
ATTENDANCE POLICY



OCTOBER 2022
(FEBRUARY 2020)

Attendance Policy

Introduction

Changing social habits and patterns, alongside the introduction of Aladdin management system necessitated the updating of the schools attendance policy. The redrafting was a collaborative school process involving staff and Board of Management (BOM), following initial drafting by a representative group.

This policy was drawn up by the Principal and Staff of the school and advice from Irish Primary Principal's Network (IPPN). It was forwarded to parents for consultation. The parent's representatives from the BOM and the BOM as a body also contributed.

St. Felim's N.S is a mainstream school with two special classes for children with Autism. The opening hours for the school are 9.10 a.m. – 2.50 p.m with children in Junior Infants and Senior Infants finishing at 1.50 p.m. Children who are enrolled in the special classes are aligned to their class group in mainstream for finishing times.

Rationale

The main factors contributing to the formulation of a revised policy can be summarised as follows:

- To promote and encourage regular attendance as an essential factor in our pupils' learning
- Legislative requirements such as the Education Welfare Act 2000 and the Education Act, 1998
- The role of the NEWB
- Levels of disadvantage
- Changing attitudes to education.

Aims and Objectives

The revised policy is geared towards:

- Ensuring that pupils are registered accurately and efficiently
- Ensuring that pupil attendance is recorded daily
- Encouraging full attendance where possible
- identifying pupils at risk
- Promoting a positive learning environment
- Enabling learning opportunities to be availed of
- Raising awareness of the importance of school attendance
- Fostering an appreciation of learning
- Identify 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.

Compliance with School Ethos

This policy complements the school ethos of nurturing potential in a caring environment where the welfare of children is paramount.

Roles and Responsibilities

All staff have an input into the implementation of the policy. Teacher's record individual patterns of attendance and the school secretarial staff make returns to NEWB.

Teachers record late arrivals as present but late. Teachers record reason for absence on Aladdin.

Secretary monitors late arrival and early departures book and ensures parents/guardians sign book.

It is the responsibility of the Principal and staff to implement this policy under the guidance of the school's BOM.

Punctuality

School begins at 9.10 a.m. All pupils and teachers are expected to be on time. The school will contact parents/guardians in the event of pupils being consistently late. The Principal is obliged under the Education Welfare Act, to report children who are persistently late, to the Education Welfare Board. A late arrival log is maintained in the office whereby late arrivals are recorded.

Children enrolled in the Butterfly and Rainbow Room begin school at the same time as their peers in the mainstream classes. All Junior and Senior Infants go home at 1.50p.m whether they are in the mainstream classes or the Butterfly and Rainbow room. Please refer to enrolment policies for further information.

Recording and Reporting Attendance

The school attendance of individual pupils is recorded on Aladdin, our online administration system, by each class teacher on a daily basis. Where a substitute is employed the secretary may input attendance. The Leabhar Tinrimh (Attendance Book) is automatically updated. Individual attendance is recorded on a pupil profile which each teacher has access to. Designated administrators also have access to this. These include Principal, Deputy Principal and Secretary.

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 prior to 10.00 a.m each morning. Any pupil not present will be marked absent. Late attendance may be recorded on Aladdin. A written note from parents/guardians is required to explain each absence. Such notes will be retained by the class teacher. Parents/ guardians must also provide a note and sign the log of late arrivals/ early departures at the desk, if a child departs early during the school day. Absence notes may also be emailed to secretary@stfelimsns.ie. A log of early departures is maintained in the office whereby the adult accompanying the child departing early signs the log giving details.

Parents/guardians are made aware of the requirements of the NEWB particularly the by-law relating to absences of more than 20 days per school year. They are notified in writing on the end of year report of the total number of absences during the school year. Pupils whose non-attendance is a concern are invited to meet with the Principal during Parent/Teacher meetings and are informed of the school's concerns.

Parents and guardians receive notification via Aladdin, our text service, when their child is absent. This text is sent out once roll call has taken place. Absences of 5,10,15,20 days etc. are also sent by text to parents in line with a recommendation by the Inspector to promote good attendance.

The school must inform the Education Welfare Officer in writing, where a child has missed 20 or more days in a school year, where attendance is irregular, where a pupil is removed from the school register and where a child is suspended or expelled for 6 days or more. Where there is concern about attendance the NEWB will be contacted at other intervals apart from the obligatory reporting time.

Promoting Attendance

The school promotes good attendance by:

- creating a safe and welcoming environment
- ensuring children are happy
- displaying kindness, compassion and understanding
- being vigilant so that risks to good attendance such as disadvantage, bullying etc. are identified early
- inviting parents to a meeting when absences reach 20 days. All unexplained absences must be accounted for. This took effect from 1 March 2020.

National Education Welfare Board

The Education Welfare Officer is informed if:

- A child is expelled
- A child is suspended
- A child has missed more than 20 days.

The NEWB is furnished with the total attendances in the school year through the Annual Report Form which is completed on-line. Aladdin facilitates the completion of this.

Whole School Strategies to Promote Attendance

St. Felim's N.S endeavours to create a safe, welcoming environment for our pupils and their parents/ guardians. Parents/ guardians are consulted in drafting and reviewing policies with the aim of promoting a high-level of co-operation among the school community. The teaching staff collaborates in the planning and implementation of the primary school curriculum, so as to provide a stimulating learning environment for all pupils.

Traditionally, school attendance is strong in our school. However, the staff remains vigilant so that 'risk' students are identified early. Risk students 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. Appropriate contact takes place between the school and parents/guardians either via a letter or a note in the homework diary when this occurs. A meeting between parents and the Principal may be set up if deemed necessary. Absences of more than 20 days are automatically referred to the Education Welfare Officer.

New entrants and their parents/guardians are invited to engage in an induction process, through which the school's policies and procedures in relation to attendance are explained. There is a focus on the value of regular attendance and on the importance of developing good attendance habits from Junior Infants onwards.

The calendar for the coming school year is published annually in June and a reminder is published in September. It is available on the school website. 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 holidays during the school term.

Transfer to Another School

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

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

The school maintains communication with local pre-schools and second-level schools in order to make the transition for pupils as easy as possible.

Communication with other Schools

- When a child transfers from St. Felim's N.S. 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 St. Felim's N.S. confirmation of transfer will be communicated to the child's previous school, and appropriate records sought
- Pupils transferring from St. Felim's N.S. to a post primary school will have their records forwarded on receipt of confirmation of enrolment.

Communication with Parents

The school informs all parents of the implications of non-attendance as per the *Education Welfare Act 2000*. This information is disseminated by regular school circulars. Parents of new children are informed on enrolment.

Parents/guardians can promote good school attendance by:

- ensuring regular and punctual school attendance.
- minimizing late arrival to school and early departure from school
- notifying the school if their children cannot attend for any reason.
- working with the school and education welfare service to resolve any attendance problems;
- making sure their children understand that parents support good school attendance;
- discussing planned absences with the school.
- refraining, if at all possible, from taking holidays during school time
- showing an interest in their children's school day and their children's homework.
- encouraging them to participate in school activities.
- praising and encouraging their children's achievements.
- instilling in their children a positive self-concept and a positive sense of self-worth.
- informing the school in writing of the reasons for absence from school.
- contacting the school immediately, if they have concerns about absence or other related school matters.
- notifying the school if their child/ children, particularly children in junior classes, are to be collected by someone not known to the teacher.

Evaluation

The success of any Attendance Policy is measured through:

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