



St. Patrick's Junior School

TENNIS COURT LANE, SKERRIES, CO. DUBLIN.

K34 D799

Principal: Máire Ní Chróinín
Deputy Principal: Ann Bowe

Roll Number: 16333Q
RCN: 20118839

School Attendance Policy

Note: This policy was developed in conjunction with parents and staff of the school and approved by the Board of Management on the 11th of December 2017.
This policy will be reviewed by the Board of Management at least every two years.


Very Rev. Fr. Melvyn Mullins,
Chairperson, BOM.


(Date)

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St. Patrick's Junior School is a welcoming and inclusive community. We recognise that all areas of the pupil's experience at school impacts on their engagement and attendance. All members of the school community strive to create an atmosphere of love, respect, security and trust. We are sensitive to the needs and circumstances of each pupil and work in close collaboration with the family. The school recognises the dignity and value of each person. The school affirms its strong commitment to attendance as an important aspect of school ethos and school policy.

There is a very strong tradition of good attendance in St. Patrick's Junior School. However, we are anxious that parents be aware of the absolute necessity for regular punctual attendance at school. Every minute of every school day is important. A child who is not in school is missing out on targeted age appropriate learning experiences, particularly in the core areas of literacy and numeracy.

The following strategies have been put in place to help foster an appreciation of learning and good attendance:

- Rewards in accordance with the Code of Behaviour
- Further rewards/incentives:
 - Display on the classroom door of notice of 100% attendance when all pupils are in school. Praise from all staff entering the room.
 - Reward card for targeted individuals (previous record of poor attendance) with small weekly/monthly rewards (extra star in star book/sticker) for "three in a row", "four in a row", "Five in a row".
 - Class teacher at end of term (Junior & Senior Infants) / end of year (First/Second classes) issues certificates for "improved attendance" (where there has been a notable improvement in previous poor attendance) or for "consistent attendance" (where a child was only absent due to illness)
- The class teacher at the end of the school year issues certificates of good (1 - 3 days absent due to anything except illness) and excellent (0 days absent) attendance.
- As stated in the Code of Behaviour, parents are required to write a note/letter notifying the teacher of the reason for a child's absence within three days of the child's return. In the case of

pupils in First and Second class, parents may use the relevant section of their homework note book for this purpose.

- Each class teacher also has a number of absence forms which can be filled in by the parent when returning their child to the class.
- If no signed absence form has been received within three days of the pupil's return to school the class teacher notifies the office of same and a text will be sent to the parents/guardians reminding them of this requirement.
- The teacher notes the reason for every student's absence on the Databiz system on a daily/weekly basis.
- The principal will monitor Databiz in order to follow up unexplained absences with parents.

Absence categories are as follows:

Category	Reason	Further details
A	Illness (the pupil, not family members)	Nature of illness if known
B	Urgent Family Reasons	Family funeral/parent in hospital etc
C	Expelled	State date
D	Suspended	State day 1 of 3 etc.
E	Other (holidays, religious observance, emigration)	State exact reason, e.g. Brother's confirmation / family trip to Canada etc. (Holiday letter to be filled in & delivered to office if relevant)
F	Unexplained	To be followed up if no note received
G	Transfer to another school	Office will confirm via Pupil Online Database

Levels of absenteeism are categorised as follows:

- Irregular Absentee: 4/5 days irregular absence or 4/5 days' absence in a 20 day period without a signed absence form
- Seriously Irregular Absentee: 6/10 days absent in a 20-day period without a signed absence form
- Chronic Absentee: 11+ days absent in a 20-day period without a signed absence form or a cumulative total of 20 days absent whatever the reason(s).

Appropriate contact will take place between the school and parents/guardians of these children as outlined below:

For Irregular Absenteeism:

- A note or text will be sent to the parents/guardians reminding them of the requirement to provide written reasons for all absences. The class teacher will use the DataBiz messaging system to inform the office that such a note or text needs to be sent.

