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Attendance Policy:

Introductory Statement

This policy document was drawn up as a collaborative process between the staff and Board of Management of St. Marnock's NS as our existing policy was due for review due to legislative changes. The Board acknowledges the high level of school attendance but wishes to raise awareness in the whole school community of the importance of school attendance and the correlation between high levels of attendance and success in school. It also wishes to ensure and maintain a high level of attendance at school by all pupils.

Rationale

The policy was drafted for the following reasons:

- The Board of Management wishes to comply with legislation, such as:
 - The Education Act, 1998
 - The Education (Welfare) Act, 2000
- The Board of Management wishes to promote and encourage regular attendance as an essential factor in our pupils' learning.
- The role of the Education Welfare Services, the Child and Family Agency TUSLA
- Changes in family circumstances
- Child Protection Issues

Relationship to the Characteristic Spirit of the School

St. Marnock's N.S. endeavours to enable every pupil to actively participate in all school activities. We also strive to create a caring environment that promotes good attendance and ensures the best possible outcomes for children and their families. 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 through the school year.

Aims:

- To raise awareness of the importance of regular school attendance
- To identify pupils at risk of leaving school early
- To promote and to foster positive attitudes to learning
- To ensure compliance with the requirements of the relevant legislation
- To ensure that pupils are registered accurately and efficiently
- To ensure that pupil attendance is recorded daily
- To encourage full attendance where possible
- To promote a positive learning environment
- To enable learning opportunities to be availed of
- To foster an appreciation of learning
- To develop, subject to available resources, links between the school and the families of children who may be at risk of developing attendance problems
- To identify and remove, insofar as is practicable, obstacles to school attendance.

Content:**Punctuality:**

Our COVID Response Plan outlines that school now begins at staggered times for children due to COVID 19 restrictions. These arrival times now range from 8.35a.m.-8.50a.m. All pupils and teachers are expected to be on time. The school will contact parents/guardians in the event of pupils being consistently late. The Principal is obliged under the Education Welfare Act, to report children who are persistently late, to the Education Welfare Board.

Recording and Reporting of Attendance and Non-Attendance

The school attendance of individual pupils is recorded on Databiz for each class by their class teachers on a daily basis. Class attendance data is recorded and calculated on Databiz on a monthly basis (Leabhar Tinrimh). The annual attendance of each individual pupil is recorded on Databiz.

If a pupil does not attend on a day when the school is open for instruction, his/her non-attendance will be recorded by the class teacher on Databiz. The roll call is taken at 9.50am each morning. Any pupil not present will be marked absent for the day.

The following two forms are required to be filled out by parents/guardians to explain such absences:

- 1. Student absence form (Appendix A)**
- 2. HSE Return to Educational Facility form (Appendix B)**

Student absence forms are located in the school diary for parents of children in 1st class to 6th class, however, this form will also be emailed to parents/guardians at the beginning of the year.

HSE Return to Educational Facility form will be emailed to parents/guardians at the beginning of the school year.

These forms can be returned in the following ways to the class teachers:

- 1. Junior infants-2nd Classes:** Class dojo
- 2. 3rd-6th Classes:** Designated teacher emails

Such notes will be retained by the class teacher in a specific folder.

Parents/guardians must also provide a note/letter/email/phone call if a child departs early during the school day. Early departures of pupils are recorded as pupils' parents have to 'sign out' their early departure in the 'Sign out' book in the Secretary's office

Parents/ guardians are made aware of the requirements of TUSLA, Education Welfare Services, particularly the legislation relating to absences of more than 20 days during the school year. They are informed in writing on the end of year report of the total number of absences during the school year.

A standard letter is also sent to parents of pupils whose non-attendance is a concern, following a period of absence totalling 15 days. This letter reminds parents that they must inform the school in writing each time their child is absent. It also emphasises the legal requirement of the school to inform Tusla following the absence of a child for 20 days or more.

NB: Notice to parents regarding Attendance/Punctuality for this school year:

This year our top priority is to implement safety measures to keep everyone safe and well. While it is accepted that there is a direct link between school attendance and pupil progress we will make exceptions this year. We thank all parents for erring on the side of caution by keeping children who are unwell at home, seeking GP advice when their child's symptoms are on the Covid-19 list and observing all the guidelines around isolation etc. The result of all this may mean that attendance figures will be low. However, our main aim is the safety and welfare of all our pupils and staff and if we manage to keep the school open and keep each other well, we are taking the correct course of action. We will continue to encourage good attendance but our attendance initiative will be put on pause as we encourage all parents to emphasise with their children to keep up their punctuality. Please follow the protocols for reporting your child's absence as outlined on pg 2 of this policy.

The school is obliged by law to inform Tusla by means of the school returns, where a child has missed 20 or more days in a school year, where attendance is irregular, where a pupil is removed from the school register and where a child is suspended or expelled for 6 days or more. The main aim is to ensure your child misses as little of school as possible. As teachers must fill in the category of absence for your child, it is essential that you submit the Student Absence form (explaining your child's absence from school) and the Return to the Educational facility form. Please note that if your child's absence is Covid related, the school will have all your email correspondence to back up your child's absence.

Pupils at very high risk to Covid-19 will be supported with remote learning when they are absent from school in order that they remain as connected as possible with the school and their classmates.

