

Attendance Policy

St. Francis Special School

Introduction:

This policy was drawn up 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 the following legislation:
 1. The Education Act, 1998.
 2. The Education (Welfare) Act, 2000.
- The Board of Management wishes to promote and encourage regular attendance as an essential factor in our pupil's learning.

Relationship to the Characteristic Spirit of the School:

St Francis Special School is dedicated to providing the highest quality, care and education of pupils under our instruction. In partnership with the Parents/Guardians, Families and/or Residential Personnel of our Pupils as well as our Trustees, we seek to promote individual intellectual, emotional, social, physical and spiritual development. The dignity of each child is maintained at a premium, thus ensuring equality of provision. We believe that each child is entitled to an appropriate educational provision, regardless of individual levels of attainment and functioning. While enabling each pupil to develop his/her potential to the full, we also want our pupils to be happy in school and to enjoy their time in our care.

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 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 who may have school poor attendance and to encourage and promote regular attendance for them.
- To promote and foster positive attitudes to learning.

- To ensure compliance with the requirements of the relevant legislation.

Recording and Reporting of Attendance and Non-attendance:

- The school attendance/non-attendance of individual pupils is recorded in the Leabhar Rolla (Roll Book) on a daily basis.
- Class attendance data is recorded daily into the Leabhar Tinrímh Laethuil.
- The annual attendance of each individual pupil is recorded in the Roll Book
- A note from parents/guardians is requested to explain school absences.
- Attendance records and Parental contact details of Pupils whose non-attendance or poor attendance is a concern as evidenced by missing twenty days or more are passed on to the Education Welfare Officer in line with NEWB Guidelines
- Details of Pupils who have been suspended or expelled are also passed on the NEWB as necessary – though no Pupil has been suspended or expelled to date.

Whole School Strategies to Promote Attendance:

- The Principal writes to all Parents / Guardians early in September outlining the SFSS's reporting obligations in regard to Child Protection and NEWB Legislation.
- Our school endeavours to create a safe, welcoming environment for our pupils, parents and staff. Parents are welcome to discuss any concerns they may have regard to their child with class teacher and principal.
- Parents are notified of school openings and closures well in advance.
- Positive relationships between School Staff and Parents are promoted and encouraged.
- Communication between SFSS and Parents / Guardians is promoted and encouraged.

Strategies for 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 twenty 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 fine and/or imprisonment.

Reasons for absence are recorded and reported to the NEWB as per required number of times 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 year.

Roles and Responsibilities:

The Board of Management of St. Francis Special School have approved this policy and it is the responsibility of the principal and staff to implement it.