For Seriously Irregular Absenteeism:

- The Principal will write to the parents inviting them to a meeting to discuss the problem.
- At this meeting reasons for the pupil's absence will be sought in a supportive manner. Attempts will be made to identify problems leading to absenteeism and possible solutions explored. SMART Targets for improvement will be agreed with the pupil and parents in line with the individual's pattern of absenteeism. Incentives for improvement in this case may include the use of star charts for attendance or increasing the frequency of rewards for attendance (three in a row, four in a row, five in a row etc).
- An EWB pre-referral checklist will be initiated and maintained for each seriously irregular absentee (See Appendix A).
- Following such a meeting the class teacher will inform the office every time this pupil is marked absent. Where parents have not already contacted the school to explain the absence, the school will telephone or text parents on the occasion of every absence and enquire as to the reason for the absence. A note will be made on the child's Databiz file of every call or text (whether answered or not). This note will be made by the person who made the phone call.

For chronic absenteeism:

- When a pupil has reached 15 days absence the principal will check the reasons for absences on the DataBiz system and if appropriate make a phone call home making parents aware that their child has been absent for a total of 15 days. A record of the phone call and its content will be kept on the child's Databiz file.
- When a pupil has reached 20 days absence the number of days absent will be reported to TÚSLA.
- The school will continue all interventions as above.
- When the pupil has reached 20 days' absence the Principal will refer details of the pupil's absence to TÚSLA via the TÚSLA referral form and notify the parents of same by letter.

In addition:

- When a pupil has reached 10 days absence for any reason the principal will check the pupil's absence records on Databiz and, if appropriate, send a note home making parents aware that their child has been absent for a total of 10 days.
- When a pupil has reached 15 days absence for any reason the principal will check the pupil's absence records on Databiz and, if appropriate, make a phone call home making parents aware that their child has been absent for a total of 15 days.
- When a pupil has reached 20 days absence for any reason the Principal will refer details of the pupil's absence to TÚSLA / the NEWB and notify the parents of this referral by letter.

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 (Education (Welfare) Act, 2000, S. 17). Only absences relating to activities organised by the school or in which the school is involved can be authorised by the principal (Education (Welfare) Act, 2000, Section 21 (9)). 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 principal will request the parent to provide a letter to the school to say they are doing so and are aware of the implications.

Transfer to another Primary School:

Attendance, behaviour and academic records of children who transfer to another primary school will be forwarded to the Principal of the school by post as soon as written confirmation of this transfer is received.

Attendance, behaviour and academic records of children who transfer into St. Patrick's JNS will be sought directly from the previous school. Permission will be sought from parents to contact previous schools directly where relevant.

Parents' roles in encouraging the highest possible attendance in the school:

- Set high standards for their child in relation to attendance and punctuality
- Engage with the school if there is a problem about their child's attendance and support plans to address the problem
- Ensure that their child regularly attends and arrives at school on time
- Avoid taking their child out of class unless there is a serious reason
- Avoid taking their child on holidays during term time.

Teachers' roles in encouraging the highest possible attendance in the school:

- Provide a classroom climate and classroom management that support participation and engagement, especially with pupils who may be at risk of poor attendance
- Actively use the school's Attendance Strategy to promote attendance
- Set high expectations for punctuality and attendance in their classrooms
- Agree punctuality and attendance standards with pupils as part of classroom rules
- Set example by their own punctuality
- Ensure attendance data are recorded accurately and reviewed in line with school procedures
- Alert relevant staff if there are concerns about pupil absences
- Support the attendance plan for pupils who have difficulty in attending school on a regular basis
- Support pupils on return when they have missed periods of schooling.

The Principal's role in encouraging the highest possible attendance in the school:

- Provides leadership for the creation of a school ethos and climate that is supportive of high levels of engagement and attendance.
- Leads on the review and implementation of the school's Attendance Strategy
- Puts arrangements in place for monitoring and evaluating implementation of the school's Attendance Strategy
- Provides opportunities for staff to engage actively with the development and monitoring of the school's Attendance Strategy
- Initiates links with other schools and relevant bodies on school attendance issues
- Notifies Túsla's Educational Welfare Services and the relevant Educational Welfare Officer of particular problems in relation to attendance and ensures support for the work of the EWO with pupils who have chronic attendance difficulties
- Furnishes pertinent attendance documentation to officers of relevant government departments.

