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## **School Attendance Policy**

1. This policy is a statement of strategies and measures to foster appreciation of learning among pupils and encouraging regular attendance at school.
2. Every child has the right to an education.
3. The Board Of Management and staff of St. Mark's Senior School see good school attendance as a means of upholding this basic right. The Board Of Management and staff view it as their duty to support the child in this right. Absenteeism of any kind is taken seriously.
4. Gross or chronic absenteeism is seen as symptomatic of other problems and necessitates further enquiry. e.g. Investigation by Attendance Support Teacher , School Completion Co-ordinator, Referral to the Pastoral Care Team and if necessary referral to the Educational Welfare Services (which are part of the Tusla Education Support Service) and/or National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS).

This policy was drawn up by staff of St. Mark's S. N. S. in consultation with and ratified by Board of Management and circulated to staff and parents / guardians of the children . The purpose of the policy is to document current and future practice on school attendance. The policy will be reviewed on a yearly basis.

### **Relationship to the Characteristic Spirit of the School**

St. Mark's S.N.S. is a Senior, co-educational, primary school which strives to provide a well ordered, caring, happy and secure atmosphere where the intellectual, spiritual, physical, moral and cultural needs of the pupils are identified and addressed (see mission statement).

### **Aims of Policy:**

1. To encourage the children to attend school on a daily basis.
2. To enhance the self esteem of everyone in the school community.
3. To encourage the children to take responsibility for their actions.

### **Record Keeping**

1. Each class teacher is required to call the roll each day. This teacher is also responsible for recording each child's daily attendance on Aladdin. All changes of address and other information must be updated on the Aladdin system. It is the teacher's responsibility to ensure, in so far as it is possible, that all the information on Aladdin is accurate and correct. Attendance numbers, once logged, should not be changed.
2. The class roll must be called at 9.50 a.m. each morning and recorded on the Aladdin Online System.
3. The total school attendance is recorded in the Leabhar Tinrimh on Aladdin daily.
4. Each child's annual attendance is recorded in the School Register and the end of year "School Report Card" which is sent home for parent record.

5. All absences have to be explained by a letter from the parent / guardian. This letter must have an address, date, explanation of absence and signature of parent / guardian. These notes are collected by the class teacher and stored for future reference.
6. Any parent / guardian wishing to withdraw a child from school between 8.50am and 2.30 p.m. must notify the office. This withdrawal will be recorded by the school secretary on Aladdin.
7. Under The Education (Welfare ) Act 2000, Part III Educational Welfare and Compulsory School Attendance Section 21 School Attendance Records 21.-(4) (b) "Where the aggregate number of school days on which a student is absent from a recognised school during a school year is not less than 20, the principal of the school concerned should forthwith so inform, by notice in writing , an educational welfare officer".
8. Tracking Of School Attendance: Under the School's Completion Programme, the S.C.P. co-ordinator in collaboration with the Principal, and teachers will track the attendance of children at risk.
9. Average Monthly Attendance is presented and discussed at each Board of Management Meeting.

### **Attendance Incentives**

In order to encourage student attendance, St. Mark's Senior School will develop and implement standard appropriate strategies and programs including, but not limited to:

1. Attendance honour rolls to be posted in the St Mark's Newsletters and Attendance Noticeboard.
2. Special events (e.g., assemblies, guest speakers, sport days) scheduled on days that historically have high absenteeism (e.g., Mondays, Fridays, day before school holidays).
3. Children with the best attendance in each class at the end of the school year will be presented with a Certificate of Attendance and a prize from the Board Of Management.
4. Classroom acknowledgement of the importance of good attendance (e.g., individual certificates, recognition chart, bulletin boards).
5. Attendance Awareness Weeks (November & February): Highlighting the importance of school attendance and improved outcomes
6. Annual Poster Competitions highlighting the importance of good attendance to be held during Attendance Awareness Weeks. These will be titled "Every School Day Counts/Tá Gach Lá Scoile Tábhachtach" or "Strive for 5".
7. Attendance Challenge for targeted children
8. Class rewards for monthly full attendance - best average. Attendance Trophy per standard. This incentive is sponsored by the S.C.P.
9. Homework Passes for child with full monthly attendance.
10. Parent teacher meetings - inform parent of most recent attendance record.
11. End of year school report: state clearly each child's school's attendance.
12. Apple club: children whose attendance is a cause for concern, will be encouraged to join the Apple club run under the auspices of the School Completion Programme.

### **Community Awareness**

The Board of Management shall promote necessary community awareness of the Policy on School Attendance by:

1. Providing a copy of the policy to parents / guardians to pupils at the beginning of each school year and promoting the understanding of such a policy to pupils and their parents/guardians.

2. Providing each teacher, at the beginning of the school year or upon employment, with a copy of the Policy on School Attendance.
3. Providing copies of the Policy to any other member of the community upon request.

### **Roles and responsibility:**

We have put in place a strategy for tracking our pupils' attendance.

- Children's attendance is recorded daily on Aladdin.
- All absences must be explained by a note.
- Teachers must record the reason for absence on Aladdin daily.

