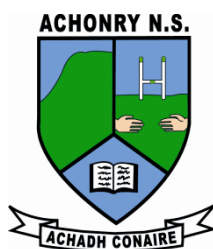


Achonry National School Attendance Policy



Introduction

This policy was introduced as a result of whole staff collaboration, together with the Board of Management to safeguard the welfare of the child and to encourage and support good attendance in school. It was reviewed in full in November 2018 in light of *Circular 33/2015*, regarding electronic roll books.

Rationale

The legislation governing school attendance in Ireland is the *Education (Welfare) Act 2000*. There is a strong tradition of good attendance in Achonry National School. In co-operation with parents, we strive to help each pupil achieve his or her full potential, and so we will promote a positive attitude towards good attendance and punctuality.

Aims:

It is our aim to:

- promote a positive attitude among children, towards coming to school
- discourage non-attendance for trivial reasons and identify acceptable reasons for absences
- ensure all parents are informed of the procedure in place for notifying teacher for reasons for absences
- ensure parents are informed of procedures in place for late arrivals / poor attendance.

Reasons for absences

Achonry National School considers the following acceptable reasons for pupil absence from school:

- Illness
- Bereavement
- Family Circumstances – e.g. illness of family member, family wedding

Holidays during Term Time

Withdrawing pupils from school for a holiday is **NOT an acceptable reason** for absence.

‘TUSLA Guidelines on Developing a Strategy for School Attendance’ states that: ***“Parents have a legal duty to ensure that their child who is attending a recognised school is at***

school on every day that the school is open, unless there is a genuine reason for him or her not to attend (Section 17 of Education (Welfare) Act 2000).

Only absences relating to activities organised by the school or in which the school is involved can be authorised by the principal (Section 21(9) of Education (Welfare) Act 2000). Therefore, the school cannot give ‘permission’ for holiday absences during term time. Schools should strongly discourage parents from taking students on holidays during term time and this should be documented in the school’s communication to parents.”

Therefore, holidays taken during term time are **not considered an acceptable reason** for a pupil to be absent from school. This practice disrupts the teaching and learning programme being carried out and does not promote a good work ethic. Pupils also miss valuable socialisation experiences.

The school is closed for a one week break at Hallowe’en, two weeks at Christmas, two weeks at Easter, between eight and nine weeks in the summer, as well as multiple Bank Holiday weekends and other closures. These closures (183 days) provide a more than adequate amount of time for families to plan holidays. The school informs families of the school calendar well in advance, so as to ensure that parents are aware of the school holidays dates and can plan any trips during these periods.

The end of the school year / term is an important time for pupils. Curricular programmes of learning are being completed; standardised tests are administered; school work is revised and consolidated; school activities such as tours, sports day etc. are planned. Pupils miss these important learning and socialisation opportunities if they are withdrawn unnecessarily for family holidays. Therefore there is no period of the school year where pupils “don’t miss much”.

If, despite the school’s recommendation not to, parents choose to withdraw their child for holidays:

- Parents should contact the Principal to explain the circumstances in person. This explanation should be placed in writing also, with parents stating they understand the implications.

- In these circumstances the **school is not obliged** to provide extra work or homework to the pupil.
- It is the parent's responsibility, and not the school's, to assist their child in 'catching up' after a period of such absence.
- The school **is not obliged** to repeat any testing or other activity that the pupil may have missed due to holidays.
- Such absences will be included in any report made to NEWB, if a pupil reaches 20 days absent during the school year.

Guidelines and Procedures

- Individual teachers encourage good attendance and all absences are explained with notes, written by parents in the homework journal.
- Good attendance is rewarded by the class teacher, through verbal praise and encouragement.

Record-Keeping

- Attendance records are kept online, through the electronic roll-book system on 'Aladdin'. Electronic format of the roll book is the sole format used in Achonry National School since September 1st See *DES Circular 0033/2015*.
- Teachers are responsible for recording attendance at 10.50 a.m. each morning.
- Teachers are responsible for recording the reason for absence into the 'Aladdin' system, when the child returns to school and entering the reason provided.
- Teachers are responsible for retaining notes explaining absences and to inform Deputy Principal re: frequent absentees.
- The Principal and Deputy Principal also have access to all classes' electronic roll book to monitor absences.
- Parents to be informed by note / phone if absences are persistent / unexplained.
- Homework journals should be used to correspond with parent / teachers.
- Parents are informed immediately (by the Principal or school secretary), if for any reason a child absconds or leaves the school during school hours, unaccompanied. Circumstances surrounding any such departure to be documented by the teacher / Principal.

