



GREYSTONES
Educate Together

**Statement of Strategy for School Attendance
Greystones Educate Together N.S.
Blacklion, Greystones, Co.Wicklow.
Roll 20300A**

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Introduction

The Board of Management of Greystones Educate Together National School recognises the clear and direct relationship between regular school attendance and pupil progress. That high attendance is linked to pupils staying at school to complete and do well in their studies. Overall, good attendance engenders a positive attitude to school and learning. The Board also recognises the impact of poor attendance on wider aspects of a student's life, such as weaker peer relationships, risks of engagement in anti-social activity and poor family relationships (Hibbett and Fogelman, 1990; Carroll, 2011).

In light of the fact that absenteeism is often a complex matter, the Board of Management, from the beginning, views each child in the context of his/her family and practises a holistic approach to improving attendance. We strive for a greater understanding of the barriers faced by students and we hope to put in place the supports and interventions that can be of help in ensuring students engage, participate and attend.

Aims and Objectives

The policy is geared towards:

- promoting a positive learning environment
- promoting a school culture where every child feels valued, trusted and respected
- facilitating children to have a voice in school matters
- encouraging full attendance where possible
- encouraging punctuality
- fostering an appreciation of learning
- raising awareness of the importance of school attendance
- raising everyone's expectations of our school attendance
- ensuring that pupil attendance is recorded daily
- ensuring that pupils are registered accurately and efficiently ensuring awareness of and compliance with the requirements of the relevant legislation
- identifying pupils at risk
- identifying and removing, insofar as is practicable, obstacles to school attendance
- rewarding good attendance and improvements in attendance

Compliance with School Ethos

This policy complements the school's ethos of nurturing children's potential in a caring environment where the welfare of each child is paramount. It is the responsibility of the Principal and staff to implement this policy under the guidance of the school's Board of Management

Roles and Responsibilities in implementing the school's Attendance Strategy

All staff have an input into the development and implementation of the policy.

a) Principal:

- Provides leadership for the creation of the school's ethos where high levels of engagement and attendance are valued, encouraged and supported.
- Ensures all staff and parents/guardians have opportunities to engage with the development and monitoring of the school's Attendance Strategy.
- Arranges for implementing, monitoring and evaluating the school's Attendance Strategy.

b) Deputy Principal

- Notifies TUSLA's Educational Welfare Services of particular problems in relation to attendance and works with the Educational Welfare Officer to support his/her work with students who have poor attendance.
- Supplies TUSLA and other government agencies with attendance documentation.
- Prepares a report on attendance for the Board of Management on a term basis or as the need arises. An end of year report, all pupil names withheld, will also be made available to the parents.
- Has responsibility for maintaining the Leabhar Tinreamh on Aladdin and making returns to TUSLA Child and Family Agency.

c) Teachers

- All teachers actively use the school's Attendance Strategy to promote attendance and set high expectations for punctuality and attendance.
- All teachers alert Principal and relevant staff if there are concerns about student absences.
- All teachers will support the attendance plan for students whose attendance is poor and will provide particular support to students on return after periods of absence.
- Class teachers agree punctuality and attendance standards with students when developing classroom rules.
- Class teachers record and review individual patterns of attendance accurately on Aladdin.
- Teachers are required to ensure notes from parents re absences are received and filed on the child's file. Teachers will request such notes / remind parents twice and then email parents (via Aladdin) requesting same. The email is recorded on the child's file on Aladdin.

Punctuality

- School begins at 9.10 am.
- Staff are expected to be on time.
- Infant children are delivered to their class between 9.10 a.m. and 9.30 a.m. by their adult carer/ guardian/ parent.

- Other classes line up in the yard at 9.10 a.m. and are brought to class by their class teacher.
- The school will contact parents/guardians in the event of pupils being consistently late.
- Students in 5th and 6th class will have a written exercise to complete, should they be reported to the Principal for being late three times in a week or four times in a month. This exercise is to be signed by their parents.
- The Principal is obliged under the Education Welfare Act, to report children who are persistently late, to TUSLA Child and Family Agency.

Recording Attendance

- The school attendance of individual pupils is recorded on Aladdin school administration software, 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. **The roll call is taken at 10.10 am** each morning. Any pupil not present will be marked absent for the day (except in the case of a necessary appointment for medical or dental treatment)The roll may not be altered once it has been filled in. Late arrivals and early departures are discouraged by the staff unless absolutely necessary. They are monitored by the class teacher and records are kept on the Aladdin school administration software.
- The annual attendance of each individual pupil is recorded by Aladdin.
- Parents are required to give their child's Class Teacher a note explaining the reason for and dates of absences, upon the child's return to school.

Target Setting:

- The whole school will aim to support students in setting and reaching targets.
- Each year the Staff will discuss setting termly targets to improve our overall school attendance for the year ahead (e.g. reduce the number of days of absence from 1,293 last year to 1,000).
- Targets will be sent to the Board of Management for approval.
- School attendance for the 2016-2017 school year was a total of 93.91% present and targets for 2017-2018 and ensuing years will continue to be set to improve on this.

