

St. Laurence O' Toole's Special School Statement of Strategy for School Attendance

In St. Laurence O' Toole's Special we value the individuality of all our children and respect their right to access all areas of learning. We work to enable them to develop the knowledge, skills, understanding and attitudes that are necessary for their self-fulfillment and their development into active and responsible adults.

We decided to review our attendance strategies because:

- It is a priority area identified by staff
- It is a requirement under Education Welfare Act 2000
- The school needs to encourage pupils to be in attendance

Aims

We aim to

- To foster an appreciation of learning
- To raise awareness of the importance of school attendance
- To address the fact that all of our students have been deemed to be at risk of early school leaving
- To enhance the learning environment so that all our students can make progress in all aspects of their development
- To promote positive attitudes to learning
- To ensure that the system of rules, rewards and sanctions are implemented in a fair and consistent manner that encourages students to attend school
- To comply with requirements under Education Welfare Act 2000/Guidelines from NEWB.

Strategies to encourage good attendance

- **Caring Environment** - St. Laurence o' Tooles, at all times, aims to ensure that students are taught in a safe secure and caring environment where their intellectual, physical and emotional development are catered for

We strive to create a welcoming environment for students and parents. Teachers consistently try to encourage good attendance in their respective classrooms

- **Individual Needs** - all of our students have been identified as having particular individual needs, so they require an individual response from the school staff team, hence the need for individual care plans. We emphasise positive achievements and do all we can to enhance self-esteem
- **Rewards** - A points system is used to reward attendance, and to improve attendance, on a weekly basis. Rewards are in place for those who achieve the most points for attendance
- **Breakfast and Lunch-** Breakfast and lunch are provided for all students. This enhances the school experience for all students and is a visible sign of their

being cared for in school. It also provides an incentive for those students who might otherwise be at risk of poor attendance.

Communication

- **Parental Support** - It is the policy of St. Laurence O' Toole's Special School to encourage and maintain open communication between home and school. The Principal is always available to parents and an appointment is not necessary.
- **Attendance** is one of the issues addressed at meetings for new parents when their child attends an enrolment meeting in St. Laurence O' Toole's.
- **Parents** are made aware of the requirements of the Education Welfare Act at initial enrolment meetings. Many of the students and parents are already involved with Education Welfare Officers as Educational Welfare is often the agency referring the student to the school.

At enrolment meetings parents / guardians and students are informed of the following :

1. **The importance of regular attendance**
2. **Parental obligations in relation to attendance under the Education Welfare Act**
3. **Advice to parents on what they can do to help children attend school regularly.**

School Records

A roll call is taken every day and where a student is absent, the school immediately contacts the parents or guardians of that student to ascertain the reason for the absence, unless the parents/ guardians have already made contact with the school.

Response to Non-Attendance

St. Laurence O' Toole's Special School makes every effort to address non - attendance. A phonecall is made to the parents / guardians in the first instance of absence to establish the reason for the student's non-attendance. If a student is absent for a number of days and there is no viable reason given for the absence, then the principal will make contact with parents / guardians and request that they attend a meeting at the school with the student. At this stage the school will endeavor to get to the root of the non- attendance issue. If valid reasons are given and there are issues that need to be resolved, where the school can be instrumental in helping to resolve the issues, then the school will make every effort to do this in conjunction with the parents / guardians.

If there are no valid reasons for the non-attendance and all efforts to address the non-attendance have been made, then the school must involve the Educational Welfare Board.

- **When a student has missed 20 days, the absence is reported to the EWO for the region and to Educational Welfare Board as required by the Education Welfare Act. If the absenteeism persists, the school makes a formal referral to Education and Welfare Board using the specified Educational Welfare Services Referral Form which can be obtained from the TUSLA Portal.**

Responsibility

All staff members have responsibility for promoting good attendance. The staff of St. Laurence O' Toole's Special School recognize the fact that students are more likely to attend school when they have positive experiences in school. Therefore, it is at the core of this school's ethos to create a warm, caring, nurturing environment for all our students where they can feel valued and encouraged to meet their full potential. Good attendance is constantly praised and encouraged. Parents are also reminded in a positive way of their children's good attendance and their successes in school as a direct result of this.