Statement of Strategy for School Attendance

Name of School	St. Patrick's JNS, Skerries
Address:	Tennis Court Lane, Skerries, Co. Dublin
Roll Number:	16333Q
The School's Vision and Values in relation to attendance	St. Patrick's Junior School is a welcoming and inclusive community. We recognise that all areas of the pupil's experience at school impacts on their engagement and attendance. All members of the school community strive to create an atmosphere of love, respect, security and trust. We are sensitive to the needs and circumstances of each pupil and work in close collaboration with the family. The school recognises the dignity and value of each person. The school affirms its strong commitment to attendance as an important aspect of school ethos and school policy. We want every pupil to get the benefits of good engagement with learning through being in school every day.
The school's high expectations around attendance	<p>There is a very strong tradition of good attendance in St. Patrick's Junior School. However, we are anxious that parents be aware of the absolute necessity for regular punctual attendance at school. High levels of consistent, unbroken attendance from the earliest days of primary school give a firm foundation for their learning right through to senior cycle in secondary school and build the good attendance habits which benefit them throughout their time in education. Every minute of every school day is important.</p> <p>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 (Education (Welfare) Act, 2000, S. 17).</p> <p>Only absences relating to activities organised by the school or in which the school is involved can be authorised by the principal (Education (Welfare) Act, 2000, Section 21 (9)). Therefore, the school cannot give "permission" for holiday absences during term time.</p> <p>If a parent decides to take a child out of school for holidays, the parents must provide a letter to the school stating that they are taking their child out of school for holidays and are aware that they are in breach of the Act in doing so.</p>
How attendance will be monitored	<p>Pupils' presence will be noted on the roll taken by the teacher each morning. The school uses the DataBiz school management system to record attendance.</p> <p>As stated in the Code of Behaviour and the school's Attendance Policy, parents are required to write a note/letter notifying the teacher of the reason for a child's absence within three days of the child's return. Pupils in First and Second class may use the relevant section of their homework note book for this.</p> <p>In addition, each class teacher also has a number of absence forms which can filled in by the parent when returning their child to the class.</p> <p>If no signed absence form has been received within three days of the pupil's return to school, a note or text will be sent to the parents/guardians reminding them of this requirement. The class teacher will use the DataBiz messaging system to inform the office that such a note or text needs to be sent.</p> <p>The teacher notes the reason for every pupil's absence on the DataBiz system on a daily/weekly basis.</p>

	The principal or Deputy Principal will monitor DataBiz on a daily basis in order to follow up unexplained absences with parents.
Summary of the main elements of the school's approach to attendance:	<p>The whole-school approach:</p> <p>Every minute of every school day is important. We affirm the excellent punctuality and attendance of a large majority of our pupils.</p> <p>The school maintains a whole school approach to encouraging and monitoring attendance. All pupils and their families are encouraged to reach very high attendance levels and are supported in reaching and maintaining them.</p> <p>All teachers agree punctuality and attendance standards with pupils as part of classroom rules at the beginning of the year and maintain emphasis on consistent punctual attendance throughout the year.</p> <p>Promoting good attendance:</p> <p>Consistent and unbroken attendance is affirmed and rewarded informally, through praise for those present when the roll is called, and more formally through a range of incentives including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Display of notice on the classroom door stating that all pupils are present every day that this is the case, thereby giving other teachers/adults working in the school the opportunity to praise a class with 100% attendance on any given day. ○ Awarding stars to pupils for attendance and other awards in accordance with the code of behaviour ○ Presentation of certificates acknowledging consistent and unbroken attendance (where pupils are only absent for illness) as well as for good and excellent attendance. ○ Display of photos of pupils with improved or consistent and unbroken attendance in each classroom. <p>Pupils at each class level will be consulted about which incentives are meaningful for them.</p> <p>Responding to poor attendance:</p> <p>Levels of absenteeism are categorised as follows:</p> <p>Irregular Absentee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 4/5 days irregular absence or 4/5 days' absence in a 20 day period without a signed absence form <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A note or text will be sent to the parents/guardians reminding them of the requirement to provide written reasons for all absences. The class teacher will use the DataBiz messaging system to inform the office that such a note or text needs to be sent. <p>Seriously Irregular Absentee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 6/10 days irregular absence or 6/10 days absence in a 20-day period without a signed absence form <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Principal will write to the parents inviting them to a meeting to discuss the problem. ○ At this meeting reasons for the pupil's absence will be sought in a supportive manner. Attempts will be made to identify problems leading to absenteeism and possible solutions explored. SMART

