

Statement of Strategy for School Attendance

Aughacarla NS

Camp

Tralea,

Co. Kerry

Roll No: 14767Q

Rationale for Developing this Policy:

This policy was drawn up in September 2017, in response to the Tusla document “Developing the Statement of Strategy for School Attendance: Guidelines for Schools.” It aims to clarify for teachers and parents the importance of creating a positive school environment, which will serve to encourage attendance.

Aughacarla NS recognises the efforts made by parents to ensure their children attend school regularly, with all the necessary requisites.

Principles underpinning an effective Statement of Strategy

There are a number of basic values which have guided the school in preparing and implementing its Statement of Strategy for School Attendance. These principles are built on core values, such as high expectations for every child, partnership, personal responsibility and respect for diversity, each described in more detail below. These principles, endorsed by the school community, will help to create a climate of support for attendance and help the school to achieve its attendance goals.

Attendance matters

The Statement of Strategy affirms the school's commitment to attendance as an important aspect of school ethos and school policy.

High expectations for every student

The Statement of Strategy aims to build a culture of high expectations among all staff and with every student for the student's learning, participation and attendance.

A whole-school approach

The Statement of Strategy recognises how all areas of the student's experience at school impacts on their engagement and attendance.

A whole-child approach

The Statement of Strategy recognises the complexity of some students' lives and difficulties. In response, the Statement of Strategy tries to secure the involvement and support of many agencies and community supports for the student's overall well-being and welfare.

Working in partnership with parents and families

The Statement of Strategy places a premium on teamwork with parents to secure high levels of attendance, partnership in developing attendance policy and close working relationships with parents of individual students to address problems.

Valuing and responding to diversity

The Statement of Strategy affirms the school's commitment to valuing the culture of every student and ensuring that every student will make the most of the learning opportunities provided by the school.

Recognising resilience and avoiding stereotypes

The Statement of Strategy will recognise every student's capacity to attend school, learn well and achieve good outcomes. The school will challenge stereotypes that might assume that students from particular backgrounds or with particular experiences will always have a problem with attendance and learning.

Focusing on personal responsibility

The Statement of Strategy aims to build each student's sense of personal responsibility for their own learning, and their responsibility to their peers and their teachers to be at school every day.

(Developing the Statement of Strategy for School Attendance: Guidelines for Schools.p12)

Expectations around Attendance:

The importance of school attendance for academic and social reasons, the need to help the child develop friendships and relationships which will guide them as they move through primary school is acknowledged in this policy. It is anticipated that each child will achieve as full an attendance as possible, with all absences explained in a satisfactory manner to the school.

How Attendance will be monitored.

As the roll book is marked daily, it will soon become obvious if there is a pattern to regular absenteeism. If absences are not satisfactorily explained (e.g. medical reasons) the Principal and /or class teacher will approach the parents to discuss the matter.

Aughacasla NS and its approach to attendance

The following apply when a child is absent from school:

Procedures for notification of absences to the school;

When a student is absent from school during part of a school day or for a school day or for more than a school day, Section 18 of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 places a legal duty on parents to notify the principal about the reasons for the child's absence. Section 23 of the Act requires that the procedures to be followed by a parent for notifying the school about

absence must be formalised by the school and form part of the school's Code of Behaviour. For our school, this means that all absences are explained by note, on return to school. It is however important that we are notified if illnesses are more serious than would need a one or two day absence.

It is the responsibility of the school principal to keep an accurate record of the students' attendance at the school and the reasons for any failure to attend. Teachers should maintain accurate class rolls and take responsibility for student absences within their classes. Late arrivals and early departures should also be recorded.

The roll is called at 10:30am approx; a child who is not in school at that time is considered to be absent and is recorded as such in the roll book.

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO ABSENCES

When a child is absent for 20 days this is reported to the Educational Welfare services. The school's obligations regarding reporting and referral of students to the Educational Welfare Services of Tusla – Child and Family Agency are clearly outlined at: <http://www.tusla.ie/services/educational-welfare->

The school has not been aware of any issues re attendance. (ie all absences are explained satisfactorily). However, if the school was to identify pupils with poor attendance, the BOM would put any necessary interventions in place to support these pupils. If necessary the school will communicate with parents, NEPS, or Tusla in an attempt to support students in this matter.

