

Corpus Christi National School Attendance Strategy



Rationale

This statement was prepared in consultation with the staff, parents, and the Board of Management of Corpus Christi National School to highlight the strategies to foster an appreciation of learning among pupils and to encourage their regular attendance and punctuality. This strategy has been formulated to ensure that the school is compliant with legislation that provides for the welfare of the pupils in its care including;

- The Education Act (1998)
- The Education Welfare Act 2000 (section 22)

Under the terms of the Education Welfare Act 2000 (amended by the Child and Family Agency Act 2013) schools are obliged to: -

- Maintain a record of students attending school
- Record school attendance and notify the relevant Educational Welfare Officer of particular problems relating to attendance
- Support students with difficulties in attending school regularly
- Prepare and implement a school attendance strategy to encourage positive, regular school attendance and an appreciation of learning within the school
- Prepare and implement a code of behaviour, setting standards of behaviour and disciplinary procedures for the school
- Liaise with other schools and relevant bodies on school attendance issues.

School Profile

Corpus Christi National School is a co-educational school under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin. There are 16 mainstream classes and a staff of 20 teachers, 3 special needs assistants, a part-time caretaker and a secretary. At present, there are 398 pupils enrolled in the school. Pupils come from the immediate Drumcondra parish and other nearby areas including Glasnevin, Santry, Beaumont, Finglas and Marino.

Relationship to the ethos of the school

The mission statement for the school states that 'Corpus Christi is a catholic primary school in which we strive to learn together in a happy and safe environment, where everyone is valued, respected and encouraged to do their best.' Regular attendance at school and being on time for school are key factors in ensuring that pupils benefit fully from their education. Corpus Christi National School aims to foster excellent relationships and cooperation between parents/guardians and staff and maintain a culture of high expectations for pupils learning, participation and attendance. The school management expects the cooperation of pupils, parents/guardians and staff in encouraging and maintaining a high level of regular attendance by pupils throughout the school year.

Aims

- To ensure pupils are registered accurately and efficiently
- To ensure pupil attendance is recorded daily
- To encourage full attendance
- To identify pupils at risk
- To promote a positive learning environment where children can avail of all learning opportunities
- To raise awareness of the importance of school attendance
- To fulfil the requirements of legislation

- To develop links with families who may be at risk of developing attendance.

How attendance is monitored

School opens for the reception of pupils at 8.50 a.m. The infant classes go home at 1.30 p.m. and the other classes go home at 2.30 p.m. All pupils and staff are expected to be in school on time and to remain at school for the full school day.

The school is responsible for maintaining a record of children who arrive late to school, leave school early or are collected late. A pupil will be recorded late to school if they arrive after 9.10 a.m. The main school door is closed at 9.10 a.m. and a written record of any late arrivals or early departures is recorded at the secretary's office.

Teachers take responsibility for calling the roll every day and for ensuring a reason is provided by parents for pupil absences. The class roll is called every morning at 9.50 a.m. Any pupil who is not present at that point is marked absent. The class roll may not be altered once it is called.

Pupils who come to school after Roll Call are marked absent, however the teacher can record that the pupil arrived late and note the time and the reason for the late as necessary e.g. (E) Other – late arrival – the teacher notes the time and reason. Parents of children who are late must sign the late register in the secretary's office and record the reason for being late.

Parents are required to provide an explanatory note to explain each absence of their child by completing the explanatory note on the Aladdin Connect App. These notes are retained by the school on the Aladdin School Management System. Parents are also required to provide an explanatory note if their child departs school early. When a child is sent home because he/she is sick, a record will be kept by the school. Every absence must be explained.

Parents/Guardians must contact the class teacher in advance if their child needs to leave class early during the school day. Parents should refrain from collecting pupils early from school unless it is for an essential reason.

Class teachers will monitor patterns of attendance and punctuality and will bring concerns to the attention of the Principal/Deputy Principal and parents/guardians at an early stage if necessary.

Parents/Guardians are made aware of the requirements of the National Education Welfare Board, particularly of the by-law relating to absences of more than 20 days per school year. They are notified in writing on the end-of-year school report of the total number of absences during the school year. In cases of concern about school attendance, the Education Welfare Officer/TUSLA will be contacted.

Recording and Reporting of Attendance and Non-Attendance

Pupils are expected to be at school on time each day. In Corpus Christi, the attendance of each pupil is recorded electronically on the Aladdin School Management System daily as per Circular 33/2015. Attendance data for each class is recorded automatically, by the same system replacing the Leabhar Tinrimh (Attendance Book). The Principal ensures that the obligatory school returns concerning pupil attendance are made on a time as directed by Education Welfare Service/TUSLA.

