



## Statement of Strategy for School Attendance

Name of school	St. Joseph's N.S.
Address	Boyerstown, Navan, Co. Meath
Roll Number	17986U
The school's vision and values in relation to attendance	<p>In St. Joseph's N.S., we recognize the importance of school attendance. It is the aim of all stakeholders that all pupils have full attendance at school. To this end, St. Joseph's aims to be a safe, caring and stimulating place of education for all pupils. We endeavour to develop a supportive, positive and welcoming school environment where the needs of every individual child are met. Our holistic approach to the development of our students as individuals underpins all our actions.</p>
The school's high expectations around attendance	<p>Every child in our school, to whom the School Attendance Act applies, is obliged by law to attend school every day on which the school is in operation, unless there is a reasonable excuse for not attending. The school expects that in so far as is possible that all pupils fully attend school. Children who are unwell are not expected to attend school.</p> <p>Taking into consideration Section 21(9) of the 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. Therefore the school cannot give permission or approve of holiday absences during term time. St. Joseph's N.S. strongly discourages parents from taking students on holidays during term time. If a parent decides do so, they are required to provide a letter to the school stating their intentions and that they are aware of the implications this decision will have on their child's education.</p> <p>The school's high expectations around attendance are manifested in our school vision: We aim to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* provide for the holistic development of each child - physically, intellectually, emotionally, creatively, spiritually and socially</li> <li>* enable each child to develop in an open, happy, safe, stimulating and mutually respectful environment</li> <li>* provide an active, enriched learning environment for children with the availability of appropriate, instructional materials, resources and classroom</li> </ul>

	<p>adaptations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* develop a love of learning and an openness to lifelong learning</li> <li>* foster a sense of community between management, teachers, parents and children and an awareness of belonging to the whole community</li> <li>* develop in students an awareness and appreciation of our culture, heritage with particular emphasis on the Irish language</li> <li>* develop an appreciation of the environment and one's responsibility for its preservation</li> <li>* prepare each child for his/her future in education and in society</li> </ul>
<p>How attendance will be monitored</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Daily roll call using the Aladdin system by 11a.m each morning.</li> <li>* Roll call input electronically by class teacher</li> <li>* After the 11a.m roll is recorded it should not be changed (Rules for National schools under the Department of Education/1965). Pupils arriving after this time will be recorded as absent albeit late arrival.</li> <li>* Attendance monitored by class teacher</li> <li>* General school attendance as well as individual attendance is monitored by the principal and Special Educational Needs Team</li> <li>* School attendance reports are prepared quarterly and attendance reports of each student and class group are examined. Collective quarterly attendances and percentages are available for analysis at the end of each quarter.</li> <li>* Written absence notes are required by the school and are filed in the main office. This is an obligation under the Education Welfare Act.</li> <li>* Reason for absences are recorded on the school database</li> <li>* Arriving late at school is recorded on a daily basis by the class teacher and addressed on School Report Card in June each year. Should a pattern begin to emerge, this information is transferred to the school database. Parents are invited to meet class teacher to discuss partial attendance and the implications of same.</li> <li>* Parents are invited to meet class teacher to discuss attendance concerns after 10 days absence</li> <li>* Parents are invited to meet with the principal and class teacher to discuss continuing absence after 15 days</li> <li>* Pre-referral form is completed at 17 days absence – informing of absences and procedures regarding reporting to TUSLA.</li> <li>* Report made to TUSLA after 20 days absence according to Section 21 of Education Welfare Act using Referral Form</li> </ul>
<p>Summary of the main elements of the school's approach to attendance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Target setting and targets</li> <li>• The whole-school approach</li> <li>• Promoting good attendance</li> <li>• Responding to poor attendance</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Target Setting and Targets</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Prepare a Statement of Strategy for School Attendance for St. Joseph's N.S.</li> <li>* Submit Statement of Strategy for School Attendance to the Board of Management for ratification</li> <li>* Submit Statement of Strategy for School Attendance to Tusla</li> <li>* Examine the school's previous year attendance data as a baseline for target setting by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>~ Recording the percentage average daily attendance for our school in the previous academic year</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

~ Recording the percentage of pupils who missed 20 days in the previous academic year