The Annual Attendance Report

The Annual Attendance Report (AAR) submitted by the school each year to Tusla – Child and Family Agency is a good source of baseline data (see://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/Child_and_Family_Agency_Annual_Attendance_Report_2013-2014.pdf). AAR data is published and is available for: the total number of days lost through student absence in the entire school year; the total number of students who were absent for 20 days or more during the school year; the total number of students expelled in respect of whom all appeal processes have been exhausted; the total number of students who were suspended.

General Awareness- Raising Strategies

A core part of the Statement of Strategy in Aughacasla NS is to raise awareness about the importance of attendance for a student's learning and school success, and to communicate high expectations for attendance. These expectations will be shared by the Board of Management, the school management, staff and parents. They will form part of the overall school climate (ethos and culture) and should be clearly communicated to students.

Approaches include:

Talking about attendance: Discussion about attendance at meetings with the Parent Association and at parent-teacher meetings ; Positive affirmation of attendance when the roll is being taken.

Rewarding Good Attendance

Section 22(2)(a) of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 requires each school to reward students who have good attendance records as part of their School Attendance Strategy. Celebrating and rewarding good attendance is an approach that is used internationally and is generally seen by schools as a useful way of promoting attendance. Reward schemes may be used to offer incentives to the whole school, class groups or individual students as part of a planned

approach to preventing poor attendance or intervening early. Reward systems should be used thoughtfully to ensure that they do not become routine and ineffective.

This will be through the presentation of a school designed attendance certificate which will be given to children with absences of 10 days or less.

ABSENCES DUE TO TERM-TIME HOLIDAYS

Parents have a legal duty to ensure that their child who is attending a recognised school is at school on every day that the school is open, unless there is a genuine reason for him or her not to attend (Section 17 of Education (Welfare) Act 2000). Only absences relating to activities organised by the school or in which the school is involved can be authorised by the principal (Section 21(9) of Education (Welfare) Act 2000). Therefore, the school cannot give 'permission' for holiday absences during term time. If a parent decides to take a child out of school for holidays, the parent is asked provide a letter to the school to say they are doing so and are aware of the implications. Where there are regular holiday absences, the school will remind parents of the educational and potential legal impact of removing students from school for periods of time.

Monitoring the Strategy

School PrincipalAs instructional leader in the school, it is the responsibility of the principal, under the direction of the Board of Management, to lead and guide the work on the Statement of Strategy. The responsibilities of the principal would ensure, either directly or through delegation, that the work is appropriately communicated, co-ordinated and concluded.

Teachers and other staff members Teachers, along with other staff members who are actively part of the school community, will bring their professional expertise and insight to bear on the preparation of the Statement of Strategy. Special needs assistants, members of the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS), the National Behaviour Support Service (NBSS) or other school support personnel who have a close working connection with the school should also be asked to bring their expertise to the attendance work.

Students Student participation work on the Statement of Strategy is a key way of engaging the support of students for high levels of school attendance, finding out their ideas about what they need to help them to engage and attend, enable them to understand better the importance of attendance and take responsibility for attendance seriously.

Parents Parental involvement in work on the Statement of Strategy is essential in order to draw on their experience, reinforce their role and responsibility for attendance, and raise awareness about the importance of attendance.

Educational Welfare Officer The Educational Welfare Officer (EWO) can advise the Board of Management about its responsibilities under the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 and about good practice in drawing up the Statement of Strategy for School Attendance.

Review of Strategy

Review will be ongoing informally, and the success of the strategy will be discussed at the end of year staff meeting. The strategy will be reported on to the BOM.

Ratification:

This strategy was ratified by the board of Management at a meeting on

Signed: _____ (Chairperson)

As with all school policies this Strategy Document will be available to all parents, and a copy given to the Parent's Association.

Submitted to Tusla

This document was submitted to Tusla on _____