Encouraging Attendance

- Parents are informed of laws within the *Welfare Act* regarding pupils who are absent for 20 days or more. Namely, that the school must maintain attendance records for all students and inform the TUSLA Child and Family Agency's educational welfare services if a child is absent (for any reason, explained or unexplained) for more than 20 days in a school year.
- Parents are notified if there is a concern regarding their attendance and if the child has missed a large number of days.
- Parents will be informed in writing when they have reached 20 days.
- Deputy Principal is informed by teachers / Aladdin system regarding non-attendees or frequent absentees.
- Analysis of absences is completed quarterly, aided by statistics generated by the electronic system. Where a pattern, or significant number, of absences exists, the Deputy Principal contacts the family and/or the Education Welfare Officer.

School Hours

- School opening hours are 9.15 a.m. to 2.55 p.m.

Break times: 11.10am –11.20am and 12.50pm –1.00 pm- 1.20pm.

- The school calendar (known closures) is communicated to parents
 - In June, providing as much detail as possible for the following school year.
 - In September – providing the complete list of known closures for that school year.
 - Any updates/reminders for closures are provided as soon as possible by text via Text A Parent.

Punctuality

- Children are rewarded verbally and frequently for punctuality and requested to explain the reasons if or when they are not punctual. Improved punctuality can be acknowledged through a Principal's Award, if appropriate.
- The school doors are opened at 9.15am, any pupils arriving before this time are supervised in the school hallway until 9.15am, when school commences.
- Late arrivals are recorded using the Aladdin system.
- Parents of children who are frequently late are contacted by the Principal/Class Teacher and advised of the dates their child was late and asking for their cooperation in ensuring their child/ren is/are punctual regularly.

Children at Risk

- These children are brought to the attention of the Principal and Deputy Principal, by class teacher. Parents are informed of concerns and consulted regarding the absences.
- The Principal / Deputy Principal will consult with parents and / or relevant agencies as appropriate.

Reporting Attendance levels

- Individual teachers calculate attendances, assisted by the electronic system.
- This information is communicated to (and can be accessed at all times by) the Principal/Deputy Principal and passed on the Board of Management, as appropriate.

Action Plan

- Parents are informed about *Attendance Policy* on enrolment and encouraged to ensure their children are attending school as much as possible and also that the children are punctual.
- Principal/Deputy Principal to oversee running of policy and its implementation
- Teachers encourage attendance and inform Deputy Principal and parents of persistent absences.
- School Organisation – individual class rolls are taken online by teachers at 10.50am. Principal/Deputy Principal have access to these numbers electronically immediately.

Implementation, Review and Communication

This policy was fully reviewed, in light of *Circular 33/2015*, approved and adopted by the Board of Management in December 2018. The Board of Management will monitor the implementation of all aspects of this policy and amend as required.

The policy will be reviewed, as necessary, in the light of experience. It will be reviewed fully every three years. The school evaluates the success of the policy through:

- Analysis of attendance trends, and noting improved attendance / punctuality
- Assessment of success through staff feedback

Appendix 1: Strategies to Foster an Appreciation of Learning & Good Attendance

1. Rewards in accordance with the Code of Behaviour.
2. Parents are asked to write notifying the teacher of the reason for a child's absence within three days of the child's return. The teacher notes the reason for the absence electronically using the Aladdin system.
3. Identification of students who are at risk of developing school attendance difficulties. These are categorised as follows;
 1. Irregular Absentee: 2/5 days absent in a 20-day period without a valid reason.
 2. Serious Irregular Absentee: 6/10 days absent in a 20-day period without a valid reason.
 3. Chronic Absentee: 11+ days absent in a 20-day period without a valid reason.
4. Appropriate contact will take place between the school and parents/guardians of children.
 1. For Irregular Absentees the teacher informs the parents by letter of her/his concerns about the child and seeks to meet the parents, to discuss the matter.
 2. For Serious Irregular Absentees the Principal will write to parents inviting them to a meeting to discuss the problem.
 3. For Chronic Absentees the Principal will inform the Education Welfare Officer and notify parents of this by letter.
5. Attendance, behaviour and academic records of children who transfer to another primary school will be passed to the Principal of the school by post, as soon as we receive written notification of transfer and request for same.
6. Attendance, behaviour and academic records of children can be posted/mailed to next/new school; however, we must first receive written permission from the parent/guardian to do so. If for any reason this permission is not forthcoming or the transfer of information is being blocked the principal of Achonry National School will contact the inspectorate and will seek professional advice re. procedure.

7. Attendance, behaviour and academic records of children who transfer into Achonry National School will be sought directly from the previous school.

8. Attendance, behaviour and academic records of pupils transferring to Secondary School will be sent to the school once enrolment has been confirmed and the secondary school requests same (via Education Passport)