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Roll No. 19650U

Scoil Cholmáin Naofa

School Attendance Strategy

This strategy document was drawn up:

- To ensure and maintain a high level of attendance at St. Colman's by all pupils.

Introduction.

The Board of Management, in consultation with staff and parents/ guardians drew up this strategy.

Good school attendance from the very beginning of a child's time in school, is an important element of all educational strategies in St. Colman's. Pupils are encouraged and rewarded for good attendance. Continuity of progress at work is best maintained when pupils attend school regularly. It is important that all parents, staff and pupils be aware of, and support the attendance strategy in operation in the school.

Our Vision and Values in Relation to Attendance

Aims and Objectives

The aims and objectives of this policy are as follow:

- Ensuring the accurate registering and daily recoding of, and keeping note of, attendance.
- To comply with the terms and requirements of the Education Act 2000, as amended by the Child & Family Act 2013 (see below).
- To raise awareness of the importance of good school attendance and its effect on the education process.
- To enhance the opportunity for every pupil to develop their skill and reach their full potential at school.
- To identify pupils who may be at risk of poor attendance, or leaving school early, putting in place a realistic strategy to help identify and remove obstacles to attendance of all pupils.

The Educational Welfare Act 2000.

Under the terms of the Education Welfare Act 2000 (amended by the Child and Family Agency Act 2013) schools are obliged to:

- *Maintain a record of students attending school record school attendance and notify the relevant Educational Welfare Officer of problems relating to attendance.*
- *Support students with difficulties in attending school on a regular basis.*
- *Prepare and implement a school attendance strategy to encourage, in a positive way, regular school attendance and an appreciation of learning within the school*
- *Prepare and implement a code of behaviour, setting standards of behaviour and disciplinary procedures for the school.*
- *Liaise with other schools and relevant bodies on school attendance issues.*
 - *Promoting a positive learning environment to ensure that all pupils in St. Colmans have as full an attendance as is possible.*

Our High Expectations For Attendance

In St. Colman's each child is valued and respected in a positive caring and supportive school setting. We have high expectations of all pupils and this includes the areas of punctuality and attendance. We believe that

1. Our School Ethos conveys those high expectations in that pupils who experience positive interaction, good role modelling, specific praise and inclusion are less likely to be absent from school on a regular basis than those who have not experienced such interaction or feel ignored.
2. A positive climate of pupil- teacher relationships, of mutual trust and respect, and where pupils have a voice in school matters are known in most educational research to have a strong influence on pupil engagement and attendance.
3. High Teacher expectations results in very good attendance. Attendance is significantly higher when teachers have high expectations of pupils – an effect that operates over and above the student's own expectations of themselves.

Punctuality

Parents are encouraged to ensure their children are at school on time each day. Doors open at 8:50am and all pupils should be seated in their class no later than 9:10am.

Rolls should be marked by 9.45 am and it is the class teacher's responsibility to note children who are late or who leave early for whatever reason. If pupils have to leave during the school day it is necessary that parents/guardians should collect and sign pupils out in the school office.

Persistent problems with punctuality should be brought to the attention of the school's Post holder with responsibility for Attendance / Deputy Principal/ Principal. Parents will be contacted to discuss these issues and to work on solutions to alleviate any issue.

Monitoring Attendance

- Attendance of pupils in St. Colman's will be recorded using the electronic administration system, Aladdin. This system assists in tracking attendance, late arrival, compiling reports on attendance over different periods and the maintenance of comprehensive attendance records and information.
- Monitoring school attendance is undertaken by the school Principal and the class teachers.
- The promotion of excellent attendance is a whole school community initiative with defined roles for all partners - parents, staff and pupils.
- As part of a whole school initiative all staff will implement strategies for promoting excellent attendance. Monitoring levels of pupil attendance with comparisons to baseline and targets at each Staff Meeting.