The **Primary Online Database** (POD) of the Department of Education and Skills holds the relevant data for each pupil such as PPSN, name, Mother's Maiden Name, Address, Date of Birth, Gender, Nationality, Religion, Ethnic background whether in receipt of learning support or Irish exemption. School Attendance Data may be recorded on POD also.

Parents/Guardians are informed in writing in the end-of-year (June) report of the total number of absences during the school year. The school is obliged to inform the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) in writing; when a child has missed 20 or more days in a school year, attendance is irregular, a pupil is removed from the school register and a child is suspended or expelled for 6 days or more.

Target Setting

The average monthly attendance ranges from 92% to 97% depending on the time of year. The target is to maintain the current attendance levels and improve the monthly averages by informing parents of their obligations regarding attendance. Corpus Christi strives for greater than 95% attendance throughout the school year.

Whole School Approach

The school promotes and encourages full attendance by all pupils. This is communicated to the parents and the school community through the following means:

1. The daily and prompt recording of attendance and absences by the class teachers
2. Daily recording of any early departures or late arrivals
3. Newsletters to parents /guardians
4. Reporting any concerns and monthly attendance averages to the Board of Management
5. Dissemination of the attendance requirements via the school website
6. Staff meetings

Strategies for promoting good attendance

The promotion of school attendance is shared amongst all in the school community. The school promotes attendance through ongoing praise for attendance and punctuality. The following strategies are in place in Corpus Christi to help foster an appreciation of learning and good attendance:

- Corpus Christi will promote attendance by raising awareness of the importance of regular attendance with the student body through Student Council presentations like the 'Strive for five initiative', attendance poster competitions and the school newsletter. Attendance is a regular item on the agenda of Student Council meetings and Staff meetings.
- The 'Strive for Five' Initiative is promoted by the Student Council to all classes. Pupils are encouraged to improve their own attendance and the number of days and the overall attendance of the school. The Student Council will observe improvements in whole school attendance with the Principal and a whole school event is organised at the end of the school year to celebrate this improvement.
- Corpus Christi National School will promote the development of good self-esteem and self-worth in its pupils (see Code of Behaviour and Anti-Bullying Policy). A Wellbeing Policy Statement is currently under development. The school supports the needs of all pupils and takes a 'whole child' approach. It promotes inclusion and celebrates diversity.
- Support for pupils who have special educational needs in accordance with DES guidelines.
- The class teacher will encourage pupils to attend regularly and punctually. Attendance and punctuality are discussed with parents at the Parent/Teacher meetings.
- The school curriculum, insofar as is practicable, will be flexible and relevant to the needs of the individual child
- The class teacher will keep a daily record of attendance in Aladdin
- The 'Don't Let Your Child Miss Out' leaflet from the Education Welfare Service is distributed electronically to all parents
- Frequent reminders about punctuality and attendance will be given through the P.A system in the morning
- The school calendar is publicised to parents (via the school website and Aladdin Connect) in advance of the beginning of each school year to ensure parents are aware of the school terms and closures
- Newsletters to parents record information about school attendance
- Attendance information and monthly attendance averages are reported to the Board of Management

- Attendance is a regular item discussed at staff meetings
- Parents must provide the class teacher with an electronic explanation of their child's absence on return to school via Aladdin Connect (such as illness, family event, appointments etc.)
- Parents/guardians should also inform the class teacher in writing if their child needs to leave class early during the school day. Parents should call to the school office in person to inform the secretary when collecting children early and record the reason for the early withdrawal in the record book. Parents should not go to the yard to collect a child during break times.
- The Senior Management team regularly reviews pupil attendance and punctuality records with a particular focus on unexplained absences and pupils who are regularly late. Parents/guardians are contacted to discuss the matter and an improvement plan may be put in place. The Senior Management team will review the data and the late register book to reduce the number of full-day absences, part day absences and late arrivals.
- The school office will contact parents/guardians of target pupils presenting with persistent school absences to check if the absence is warranted
- The Principal will inform the NEWB when:
 - a pupil has been missing for twenty or more days during the school year
 - a pupil has been suspended from school more than once under the Code of Behaviour.

Identification of students who are at serious risk of developing school attendance problems

School Attendance rates and absence reasons are recorded and reported to TUSLA in accordance with the current reporting requirements during the school year through the TUSLA online system. This data is used to identify pupils at risk of poor attendance. An Annual Report is submitted to TUSLA at the end of the school year and details the overall levels of attendance at the school during that school year.

Where deemed necessary the Principal will refer cases of ongoing and chronic absences and poor punctuality to the Educational Welfare Officer/TUSLA. In such case, the Education Welfare Officer (following all reasonable efforts by TUSLA to consult with the child's parents and with the Principal of the school) may serve a 'School Attendance Notice' on any parent who they conclude is failing or neglecting to cause the child to attend the school. A successful case against the parent/guardian may result in a monetary fine and/or imprisonment.

