

# Attendance Policy

## Introduction

There is a very strong tradition of good attendance in Darley N.S. However, we are anxious that parents are aware of the absolute necessity for regular and punctual attendance at school. This policy document was drawn up to ensure and maintain a high level of attendance at school by all pupils. The Board of Management, in consultation with staff and parents, formulated this Attendance Policy.

## Rationale

The main factors contributing to the formulation of this policy are:

- To promote and encourage regular attendance as an essential factor in our pupils' learning;
- Legislative requirements such as the Education Welfare Act 2000 and the Education Act 1998;
- The role of the National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB);
- Levels of disadvantage;

## Aims

- To raise awareness of the importance of regular school attendance
- Ensuring that pupils are registered accurately and efficiently.
- 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 highlight the importance of remaining in school for a full school day
- To ensure the safety of all pupils in our school and following child protection guidelines, by having all visitors and parents report to the school office
- To ensure the accountability of all pupils during any emergency evacuations
- To retain a record of pupils regularly leaving school early.
- To identify and remove, insofar as is practicable, obstacles to school attendance.

## Relationship to the Characteristic Spirit of the School

Darley NS endeavours to enable every pupil to actively participate in all school activities. Regular attendance helps to create a stable learning environment for all pupils, and the school hopes to promote cooperation among pupils, parents/guardians and staff in maintaining a high level of regular attendance through the school year.

## Roles and Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the principal and class teacher to implement this policy under the guidance of the school's Board of Management.

The school principal will ensure that the school register is maintained in accordance with regulations. The principal will 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 course of a school year or when a pupil's name is removed from the school register. The Principal will inform parents of a decision to contact the Education Welfare Officer of concerns regarding a pupil and, insofar as is practicable, promote the

importance of good school attendance among pupils, parents and staff.

### **Punctuality**

School starts at 9.10am. All pupils and staff are expected to be in school before this time. For security reasons, all doors will be locked at 9.30am. If a child arrives at school after 9.30am, they must be brought to the office by their parents/guardians where they will be asked to sign the Student Attendance Book. The secretary will bring the children to the classroom to prevent disruption as class will have already commenced. The class teacher will discuss, with the parents of children who are continually late, strategies to improve punctuality.

If following school intervention and strategies, punctuality does not improve, the principal will report the case to the Education Welfare Officer for further intervention and action.

### **Recording and Reporting of Attendance and Non-Attendance**

The school attendance of individual pupils is recorded for each class on a daily basis.

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. Any pupil not present at roll call will be marked absent for the day unless the teacher has been informed, either through the school text/email or making contact with the office, that the child is due to attend school later that day. The child will need to attend school for a half day to be marked present on the roll. The roll may not be altered once it has been filled in.

An absence note (template supplied) or email is required to explain each absence. Explanations will be recorded on file. Parents/guardians must also provide a notification if a child departs early during the school day. Late arrivals and early departures are also recorded in the Student Attendance Book in the office. Children will be marked present if they are not in school but are representing the school at outside activities.

Parents/guardians are made aware of the requirements of the NEWB particularly the by-law relating to absences of more than 20 days per school year. They are notified in writing on the End of Year Report of the total number of absences during the school year.

The school must inform the Education Welfare Officer in writing, where a child has missed 20 or more days in a school year, where a pupil is removed from the school register or where a child is suspended or expelled for 6 days or more.

### **Promoting Attendance**

The school promotes good attendance by:

- creating a safe and welcoming environment
- displaying kindness, compassion and understanding

- being vigilant so that risks to good attendance such as disadvantage, bullying etc. are identified early
- publishing the school calendar for the year ahead in May/ June of the previous academic year. 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.
- rewarding pupils who have no more than 2 days absence during the school year by presenting them with an attendance certificate at the end of the academic year.

### **Whole School Strategies to Promote Attendance**

Traditionally, school attendance is strong in our school. However, the staff remains vigilant so that 'risk' students are identified early. Risk students can be categorised as those who miss more than 3 days in a 20-day period without an accompanying note of explanation from parents/guardians. Appropriate contact takes place between the school and parents/guardians either via a phone call or a note in the homework diary when this occurs. A meeting between parents and the class teacher and/or principal may be set up if deemed necessary. Absences of more than 20 days are automatically referred to the Education Welfare Officer.

### **Strategies in the Event of Non-Attendance**

Section 21 of the Act obliges schools to inform the Education Welfare Officer if a child is absent for more than 20 days in any school year, or if a child does not attend school on a regular basis. When a child reaches 15 days absence, a letter will be automatically sent to parents informing them of this and the responsibility of the school to report to NEWB should the child reach 20 days absence.

### **Transfer from another school**

When Darley NS receives a new student, the principal will notify the principal of the child's last school attended that the child is now registered in our 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 it appropriate.

### **Removal from Register**

*The school is aware that 'A principal may only remove a pupil's name from a school register where they have been informed that the child has been enrolled in another school or when the Welfare Board notifies them that the child has been registered by it as in receipt of out-of-school education.'*

### **Education Welfare Board (EWB)**

- Reasons for absence are recorded and reported to the EWB twice during the school year through an online system. An annual report is submitted - 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.
- 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.

- 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'.

### **Consultation with Parents:**

- 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.
- Darley NS 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.

### **Withdrawing a sick child from school**

- It is important to note that we do not encourage students to attend school who are feeling unwell at home. This can lead to more infection in the classroom and invariably the child that is unwell is sent home during the school day. If a child is sick during the school day, the secretary/teacher will first ring the parent and if he/she is not contactable, they will ring the emergency contact number. Parents should ensure all phone numbers are up to date. The parent or emergency contact must then arrange for the child to be picked up and removed from the school. If the parent/emergency contact is unable to attend personally, they must advise the secretary of who will be picking up the sick child.

### **Medical Appointments**

If a child needs to leave school for a medical appointment, this must be advised to the school either by a phone call, email, text to school phone or a note in the child's school diary prior to the collection time. *No child will be allowed to leave the school with any other adult other than his/her parent unless notification or phone call has been received beforehand naming the person who is to collect the child.* On returning the child after the appointment, the return time will be recorded in the Student Attendance Book.

### **Family Emergencies**

When collecting the child, the parent should report to the school office where she/he will be asked to sign the child out in the Student Attendance Book. The parent can then wait in reception while the secretary collects the child from the classroom.

## Success criteria

The success of any Attendance Policy is measured through:

- Communication
- Action
- Rationale
- Improved attendance levels as measured through the attendance records and statistical returns
- Happy, confident, well-adjusted children
- Positive parental feedback
- Teacher vigilance

## Ratification and Review

This policy was reviewed and ratified by the Board of Management at a meeting on \_\_\_\_\_ and is due to be reviewed again in January 2025 or sooner if the need arises.

Chairperson of the B.o.M. \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Principal: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

A copy of the policy will be given to the Board of Management, Parents' Association, all members of staff and is available for parents to view on our school website.