



Attendance Policy

for

Athea National School

Introduction

There is a very strong tradition of good attendance in Athea N.S. However, we are anxious that parents be aware of the absolute necessity for regular and punctual attendance at school. As a result this policy document was drawn up to ensure and maintain a high level of attendance at school by all pupils. The Board of Management, in consultation with staff and parents, drew up this Attendance Policy.

Rationale

The main factors contributing to the formulation of this policy are:

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 and the role of the NEWB.

Aims

- To raise awareness of the importance of regular school attendance
- To identify pupils at risk of leaving school early
- To promote and to foster positive attitudes to learning
- To ensure compliance with the requirements of the relevant legislation

Relationship to the Characteristic Spirit of the School

Athea NS endeavours to enable every pupil to actively participate in all school activities. Regular attendance helps to create a stable learning environment for all pupils, and the school hopes to promote cooperation among pupils, parents/guardians and staff in maintaining a high level of regular attendance through the school year.

Roles and Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the principal and class teacher to implement this policy under the guidance of the school's Board of Management.

The school principal will ensure that the school register for pupils on Aladdin is maintained in accordance with regulations. The principal will inform the Education Welfare Officer if a pupil is not attending school regularly, when a pupil has been absent for 20 or more days during the course of a school year or when a pupil's name is removed from the school register. The Principal will inform parents of a decision to contact the Education Welfare Officer of concerns regarding a pupil and insofar as is practicable, promote the importance of good school attendance among pupils, parents and staff.

The class teacher will maintain the school's Aladdin school software programme in accordance with procedure. Keep a record of explained and unexplained absences. Promote a reward system for pupils with exceptional attendance. Encourage pupils to attend regularly and punctually. Inform the principal of concerns s/he may have regarding the attendance of any pupils.

Punctuality

School starts at 9.25am. All pupils and staff are expected to be in school before this time. For security reasons, all doors will be locked at 9.40am. The roll will be called at 10:00am. If a child arrives at school after 9.40am, they must ring the doorbell at the reception entrance. They will be escorted to their class. The principal will meet with the parents of children who are continually late to discuss strategies to improve punctuality.

If following school intervention and strategies punctuality does not improve, the principal will report the case to the Education Welfare Officer for further intervention and action.

Recording and Reporting of Attendance and Non-Attendance

The school attendance of individual pupils is recorded on Aladdin for each class on a daily basis.

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. Any pupil not present at roll call, 9.45am, will be marked absent for the day unless the teacher has been informed in writing beforehand that the child is due to attend school later that day. The child will need to attend school for at least one and a half hours to be marked present on the roll. The roll may not be altered once it has been filled in.

A note from parents/guardians is required to explain each absence. Such notes will be recorded on Aladdin and retained by the class teacher in the child's class file. Parents/guardians must also provide a note if a child departs early during the school day. Children will be marked present if they are not in school but are representing the school at outside activities.

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 and are informed of the school's concerns.

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.

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

Whole School Strategies to Promote Attendance

Athea NS 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.

Our homework policy, drawn up in consultation with parents/guardians, clearly outlines the school's expectations in terms of the quantity of homework assigned and in the quality of homework presented. There is a consistent approach to homework throughout the school.

The calendar for the coming school year is published annually in June 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.

Pupils are expected to wear the correct school uniform and bring a healthy lunch to school each day.

It is important to note that we discourage students to attend school who are feeling unwell at home. The child that is unwell is sent home during the school day as per COVID-19 Policy.

Strategies in the Event of Non-Attendance

Section 17 of the Education (Welfare) Act (2000), states that ‘the parent of a child shall cause the child concerned to attend a recognised school on each school day’.

Section 21 of the Act obliges schools to inform the Education Welfare Officer if a child is absent on more than 20 days in any school year, or if a child does not attend school on a regular basis.

In such cases the Education Welfare Officer (following all reasonable efforts by the Education Board to consult with the child’s parents and the principal of the school) may serve a ‘School Attendance Notice’ on any parent who he/she concludes is failing or neglecting to cause the child to attend the school. A successful case taken against the parent may result in a fine and/or imprisonment.

When a child reaches 15 days absence, a letter will be automatically sent to parents informing them of this and the responsibility of the school to report to NEWB should the child reach 20 days absence.

Reasons for absence are recorded and reported to the EWB five times during the school year through an online system. An annual report is submitted – not more than six weeks following the end of the school year – detailing the overall level of attendance at the school during that school year.

Procedures in relation to the Removal from Register/Transfer from another school:

The school is aware that *‘A principal may only remove a pupil’s name from a school register where they have been informed that the child has been enrolled in another school or when the Welfare Board notifies them that the child has been registered by it as in receipt of out-of-school education.’*

The Board of Management may in exceptional circumstances suspend a child. (see Code of Behaviour)

Transfer to another school:

Where parents remove a child from a school the principal is obliged to give them and the new school a certificate stating child's record of attendance and absences in the school, the last class the child attended, and any other relevant information pertaining to the education of the child.

Transfer from another school:

When Athea NS receives a new student, the principal will notify the principal of the child's last school attended that the child is now registered in our school "as soon as may be". 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 it appropriate.

Action

1. Unavoidable medical appointments / withdrawing a sick child from school

If a pupil needs to leave early for an unavoidable medical appointment, a letter should be sent in beforehand from his/her parents.

If a child is sick during the school day, the teacher will firstly ring the parent and if he/she is not contactable, they will ring the emergency contact number. Parents should ensure all phone numbers are up to date.

When collecting the child, the parent should report to the school office where she/he will be asked to sign the child out. The parent can then wait in reception while the child is collected from the classroom. The teacher may meet with the parent also to explain about any sickness that may have occurred.

No child will be allowed to leave the school with any other adult other than his/her parent unless a letter or phone call has been received beforehand naming the person who is to collect the child.

2. Family Emergencies

The parent should ring the school en-route and explain the situation. The child can then be escorted from the class and ready to meet the parent. The parent will be asked to sign the child out.

Communication

A copy of the policy will be given to the Board of Management, all members of staff and is available for parents to view on our school website.

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

Implementation

This policy was first implemented in 2005 following ratification by the Board of Management and communication to the parent body.

Ratification and Review

This policy was reviewed by the Board of Management in 2021 and is due to be reviewed again in May 2023, or sooner if the need arises.

Signed: *Marie Gleeson* **Date:** 18/05/21

Chairperson B.O.M.