- \* Raise awareness about the importance of attendance among management, staff, pupils and parents.
- \* Have 'Attendance' as an item on the agenda of all staff meetings and Board of Management meetings
- \* Sustain an ethos of continuous improvement
- \* Provide a sense of commitment to attendance

#### **Whole-School Approach to Attendance**

- \* The school has a comprehensive attendance policy which sets out its systems and procedures for ensuring regular school attendance and investigating the underlying causes of poor attendance. This policy is reviewed regularly.
- \* Roles and responsibilities of those working with the school are clearly defined in relation to attendance.
- \* Attendance and its importance is emphasised at introductory meeting for parents of Junior Infants
- \* The principal and staff record and monitor attendance on a daily basis
- \* Frequent meetings are held between the principal and the schools Education Welfare Officer.
- \* Attendance is recorded electronically via the Aladdin system as well as on paper. This enables more effective and efficient monitoring of attendance on a daily basis as well as allowing the identification of longer-term trends in absence which can be used to inform school policy and practice.
- \* There is continuous analysis of individual pupil attendance and of whole school attendance.
- \* The school emphasises parents' prime responsibility for ensuring attendance by asking parents to inform them as soon as possible if their child will not be attending school on a particular day. If a pupil is absent without explanation, parents/guardians are contacted and requested to forward a written explanation regarding the child's absence. A declared and active policy of school contact makes clear to pupils and parents that absence is a matter of concern and will be followed up on.
- \* Attendance is promoted through the use of parent-teacher meetings, school newsletters, posters and leaflets.
- \* When welcoming new parents/guardians and pupils, the principal raises awareness of the importance of punctuality and attendance.
- \* As part of staff induction, new staff members are briefed on the school's philosophy on attendance and they are introduced to their responsibilities for attendance management.
- \* Rewards and incentives are used to encourage attendance and punctuality.

### Promoting Good Attendance

- \* **Early Intervention:** A Welcome Information pack is prepared each year for new enrolments. Information from TUSLA about the importance of attendance is included. The INTO booklet on Primary Education is also included.
- \* **Communication with Parents:** A Beginning of Year Newsletter is sent home to parents each term outlining the importance of attendance and punctuality and stating the obligation on staff to report non-attendance. Parents are also informed, of their responsibility, to send a note explaining absences to the staff. Where a pattern of non-attendance begins to emerge in the year, the class teacher should keep a copy of the parent notes for the pre-referral form.
- \* **Family Communication:** If a child's attendance is of concern (even before the child has reached 20 days absence) the class teacher will contact parents to ascertain a reason for the child's absence and if further support is needed.  
**School Records of Attendance:** The staff is involved in keeping daily, monthly and annual records of attendance. The staff also keep notes received from parents re. absences where a pattern of non-attendance is emerging.
- \* **School Reports:** Children's individual attendances are recorded in the annual school report which is sent home to parents. In the cases of children transferring to secondary schools and/or other primary schools attendance records are also forwarded.
- \* **TUSLA:** Quarterly and annual returns are forwarded to TUSLA about attendance every year. The Education Welfare Officer has meetings with parents in school and / or at home to discuss concerns regarding attendance and to encourage pupils to attend.
- \* **Reward Certificates** will be presented to those targeted pupils who have shown significant improvement in their attendance.
- \* **SPHE:** As part of our Social Personal and Health Education Programme each class teacher teaches SPHE. This aims to promote self-esteem and encourage attendance through strand units such as "Making choices".
- \* **Assessment:** Individual teachers make arrangements for their own class tests. If lack of attendance was due to fear of tests parents would be encouraged to talk to the class teacher. Tests generally reflect class work and homework. Encouraging children to do homework will help alleviate their fears. In the case of children with special learning needs the teacher will make professional decisions as to whether the child needs to complete the full test
- \* **Awards/ Incentives:**  
End of year award for full attendance to be introduced.  
Consultation with pupils to be asked what they consider to be meaningful incentives and to discuss with pupils the importance of attendance.

### Responding to Poor Attendance

- \* Early dialogue with parents is critical to ensure that non-attendance does not persist. In St. Joseph's N.S., the following ways of doing this are:

~At the start of each school year (and throughout the year), teachers are alerted to children we are concerned about to monitor attendance.