The information submitted in the Annual Attendance report includes:

- Total Number of days lost through student absence
- Total number of students who were absent for 20 days or more
- Total number of students expelled in respect of whom all appeal processes have been exhausted or not availed of during the school year
- Total number of students who were suspended for any number of days during the school year.

In addition, the school makes three other reports to TUSLA during each school year.

A school is obliged to report to the Child and Family Agency (TUSLA) when

- A student has been suspended for 6 days or more cumulatively
- A student has reached 20 days absence cumulatively
- A student's name is to be removed from the school register for whatever reason
- A principal is concerned about a student's attendance
- The Board of Management decides to expel a student.

Tiered intervention to tackle pupils at risk of poor attendance

Corpus Christi takes a proactive and preventative approach to school attendance. It focuses on systems, groups of pupils and individual pupils. It takes an evidence-based approach and uses a tiered-interventions to improve attendance.

Tier 1- Target group -All pupils

Tier 2- Target group- Students with Emerging School Attendance Problems

Tier 3-Target group- Students with a significant attendance problem Intensive- individualised intervention)

Attendance is an important part of Child Protection and a lack of attendance can often indicate neglect. The following strategies may be employed to identify students at risk of developing school attendance problems:

- At-risk students are identified early. At-risk students can be categorised as those who miss more than 5 days in a 20-day period without an accompanying explanatory note from parents/guardians. Parents are contacted when this occurs. Absences of more than 20 days are automatically referred to the Education Welfare Officer.
- Class teachers will inform the Principal of any concerns s/he may have regarding pupil attendance
- The school will contact the various agencies who are involved with such students.

Effective Strategies in the Event of Poor Attendance

- Corpus Christi promptly identifies pupils who are at risk of poor attendance
- Parents receive a message from the school when their child is absent for 15 days and then 20 days
- A formal letter is sent to parents of children who are absent for more than 20 days
- Contacting parents on an informal basis when a child is absent regularly
- Discussing school attendance with the student (where appropriate) to find an explanation for the absence, listening to the pupil to find a solution. Encouraging the pupil's good attendance by responding to their concerns and incentivising improvement.
- Supporting pupils through the school (Principal, Deputy Principal, Class Teacher) where it is known that a child is at risk. Establishing a care team to support the child at risk. Complete sociometric surveys to ensure the child has a social network.
- In the event of prolonged absence/irregular attendance the school will request a meeting with the child and parent to try to identify and resolve any barriers to attendance
- Contacting the N.E.W.B. /NEPS/HSE or other outside agencies as appropriate.

Roles and Responsibilities for School Attendance

The Principal, Deputy Principal, teachers and other school staff, in consultation with parents, and the BOM, are responsible for implementing this policy. It will be the responsibility of the Principal Teacher/Deputy Principal to monitor overall school attendance levels. Class teachers are responsible for monitoring individual pupils' attendance and identifying and reporting ongoing concerns for 'at risk' pupils. The Education Welfare Act 2000 (amended by the Child and Family Agency Act 2013) obligates schools to undertake the following actions in respect of school attendance matters:

- Maintain a record of students attending the school
- Record school attendance and notify the relevant Educational Welfare Officer of issues relating to attendance
- Support students with difficulties in attending school regularly
- Implement a school attendance strategy to encourage, in a positive way, regular school attendance and an appreciation of learning within the school
- Prepare and implement a code of behaviour, standards of behaviour and disciplinary procedures for the school
- Liaise with other schools and relevant bodies on school attendance issues.

The Role of the School

It is the responsibility of the Board of Management, the Principal and the class teachers to implement this attendance strategy. The school will endeavour to do this by fostering excellent home-school links, encouraging links with the community, providing excellent teaching and learning opportunities for the pupils and ensuring correct monitoring and reporting of attendance. Close home school and community links will be fostered through;

- Continued cooperation between the school and the Parents Association
- Attendance at parent/teacher meetings
- Attendance at school events (e.g. concerts, masses, tours/trips, etc)
- Regular newsletters to parents
- Availability of teachers to meet with parents
- Sacramental preparation with the parish
- Cooperation with Community Gardaí programmes
- Charity and community events
- Liaison with our local GAA club and other local sports clubs.

The Role of the Principal/Deputy Principal is to:

- Ensure that the school register of pupils is maintained in accordance with regulations
- Inform the Education Welfare Officer if a pupil is not attending school regularly, when a pupil has been absent for 20 or more days during the school year or when a pupil's name is removed from the register
- Inform parents of a decision to contact the Education Welfare Officer of concerns regarding a pupil
- Insofar as is practicable, promote the importance of good school attendance among pupils, parents and staff
- Make all required attendance returns to TUSLA
- Report attendance statistics to the Board of Management regularly.

