

Robertstown National School

ATTENDANCE POLICY

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The Board of Management ('the Board') of Robertstown National School strives to provide a well-ordered, caring, happy and secure atmosphere where the academic, personal and social development of all our pupils flourishes in a culture of respect, tolerance and openness. Accordingly, the Board recognises that regular punctual attendance is crucial to the welfare, development and education of our pupils, and contributes to the fostering of an appreciation of learning.

Rationale

Following a collaborative process between the staff, the Board and parents' representatives of the school, this attendance policy is set out in order to:

1. reaffirm the Board's commitment to the protection, welfare and development of every pupil in our school;
2. give clear direction and guidance in identifying and addressing non-attendance and pupils at risk;
3. fulfil the school's obligations under the Education Welfare Act 2000;
4. update the school's existing attendance policy in order to maintain an integrated and inclusive approach, taking into account school resources, the needs of pupils, social changes, and the changing attitudes to education.

Aims and Objectives

The Board's commitment to the development and welfare of our pupils is reflected in this policy. Through this policy the Board will:

1. encourage full attendance and punctuality where educational opportunities can be availed of in a positive environment that fosters an appreciation of learning;
2. develop a practice of openness with parents and encourage parental involvement in the education of their child(ren);
3. raise awareness of the importance of school attendance and punctuality;
4. ensure that the system of rules and rewards are implemented in a fair and consistent manner that encourage pupils to attend school;
5. identify and remove, insofar as is practicable, obstacles to school attendance.

Principles Underpinning the Policy

The principles that underpin and inform this policy, and provide the contextual basis for best practice in relation to attendance and punctuality are:

1. the welfare and development of pupils is of paramount importance;
2. parents have a right to respect and should be involved in matters that

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concern the welfare and development of their child(ren).

1. DEFINING AND RECORDING NON-ATTENDANCE

The school opens at 8:50 a.m. each morning for the reception of pupils. The school day commences at 8:55 a.m. and concludes at 1:35 p.m. for infant classes, and 2:35 p.m. for all other classes. Any pupil arriving in class after [9.05] a.m. will be recorded as late. Where a pupil is persistently late, a meeting between the parents/guardians and the Principal will be set up to discuss and address the pupil's lateness and any circumstances that may be preventing the pupil from being punctual. Parents/guardians are reminded regularly of the school's obligation to report persistent lateness to the National Education Welfare Board ('NEWB').

1.1. Definition of Non-Attendance

The Board defines non-attendance as a pupil not being present in class at roll call at [10.00] a.m. Exceptions are made for absences authorised by the Board or Principal for school tours, religious services arranged through the school, and participation in sports or other events arranged by the school. Whilst parents/guardians are encouraged not to make external appointments for their child(ren) during the school day, the Board recognises that there may be occasions where this is unavoidable. Consequently, parents/guardians are required to contact their child(ren)'s teacher, the Secretary or the Principal, prior to the external appointment, and provide (where possible) a copy of any appointment card or letter. Parents/guardians are required to sign the [Sign-Out Book] when collecting their child(ren) during the school day.

1.2. Recording Non-Attendance

Non-attendance is recorded in accordance with the Department of Education and Skills' guidelines as 'absence' in the Leabhair Rolla of each class, and in digital format using the Aladdin Software Program. The utilisation of this administration software enables the teachers, secretary, and the Principal to monitor trends in a pupil's non-attendance. Teachers also record the reason for absence in line with NEWB reporting guidelines as soon as the information is provided by parents/guardians. At the end of each reporting period the Principal transfers the appropriate recorded data to NEWB. Storage and communication of this information is made in accordance with the school's Data Protection and Record Retention Policy.

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2. PROCEDURES IN EVENT OF NON-ATTENDANCE

2.1. Pupils at Risk

Traditionally, pupil attendance is strong in the school. However, staff remain vigilant so that pupils at risk are identified early and any circumstances or impediments to their regular attendance are addressed in a constructive and sensitive way in accordance with the school's Equal Opportunity and Gender Equality Policy. Pupils at risk are categorised as those who miss more than five days in a twenty day period without an accompanying note of explanation from parents/guardians. Appropriate contact takes place between the pupil's teacher and parent/guardian via letter, note in the pupil's homework diary, or a direct informal conversation when this occurs. A meeting between parents/guardians and the Principal may be set up if it is deemed necessary. In so far as possible, every effort will be made to work with the parents/guardians of such pupils in order to put in place any reasonable supports that the school is able to provide.