~Informal correspondence with parents will be initiated by telephone calls or note in the diary by the class teacher inviting the parents to a meeting to discuss matters of non-attendance and the parents' responsibility. Teachers to communicate with parents between 10 and 20 days missed [see above].

~At these meetings the class teacher will try to ascertain the cause for the child's lateness or non-attendance and inform the parent what has been missed in class during the child's absence. The teacher may commence reward certificates or/and targeted attendance charts at this stage e.g. Reward Certificates for targeted pupils who have shown significant improvement in their attendance.

~A standard school letter with a response requirement will be sent to the parent after the child misses 20 days.

~Attendance targets for improved attendance are set in collaboration with parents and monitored with them.

~When there is no improvement in attendance, a referral to Tusla's Educational Welfare Services will be activated by the school. A pre-referral checklist will be provided to Tusla demonstrating the efforts already made to address the attendance problem.

~An individual planned approach may be considered that will involve staff, pupil and parents together if the needs of a pupil are particularly complex.

~Chronic attendance issues may point to the need for support from a range of agencies. In consultation with the Education Welfare Officer, National Educational Psychological Service, National Behavioural Support Service, National Council Special Education, Tusla- Child and Family Agency, the Health Service Executive, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, as well as child welfare organisations such as Barnardos and the ISPC may be consulted.

~The school adheres to the National Education Welfare Board's 'Developing a Code of Behaviour: Guidelines for Schools (2008b:74)' that pupils will not be suspended for poor attendance or lateness.

School roles in relation to attendance

## Roles and Responsibilities

### Board of Management

- \* Ensures that a comprehensive attendance policy is in place in the school and that this policy is reviewed regularly.
- \* Ensures that all school records are established and maintained in accordance with the Education Act and the Education Welfare Act.

Under sections 20 and 21 of the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000, recognised schools are required to:

- \* establish and maintain a school register and school attendance records
- \* monitor the attendance of all students enrolled

### School Principal

Under Section 21 of the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000, the school Principal must maintain a 'record of the attendance or non-attendance on each school day of each student registered at that school'.

The school attendance record should contain the following information for each student whose name is on the School Register:

- \* Attendance or non-attendance on each school day. A student is in attendance if he/she is present when attendance is checked under the school's normal procedures i.e. when the school roll is taken.
- \* If a student has been suspended for any number of days these should be recorded as absences in the normal way, and categorised appropriately.
- \* Reasons for failure to attend on each school day.
- \* Report on student attendance in certain circumstances

Under the Act, a school is obliged to report to the TUSLA every time:

- \* a student has reached 20 days absence cumulatively
- \* a Principal is concerned about a student's attendance
- \* the Board of Management decides to expel a student
- \* a student has been suspended for 6 days or more cumulatively
- \* a student's name is to be removed from the school register for whatever reason

All schools are asked to submit information about individual student absences **four** times a year on designated dates, and only if they have students in the categories stated above. Reporting dates are circulated at the beginning of each school year.

