

ATTENDANCE STRATEGY



Introductory Statement:

- The school has promoted good attendance since its inception in 1987. It is a fundamental component of the DEIS strategy current in the school since 2002 and its workings are reviewed annually. The percentage of days attended annually has been recorded for both boys and girls since 2007.
- This new policy was created in February 2017 following new guidelines for schools drawn up by Educational Welfare Services TUSLA, the Child and Family Agency. All staff participated in the review of our document.

St. Conal's N.S. decided to review its attendance because:

- While there is a strong tradition of good attendance in our school, changing social habits and patterns require us to monitor attendance and to put strategies in place to counter-act poor or irregular attendance going forward.
- Developing the Statement of Strategy for School Attendance: Guidelines for Schools is provided under statutory instrument of Section 22 of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000. Section 22(1) of the Act, states:

'the board of management of a recognised school shall, after consultation with the principal of, teachers teaching at, parents of students recognised at, and the educational welfare officer assigned functions in relation to, that school, prepare and submit to the Board [of Tusla] a statement of strategies and measures it proposes to adopt for the purposes of fostering an appreciation of learning among students attending that school and encouraging regular attendance at school on the part of such students'

- It is an obligatory component of its participation in DEIS.

Relationship to characteristic spirit of the school:

The Board of Management of St. Conal's National School wants every pupil to actively participate in all school activities. While St. Conal's is a Catholic School with a Catholic ethos, it has due recognition and respect for all other religious beliefs. The school models and transmits a way of life inspired by belief in God and in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Mary, His mother is admired as the exemplar of these values. The school strives to provide a caring, happy and secure environment where the intellectual, spiritual, emotional, physical and cultural needs of the pupils are identified and addressed.

Regular attendance helps to create a stable learning environment for all pupils, and the school hopes to promote co-operation among pupils, parents/guardians and staff in maintaining a high level of regular attendance and punctuality throughout the school year.

Our school aims to provide a happy, secure learning environment where children,

parents/guardians, teachers, ancillary staff and Board of Management work in partnership, where each individual is valued, encouraged and respected for their uniqueness and facilitated to reach their full potential in a positive atmosphere. A high pupil attendance is paramount to achieving this.

We are committed to providing a learning environment that will foster all children's learning and encourage them to attend school regularly. Our aim is to provide a stimulating day, with clear guidelines and structures, so that children feel welcome and nurtured while attending school. We believe that our pupils will benefit from this education through regular attendance.

Aims of the policy:

Our aim is to ensure and maintain a high level of attendance at school by all pupils.

- Encouraging full attendance where possible
- Identifying pupils at risk
- Promoting a positive learning environment
- Raising awareness of the importance of school attendance
- Fostering an appreciation of learning
- To comply with requirements under Education Welfare Act 2000/Guidelines from TUSLA.

Whole school strategies to promote attendance:

- Non-attendance is recorded daily in the school roll books and further collated in the Leabhar Tinrimh.
- Teachers will inform parents of attendance record in school reports.
- After 15 days of non-attendance, a reminder letter is sent to parents stating the implications of missing 20 days in accordance with the Education Welfare Act.
- 20 or more days of non-attendance or irregular attendance is reported to Educational Welfare Services TUSLA, Child and Family Agency at one of its four annual reporting periods.
- Should it be necessary for a child to attend an appointment or if he/she, for any other reason, must leave the school during school hours, parents/ guardians are requested to notify the class teacher or school principal by letter or telephone of the intended absence. In these cases, a person known to the child and to the class teacher or school principal must collect the child at the school.
- The Attendance Strategy for St. Conal's N.S. is incorporated into the DEIS plans.
- Attendance levels are reviewed each year.
- Figures are analysed and areas of concern are identified.
- If a child has been absent from school, parents/guardians are requested to inform the school by letter of the reason for the absence on the child's return to school. A standard template for reporting absences is circulated to parents at the beginning of each year. Its categories of absence correspond to those set by the NEWB.
- Schools report individual student absences and expulsions by submitting Student Absence Reports four times each year. Schools also report the total number of days lost through absence by submitting an Annual Attendance Report (AAR) at the end of the academic year. Both Reports can be either online via www.schoolreturn.ie or by downloading the documentation and posting to the Educational Welfare Services, Child and Family Agency, Brunel Building, Heuston South Quarter, Saint John's Road West, Dublin 8.
- The parents are reminded every year of the Child and Family Agency's requirement that any child missing twenty days in the school year must be reported to the NEWB.
- Our class teachers and support teachers seek to ensure that children who may be experiencing learning difficulties are actively supported and encouraged with appropriate teaching. Homework is tailored to the individual needs of these pupils.
- As a school, and within the classroom, we strive to create a safe, welcoming environment for our pupils and their parents through our policies on Child Protection, Code of Behaviour and Anti-Bullying and through the SPHE curriculum.

- We ask parents to value every minute that the children spend at school and therefore make sure that the children are sitting in their classroom prior to the commencement of lessons at 9.30a.m.
- Attendance is monitored by each class teacher and if child is absent for long periods without explanation, parents are contacted by the class teacher. Lateness is not usually the child's fault, but if a pattern develops, contact is made with parents by the class teacher requesting their co-operation in improving punctuality. If the problem persists, the Principal will then contact parents in an effort to resolve any difficulties.
- Parents are discouraged from taking children out of school for holidays during school time. The school calendar is published at the beginning of the school year and it is hoped that parents can use this to plan holidays. The school is not responsible for work missed while a child is on holiday.
- Parents of newly enrolled infants are invited to a welcome meeting in June each year and are informed of procedures in relation to attendance and the importance of attendance.
- The necessity of healthy eating habits is encouraged by the school in the annual newsletter and also incidentally with individual parents where necessary.
- We seek to create an active learning environment where all types of learners are catered for based upon a child-centred curriculum.
- We communicate the requirements of schools and of parents under the Education Welfare Act to parents via parent-teacher meetings, text messaging, and information and reminder letters.
- Attendance of pupils is discussed regularly among teaching staff and annually in the updating of DEIS plans.

