



School Attendance Policy

1. Introduction

The Board of Management of Malahide Portmarnock Educate Together National School recognises the clear and direct relationship between high and regular school attendance and pupil progress. The Board also recognises that high and regular attendance engenders a positive attitude to school and learning.

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 a holistic approach to improving attendance will be followed. Malahide/Portmarnock Educate Together is committed to attendance as an important aspect of school ethos and school policy. We aim to build a culture of high expectations among all staff and with every student for the student's learning, participation and attendance.

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

2. Aims and Objectives

The aim of this policy, in line with the Education Welfare Act, is to ensure the school's high expectations around attendance are met by:

- promoting a supportive, positive and welcoming learning environment
- encouraging and acknowledging full attendance where possible
- fostering an appreciation of learning by providing a stimulating learning environment for all pupils
- raising awareness of the importance of school attendance
- ensuring that pupil attendance is recorded daily
- ensuring that pupils are registered accurately and efficiently
- ensuring compliance with the requirements of the relevant legislation
- identifying pupils at risk
- identifying and removing, insofar as is practicable, obstacles to school attendance
- developing, subject to available resources, links between the school and the families of children who may be at risk of developing attendance problems

3. Recording Attendance

- The school attendance of individual pupils is recorded on Aladdin school admin software, on a daily basis.
- *In the Rules for National Schools 1965 'Roll Call shall be completed not later than 40 minutes after the time fixed for the commencement of formal instruction at the school meeting'. Therefore roll call is taken by 9:05am each morning.

- Late arrivals and early departures are discouraged by the staff unless absolutely necessary. Late arrivals and early departures are recorded in the sign in/out book in reception and will also be added in Aladdin using the quick add (+) tab at the top of the page.
- The annual attendance of each individual pupil is recorded on Aladdin, together with information provided in enrolment forms (Pupil's Name, Date of Birth, Address and Parents' Names).
- The NEWB is furnished with the total attendances in the school year through the Annual Report Form which is completed online.

4. Procedure for parents/guardians to follow in cases of:

4.1 Student Absences

- Inform the school by emailing info@mpetns.ie or writing the reasons for each student's absence from school
- Discuss planned absences with the school

4.2 Late Arrival/ Early Collection

- In Reception, sign pupils name in Sign In book if late arriving or if child is collected early
- Notify the school if their child/children, particularly children in junior classes, are to be collected by someone not known to the teacher

5. Target Setting and Targets

5.1. Attendance targets in MPETNS provide:

- a clear measure of improvements in attendance levels in the school
- a way of checking the impact and benefit of attendance strategies
- raised awareness about attendance among management, staff, students and parents
- an ethos of continuous improvement
- a sense of commitment to attendance and a sense of pride in the school's achievements

MPETNS will set targets using the school's previous year attendance data as a baseline.

5.2. Our targets in MPETNS are:

- to achieve a reduction in the following each year:
 - the total number of days lost through student absence in the entire school year
 - the total number of students who were absent for 20 days or more during the school year

6. Whole School Approach

Our whole-school approach to attendance will mean that:

- school ethos, policies and practices work consistently together to support good attendance
- management and staff work as a team, with a consistent approach to attendance
- parents and students are part of an inclusive school community and have opportunities to contribute to and take appropriate responsibility for attendance policy and strategy
- opportunities are provided through which staff members as a team can focus on attendance, update their knowledge about effective practice and share experience and expertise on managing attendance.

7. Strategies to Promote Attendance

7.1 The school promotes high levels of attendance by:

- creating a supportive, positive and welcoming environment
- ensuring children are happy
- celebrating the talents, academic and non-academic, of every child

- ensuring the children have belief in their own academic ability and have realistic expectations of themselves
- promoting a culture where mistakes are seen as opportunities for learning
- early identification of individual children's needs
- putting in place appropriate strategies to support individual needs
- 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
- being vigilant so that risks to good attendance such as disadvantage, bullying etc. are identified early
- inviting all parents/guardians to a welcome meeting in September during which the school's policies and procedures in relation to attendance are explained
- sharing regular updates on attendance with parents
- reminding Parents/Guardians of the importance of regular school attendance and of the Board's obligations to report absences.
- publishing the calendar for the coming school year annually in June and posting it on the school website (it is hoped that 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)
- operating a reward system on a whole class/school basis
- highlighting good school attendance at assemblies
- setting targets using the school's previous year's attendance data as a baseline
- timetabling enrichment activities, eg art, music, drama classes, after-school activities and special events during risk periods
- providing extra-curricular activities that encourage good attendance
- encourage participation in Leadership Development Programmes such as Active School, Student Council etc
- provide, where possible, mentoring by a supportive and significant adult
- promoting parental involvement in all aspects of school life as involvement leads to parents viewing the school in a positive way