However in general situations if **a pupil is absent from school and required to self- isolate** 'for a short time on foot of medical advice, it is not expected that these pupils would be educated through adapted education provision during this time'. St. Marnock's NS will ensure that these pupils are supported to catch up with their learning on their return to school.

Refer to *Continuity of Schooling: Supporting pupils who are at very high risk to Covid-19* pg 12

Whole School Strategies to Promote Attendance

- St. Marnock's N.S. endeavours to create a safe, welcoming environment for our pupils and their parents/guardians. Parents/guardians are consulted in drafting and reviewing policies with the aim of promoting a high-level of co-operation among the school community. The teaching staff collaborates in the planning and implementation of the primary school curriculum, so as to provide a stimulating learning environment for all pupils.

- New entrants and their parents/guardians are invited to engage in an induction process, through which the school's policies and procedures in relation to attendance are explained. There is a focus on the value of regular attendance and on the importance of developing good attendance habits from Junior Infants onwards.
- Our school's homework policy drawn up in consultation with parents/guardians, clearly outlines the school's expectations in terms of the quantity of homework assigned and in the quality of homework presented. There is a consistent approach to homework throughout the school.
- The calendar for the coming school year is published annually in September. It is hoped that this approach will enable parents/guardians to plan family events around school closures, thus minimising the chances of non-attendance related to family holidays during the school term.
- Pupils with special needs needing support are identified as early as possible and the appropriate support systems are put into place. We emphasise positive achievements and do all we can to enhance self-esteem.
- Pupils are expected to wear the correct school uniform. If they arrive at school without a complete uniform every effort is made to provide them with the necessary uniform if spare items are available.
- The question of equality of access is addressed through school policy on Equality of Access and Participation.

Communication

The school makes contact with the local Education Welfare Board (EWB) personnel and there is ongoing communication in relation to children who are at risk.

The school maintains communication with local pre-schools and second-level schools in order to make the transition for pupils as easy as possible.

Communication with other schools

- When a child transfers from St. Marnock's NS to another school, the school's records on attendance, academic progress etc will be forwarded on receipt of written notification of the transfer
- When a child transfers into St. Marnock's NS confirmation of transfer will be communicated to the child's previous school, and appropriate records sought
- Pupils transferring from St. Marnock's NS to a post primary school will have their records forwarded on receipt of confirmation of enrolment.

Communication with Parents

The school informs all parents of the implications of non-attendance as per the *Education Welfare Act 2000*. This information is communicated through close collaboration with the Parents' Association and through school newsletters. Parents of new children are informed on enrolment.

Parents/guardians can promote good school attendance by:

- ensuring regular and punctual school attendance
- notifying the school if their sons 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 good school attendance
- not arranging holidays during the school year
- 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
- ensuring, insofar as is possible, that children's appointments (with dentists etc), are arranged for times outside of school hours
- contacting the school immediately, if they have concerns about absence or other related school matters
- notifying, in writing, the school if their child/children, particularly children in junior classes, are to be collected by someone not known to the teacher

Strategies in the Event of Non-Attendance

Section 17 of the Education (Welfare) Act (2000), states that 'the parent of a child shall cause the child concerned to attend a recognised school on each school day'.

Section 21 of the act obliges schools to inform the Education Welfare Officer if a child is absent on more than 20 days in any school year, or if a child does not attend school on a regular basis.

In such cases the Education Welfare Officer (following all reasonable efforts by the Education Board to consult with the child's parents and the Principal of the school) may serve a 'School Attendance Notice' on any parent who he/she concludes is failing or neglecting to cause the child to attend the school. A successful case taken against the parent may result in a fine and/or imprisonment.

Reasons for absence are recorded and reported to Tusla twice during the school year through an online system. An annual report is submitted by the school not more than six weeks following the end of the school year detailing the overall level of attendance at the school during that school year.

Transfer to another school

Under Section 20 of the Education (Welfare) Act (2000), the Principal of a child's current school must notify the Principal of the child's previous school that the child is now registered in their school.

When a Principal receives notification that a child has been registered elsewhere he/she must notify the Principal of the pupil's new school, of any problems in relation to attendance at the pupil's former school and of such matters relating to the child's educational progress as he or she considers appropriate. This applies to pupils who transfer between primary schools and to pupils who transfer from primary to second-level education.

Success Criteria

The following will provide some practical indicators of the success of this policy:

- Improved attendance records as measured through DataBiz attendance records and statistical returns

- Board of Management, staff and parent/guardian awareness of their legal obligations under the Education (Welfare) Act 2000
- Positive parental feedback
- Happy, confident, well-adjusted pupils

Roles and Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the Principal and staff to implement this policy under the guidance of the school's Board of Management.

Implementation date: October 2020

This policy will be implemented immediately following ratification by the Board of Management and communication to the Parents' Association.

Ratification and Review

This policy will be reviewed in _____.

It was ratified by the Board of Management in _____.

Ratification and Communication:

This policy will be available to all parents to view in school and on the school website.

The policy was ratified by the Board of Management on **8th October 2020**

Timetable for Review: November 2021

Signed: _____

Ciarán McCormack

Chairperson of the Board of Management

Date: _____