School Roles in Relation to Attendance

Principal's Role

- Highlight excellent and good attendance at assembly each month.
- Liaise with Tusla's Education Welfare Officer on a regular basis re school attendance. The principal must inform the EWO
 - Where a child has missed 20 or more days in a school year
 - Where the pupil's attendance is a cause of concern
 - Where a pupil is removed from the school register
 - Where a child is suspended for 6 days or more
- Work in collaboration with and as a member of the local School Completion Programme committee. Attend SCP meetings -at least 5 - during the school year
- Liaise with Tusla's Child and Family Social Work team.
- Work collaboratively with the school's Postholder who has responsibility for Attendance.
- Liaise with other schools when a pupil is transferring into or out of St. Colman's.

Teachers' Role

- Agree punctuality and attendance standards with students as part of classroom rules.
- Rolls to be called at 9.45am and marked on the Aladdin system in the DES Electronic Roll Book.
- Late arrivals and early departures will also be recorded
- In noting absences, the reason for the absence will be recorded in the appropriate section, (i.e. under Edit Absence Reasons tab) as soon as that information becomes available. This allows teachers to categorise the absence, such as Unexplained, Illness, Urgent family reason etc. This information will form part of the reporting procedure to the Educational Welfare Services section of the Tusla - Child and Family Agency
- Annual attendance for each pupil made available on the Aladdin system in the DES Electronic Roll Book, will be conveyed to parents on the end of year school report as a %.
- Support students on return when they have missed periods of schooling.

Role of Post Holder's with Devolved Responsibility for Attendance

The special duties post holder or Assistance Principal with responsibility for Attendance will

- Monitor attendance throughout the school and identify pupils whose absenteeism is of concern.
- Using the Aladdin system download reports and trends to monitor and inform staff of attendance levels, improvements and other trends.
- Liaise with class teachers and Principal when a pupil's attendance is showing signs of concern.
- Make regular contact with pupils experiencing difficulties in relation to attendance to encourage and maximise their involvement in school life to in turn improvement attendance.
- Ensure that appropriate communication, ie texts and letters are sent home to parents when (unexplained) absences become a concern ie 10 days, 15 days, 20 days.
- Work alongside class teachers in looking at strategies to promote and encourage good attendance ie implementing whole school strategies and specific individual programmes for improved attendance.
- Collaborate with class teacher in preparing Pre-referral (See Appendix B) and Referral forms (See Appendix C) for Tusla where necessary.
- Prepare reports for School Completion Programme in relation to pupils with poor attendance.
- Organise interventions for School Completion Programme 'targeted' children -ie those whose with extremely poor attendance record and other who meet other SCP criteria - such Homework Club and Social, Emotional and Building Self Esteem Programme.
- Liaising with SET team re additional support for specific children where deemed necessary.
- Make ~~Quarterly~~ returns to Tusla as guidelines advise.
(biannually)

Parents' Role

- Set high standards for their child in relation to attendance and punctuality.
- Avoid taking their child out of class unless there is a serious reason
- Notes to explain absences should be signed in children homework journals / folders. A written note is the preferred method of communication.
- Medical certificates should be passed on to the school where applicable. The reason for the absence is noted on the school's attendance system.

- Avoid taking holidays during school term as they count as absences from school.
- Make sure your child understands that you do not agree with his/her missing school unless it is for a valid reason.
- If you receive a letter re Attendance from the school inviting you to come into the school to discuss your child's attendance, please ring to arrange a meeting as recommended.
- When are parents/guardians contacted by the school?
 - If the pupils has 10 or more unexplained absences.
 - If the pupil has missed 15 days.
 - If the pupil has missed 20 days.
 - If the pupil is at risk of developing school attendance problems or there is a worrying pattern of unexplained absences.
 - If the parents/guardians fail to explain a number of the pupil's absences.

Target Setting and Attendance Targets

Target(s):

- Increase overall attendance in the school to 95.5 % during the next school year and maintain it at that level for the following two years.
- Reduce the number of referrals (20 days) to EWO by 6% each year for the next three years.
- Improve the data input into our Aladdin system in relation to explained absences during the next school year.
- Implement and embed the strategies and practices outlined in this policy over the next three years.

Strategies to Promote and Support Good Attendance.

