



SAINT FINIAN'S NATIONAL  
SCHOOL

SCHOOL  
ATTENDANCE  
POLICY  
2023/24



## **Introduction**

This policy document was drawn up to promote and ensure a high level of attendance by all pupils in St. Finian's school. It also forms one of the main aims of our Deis Plan. This policy on attendance was drawn up by staff and parents/guardians and approved by the Board of Management.

## **Rationale**

The policy was drawn up to comply with the legislation such as the Education Act, 1998 and The Education Welfare Act 2000. St. Finian's primary school endeavours to enable every pupil to participate in all school activities. Attendance and punctuality is a priority area which was identified by staff in 1999. Regular attendance helps to create a stable environment with continuity of learning for all pupils. We aim to promote cooperation among pupils, parents/guardians and staff in maintaining a very high level of regular attendance and punctuality through the school year.

## **Relationship to the characteristic spirit of the school**

In accordance with St. Finian's vision statement we 'strive to promote a love of learning and try to meet the individual needs of all through a positive work ethic' Regular attendance, punctuality and participation in all school activities helps to create a love of learning and promotes a positive work ethic.

## **Aims**

To establish a lifelong habit for the pupils of St. Finian's of good attendance and punctuality which will extend from Early Start and on into their working lives

To identify and establish an accurate picture of attendance and retention problems

To increase school attendance to 92% five-year average for the period spanning 2023 to 2026

Early identification and targeting of non-attendance patterns to prevent underachievement.

To provide a welcoming and supportive school atmosphere that encourages parents and guardians to be actively involved in their child's education

To heighten parental awareness of the importance of good attendance and punctuality and to regularly communicate and share information

To support families through problems affecting school attendance

To establish close cooperation and an integrated approach between all agencies and personnel in the promotion of good attendance

To establish and maintain procedures and reward systems that promote good school

**Whole school strategies to promote attendance:**

There is a focus in St. Finian's on school attendance and punctuality and on the importance of developing good attendance habits from Early Start

The school ensures that:

- Pupils are registered accurately and efficiently on our electronic roll books facilitated by Aladdin
- School calendar for the forthcoming year is issued in September to all parents/guardians and staff. It is hoped that this approach will enable families to plan family events to coincide with school closures
- Pupil attendance is recorded daily
- High school attendance is promoted through a range of strategies and rewards
- Pupil attendance and punctuality are monitored and assessed
- HSCL works with families to promote attendance, participation and retention in school
- Follow up occurs with parents or guardians when reasons for absences are unknown

- School attendance statistics are reported as appropriate to  
The Education Welfare Board (Tusla)  
The Education Welfare Officer  
The Board of Management

### **Specific Strategies in place in St.Finian's to promote good attendance and punctuality**

End of term/year whole school assembly with prize giving ceremony including certificates of achievement, prize/trophy and school photographs. Invitations to award ceremonies at the end of each term are sent to parents/guardians via scoil text.

Monthly best class attendance trophy and homework pass is given to the class with the best attendance for the month and each child in the class receives a one-night homework pass.

Special recognition for children with an outstanding attendance record during their time at St. Finian's – three days or less missed; the prize takes the form of an engraved cup and voucher and is presented at the end of sixth class. Flowers are presented to the parents in recognition of their outstanding effort, co-operation and support.

Parents/guardians of children who are on target for Full Attendance Award receive a scoiltext/ msg on Aladdin or Dojo to inform and encourage the children and their families to sustain their efforts.

Where poor attendance improves a postcard/letter of acknowledgement and praise is sent to parents/guardians.

A monthly graph/bar chart showing the number of full attendance days for each class and a photograph of the class with the highest number are displayed in the classroom and on the school notice board.

Template for making pictogram/graph/bar chart is available to class teachers to allow tracking of weekly attendance. This can be used at the discretion of the teacher as a whole class maths activity or children could make individual charts.

Children who attend Learning Support and who are in school for 30 days consecutively receive a token which can be brought to the principal and exchanged for a 'lucky dip' prize.

Classes who have full attendance for the week get an extra 5-10 minutes playtime in the yard

Up to date information on school attendance statistics may be printed in the school newsletter. The number of days left in the term is also displayed to encourage and remind children to stay on target for full term attendance prize

### **Punctuality**

We emphasise the importance of punctuality both for the pupils and the smooth running of the school. A proactive positive approach is taken. The Principal and Deputy Principal meet and greet parents/guardians and pupils each morning.

