

St. Gabriel's Primary School Attendance Policy

Aims and Objectives

This revised policy aims to:

- Ensure that that pupils are registered accurately and efficiently
- Ensure that pupil attendance is recorded daily
- Raise awareness of the importance of school attendance
- Encourage full attendance
- Promote a positive school environment
- Identify and support pupils at risk of poor attendance
- Foster an appreciation of learning
- Identify pupils at risk of leaving the education system early
- Ensure compliance with the requirements of relevant legislation including the Education Welfare Act 2000, Guidelines from the NEWB and Department of Education circulars
- Develop links between the school and the families of children who may be at risk of developing attendance problems
- Identify and remove, insofar as is practicable, obstacles to school attendance.

Compliance with School Ethos

This policy complements the school ethos of nurturing potential in a positive environment where the welfare of children is paramount.

Punctuality

School begins at 8.50am. All pupils and staff are expected to be on time. The school will keep records of late arrivals or leaving early. In the event of pupils being consistently late or leaving early frequently the school will contact parents/guardians. The school is obliged under the Education Welfare Act, to report children who are persistently late, to the Education Welfare Board.

Recording Attendance

Attendance records are kept in accordance with circulars 0028/2013 and 0033/2015. The school attendance of individual pupils is recorded electronically on a daily basis. Class attendance data is then automatically recorded daily via the software known as Aladdin. The annual attendance of each individual pupil is also automatically recorded, together with information provided in enrolment forms (Pupil's Name, Date of Birth, Address, Religion, Parents' Names and Parents' Occupations). Relevant information is transferred and maintained on the Primary On-line Data base (POD) as required.

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 electronically at 10.00am each morning. Any pupil not present will be marked absent for the day. The roll book may not be altered once it has been filled in. An explanation is required from parents/guardians to explain each absence. Such explanation may be uploaded directly to Aladdin by Parent/guardian

or recorded by class teacher/school staff. Parents/guardians must also provide an explanation if a child departs early during the school day. Children should be accompanied by an adult and may leave the school alone only in exceptional circumstances with permission from the Principal. Late arrivals are recorded by the class teacher, early departures are recorded by the school secretary.

Reporting absences

Parents/guardians are made aware of the requirements of the National Education Welfare Board (NEWB), particularly the by-law relating to absences of more than 20 days per school year. The total number of absences for the school year is shown on the annual school report cards, at the end of June.

Pupils whose non-attendance is a concern are placed on a target list so that 'at-risk' students are identified early. "At-risk" students can be categorised as those who miss more than 5 days in a 20-day period without an accompanying note of explanation. Students whose attendance patterns are of concern to a teacher (e.g. missing Fridays/Mondays, consistently absent when siblings are absent etc.) are also placed on the target list. Parents are notified of this, initially by the class teacher and subsequently by a School Completion (SCP) project worker. All unexplained absences are then followed up daily by SCP. This target list is monitored by the School Completion Programme coordinator through the Attendance Care-team. Monthly team meetings consisting of the SCP coordinator, SCP project worker, HSCL teacher, Principal and Education Welfare Officer are held. In order to notify parents of concerns and to improve attendance a range of strategies in line with NEWB guidelines are implemented. These include phone calls, letters, meetings, home visits, HSCL support and working directly with children.

National Education Welfare Board (NEWB)

Reasons for absence are recorded and reported to the NEWB twice during the school year through an online system. The school must inform the Education Welfare Officer in writing, 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 expelled or suspended for 6 days or more. The NEWB is also furnished with the total attendances in the school year through the Annual Report Form which is completed on-line. This information will be communicated to the school community through the school's newsletter

NEWB 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 Welfare 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.

