

Castletown Girls' School

Attendance and Punctuality Policy

The Formulation of the Schools attendance policy was a collaborative school process involving staff and Board of Management in consultation with Department of Education and Science and National Educational Welfare Board guidelines. It was updated in April 2021.

Rationale

The school needed to devise a policy in this area in response to the guidelines issued by the NEWB. The school also recognises that when a child is absent or late for school, they miss out on both educational and social needs. It is also difficult for children, who are frequently absent, to maintain relationships and attain their full potential in their education.

Aims

The aims of this policy are to

- Foster an appreciation of learning;
- Encourage pupils to attend school regularly and punctually;
- Share the promotion of school attendance amongst all the school community.
- Inform the school community of its roles and responsibilities as outlined in the Education Welfare Act 2000;
- Identify pupils who may be at risk of developing school attendance problems;
- Ensure that the school has procedures in place to promote attendance and participation;
- Develop, subject to available resources, links between the school and the families of children who may be at risk of developing attendance problems;
- Identify and remove, insofar as is practicable, obstacles to school attendance;
- Enhance the learning environment where children can make progress in all aspects of their development;
- Promote positive attitudes to learning;
- Ensure that the system of rules, rewards, and sanctions are implemented in a fair and consistent manner, thus encouraging pupils to attend school;

Content of Policy

1. The NEWB and absenteeism
2. Keeping records
3. What to do if your child is absent
4. Guidelines on holidays or planned absences
5. Leaving early

6. Structures and plans to counteract lateness
7. Roles and responsibilities
8. Records and communication of records
9. Implementation
10. Review
11. Ratification and communication

1. The NEWB and absenteeism

The NEWB is the board responsible for ensuring that all children in our school attend school regularly. The local NEWB officer in Dundalk is Leanne Meehan. Schools are responsible for reporting absenteeism through a website, www.schoolreturns.ie. When a child misses 20 school days, the NEWB may become involved in investigating the cause.

2. Keeping Records

Individual pupil attendance is recorded on Databiz; class roll time is 10.10 daily.

In line with circular 0028 2013.

“ A pupil will be marked either present or absent at the time of roll call and there will be no provision for adjusting the roll book where a pupil subsequently does not complete the full school day or arrives after roll call.” (Individual teachers will use the Databiz System to note late attendance)

Every term, the school reports all absences to the NEWB. In this report, every child's absence is recorded online. There are 6 criteria for absence in the report. The National Educational Welfare Board Codes for categories of absence are a) illness b) urgent family reasons c) expelled d) suspended e) other f) unexplained g) transfer to another school.

3. What to do if your child is absent

When a child is absent, it is the parent/guardian's responsibility to write a note/ email to explain the absence. It is acceptable to telephone or text the school on the first day of a child's absence, but a written note/ email explaining the reason for a child's absence should be provided to the school upon the child's return. To facilitate this, such communications should be in the homework diary on the designated pages or through the class teacher's school email address. Parents/guardians should communicate reasons for absences in Infant classes on a separate page or sheet of paper or by email to the class teacher.

If a child is absent, when the child returns to school she should give a written note/ email to the school. These notes are kept by the class teacher until the end of each school year. The school may contact parents when a written explanation for the child's absence is not received by the school.

4. Guidelines on holidays or planned absences

Although planned holidays and other absences are not encouraged by the school, a note or email must be sent in to explain the absence from school.

5. Structures and plans to counteract lateness

School starts at 9.20 in Castletown Girls' school. A child who arrives only 10 minutes late for school misses over 30 hours of tuition per annum. The first ten minutes of our school day can be the most important time as it helps the child settle in to her routine.

6. Roles and Responsibilities

Parents/guardian can promote good school attendance by

- Ensuring regular and punctual school attendance;
- 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 and approve of school attendance;
- Discussing planned absences with the school;
- Refraining, if at all possible, from taking holidays during term 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;
- Ensuring, insofar as is possible, that children's appointments (with dentist etc.), are arranged for times outside school hours;
- Contacting the school immediately, if they have concerns about absence or other related school matters;
- Notifying the school in writing if possible, if their child/children particularly children in junior classes, are to be collected by someone not known to teacher.

Pupils

- Pupils have the clear responsibility to attend school regularly and punctually;
- Pupils should inform staff if there is a problem that may lead to their absence;
- Pupils are responsible for promptly passing on absence notes from parents to their class teacher;
- Pupils are responsible for passing school correspondence to their parents, on a specified day.

Board of Management

The Board of Management is committed to providing a positive school atmosphere which is conducive to promoting good school attendance. In this regard:

- The school curriculum, insofar as is practicable, is flexible and relevant to the needs of the individual child;
- The school will promote development of good self-concept and self-worth in the children;
- Support for pupils, who have special educational needs, are in place in accordance with Department of Education & Science guidelines;
- Internal communication procedures are in place to inform teachers of the special needs of pupils;
- A special reward system will be introduced for promoting good attendance at school;
- The assistance of the Education Welfare Officer will be utilised;
- The attendance rates of pupils will be monitored by the class teacher in the first instance, and the class teacher will notify the Principal of any concerns regarding the attendance of any child;
- Pupils with a poor attendance record will, insofar as is practicable, be supported in an effort to improve their attendance.

Principal

The Principal will:

- Ensure that the school register of pupils is maintained in accordance with regulations;
- Inform the Education Welfare Office:
 - If a pupil is not attending school regularly;
 - When a pupil has been absent for 20 or more days during the course of the school year;
 - If a pupil has been suspended for a period of six or more school days;
 - When a pupil's name is removed from the school register;
- Inform parents of a decision to contact the Education Welfare Office of concerns regarding a pupil;
- Insofar as is practicable, promote the importance of good school attendance among pupils, parents and staff.

Class Teacher

The class teacher will:

- Record attendance and punctuality for class on Databiz System;
- Keep a record of explained and unexplained absences;
- Contact parents, or request the principal to make contact, in instances where frequent absences are not explained;
- Encourage pupils to attend regularly and punctually

- Inform the principal of concerns s/he may have regarding the attendance of any pupil.

7. Records and Communications

Subject to the restrictions of the Data Protection Act attendance, behaviour and academic records of children who transfer to another primary school will be passed to the Principal of the school by post, as soon as we receive written notification of transfer. Attendance, behaviour and academic records of children who transfer from another primary school will be sought directly from the previous school. Attendance, behaviour and academic records of pupils transferring to a second level school will be sent to the school, if requested, once enrolment has been confirmed.

8. Implementation

This policy will be implemented with immediate effect.

9. Review

The Board of Management will review this policy in three years' time or sooner should the need arise.

10. Ratification & Communication

The policy was ratified by the Board of Management at its meeting on _____

It will be available in the school for any parents/guardians who wish to view it.

Signed _____

Date: _____