The Principal monitors punctuality-

- A record is kept logging latecomers
- Friendly reminders are given
- Tips to improve timekeeping are given
- Improvements on timekeeping are acknowledged

This should be done on Aladdin.

### **Legal Requirements 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 for 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 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.

Reasons for absence are recorded and reported to Tusla three times during the school year through an online system. An annual report is submitted - not more than six weeks following the end of the school year - detailing the overall level of attendance at the school during that school year. This information will be communicated to the school community through the school's newsletter.

We submit a return on those students with serious attendance issues that have been identified during the current academic year for e.g.

- a student has been absent from school for a cumulative total of twenty days or more
- a student's name is to be removed from the school register for any reason
- a student has been suspended for a cumulative total of six or more days

- a principal is concerned about a student's attendance
- the school has expelled a student

### **Transfer to another School**

As under Section 20 of the Education (Welfare) Act (2000), upon the transfer of a pupil the Principal notifies the Principal of the child's previous school that the child is now registered in their school.

### **Specific Procedures for Recording attendance and non-attendance.**

The school attendance of individual pupils is recorded in the Leabhar Rolla (Roll Book) of each class on a daily basis. Class attendance data is recorded daily in the Leabhar Tinrimh (Attendance Book). The annual attendance of each individual pupil is recorded in the Clár Leabhar (Register), together with information provided in enrolment forms (Pupil's Name, Date of Birth, Address, Religion, Parents' Names and Parents' Occupations). All this is done electronically through the Aladdin system.

The roll call is taken at 10.15 am each morning. Any pupil not present will be marked absent for the day. The roll book must not be altered once it has been filled in. Numbers are sent to the Deputy Principal to be tabulated and then transferred to the Principal each day. Exact attendance details are given to parents at parent teacher meetings and are included on official school report at the end of the year

### **Notifying the School**

If a pupil does not attend school the reason for absence must be given to the school by the parent/guardian in one of the following ways:

- note in school diary/journal
- in person
- letter
- phone call
- Class Dojo
- Aladdin

Letters are sent to parents highlighting concerns re attendance

Attendance forms an important part of parent/teacher meetings

Parents are invited to discuss issues around attendance with class teacher/Principal/HSCL

Number of days absent and what those days represent in terms of weeks/months missed is recorded on the annual school report.

### **Identified Patterns of Absences causing concern**

Identification of patterns in poor attendance is a priority. On the school network (Z: drive) letters are available the following patterns of non-attendance and to address the issue of general poor attendance.

- Patterns of random absences
- Patterns of Monday and Friday absences

Teachers can adapt these letters to suit the particular attendance issue. The attendance post holder and the HSCL will be available to the class teacher to help or to discuss any sensitive issues concerning attendance. These letters should be issued after the 12th day of absence.

## **Chronic non-attendance**

### **Attendance/Education Welfare Act**

Under the Education Welfare Act 200, absences or lateness must be explained on Aladdin. Absences of 20 days or more must be referred by the school to the Education Welfare Board. **Any parent wishing to take a child home early, must give the school prior notice through the class teacher or school secretary. The child must be collected by a designated adult.** The Education Welfare Officer is available to support parents with attendance issues. Children with hospital or dental appointments on an ongoing basis should give a copy of appointments to the office secretary. Daily attendance and punctuality are required from pupils. School opens to receive pupils at 8.40 am each morning. A text message is sent to parents if a child is absent from school. The parent is requested to contact the school to clarify the situation, or they can fill out the reason on Aladdin. When a pupil must leave school early (i.e., before 2.30pm) a note, email, or Dojo message from parents must be sent to the class teacher stating the time at which the pupil is to leave.

### **Poor school attendance is addressed early in St. Finian's.**

Where attendance causes continued concern in infant classes the Principal seeks a meeting with the parents/guardians to address the issue and break the cycle of non-attendance as early as possible.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

The children of St. Finian's and their right to a full education are at the heart of this policy. Parents and school staff have both individual and shared responsibility for the delivery of this Attendance Policy and it is in our working together as a team that we ensure its success.