Whole School Strategies to Promote Good Attendance

These measures enhance the school experience for those children who might otherwise be at risk of poor attendance. They include:

- **Caring Environment** – St. Gabriel’s school, endeavors to ensure that children are taught in a welcoming, secure and positive environment catering for their intellectual, physical and spiritual development. Kindness, empathy and vigilance are encouraged.
- **Special Needs** – pupils needing support are identified as early as possible and the appropriate support systems put into place. We emphasise positive achievements and strive to enhance self-esteem.
- **Homework & After-School Support** – The homework club exists to support those pupils whose home circumstances dictate that there is neither the environment conducive to homework completion nor the expertise at home to help. A consistent but flexible approach to homework is implemented by teachers in all classes.
- **Lunches** - A scheme is in place to provide all children with a piece of fruit each morning. School lunches are available to all and breakfasts are available when required.
- **Uniform, books, resources:** A simple, practical uniform policy is in place to make preparation for school easier. A book lending scheme is in place and requests for resources or money from children are kept to a minimum. Funding is available for hardship cases.
- **School Completion Programme:** The school completion team keeps regular contact with parents, run one on one programmes to support attendance, arrange a “Back to School” programme at the start of each year, display average monthly attendance on each class door and reward as appropriate.
- **Rewards:** Teachers consistently encourage good attendance. Rewards are used and efforts at good attendance are praised. Certificates are issued for perfect and improved attendance at whole school assemblies termly.

Parental Support

It is our policy to encourage and maintain open communication between home and school and to encourage parents in their role as primary educators of their children. The HSCL coordinator is available to parents either on the school premises, via telephone or through home visits. The Principal and teachers are also available to meet parents, on an appointment basis.

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 and other matters 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. Parents are made aware of the requirements of the Education Welfare Act. Each family is given a copy of the information leaflet - Don’t Let Your Child Miss Out (Leaflet for parents NEWB 2004). This leaflet outlines information on the importance of regular attendance, parental obligations in relation to attendance under the Education Welfare Act and advice to parents on what they can do to help children attend school regularly.

Parents are reminded regularly of the importance of good attendance through newsletters, assemblies, parent/teacher meetings, Junior Infant information pack etc.

Parents/guardians can promote good school attendance by:

- Ensuring punctual school attendance
- Notifying the School if their children cannot attend for any reason
- Ensuring, insofar as is possible, that children's appointments (with dentists etc), are arranged for times outside of school hours.
- Returning children to school after appointments.
- Working with the School and education welfare service 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
- Showing an interest in their children's school day and their children's homework.
- Encouraging children to participate in school activities.
- Praising and encouraging their children's achievements in school.

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. Data from POD will be transferred electronically to the new school once the child is registered to their in-take list.

When a child transfers to a new school, the Principal will notify the pupil's new school of any problems in relation to attendance and of such matters relating to the child's educational progress as he or she considers appropriate, with permission from the parents. 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 St. Gabriel's confirmation of transfer will be communicated to the child's previous school, and appropriate records sought.

Review/Ratification/Communication:

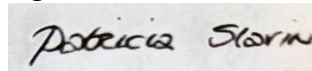
This policy was ratified on: February 21st 2023

The policy will be available on the school website and through the office.

It will be reviewed again as necessary, ideally within a four year period.

Signature

Signed on behalf of the Board of Management:



Ms. Patricia Slavin

Chairperson St Gabriel's Primary School Board of Management

Date: 21/02/2023

Appendix 1

SCP Attendance Tracking List and Ladder of Intervention

Days missed	Intervention
5 unexplained days	Informal discussion between teacher and parent/guardian
6-10 unexplained days	Formal meeting with parent/guardian. Informing them that if the student is absent for 10 unexplained days they will be referred to the attendance committee. Teacher will also inform parent/guardian of school supports which are available to them such as HSCL and SCP.
10 unexplained days	Teacher makes a referral to the attendance committee. If a student is placed on the Tracking List a letter will be sent from SCP to inform the parent/guardian of this. SCP Project Worker will contact the parent by phone each day the child is absent.
15 unexplained days	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Contact will be made by phone by SCP/HSCL• Home Visit by HSCL• A meeting will be called with the parent/guardian and HSCL/SCP.• A meeting will be called with parent/guardian and school Principal
20 unexplained days	A referral will be made to the EWO. A SCP letter will be sent to the Parent/guardian informing them of this. SCP/HSCL will work closely with the EWO in trying to improve attendance of the student in school.
If a student on the Tracking List has had no absents for 3 months they will no longer receive phone calls, however they will remain on the Tracking list until the end of the school year.	