While attendance in St. Colmans is traditionally of a very high standard for the vast majority of students, the school continually strives to encourage full, or very high attendance for all pupil through the following strategies:

- ✓ Maintaining a safe and welcoming learning environment to all pupils.
- ✓ Class teachers will highlight good attendance in the classroom
- ✓ Principal will highlight excellent/good attendance – classes, individuals and families - at assembly each month.
- ✓ Specific school planned incentives may be offered to particular child to encourage attendance.

- ✓ Rewarding pupils with excellent attendance / full attendance each term. (Homework Pass)
- ✓ End of School Year "Excellent Attendance Certificate" for full attendance and "Very Good Attendance" 5 days or less absent 97%.attendance
- ✓ Maintaining close contact and good communication with parents/guardians whose children have poor attendance in an effort to work towards continuous improvement targets for the child's attendance.
- ✓ Ensure that factors to alleviate bullying are deterred and eliminated.
- ✓ SET -Special Educational Teaching - in Literacy and Numeracy where required to support the child to succeed and achieve to the best of his/her ability in a positive and supportive setting and hence reduce the occurrence of absenteeism.
- ✓ Early Intervention with regard to Literacy initiatives such as Reading Recovery is designed for children aged around six, who are the lowest literacy achievers after their first year of school. Such a valuable intervention builds life-long skills and success with reading leads to success at school and lessens the likelihood of dropping out of school.
- ✓ Extensive use of resources and strategies in line with School Completion Programme criteria. These resources are used for targeted children who meet the SCP criteria and /or are deemed to be at risk of leaving school early. Such resources include Homework Club, Social Skills / Self Esteem Building programmes.

Involvement with School Completion Programme

- ✓ The School Completion Programme (SCP) was set up as part of Department of Education and Skills (DES) DEIS Strategy - Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools.
- ✓ St. Colman's has participated in this Programme since its inception in 2012.
- ✓ Its aim is to increase the numbers of young people staying in primary and second level school and in doing so improve the numbers of pupils who successfully complete the Senior Cycle, or the equivalent.
- ✓ SCP work focuses on targeting and providing supports to young people identified to be most at risk of early school leaving and includes:
- ✓ Identifying and supporting children at risk of not reaching their potential in the educational system because of poor attendance, participation and retention via initiatives such as homework clubs; afterschool supports; mentoring programmes; and working with children on building self esteem, coping skills and resilience, therapeutic interventions;

- ✓ Implementing transfer programmes to support young people transitioning from primary to post-primary school;

Responding to Poor Attendance

1. Where teachers notice a pattern of poor attendance emerging, they should
 - (a) bring it to the attention of parent and
 - (b) to the Post Holder with responsibility for Attendance
 - (c) and then the Principal.

2. It should be noted that early intervention is vital in improving poor attendance.

If an "at risk" pupil is identified, then the class teacher will complete the Pre-Referral Checklist see Appendix A.

"At risk" pupils can be categorised as those who miss more than 5 days in a 20-day period without an accompanying note of explanation from parents/guardians.

The following intervention as recommended by Tusla will be implemented over a period of time:

- In-school discussion with pupil
 - Contact between school and parent/guardian to express concern e.g. phone call, letter, discuss at parents evening
 - Specific meeting in school with parent/guardian to identify problems and agree interventions Concerns and agreements communicated in writing to parent/guardian
 - Implementation of any appropriate in-school
 - Use of appropriate interventions with pupil (e.g. attendance charts/ attendance report, incentives, rewards etc)
 - Other school interventions (eg. School Completion Support Work, pastoral care team, SET team etc.)
3. When a child reaches 10 days absences, parents will be notified by text that the school staff has concerns about their child's attendance. Their attention will drawn to the school's Attendance Policy.
 4. When a child reaches 15 days, parents will be informed and invited to come into school to discuss the situation.