### **School Principal will:**

Schedule Term Assemblies and present prizes/certificates/trophies to children with Full Attendance

Present special award to class with the best monthly attendance

Present lucky dip prize to children from Learning Support who have achieved 30 days attendance in a row

Meet and greet parents/guardians and pupils, monitor punctuality, log latecomers and acknowledge improvements made on timekeeping

Provide school attendance information and statistics for parents in the school Newsletter

**Inform the Education Welfare Officer:**

- Of the level of attendance at the school for the school year
- If a pupil is not attending school regularly
- When a pupil has been absent for 20 days or more during the course of a school year
- When a pupil's name has been removed from the Register/Transfer from another school
- When a pupil is in receipt of education outside of the regular school system

**Inform the Board of Management:**

- Of the level of attendance at the school for the school year

**Inform Tulsa**

- Of the number of absences at the school for the school year

**Inform the parents:**

- When a pupil is absent for 20 days or more, that they are being reported to the National Education Welfare Board
- When a pupil is not attending regularly that they are being reported to the Education Welfare Officer

**Deputy Principal will:**

Ensure that roll books and the School Register of pupils are maintained in accordance with regulations

- Follow procedures in relation to the Removal from Register/Transfer from another school/Transfer to another school/Tracking registered non-attendees
- Meet and greet parents/guardians and pupils on arrival
- Collate Attendance Statistics on daily/weekly/monthly/annual basis in School Register
- Circulate Attendance Statistics to Principal
- Assist, inform and support the Class teacher with maintaining the roll book and database in accordance with regulations



**Class Teacher will:**

- Maintain the school roll book and database in accordance with procedure
- Keep a record of explained/unexplained absences on Aladdin.
- Have in-class discussion with pupils concerning importance of attendance
- Have in-class discussion with pupil whom he/she has concerns about
- Send Absence Report (homework journal) to parents/ guardians in instances where absences are not explained
- Use of appropriate interventions with pupil
- Monitor patterns of non-attendance and when necessary, download and send appropriate letters of concern in conjunction with the post holder.
- Liaise with post holder/HSCL/Principal regularly regarding issues of non-attendance
- Communicate attendance/absenteeism information to parents/guardians at Parent/Teacher Meetings and on End of Year Official School Report
- Keep updated records of all matters re attendance

**Attendance Post holder will:**

- Consult with staff about concerns/reviews/success of attendance strategies and rewards system
- Will compile a record of children with Full Attendance for term/year
- Organise prizes for award ceremonies and lucky dip, print certificates and homework passes
- Collate block graph showing monthly best class attendance and display with photograph
- Work with Attendance Team (at present made up of attendance post holder, HSCL)
  
- Identify children whose continued absence is unexplained and make to contact with parents/guardians for the explanation
- Send letters reminding parents of the importance of good attendance

Support class teachers when they are sending Letters of Concern and be available for teachers when sensitive issues arise around attendance.

**Parents/Guardians will:**

- Take responsibility for their children attending school regularly
- Get their children to school on time
- Notify the school when their children are unable to attend
- Only allow children miss school for essential reasons e.g., medical reason
- Make school important in the home by letting children know that it is not ok to miss school

- Take family holidays that coincide with school holidays and purchase Communion/Confirmation outfits during holidays/weekends/after school
- Get children to bed in good time on Sundays and school days to ensure that children receive plenty of sleep and rest
- Make sure that children eat some breakfast every morning
- Encourage their children to participate fully in all school activities
- Help their children to be proud of a good attendance record

### **Progress Evaluation and Success Criteria**

Attendance was identified as a major concern in St. Finian's in 1999 when attendance was in the 80 percentiles. A term/yearly and monthly reward system for full attendance was introduced. After analysing the figures, it emerged very quickly that while overall attendance improved, children attending Learning Support were not receiving term/yearly full attendance awards. In 2000-2001a reward system specifically for children attending Learning Support to improve their attendance was introduced and this has been successful and has led to many children who attend Learning Support achieving full term/yearly attendance.

- We feel that we have not adequately targeted children with patterns of poor attendance, and this is an area that we could improve on. We are currently focusing on this area – identifying and tracking children concerned, addressing the issue with parents/guardians, recording progress and following up with outside agencies where necessary.

### **Success Criteria**

The following will provide some practical indicators of the success of this policy:

- Seeing a reduction in the number of persistent latecomers
- Seeing a reduction in the number of children with patterns of poor attendance
- The Sign out Book showing a reduction in the number of children being withdrawn from class for non-essential reasons
- A five-year analysis of attendance is included in this policy. This five-year period begins in the school year 2011/12 and concludes in the school year 2015/16. This analysis has yielded five-year averages in percentage terms under certain categories. Extrapolating from these figures new targets are to be set for the next five-year period commencing from September 2017 to conclude in June 2022. It must be noted that the pandemic will have a serious implication for these numbers

### **Ratification and Review**

This Attendance Policy was updated on September the 30<sup>th</sup> 2023. The plan will be implemented throughout the school and will be reviewed and adjusted in September 2024.