- Record school attendance and notify the relevant Educational Welfare Officer of particular problems relating to attendance
- Support students with difficulties in attending school on a regular basis
- Prepare and implement a school attendance strategy to encourage, in a positive way, regular school attendance and an appreciation of learning within the school
- Prepare and implement a code of behaviour, setting standards of behaviour and disciplinary procedures for the school.
- Liaise with other schools and relevant bodies on school attendance issues

## **Punctuality**

School begins at 9.20am. All pupils and staff are expected to be on time.

- Any pupils who arrive in school after 9.20 am must enter the school via the Main Door. The parents must sign the pupil in.
- A child will be recorded as being late to school if they arrive after 10.10am.
- Parents/guardians must provide a note if a child departs early during the school day. These notes can be left in pupils' journals or kept in a class file. The Parent must sign the pupil out in the 'Record Book' which is kept in the Secretary's Office. Children may only be collected from the Secretary's Office.
- Where teachers see a pattern of poor punctuality emerging, they should bring this to the attention of parents/guardians at an early stage.
- If there is still no improvement in punctuality then a letter should be sent home notifying parents / guardians of the issue.
- If punctuality continues to be an issue then teachers should bring the issue to the attention of the Principal / Assistant Principal II (Maureen O'Donnell)

## **Procedures for Ongoing Monitoring of Attendance**

Ms. O'Donnell has, under the terms of her Assistant Principal II, undertaken to monitor school attendance and policy development in this area. She will be available to support, advise and remind staff on an ongoing basis of how these procedures are being implemented.

- Class teachers are required to call and mark the DES Electronic Roll Book (Aladdin system) on a daily basis.

- An electronic copy of the Leabhar Tinrimh (Attendance Book) is maintained on the Aladdin system. At the end of each month a hard copy of that month's Leabhar Tinrimh is printed and signed by the Principal and filed.

**Keeping records of Absences:**

- The roll is taken each morning by 10.00am. Any pupil not present at this time will be marked absent for the day.

- Parents will be informed of their responsibilities in relation to school attendance, and will be requested to provide written explanations for all absences from school, regardless of the length or nature of the absence.

Due to Covid-19 restrictions, parents and teachers communicate via Aladdin Connect and/or email. Explanations for absences are communicated to teachers or placed on Aladdin Connect directly by parents/guardians.

- Individual notes and other written communication around attendance, such as Medical Certificates and other explanations for student absences should be kept in the class file. These will be retained for possible inspection by the National Educational Welfare Officer

- When a child is marked absent on Aladdin, parents and/or teachers should ensure that they enter the reasons for the absence in the appropriate section, (i.e. under Edit Absence Reasons tab) as soon as that information becomes available. This allows teachers to categorise the absence, such as Unexplained, Illness, Urgent family reason etc. This information will form part of the reporting procedure to the Educational Welfare Services section of the Tusla - Child and Family Agency

- A text will be sent when a child has been absent for 10 days regardless of the reason for the absence. When a child has missed 20 days a letter will be sent to the parent/guardian informing them that the Educational Welfare Officer will be notified of the absences.

- If a child misses school and an explanation is not furnished, the class teacher must send a message requesting this.

- Each class teacher has a responsibility to monitor the attendance of the children in their care. Teachers should be aware of emerging patterns in relation to poor attendance.

**What to do when a child reaches 10 days absence:**

- It is school policy that when a child has been absent for 10 days a text will be sent to his/her parents notifying them of the absence.

### **What to do when a child reaches 20 days absence**

- When a child has been absent for 20 days we notify the Educational Welfare Services section of Tusla - Child and Family Agency
- The School has an obligation to hand this information on to Tusla – Child and Family Agency, regardless of the reason for absence. However, Tusla – Child and Family Agency will take account of absences due to illness, bereavement or other such circumstances
- There are four reporting periods during the year when we report information to Tusla – Child and Family Agency ( two periods are obligatory and two discretionary) reports will be forwarded on the requested dates. Additionally, Tusla – Child and Family Agency request an Annual Report at the end of each school year.