2.2. Parent/Guardian Communication

When a pupil is absent from school, parents/guardians are expected to contact the school as soon as possible to inform the school as to the reason for the pupil's absence. The reason for absence will be recorded by the class teacher. A written note by means of the special forms in the pupil's school diary is the best way to communicate this information but the school will accept the information by telephone. The secretary will relate information taken over the phone to the relevant class teacher for recording purposes. If the parent refuses to explain the reason for the absence this is noted as unexplained.

2.3. Principal's Reporting Requirements

The principal will inform NEWB in writing where:

- i. a pupil is suspended from the school for a cumulative total of six or more days;
- ii. a pupil has been absent from school for a cumulative total of twenty days or more;
- iii. a pupil's name is, for whatever reason, removed from the register;
- iv. there is a concern about a pupil's attendance or punctuality;
- v. a pupil has been expelled.

3. REMOVAL FROM REGISTER/INTER SCHOOL TRANSFER

The Principal will only remove a pupil's name from the school register where the school has been informed in writing that the pupil has been enrolled in another school or when NEWB notifies the school in writing that the pupil has been registered by it as in receipt of out-of-school education.

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When a pupil is transferred to another school the Principal will forward the pupil's record of attendance and any other relevant information pertaining to the academic process of the pupil upon receipt of written notification of the transfer.

NEWB will be informed in writing by the Principal where the school receives either a notification from another school that the pupil has been enrolled in that school, or a notification that the pupil has enrolled in a special educational needs school is received.

When a pupil is transferred from another school the Principal will ask the parents in question to sign a permission letter giving authorisation to the previous school for the transfer of the pupil's record of attendance and any other relevant information pertaining to the academic process of the pupil.

4. PROMOTION OF ATTENDANCE

4.1. Recognising and rewarding good attendance

Certificates and/or medals for good attendance are presented to all pupils whose cumulative absences in any given year do not exceed 3 days. Rewards given termly for good attendance. Monthly attendance displayed in school. Class award for best attendance during assembly. The school also recognises and rewards improvements in a pupil's attendance where it may have been necessary for the class teacher and/or principal to address the issue of non-attendance with the pupil's parents/guardians.

4.2. Communication with Parents/Guardians

The school informs all parents/guardians of the school's obligations as contained in the Education Welfare Act 2000 in relation to the reporting of the non-attendance of a pupil to NEWB. The school also outlines the possible implications that non-attendance of their child(ren) may result in the serving of a 'School Attendance Notice' by NEWB (following all reasonable efforts by the NEWB to consult with the pupil's parents and the principal of the school) on any parents/guardians who they conclude are failing or neglecting to cause the pupil to attend the school and of the possible consequence of a successful case being taken against the parents/guardians. This information is disseminated by regular school circulars, and to parents of new pupils upon enrolment of their child(ren). The school also displays monthly attendance figures on the office notice board.

4.3. Positive Environment

The Board and school are committed to creating a safe and welcoming
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environment for all our pupils. Consequently, pupils who are late are welcomed by teachers in order to ensure that they feel included and valued. Teachers are sensitive to any pupil who has missed school and will endeavour to catch up on work missed without putting undue pressure on the pupil in question.

4.4. Equality of Access

In accordance with the school's Equal Opportunity and Gender Equality Policy, the Board is committed to ensuring that no condition is allowed to hinder a pupil's participation in school life for reasons of social/economic disadvantage or special educational need.

4.5. Reports

The school reports the total amount of days absent, and the total amount of days late in a year to parents/guardians in the end of year report and at parent/ teacher meetings.

4.6. Curriculum Provision & Anti-Bullying Policy

The school has an Anti-Bullying Policy and procedures are in place to address all incidences of bullying. The school also utilises programmes under the umbrella of the SHPE curricular programme to raise the self-esteem of pupils including Circle Time and the Stay Safe Programme.