The Role of the Class teacher is to:

- Maintain the school roll-book by procedure
- Keep a record of late arrivals, explained and unexplained absences
- Encourage pupils to attend regularly and punctually
- Inform the principal of concerns she may have regarding the attendance of any pupils.

Transfer and communication with other schools

When a child transfers from Corpus Christi to another school, the school's records on attendance, academic progress, etc; will be forwarded upon receipt of written notification of the transfer.

- When a child transfers to Corpus Christi NS, confirmation of transfer will be communicated to the child's previous school and appropriate records will be sought
- Pupils transferring from Corpus Christi to a post-primary school will have their Education Passport forwarded upon receipt of confirmation of enrolment from the Principal of the secondary school.

Communication with Parents

"A parent is obliged to cause a child between the ages of 6 and 16 to attend at 'a national school or another suitable school' on each day that the school is open for instruction." (Education Welfare Act 2000). Good communication with parents/guardians is key to encouraging good attendance. By consulting with parents/guardians when reviewing policy, the aim is to promote good cooperation among the school community.

The school also informs all parents of the implications of non-attendance as per the Education Welfare Act, 2000. (This information is disseminated at least once a year in a school newsletter).

Specific reference is made to the consequences of long absences on children's progress in language acquisition and general academic progress, and also to the fact that children can become unsettled and find it difficult to readapt to their class situation after a long absence. The school also reminds the parents of the importance of good punctuality and encourages parents to ensure their child 'is in the line before ten to nine'. This ensures their child has adequate time to socialise with their peers before school and it helps to settle them for the school day. Late arrivals can be upsetting and unsettling for children.

Parents/ Guardians can promote good attendance by:

- Ensuring regular and punctual school attendance. Children will line up with their class in the morning, socialise and establish a connection with their peers. This eases the transition to the classroom each morning.
- Notifying the school if their children cannot attend for any reason- reasons for absence must be communicated by parents/guardians in writing via the explanatory note on Aladdin Connect. These notes form a record and may be inspected by the Education Welfare Officer. If a child is absent for part of the school day, a written explanation is recorded on Aladdin by the parent.
- Recording a note in advance to the class teacher in the child's homework journal if the child has to leave school early for an unavoidable medical appointment/essential reason. Parents should sign their child out in the record book in the front office and sign their child in on their return. Parents/Guardians should, where possible organise appointments after the school day has finished.
- Ensuring that they have listed two emergency contacts for the school to phone in an emergency
- Working with the school and education welfare service to resolve any attendance concerns
- Making sure that the child understands that parents support good attendance
- Discussing planned absences with the class teacher
- Refraining, where possible from taking holidays during school time
- Showing an interest in their child's learning and homework
- Encouraging pupils to participate in school activities
- Praising and encouraging their child's achievement
- Contacting the school immediately if they have concerns about absence or other related school matters
- Notifying the school if their child/children are to be collected by someone unknown to the teacher. Parents should ensure the person collecting their child is over the age of 18.

Term-time holidays

Parents are informed that they have a legal duty to ensure their child attends school every day that the school is open; unless there is a genuine reason. 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 the Education (Welfare) Act 2000)

Therefore, the Principal or the class teacher cannot permit holiday absences during term time. The school discourages parents from taking their child/children on holidays during term time. If parents decide to take a child on holiday during the school term, they should inform the school in writing.

Homework

It is the policy of the school not to assign homework to children who are sick or those who are absent due to going on holiday during term time.

Policies that support good attendance

- Child Safeguarding Statement
- Code of Behaviour and Discipline
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- The Wellbeing Policy
- Parents as partners policy
- Substance Use Policy
- Acceptable Use Policy -Internet Safety Policy
- Critical Incident Policy
- Homework policy

Monitoring and Evaluation

The Board of Management, the staff and the whole school community will be mindful at all times of:

- The identification of aspects of the operation and management of the school and of the teaching of the school curriculum that may contribute to problems relating to school attendance on the part of specific students.
- The need to review this strategy in the future to accommodate the changing needs of the school and its population.

Success criteria

The success of this policy will be measured through:

- Improved attendance levels as measured on the Aladdin Management System and statistical returns
- Happy, confident well-adjusted children
- Positive parental feedback
- Teacher vigilance

Implementation and review.

This strategy has been fully operational from September 2017 following ratification by the school's Board of Management. It will be reviewed every three years or more often if necessary. It was reviewed at a Board of Management meeting on May 13th, 2024.

Signed: _____ Signed: _____

Niamh Greene

Felix McKenna

Principal

Chairperson Board of Management