

Attendance Policy

Introductory Statement:

School staff of Inch N.S. developed this policy at their School Development Planning day on the 7/11/05. It was reviewed in 2008, 2012 and 2016. The latest review updated the policy in line with the TUSLA guidelines for schools in developing a statement of strategy for school attendance. Parents, staff and the Board of Management worked collaboratively to update and enhance the school's existing policy on attendance and to formulate a Statement of Strategy for School Attendance. It was presented to the Board of Management for ratification and circulated to parents.

Rationale

This policy was drafted in compliance with the requirements of the Educational Welfare Act and the TUSLA guidelines for schools in developing a statement of strategy for school attendance.

Inch N.S. is committed to providing a quality education for every child. The school further wishes to ensure that each child will get every opportunity to flourish as the unique individuals that they are and to realise their full potentials. Regular school attendance is a prerequisite of this.

Good school attendance plays a critical role in the success of every one of our students. Improved student attendance is a critical part of our overall programme of work for improving performance of each child in several facets. Since the classroom is a setting where spiritual, intellectual and interpersonal exchanges take place, being present for those experiences enhances the students' education.

Relationship to the Characteristic Spirit of the School:

Our vision of the school is that the children will flourish as the unique individuals that they are. Inch N.S, recognises that achievement in life is closely tied to habits of punctuality and regular/ consistent attendance. We endeavour that each child will develop a sense of personal responsibility and an appreciation of the importance of punctuality and regular attendance in achieving their full potential as learners and individuals.

Aims

- To promote good attendance
- To promote punctuality
- To establish behaviours that will serve the children in the future
- To ensure that children will not be alienated from the Education System through bad attendance.
- To develop an awareness among parents of the importance of regular attendance, punctuality and continuity.

- To have clear procedures for the school in dealing with problem attendance and punctuality.

Punctuality, Early Departures:

Punctuality:

The school wishes to promote punctuality by:

- Informing parents of school times, expectations of punctuality and attendance and the reasons for this. The school is open to receive pupils into classrooms from 9.00 a.m. onwards. Pupils are expected to be in their classroom no later than 9.15 a.m.
- Ensuring that school starts and finishes punctually.
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- Varying the morning timetable to motivate students.
- If a pupil arrives late for school s/he must be signed in by the accompanying adult on the school's sign in/out sheet. This sheet is available in the office or from the class teacher.
- The school roll book is completed daily at 10 a.m. Pupils not present at this time will be marked absent.

Problems with Punctuality:

- Where there is a problem the teachers will keep a record of arrival times and dates.
- The teacher will communicate with the parents about the problem – written note in homework journal or orally.

Early Departure from School:

- If a pupil needs to leave school early the parent/guardian should notify the class teacher in advance via the homework journal. The parent/ guardian should collect the pupil at the assigned time from the classroom and fill in the sign out form available from the office or the class teacher.

Attendance and Absences:

Promoting Good Attendance:

- In September a letter will be circulated to parents informing them about this policy (available on the school website) and of the requirements to the Educational Welfare Act,
- Roll books will be marked daily in accordance with Rule 55 of the “Rules for National Schools”
- Good attendance will be praised and encouraged.
- Attendance will be specifically mentioned at parent-teacher meetings.
- Parent(s) must sign an Absence Form (purple form), giving date and reason of absence. These absence forms must be submitted to relevant class teacher when the pupil arrives back at school.
- The school will keep a record of all attendances and Absence Forms.
- Pupils with excellent or very good attendance will receive certificates at the end of each term.
- Teachers will regularly talk to pupils about the importance of good attendance.
- Parents will be made aware of the section in this policy dealing with pupil withdrawal for holidays during term- time.
- The Principal will talk about the importance of good attendance at school assemblies (pupils) and at parent information evenings.
- A statement strategy for school attendance, involving parents, Board of Management and staff, will be drafted which is based on the guiding principles in this policy.
- When reporting on pupil attendance to parents the following descriptive language will be used by all teachers.

Attendance

Number of days absent	Comment
0	Excellent
1-5	Very Good
6-10	Good
> 10	Fair/ See report.

Procedures for Notification of Student Absences to the School:

- Parents should advise the school about a pupil's absence when the student returns to school.
- The dates of and reason for absence should be recorded by parents on the school's absence form (purple form) and returned to the class teacher.
- The school roll book is completed daily at 10 a.m. Pupils not present at this time will be marked absent.