### Teachers

- \* Class teachers ensure children in the class are registered on the electronic roll book at the beginning of the school year.
- \* Teachers take the class roll before 11 o' clock each morning. Attendance is recorded immediately in the electronic roll book.
- \* Class teachers remind children to submit notes regarding absence using the provided absence/punctuality slips.
- \* These notes are kept by the teacher and forwarded to the office weekly.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* The class teacher monitors attendance in the class closely.</li> <li>* The class teacher alerts the principal to children who are absent regularly with unexplained reasons for absence</li> <li>* The class teacher meets with parents/guardians to discuss attendance concerns when the child has reached 10 days absence.</li> <li>* The class teacher and principal meets with parents/guardians to discuss attendance concerns when the child has reached 15 days absence.</li> <li>* The class teacher records strategies in use in the classroom to promote good attendance and to improve individual attendance.</li> <li>* </li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Parents / Guardians</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Parents/guardians make every effort to ensure that the child attends school every day and is on time for school.</li> <li>* The school will be informed in advance of planned absences.</li> <li>* Parents/guardians will forward a signed note outlining the reason for absence immediately following the absence of the child.</li> <li>* Parents/guardians will make every effort to schedule appointments and holidays outside of school time.</li> <li>* The importance of school attendance should be communicated to the child by parents/guardians on receipt of newsletters, brochures and general information.</li> <li>* Parents/guardians will make every effort to co-operate with the school in relation to all matters on school attendance.</li> </ul>
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<p>Partnership arrangements (parents, students, other schools, youth and community groups)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Parents / Guardians</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* A Beginning of the School Year Newsletter is sent out to parents every year. This Newsletter informs parents of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Children should be in school every day the school is open for instruction.</li> <li>- A calendar of the school closures and other school events is attached.</li> <li>- Parents are notified of the schools opening and closing times. Parents are informed that children should arrive at school for 9.20 and be collected promptly at 2pm (infants) 3pm (all other classes).</li> <li>-Parents are asked in the Newsletter to send a written note to the class teacher when a child is absent. (This is an obligation under the Education Welfare Act). This note should be dated and explain the reason for absence. This assists the class teacher in completing returns about absences to TUSLA. When no note is sent to the school absences are recorded on the data base system as unknown reason. If we are made aware of parents, who have a learning difficulty, procedures will be put in place to assist them in reporting absences.</li> </ul> </li> <li>* It is the parents’ responsibility to inform the class teacher if a child is going to be late arriving to school or if the child has to leave school early.</li> <li>* An email to parents of a pupil who has missed 20 days will be sent automatically from the School Data Base informing parents that the school is obliged to report to Tusla after 20 days.</li> <li>* Close contacts between the school and the families of (5) above will be established if non-attendance or poor attendance patterns prevail post letter from the school. Meetings between parents and school will try to identify and remove any barriers to attendance.</li> </ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* The school strongly discourages parents from taking pupils on holidays during term time. If this does happen, parents are required to provide a letter to the school to say that they are doing so. This request is documented as a matter of priority in the start of year Newsletter to parents.</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Contacts with other Schools</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* If a parent hopes to enrol a child in our school from another primary school in the state the principal contacts the principal of the other school to inform them of the request. It is hoped that the principal would then pass on any concerns regarding attendance. Once the child is enrolled in our school the principal will send a letter to the other primary school informing them that the child has now enrolled in the school.</li> <li>* If a child from St. Joseph’s N.S. transfers to another school, details about the child are passed onto the other school. These details include attendance figures, results of standardised tests (where applicable) and any other relevant educational reports.</li> <li>* When a child transfers to secondary school the school passport information from parents and pupils, the school report showing attendance for the previous year including standardised test reports are passed on to the principal/senior post holder in that school.</li> <li>* Returns are made to TUSLA each quarter outlining the number of children who have missed 20 days. Annual returns are forwarded showing total attendance for all children and total absence numbers.</li> <li>* Pre-referral forms are also completed by the staff and returned to the NEWB when we have a concern about a child’s non-attendance at school.</li> <li>* TUSLA will also be informed if a child has been suspended, for 6 days or more, and also if a child is being expelled.</li> <li>* The principal of the school may also contact Social Workers (if involved) to discuss children’s long term absences or repetitive absences in the best interest of the child.</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Youth and Community Groups</u></b></p> <p>Our school is involved in many initiatives which creates links with youth and community groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*GAA clubs</li> <li>*An Taisce-Green schools</li> <li>Local Parish NET Team initiative</li> <li>Transition meetings with local secondary schools</li> <li>Transition Year Student Work Experience Facilitation</li> </ul>
<p>How the Statement of Strategy will be monitored</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Annual review of statement of strategy</li> <li>*Item on agenda of staff meetings and Board of Management meetings</li> <li>*Continuous awareness of the School Attendance Strategy by all stakeholders</li> <li>*Focused implementation of strategies</li> <li>*Review of targets and setting of new targets</li> </ul>



Review process and date for review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*In-school Review September 2018</li> <li>*Analysis of current strategy and listing of successes / challenges</li> <li>*Action Plan with reviewed targets</li> <li>*Strategy discussed and to be approved at next Board of Management meeting</li> <li>*School Statement of Strategy communicated to all stakeholders</li> </ul>
Date the Statement of Strategy was approved by the Board of Management	Awaiting meeting in May for final ratification
Date the Statement of Strategy submitted to Tusla	10 <sup>th</sup> March 2018