Targets for improvement will be agreed with the pupil and parents in line with the individual's pattern of absenteeism. Incentives for improvement in this case may include the use of star charts for attendance or increasing the frequency of rewards for attendance (three in a row, four in a row, five in a row etc).

- An EWB pre-referral checklist will be initiated and maintained for each seriously irregular absentee (See Appendix A).

- Following such a meeting the teacher will inform the office on completion of the rolla each morning that the child is absent of this fact and the parents will be texted/called. A record of these calls/texts and their contents will be kept by the person making the calls on the pupil's DataBiz file.

Chronic Absentee:

- 11+ days absent in a 20-day period without a signed absence form or a cumulative total of 20 days absent whatever the reason(s):
 - When a pupil has reached 15 days absence the principal will check the reasons for absences on the DataBiz system and if appropriate make a phone call home making parents aware that their child has been absent for a total of 15 days. A record of the phone call and its content will be kept on the child's DataBiz file.
 - When a pupil has reached 20 days absence the number of days absent will be reported to TÚSLA.
 - The school will continue all interventions as above.
 - For chronic absenteeism the Principal will refer details of the pupil's absence to TUSLA via the TÚSLA referral form and notify the parents of same by letter.

In addition:

- When a pupil has reached 10 days absence for any reason the principal will check the pupil's absence records on DataBiz and, if appropriate, send a note home making parents aware that their child has been absent for a total of 10 days.

- When a pupil has reached 15 days absence for any reason the principal will check the pupil's absence records on DataBiz and, if appropriate, make a phone call home making parents aware that their child has been absent for a total of 15 days.

- When a pupil has reached 20 days absence for any reason the Principal will refer details of the pupil's absence to TÚSLA / the NEWB and notify the parents of this referral by letter.

<p>School roles in relation to attendance</p>	<p>Parents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set high standards for their child in relation to attendance and punctuality • Engage with the school if there is a problem about their child's attendance and support plans to address the problem • Ensure that their child regularly attends and arrives at school on time • Avoid taking their child out of class unless there is a serious reason • Avoid taking their child on holidays during term time. <p>Teachers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a classroom climate and classroom management that supports participation and engagement, especially with pupils who may be at risk of poor attendance • Actively use the school's Attendance Strategy to promote attendance • Set high expectations for punctuality and attendance in their classrooms • Agree punctuality and attendance standards with pupils as part of classroom rules • Set example by their own punctuality • Ensure attendance data are recorded accurately and reviewed in line with school procedures • Alert relevant staff if there are concerns about pupil absences • Support the attendance plan for pupils who have difficulty in attending school on a regular basis • Support pupils on return when they have missed periods of schooling. <p>Principal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides leadership for the creation of a school ethos and climate that is supportive of high levels of engagement and attendance. • Leads on the review and implementation of the school's Attendance Strategy • Puts arrangements in place for monitoring and evaluating implementation of the school's Attendance Strategy • Provides opportunities for staff to engage actively with the development and monitoring of the school's Attendance Strategy • Initiates links with other schools and relevant bodies on school attendance issues • Notifies TÚSLA's Educational Welfare Services and the relevant Educational Welfare Officer of particular problems in relation to attendance and ensures support for the work of the EWO with pupils who have chronic attendance difficulties • Furnishes pertinent attendance documentation to officers of relevant government departments.
<p>Partnership arrangements (parents, pupils, other schools, youth and community groups)</p>	<p>St. Patriek's JNS makes opening and closing arrangements in tandem with St. Patrick's SNS as many of our pupils' siblings attend the senior school.</p> <p>Attendance and absentee patterns of pupils transferring to other primary schools will be passed on to the receiving school along with other relevant information.</p> <p>Parents, through the Parents' Association, will be consulted on the strategy at each review.</p> <p>Individual parents will be consulted about reasons for their child's absenteeism and supported in ensuring that their attendance improves.</p>