### **Class Teacher's Responsibility:**

1. The Class Teacher must CALL roll daily at 9.50 am.
2. If a Class Teacher is absent, their Support Teacher calls the roll on Aladdin.
3. If both the Class Teacher and the Support Teacher are absent, the teacher adjacent or opposite calls the roll.
4. The Attendance Support Teacher will show any substitute teacher how to call roll on Aladdin.
5. An explanatory note must be provided by parent / guardian for each and every absence. These notes must be logged on Aladdin on a daily basis.
6. If a child is absent for up to 3 days in a row, the Class Teacher must call the parent / guardian to enquire about the child's absence. If the teacher is unable to make contact with the parent by phone, the class teacher will send a text message using Aladdin.
7. Once contact is made with a parent re school attendance, it is vital that the teacher begins using the **Pre-Referral Checklist** for the Educational Welfare Board, which is on Aladdin.
8. If the Absence is Unexplained, the class teacher must make a phone call, requesting the Note / Doctors Note to cover the absence. **Remember:** All absences must be explained in writing.
9. Once a child has missed **11 School Days**, it is the teacher's responsibility to give the child an **"Attendance Causing Concern Letter"** in a sealed envelope. Letters of Concern must be sent when the absence reaches: 11 days, 14 days, 17 days, 19 days
10. The class teacher must inform **the Attendance Support Teacher** on the **SAME DAY** a letter is sent and they will send a text to the parent informing them that the child has a letter in his/her school bag.
11. The teacher is required to email both Principal and School Completion Coordinator to inform them about (a) children who have missed >20 days and (b) that a Pre-Referral checklist has been started on Aladdin.
12. The Pre-Referral checklist is for the Educational Welfare Board. The School Completion Coordinator will need this document should a referral to EWO be made in the future.
13. **Sending Letters of Concern in June:** *Letters of Concern must be sent once the child reaches 11 days absent or more regardless of the time of the school year.*

### **Attendance Support Teacher :**

An Attendance Support Teacher is assigned to each standard, third to sixth class.

### **Responsibility of Attendance Support Teacher**

At 10.00 am daily the Principal/Deputy Principal and secretary will check that all rolls on Aladdin have been marked.

Each A.S.T will:

- Check with the Principal at the end of each week regarding children who have missed >20 days
- Check that Tusla Referral Forms have been opened and completed for relevant children.
- Check that a Pre-Referral checklist has been started on Aladdin for children who have missed >20 days.

- Provide a **School Attendance Notification Letter: 20 Days Notice or more** to the class teacher of the relevant child, who has missed more than 20 days.
- Generate a list of any children whose Attendance is a Cause of Concern ("**Concerned List**") & forward it to the Principal on the last Friday of each month.
- Discuss all responsibilities at Pastoral Care Meetings.

### **School Completion Coordinator:**

1. Each week: The School Completion Coordinator will phone the parents of any child on the Concerned List, if the child attendance remains a matter of concern. If we cannot make contact by phone call, the following text message is sent from Aladdin:

*"I have been trying to make contact with you by phone. Please ring St. Mark's S.N.S. to speak with me regarding your child's unexplained absences from school. (SCP)"*

2. If the SCP or school get no response from either action above, phone or text, the School Completion Coordinator will call to parent's / guardian's house.

### **Children Who Have Been Absent for 20 days or more:**

*Their parents will receive **A School Attendance Notification Letter, 20 Days Notice or more** from the Principal, informing them of this fact.*

*We are obliged under the Education Welfare Act 2000 to inform the Educational Welfare Board if a student has been absent for 20 Days or more.*

### **Extra Notes for Teachers:**

1. Ensure parents / guardians have appropriate forms 'to explain and sign' why a child is absent.
2. Keep all forms returned by parents / guardians safely in your own classroom. At the end of the year we file these notes in the child's file.
3. We are required by the Educational Welfare Board to ensure that all pupil absences are explained in writing in as far as it is possible to do so. Parental explanation for their child's absence should be entered on Aladdin. While the "Reason" for absence may be "illness" under the heading note - you do need to elaborate in brief detail. e.g. Doctor's Cert.
4. In the event a parent / guardian cannot read or write request the parent / guardian to sign for the child's absents in your presence.

### **Whole School Interventions for Children Experiencing Attendance Issues:**

Schools Code of Good Behaviour, Anti-Bullying Policy, SPHE programme, Stay Safe, Weaving Well-being programme, Classroom Mindfulness interventions, Attendance Awareness Weeks (November & February)

### **Individual Interventions for Children Experiencing Attendance Issues:**

Attendance Challenge for targeted children, Individual/Group Session with School Completion Coordinator, Social Skills Group, Continuum of Support for School Refusal/Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA), Return to School Plan for EBSA, Placement in Apple Club, MAP: *Mentoring for Achievement Programme* with School Completion Coordinator, NEPS, EWO, TUSLA Family Support Services

### **Responsibility for Review:**

Class teacher, Attendance Support Teachers, Pastoral Care Team, School Completion Coordinator, School Principal and the Board of Management of St. Mark's Senior National School.

**Annual Review by the Board of Management:**

The Board of Management shall annually review the level of student attendance records and if such records show a decline in student attendance, the Board shall direct the Principal to develop and implement revisions and plans deemed necessary to improve student attendance.

Signed: *Fr. Pat McKinley*  
Acting Chairperson B.O.M.

Date: 28/3/22

Last Review Date: April 2019

Review date: March 2022

**Appendix 1:** Written explanation for absence from St. Mark's SNS

**Appendix 2:** Pre-Referral checklist for Educational Welfare Board.

**Appendix 3:** Attendance Causing Some Concern Letter

**Appendix 4:** School Attendance Notification 20 / 30 /40 Days Notice

**Appendix 5:** Attendance Challenge - "Strive for Five"