The school promotes good attendance by:

- creating a safe and welcoming environment
- ensuring children are happy
- developing mutual trust and respect with students
- facilitating children to have a voice in school matters via the Student Council
- listening to students' concerns
- having high expectations of students' attendance
- displaying kindness, compassion and understanding
- collaborating in the planning and implementation of the primary school curriculum, so as to provide a stimulating learning environment for all pupils

- promoting attendance through engagement with school initiatives such as Swimming, Green Schools, GAA, School Outings and Homework Choice Projects and also by offering many 'extra-curricular activities' at the end of the school day
- discussing attendance in line with the school's Code of Positive Behaviour
- being vigilant so that risks to good attendance such as disadvantage, bullying etc. are identified early for individual children and that children are supported by our staff
- publishing the calendar for the coming school year annually by June and posting it on the school website (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)
- involving parents in discussion and reflection about attendance
- requesting parents to participate in reviews of attendance strategy
- awarding annual certificates for students with full and nearly full attendance
- reminding Parents/Guardians of the importance of regular school attendance from Junior Infants onwards and the Board's obligations to report absences.

Responding to Poor Attendance:

- intervening early with personalised support (e.g. curricular incentive, targeted attendance chart, behaviour plan or mentoring) and engagement with families
- addressing personal (e.g. parent-child conflicts) and practical issues (e.g. access to health / mental health care)
- monitoring progress or lack of and noting when the threshold is met for a referral to TUSLA's Educational Welfare Services.

Parents/guardians can promote good school attendance by:

- ensuring regular and punctual school attendance
- working with the School and TUSLA Child and Family Agency to resolve any attendance problems
- making sure their children understand that parents support good school attendance
- discussing planned absences with the school
- refraining, if at all possible, from taking holidays during school time
- notifying the school office and Principal if children need to be removed for more than three days from school for family reasons, or other exceptional circumstances.
- 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.
- 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

TUSLA Child and Family Agency is informed if;

- A child is expelled for 6 days or more
- A child is suspended for 6 days or more
- A child has missed more than 20 days
- A child is late for 20 days or more

TUSLA Child and Family Agency is furnished with the total attendances in the school year through the Annual Report Form which is completed on-line via Aladdin.

Communication with other schools

- 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, via P.O.D. (Primary Online Database) 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.
- When a child transfers into Greystones Educate Together N.S., confirmation of transfer will be communicated to the child's previous school via P.O.D., and appropriate records sought.

Communication with parents.

- The Statement of Strategy for School Attendance was displayed on the school website between April 2018 and September 2018 and parents were invited and reminded to read same and contribute their opinions and suggestions for the review date.
- Parents/guardians are made aware of the requirements of TUSLA Child and Family Agency particularly the by-law relating to absences of more than 20 days per school year. Parents are sent a 'reminder notice' on the 15th day of their child's absence. This states the school's obligation to inform TUSLA Child and Family Agency of all pupils who accumulate an aggregate of 20 school days in any one school year.
- Pupils whose non-attendance is a concern are invited to meet with the Principal to discuss the school's concerns, the importance of good attendance and how the school can support the student/family to improve attendance.
- All pupil absence must be explained by the Parents/Guardians to the Class Teacher by written note. This explanation is then inputted into the Aladdin software by the Class Teacher.
- When such an explanation is not forthcoming, the Class Teacher will seek clarification from the Parents/Guardians. Teachers will request such notes /

remind parents twice and then email parents (via Aladdin system in school office) requesting same. The email is recorded on the child's file on Aladdin.

- Parents/Guardians must also provide a note if a child departs early during the school day. They must also be signed out at the school office by the adult who is collecting them early.
- These notes are dated and kept in the child's file in the school's central filing location.

Evaluation

The success of this Attendance Strategy is measured through:

- Staff discussing how the school's Strategy for Attendance is working and reviewing progress towards attendance targets.
- Improved attendance levels as measured through Aladdin attendance records and by statistical returns and updating the board of Management of same at Board meetings.
- Happy, confident, well-adjusted children.
- Positive parental feedback.
- Teacher vigilance.
- Formal end of year review of the school's Attendance Strategy for the Board of Management's annual report on attendance (as per section 21(6)(a)(b) of the Education Welfare Act 2000) to TUSLA's Educational Welfare Services and the school's Parents Association.

Implementation/Ratification and Review:

This policy will be gradually implemented in the latter part of school year 2017/18 and was ratified by the Board of Management of Greystones Educate Together N.S. on 23rd April 2018. It will be reviewed again in December 2018 or earlier as required.

Signed: _____ Date: _____
Chairperson: Liam Friel

Signed: _____ Date: _____
Principal: Catherine Sadlier

Signed: _____ Date: _____
Deputy Principal: Helen Mc Clelland

References:

Don't let your Child Miss Out - NEWB 2004 Education Welfare Act 2000
Education Act 1998
Section 29 Education Act
Empty Desks - CDU Mary Immaculate