7.2 Parents/Guardians can promote good school attendance by:

- ensuring regular and punctual school attendance
- working with the school and education welfare service to resolve any attendance problems
- making sure their children understand that parents support good school attendance
- 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
- instilling in their children a positive self-concept and a positive sense of self-worth
- refraining, if at all possible, from taking holidays during school time
- 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 matter

8. Responding to poor attendance

Should the school's attendance monitoring system draw attention to individual students, a class group or another sub-group of students with an emerging problem of poor attendance the school will implement interventions beyond those strategies that are geared towards promoting good school attendance for the whole school population. For example:

- Attendance is monitored by class teachers and the Principal. If needed, a regular check is kept of the attendance of vulnerable pupils. If any patterns of poor attendance emerge, the school intervenes
- Parents of pupils whose non-attendance is a concern are invited to meet with the class teacher/Principal. They are informed of the school's concerns and a support plan will be put in place if necessary e.g. specific targets are set for attendance.
- When a pupil has accumulated 10, 15 or 20 absences in any one school year, a standard text informing the pupil's Parents/Guardians is sent automatically and a notification is sent to the principal. This text states the school's obligation to inform the NEWB of all pupils who accumulate an aggregate of 20 school days in any one school year.
- Parents are notified in writing on the end of year report of the total number of absences during the school year.

9. Roles and Responsibilities of the School Community

9.1 Staff

- All staff have an input into the implementation of the policy
- Class teachers record individual patterns of attendance.
- The Principal has responsibility for maintaining the Leabhar Tinreamh and making returns to NEWB.
- The Principal prepares a report on attendance for the Board of Management for every board meeting or as the need arises. An end of year report, all pupil names withheld, will also be made available to the parents.
- It is the responsibility of the Principal and staff to implement this policy under the guidance of the school's Board of Management

9.2 Parents/Guardians

- Parents/Guardians have a responsibility to notify school of student absences

9.3 Punctuality

- School begins at 8.15 am, formal teaching begins at 8.25am.
- All pupils and teachers are expected to be on time.
- The school will contact parents/guardians in the event of pupils being consistently late.
- The Principal is obliged under the Education Welfare Act, to report children who are persistently late, to the Education Welfare Board.

10. Partnership Arrangements

The school will:

- Establish closer contact with the families of students who are at risk of developing school attendance problems.
- Foster, promote and establish contacts with bodies engaged in the organizing of sporting and cultural activities with a view to developing programmes of activities designed to encourage full participation of students in the life of the school.
- Foster, promote and establish contacts with other schools both primary and post-primary, with a view to exchanging information relating to matters of behavior and school attendance and in so far as is practicable, coordinating programmes aimed at promoting good behavior amongst students and encouraging regular attendance at school.

11. Communication

11.1 Communication with parents/guardians

- Parents/guardians are made aware of the requirements of the NEWB particularly the by-law relating to absences of more than 20 days per school year.
- Parents are notified in writing on the end of year report of the total number of absences during the school year.

- All pupil absence must be explained by the parents/guardians to the teacher or by email or 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.
- Parents/guardians must also provide a note/email if a child departs early during the school day.
- These notes are dated, kept in a central location (administration office) and are documented on Aladdin

11.2 Communication with Other Schools

- When a child transfers into Malahide/Portmarnock Educate Together NS confirmation of transfer will be communicated to the child's previous school, and appropriate records sought

11.3 National Education Welfare Board

The Education Welfare Officer 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

The NEWB is furnished with the total attendances in the school year through the Annual Report Form which is completed on-line.

12. Evaluation

The success of any Attendance Policy is measured through:

- Improved attendance levels as measured through Aladdin records and statistical returns
- Happy confident well-adjusted children
- Positive parental feedback
- Teacher vigilance
- Update on attendance at Board of Management Meetings
- Formal end of year review of this policy as part of preparation for the Board of Management annual report on attendance

13. Implementation/Ratification and Review

This policy was ratified by the BoM of Malahide Portmarnock Educate Together NS on 20/06/2018. It will be reviewed again in 2022.

14. 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