How the Statement of Strategy will be monitored	<p>Class teachers will monitor the effectiveness of the various incentives and rewards throughout the year and these will be maintained, changed or augmented as necessary. General attendance levels are monitored on a daily basis in accordance with procedures laid down in this strategy statement.</p> <p>Overall annual attendance for the past six years is as follows:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="352 389 1262 656"> <thead> <tr> <th>School Year</th> <th>Overall attendance</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>2011 – 2012</td> <td>95%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2012 – 2013</td> <td>95%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2013 – 2014</td> <td>96%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2014 – 2015</td> <td>95%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2015 – 2016</td> <td>95%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2016 - 2017</td> <td>95%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Our target is to maintain this excellent attendance rate while supporting parents in keeping their children at home when necessary, that is when children are unwell and while their absence is recommended on health & safety or medical grounds (such as to avoid the spread of illness in the school).</p> <p>The school will work with families of chronic absentees with a view to improving attendance in these cases. The school is also committed to working with relevant outside agencies (HSE, NEWB, TÚSLA etc.) in helping families improve pupil attendance in these cases.</p>	School Year	Overall attendance	2011 – 2012	95%	2012 – 2013	95%	2013 – 2014	96%	2014 – 2015	95%	2015 – 2016	95%	2016 - 2017	95%
School Year	Overall attendance														
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2015 – 2016	95%														
2016 - 2017	95%														
Review process and date for review	The strategy will be reviewed by staff on the 5 th of December 2017 and by the Board of Management on 11 th of December 2017														
Date the Strategy was approved by the Board of Management	11/12/2017														
Date the Statement was submitted to Túsła	13/12/2017														

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References:

Education Act 1998 Ss 26, 27, 29.

Education (Welfare) Act 2000 Ss 17, 20, 21, 22, 25.

"Empty Desks", C.D.U. Mary Immaculate College (2000)

TÚSLA Educational Welfare Services pre-referral checklist.

TÚSLA:Developing the Statement of Strategy for School Attendance: Guidelines for Schools (2015)

Appendix A
TÚSLA / NEWB PRE REFERRAL CHECKLIST

Prior to submitting a referral form to the statutory education welfare service it is expected that the school has made attempts to resolve attendance issues. The purpose of this checklist is to note the actions taken prior to referral to the EWS. This checklist should always accompany a referral form.
 To be completed in discussion with the class teacher or a nominated teacher/principal.

Child's name		Gender	M	F
Home Address				
Date of Birth		PPSN		
Ethnicity		Language spoken at home		
School Name		Roll No:		
Class/Year:				
Number of school days absent this year out of a possible number of school days open:	_____ days absent out of _____ school days to date			
Number of unexplained absences year to date:				
What is the presenting issue for this child:				

Checklist actions to address poor attendance	Date action taken	By whom
In-school discussion with pupil, where appropriate.		
Contact between school and parent/guardian to express concern, eg phone call, letter, discuss at parents' evening		
Specific meeting in school with parent/guardian to identify problems and agree interventions		
Concerns and agreements communicated in writing to parent/guardian		
Implementation of any appropriate in-school measures (ie change of class, "contact person", support in class etc)		
Use of appropriate interventions with pupil (eg attendance charts / attendance report, incentives, rewards etc)		
Other school interventions (eg care team, pastoral care team, student support team etc)		
Previous EWB involvement in this case		