School Responses to Absences:

- Class teachers will update and give out a new absence form to pupils returning to school after being absent.
- At 15 days' absence the school will request a meeting with the parents/guardians. The class teacher and principal will speak with the child's parents/guardians. The aim of this conversation is work collaboratively with parents to try and understand the in- school and/or out- of –school factors influencing attendance.
- Where a pupil has an accumulation of 20 days' absence, the school will advise parents of their concern in writing. The school will also inform the EWS through the school's quarterly returns.
- Where there is an ongoing concern over a student's attendance for whatever reason and in spite of all the efforts at resolution made at school level and in collaboration with parents/guardians, a formal written and signed referral will be made to the Educational Welfare Services (EWS).
- In line with the school's child protection policy, notice will be taken where excessive absences are affecting a child's academic and social development or where repeated patterns of absences appear to emerge, e.g. repeated absences on a Monday/ Friday etc.

Absences due to Term Time Holidays:

- Parents have a legal duty to ensure that their child who is attending a recognised school is at school on every day that the school is open, unless there is a genuine reason for him or her not to attend (Section 17 of Education (Welfare) Act 2000). 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 Education (Welfare) Act 2000). Therefore, the school cannot give 'permission' for holiday absences during term time.
- As part of the school's strategy for promoting attendance it is strongly recommended that parents avoid taking students on holidays during term time
- If a parent decides to take a child out of school for holidays a letter will need to be submitted to the principal stating:
 - 1) They are removing the pupil from the school for the purpose of a holiday.
 - 2) As parents they are aware of the learning implications for their child, the reporting implications for the school and the possible legal implications for themselves as parents/guardians.

Roles and Responsibilities:

The Board of Management:

- The Board of Management has responsibility for the overall development and review of this attendance and the preparation of the Statement of Strategy.
- The Board has responsibility for ensuring that the measures outlined in this policy and strategy are in place.
- The Board of Management has responsibility for signing off and submitting the Statement of Strategy to TUSLA.

The Principal:

- The Principal is responsible for leading and guiding the work on the policy review and the Statement of Strategy on behalf of the Board of Management.
- The Principal is responsible for ensuring, either directly or through delegation, that the measures identified in the school attendance policy and Statement of Strategy are communicated and carried out.

- Provides leadership for the creation of a school ethos and climate that is supportive of high levels of engagement and attendance.
- Ensures that relevant data and documentation is returned to TUSLA where there are concerns about a pupil's attendance levels.

Teachers:

- Teachers will contribute their professional expertise to the preparation of the Statement of Strategy and the attendance policy.
- Teachers are responsible for implementing the measures outlined in the school attendance policy and the Statement of Strategy.
- Teachers will provide a classroom climate and classroom management that support participation and attendance.
- Actively use the school's attendance policy and strategy to promote attendance.
- Set high expectations for punctuality and attendance.
- Set example by their own punctuality.
- Support students on return when they have missed periods of schooling as per the school's homework policy.

Parents:

- Parents are responsible for supporting the measures identified in the school attendance policy and the statement of strategy.
- Parents are responsible for setting high standards for their child in relation to attendance and punctuality.
- Parents should ensure that their child regularly attends and arrives at school on time.
- Parents should avoid taking their child out of class unless there is a serious reason.
- Parents should avoid taking their child out of class on holidays during term time.

- Parents must be willing to engage with the school if there is a problem with their child's attendance and support plans to address the problem.
- Parental involvement in the development of this strategy plan is essential in reinforcing their role and responsibility for attendance, and raising awareness about the importance of attendance.
- Parent participation in the development of the Statement Strategy is essential in order to draw on their experience.

Success Criteria

Implementation of a successful attendance policy.

Improvement in average attendance as per the school's statement of strategy.

Improvement in punctuality.

Timeframe for Implementation

This policy was initially implemented in November 2005, following ratification by the Board of Management. It was reviewed and approved by the Board of Management in 2008.

Further review was carried out in 2012 and December 2016.

This reviewed policy and statement of strategy was approved by the Board of Management on the 8th March 2017

Timeframe for Review

This policy will be reviewed for the academic year 2019-2020.