5. When child reaches 20 days the school must notify the Educational Welfare Services section of Tusla – Child and Family Agency. The school has no discretion over handing this information on to Tusla – Child and Family Agency, regardless of the reason for absence. However, Tusla – Child and Family Agency will take account of absences due to illness, bereavement or other such circumstance. There are four period during the year when we are obliged to report information to Tusla – Child and Family Agency. Class teachers will be responsible for providing information on these absences. Additionally, Tusla – Child and Family Agency request an Annual Report at the end of each school year.
6. Where the school has cause for concern over a pupil's attendance for whatever reason and in spite of all efforts at resolution made at school level and in collaboration with the home a formal written and signed Referral will be made to the Educational Welfare Service.

Expectations, Rationale and Procedures for Pupils Leaving School during the School Day

Rational:

Pupils are expected to remain in school for a full school day. Pupils should only be collected early from school in cases of emergency or unavoidable medical appointments.

We draw your attention to this section of the policy:

- To highlight the importance of remaining in school for a full school day.
- To ensure the safety of all pupils in our school 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.

If A Pupil Needs To Leave Early For An Unavoidable Medical Appointment Or Emergency, a letter should be sent in beforehand by his/her parents. When collecting the child parents are asked to

- report to the school office where she/he will be asked to sign the child out in the Appointments Record.
- On returning to the school, parents should accompany their child into the school and fill the 'Time of Return to School' on the Appointments Record.

If A Child Is Sick During The School Day, contact will be made to inform the parent/ guardian of their child's illness. The parent may then come to the school and decide **whether** their child needs to be taken home or is able to stay at school.

If the child's parent decides to take their child home, they should

- report to the school office where she/he will be asked to sign the child out in the Appointments Record.

In the interest of safety, no child will be allowed to leave the school with any other adult other than his/her parent unless parental consent has been given to the school ie a letter has been received beforehand, naming the person who is to collect the child.

Monitoring this Statement of Strategy

How we will know the strategy is working - key outcomes

If the strategy is working, then the key outcomes we would expect to see are:


1. Improved levels of attendance as per target.
2. Reduction in the number of unexplained absences as per target.
3. Reduced number of referrals (20 days plus absences) to EWO as per target.
4. Improvement in the use of Aladdin admin system for recording absence explanations.
5. Strategies with regard to attendance monitoring, recording and referral embedded in school practice.

Review/ Monitoring and Submission

Review process and date for review

The policy will be reviewed annually. The next review will take place between September 2018 – December 2018

This statement of strategy was approved and ratified by the by the Board of Management in May 2017


Chairperson

9th May 2017
Date

The Statement of Strategy was submitted to Tusla on 10th May 2017

By Mary Eamery Principal

**LETTER 1 GENERAL INFORMATION ON ATTENDANCE
STRATEGY AND PROCEDURES.
START OF SCHOOL YEAR FOR ALL.**



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Dear Parents/ Guardians,

I am writing to tell you a little about the Education Welfare Act, 2000 and about some of the responsibilities we now share under the Act particularly in relation to Attendance.

THE IMPORTANCE OF A GOOD EDUCATION

As you know, a good education gives your child the best possible start in life. A good education helps young people to obtain secure employment and develop into mature and responsible citizens. The purpose of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 is to encourage regular school attendance and participation in education and training for as long as possible.

NATIONAL EDUCATIONAL WELFARE BOARD

Under the law, every child must attend school regularly up to sixteen years of age or complete at least three years education in a post primary school whichever comes later. The National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB) was established to support school attendance and follow up on children who are not attending school regularly.

OUR SCHOOL POLICY ATTENDANCE POLICY / STRATEGY WHICH HAS RECENTLY BEEN REVIEWED IS AVAILABLE AT THE SCHOOL OFFICE AND ON OUR SCHOOL WEBSITE, WWW.STCOLMANSNS.COM

I would like to draw your attention to important parts of the policy. As a parent, you must let the school know if your child is absent and the reason why. It is school policy that reasons must be given in writing. We will have a new 'St. Colman's Homework Journal' – 1st to 6th classes – and a 'St. Colman's Homework Folder' for Junior and Senior Infants' available for the school year 2017-2018. Please use these journals to inform your child's class teacher as to

the reasons for your child's absence eg sickness, bereavement, emigration,
XXXX

Under legislation the school has a duty to notify the *Educational Welfare Officer, Tusla* if a child is absent for 20 days or more or where the absence gives rise to concern.