### **Procedures for Serious Absences**

- Where teachers see a pattern of poor attendance emerging, they should bring this to the attention of parents at an early stage
- Poor attendance patterns are more easily changed if attention is drawn to them at an early stage.
- The Educational Welfare Act, 2000 requires schools to notify the Educational Welfare Services section of the Child and Family Agency (Tusla) of pupils who have been absent for 20 days and who are aged over 6 years of age.
- However, in Woodland NS, we will be monitoring the attendance patterns of children from when they start school in Junior Infants, and we will inform Tusla – Child and Family Agency of such absences, in order to seek to address the matter and deal with it as early as possible in the child’s school career.
- The class teacher in conjunction with the school will follow a series of progressive steps, as per EWS Pre-Referral Checklist, when they are concerned about a pupil’s attendance
- If an ‘at risk’ pupil is identified then the class teacher will complete the Pre-Referral Checklist.
- ‘At risk’ pupils 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.
- Where the School has cause for concern over a pupil’s attendance for whatever reason and in spite of all efforts at resolution made at school level and in collaboration with the home a formal written and signed Referral will be made to the Educational Welfare Service.

### **Reporting Absenteeism to Educational Welfare Services (EWS)**

Since the inception of the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000 schools are obliged to report on school attendance. Ms. O’Donnell has, under the terms of her Assistant Principal II Post, responsibility for these reports.

The following reports will be submitted:

Student Absence Report: This report is submitted four times each year on those students falling within the following criteria:

- a student has been absent from school for a cumulative total of twenty days or more
- a student's name is to be removed from the school register for any reason
- a student has been suspended for a cumulative total of six or more days
- the school has expelled a student
- the school is concerned about a student's attendance.

### **Annual Attendance Report (AAR)**

The Annual Attendance Report is submitted at the end of each academic year and provides information on levels of attendance. Schools are required to provide the following data in the AAR:

- Total number of days lost through student absence in the entire school year.
- Total number of students who were absent for 20 days or more during the school year.
- Total number of students expelled in respect of whom all appeal processes have been exhausted or not availed of during the school year.
- Total number of students who were suspended for any number of days during the school year.

### **Transfer to Another School / Communication with Other Schools**

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 with other Schools

- When a child transfers from Woodland NS 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 Woodland NS confirmation of transfer will be communicated to the child's previous school, and appropriate records sought .

- Pupils transferring from Woodland NS to a post primary school will have their records forwarded on receipt of confirmation of enrolment.
- The school will also follow the four steps to update POD as per Circular 0033\_2015

## **Strategies to Promote and Support Good Attendance**

As already stated, there is a need for regular review of school attendance in each class. The primary responsibility for this lies with the class teacher. Teachers should therefore actively review the attendance patterns of all children in their care.

The school will continue to encourage full or near full attendance through the following strategies and approaches:

- By creating a safe and welcoming environment for our pupils and their parents/guardians.
- By being vigilant so that risks to good attendance such as disadvantage, bullying etc are identified early .

Identifying ‘at risk’ pupils:

- While actively reviewing attendance patterns of children in their care, teachers should be vigilant so that ‘at risk’ pupils are identified early.
- ‘At risk’ pupils 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.
- When this occurs, teachers should follow the steps outlined under the Procedures for Serious Absences section above.

### **Communication with Parents/Guardians:**

- Good communication with parents/guardians is key to encouraging good attendance
- Parents will be encouraged to access the School’s Attendance Policy on the school website and their attention will be drawn to the procedures that are in place should their child miss 10 days etc. By consulting with parents/guardians when reviewing policies the aim is to promote a high-level of co-operation among the school community.
- The calendar for each school year is prepared in advance and a copy is sent out to each family of the school closures for the year. 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 events during the school term.
- The school also informs all parents of the implications of non-attendance as per the Education Welfare Act, 2000. (This information is disseminated at least once a year in a school newsletter). Specific reference is made to the consequences of long absences on children’s progress in language acquisition and general academic progress, and also to the

fact that children can become unsettled and find it difficult to readapt to their class situation after a long absence.

## **End of Year Procedures**

The attendance of each pupil will be reported to parents/guardians, with the number of days absent indicated on their child's end of year report card.

### **Success Criteria:**

The success of any Attendance Policy is measured through:

- Improved attendance levels as measured through attendance records on Aladdin and statistical returns.
- Happy confident well-adjusted children.
- Positive parental feedback.
- Teacher vigilance.

This policy was reviewed and approved by the Board of Management on: 7<sup>th</sup> December 2020

Signed: Susan Kenny  
Chairperson  
Board of Management

Signed: Patricia Slevin  
Principal

Date: 07/12/2020

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Date of next review: November 2023