Parents/guardians 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 school 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.
- Contacting the school immediately, if they have concerns about absence or other related school matters.

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 the specified day.

Procedures in relation to the Removal from Register/Transfer from another school:

- The principal will only remove a pupil's name from a school register and POD (Primary Online Data Base) System where he has been informed that the child has been enrolled in

another school or when the Child and Family Agency notifies them that the child has been registered by it, as in receipt of out-of-school education.

- Transfer to another school: Where parents remove a child from a school and on receipt of a letter of confirmation from that school, the school will forward on the most recent school report, detailing attendance history.

Success Criteria:

- Improved attendance will determine the success of this statement.
- Under DEIS, the school aims to sustain a target of 95% overall attendance or more if possible.

Practical indicators of the success of the strategies in the statement may be:

- An increase in attendance and punctuation levels. (Check rolls, registers, Daily Attendance Summary, etc.)
- Positive feedback from teachers, parents and pupils.

Ratification

Signed:

_____ Chairperson

Date: _____

Review

This policy will be reviewed on an ongoing basis and/or as the need arises.

Statement of Strategy for School Attendance

Name of school	St. Conal's N.S.
Address	Narin, Portnoo, Co. Donegal.
Roll Number	19756N
The school's vision and values in relation to attendance	<p>Aims Aims of this statement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) To comply with requirements under Education Welfare Act 2000/Guidelines from TUSLA. b) Encouraging full attendance where possible c) Identifying pupils at risk d) Promoting a positive learning environment e) Raising awareness of the importance of school attendance f) Fostering an appreciation of learning
The school's high expectations around attendance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Regular attendance helps to create a stable learning environment for all pupils, and the school hopes to promote co-operation among pupils, parents or guardians and staff in maintaining a high level of regular attendance and punctuality throughout the school year. b) Our school aims to provide a happy, secure learning environment where children, parents or guardians, teachers, ancillary staff and Board of Management work in partnership, where each individual is valued, encouraged and respected for their uniqueness and facilitated to reach their full potential in a positive atmosphere. A high pupil attendance is paramount to achieving this.
How attendance will be monitored	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Attendance/Non-attendance is recorded daily in the school roll book. b) Teachers will inform parents of attendance record in school reports. c) After 15 days of non-attendance, a reminder letter is sent to parents stating the implications of missing 20 days in accordance with the Education Welfare Act. d) 20 days of non-attendance or irregular attendance is reported to TUSLA, Child and Family Agency.

	<p>e) Should it be necessary for a child to attend an appointment or if he/she, for any other reason, must leave the school during school hours, parents/ guardians are requested to notify the class teacher or school principal by letter or telephone of the intended absence. In these cases, a person known to the child and to the class teacher or school principal must collect the child at the school.</p> <p>f) If a child has been absent from school, parents/guardians are requested to inform the school in a note of the reason for the absence on the child's return to school. We promote the use of the standard reporting slips distributed annually by the school for this purpose as they tally with the NEWB categories of absence.</p>
<p>Summary of the main elements of the school's approach to attendance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target setting and targets • The whole-school approach • Promoting good attendance • Responding to poor attendance 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>Target setting and targets</u> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Attendance levels will be reviewed each year b) Figures will be analysed and areas of concern will be identified c) Under DEIS, the school aims to reach a target of 95% overall attendance or more. 2. <u>The whole-school approach</u> Attendance of pupils is discussed regularly among teaching staff and the children are praised for good attendance at assemblies. 3. <u>Promoting good attendance</u> The parents will be reminded annually of the Child and Family Agency's system whereby any child missing twenty days in the school year will have to be reported. 4. <u>Responding to poor attendance</u> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) If a child has been absent from school, parents/guardians are requested to inform the school in a note of the reason for the absence on the child's return to school. The standard reporting slip should be used by parents. b) Engaging in early dialogue with parents and pupils if there is a problem. c) Referral to Tusla's Educational Welfare Services where the need arises.

	d) Referral to other agencies such as NEPS.
School roles in relation to attendance	<p>a) Through school policies, teacher expectations, curriculum subjects such as SPHE and an overall positive school climate, a high attendance level will be promoted by the Board of Management and all teaching staff.</p> <p>b) The Principal will report to the Board annually regarding the numbers reported to the NEWB for having exceeded 20 days.</p>
Partnership arrangements (parents, students, other schools, youth and community groups)	<p>a) High attendance will be further promoted by keeping parents informed about their responsibilities to ensure high attendance of their children, and informing them on school policy and expectations in relation to attendance.</p> <p>b) Communication with the local secondary school about pupils' attendance on their transition into secondary school.</p> <p>c) Principals in the locality networking together in promoting attendance and sharing good-practice experience such as absence note templates.</p>
How the Statement of Strategy will be monitored	<p>Practical indicators of the success of the strategies in the statement may be:</p> <p>a) Checking rolls, registers, Daily Attendance Summary, Annual Audit, etc.</p> <p>b) Positive feedback from teachers, parents, pupils.</p>
Review process and date for review	Review will take place annually with teaching staff at staff meetings and during the DEIS review and outcomes will be relayed to the Board of Management.
Date the Statement of Strategy was approved by the Board of Management	25 April, 2017
Date the Statement of Strategy submitted to Túsla	27 June, 2017