If your child is sick or is absent for other good reasons, no action will be taken by the Educational Welfare Officer, Tusla. However, if there is concern about your child's attendance at school or about the reasons given, you may be visited by the EWO who will discuss your child's education with you. The Officer will work with you and take full account of the circumstances of the child and the family before deciding what further action is necessary to ensure that the child receives his/her entitlement to an education.

Our intention and approach to motivating high levels of attendance among all students is at the core of our Attendance Strategy. We ask for your cooperation with this endeavour..

...GIVE YOUR CHILD A FUTURE. GET THEM TO SCHOOL. EVERY DAY COUNTS.

Please become familiar with the school's Attendance Strategy and encourage and ensure that your child is at school every day and on time.

Yours sincerely,

Mary Garvey
Principal

LETTER 2: 15 DAYS UNEXPLAINED ABSENCE OR CONCERNS



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<DATE XXXXX>

Dear Parents,

I am writing to regarding <Insert name> attendance at school.

<Insert name> has been absent for at least 15 school days since the start of the school year. Please see the attached record of absences. The school has not received any letter or contact from you. When your child had 10 unexplained absences you were sent a text message. At this stage you are asked to contact the school as soon as possible to arrange an appointment to discuss <Insert name> attendance with <name of teacher>.

Under the law, every child must attend school regularly up to sixteen years of age or complete at least three years post primary whichever comes later. When your child is absent, you as parent must let the school know the reason for this absence every time. It is school policy that you do this in writing. From now on please use your child's Homework Journals to inform your child's class teacher as to the reasons for your child's absence.

The school is duty bound to notify the Educational Welfare Officer when a child is absence for 20 days. If <Insert name> absenteeism comes into with range we must make a referral to the EWO. Please make immediate contact with the school to arrangement a meeting so that we can discuss this matter and work on a plan to ensure that <Insert name> attendance improves.

Thank you for your co-operation in this matter.

Yours sincerely,

Mary Garvey
Principal

LETTER 3: 20 DAY, regarding a child's absence where the school is concerned about a child's non-attendance and the concern is being passed to the EWO Tulsa



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Dear Parents,

I am writing to you regarding **<Insert name>** attendance at school.

Your child has been absent for at least 20 days now since the beginning of the school year. Please see the attached record of absences. The school has written to you about this matter but has not received an explanation from you. The school is now very concerned that **< Insert name>** is not receiving an education and we will be writing to the National Educational Welfare Board to pass on our concern. An Educational Welfare officer may therefore be in contact with you shortly to discuss the matter further.

Under the law, every child must attend school regularly up to sixteen years of age or complete at least three years post primary education whichever comes later. When a child is absent, you as parent must let the school know the reason for the absence every time. It is school policy to do this in writing. From now on please use your child's Homework Journals to inform your child's class teacher as to the reasons for your child's absence.

If you wish to discuss **< Insert name>** attendance, please contact the school to arrange an appointment to meet with **<name of teacher>** as soon as possible.

Thank you for you co-operation in this matter.

Yours truly,

Mary Garvey
Principal

LETTER 4

Letter **ABSENCE THROUGH ILLNESS AND EXPLAINED** regarding a child's absence where the school is not concerned about the pattern of absences but where the child's name is being passed to the NEWB



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Dear Parents,

I am writing to you regarding **<Insert name>** attendance at school who has been absent on the following days **<insert days>**.

Because **<insert name>** has been absent through illness, the school will be reporting the absence in the normal way but will not be informing the National Educational Welfare Board that it is concerned about your child's educational welfare.

Under the law, every child must attend school regularly up to sixteen years of age or complete at least three years post primary education whichever comes later. When a child is absent, you as parent must let the school know the reason for the absence every time. It is school policy to do this in writing.

If you wish to discuss **< Insert name>** attendance, please contact the school to arrange an appointment to meet with **<name of teacher>** as soon as possible.

Thank you for your co-operation in this matter.

Yours truly,

Mary Garvey
Principal