The aims of the attendance policy in St. Benedict’s Primary School are to:

* Encourage pupils to attend school regularly and punctually.
* Share the promotion of school attendance amongst all in the school community.
* Inform the school community of its role and responsibility as outlined in the Education Welfare Act.
* Identify pupils who may be at risk of developing school attendance problems.
* Ensure that the school has procedures in place to promote attendance/participation.
* Develop links between the school and the families of children who may be at risk of developing attendance problems.
* Identify and remove, insofar as is practicable, obstacles to school attendance,

The school will seek to ensure that:

* The importance of school attendance is promoted throughout the school.
* Pupils are registered accurately and efficiently.
* Pupil attendance is recorded daily.
* Parents or guardians are contacted when reasons for absences are regularly unknown or have not been communicated.
* Pupil attendance and lateness is monitored.
* School attendance statistics are reported as appropriate to:
* The Education Welfare Board/Tusla.
* The Education Welfare Officer
* The Board of Management

**Punctuality**

School is open from 9.00 a.m. and children are required to be in their class lines in the yard no later than 9.00 a.m. 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/Tusla.

**Guidance for Parents**

Reasons for pupils’ absences must be communicated in writing, by parents/guardians to the school and will be retained by the school. If a child is absent, when the child returns to school s/he should give/send a written note to the class teacher/complete relevant section in school journal which contains the child’s name, the dates of absence and the reason for the absence. These notes will form a record which may be inspected by the Education Welfare Officer on a visit to the school. The school may contact parents when a written explanation for the child’s absence is not received by the school. If a parent rings the school to explain the reason for a child’s absence the date, time and reason for absence will also be recorded and kept on Aladdin, but a written note will also be required. Holiday absences during term times are strongly discouraged.

**Parents/guardians can promote good school attendance by:**

* Ensuring regular and punctual school attendance.
* Notifying the School if their children cannot attend for any reason.
* Working with the School and Education Welfare Service (Tusla) to resolve any attendance problems;
1. Making sure their children understand that parents support/approve of school attendance;
2. Discussing planned absences with the school.
3. Refraining, if at all possible, from taking holidays during school time
4. Showing an interest in their children’s school day and their children’s homework.
5. Encouraging them to participate in school activities.
6. Praising and encouraging their children’s achievements.
7. Instilling in their children, a positive self-concept and a positive sense of self-worth.
8. Informing the school in writing of the reasons for absence from school.
9. Ensuring, insofar as is possible, that children’s appointments (with dentists etc.), are arranged for times outside of school hours.
10. Contacting the school immediately, if they have concerns about absence or other related school matters.
11. Notifying, in writing, the school if their child/children, particularly children in junior classes, are to be collected by someone not known to the teacher.

**Pupils**

Pupils have the clear responsibility to attend school regularly and punctually and should inform staff if there is a problem that may lead to their absence. Pupils are responsible for promptly passing on absence notes from parents to class teacher and school correspondence to their parents, on the specified day.

# A strategy for promoting good school attendance

The Board of Management is committed to providing a positive school atmosphere which is conducive to promoting good school attendance in this regard through:

* The creation of a supportive, positive and welcoming environment within St. Benedict’s NS, ensuring children are happy.
* Displaying kindness, compassion and understanding while being vigilant so that risks to good attendance such as disadvantage, bullying etc. are identified early.
* Overseeing that the school curriculum, insofar as is practicable, is flexible and relevant to the needs of the individual child to promote development of good self-concept and self-worth in the children.
* Support for pupils, who have special educational needs in accordance with Department of Education & Science guidelines with internal communication procedures to inform teachers of special needs of pupils. These children will be supported through the use of a Student Support File.
* Supporting a reward system used for promoting good attendance at school:
* Deputy Principal will:

*Support for All:*

* arrange awards for children with good attendance
* at end of each term children who have missed fewer than 2 days (or ‘at risk’ children who have missed fewer than 5 days) will be entered into a draw for numerous prizes
* At end of school year all children whose names have been entered for that year will be entered into a draw for a significant prize/award.

*Support for Some:*

* The assistance of the Education Welfare Officer will be utilised.
* The attendance rates of pupils will be monitored by the class teacher in the first instance, who will notify the Principal and Deputy Principal of any concerns regarding the attendance of any child.
* Pupils with a poor attendance record will, insofar as is practicable, be supported in an effort to improve their attendance.
* Issues will be discussed with the child and the child’s parent by class teacher in the first instance and subsequently with the Deputy Principal.
* Parents will be notified in writing when their child misses **15 days** informing them that in the event of their child missing ***20 days*** that the school is obliged under the Education Welfare Act to inform the National Education Welfare Board/Tusla of their absence(*Appendix I)*

*Support for a Few:*

* At the end of the school year parents of children who have missed 20 days receive a letter informing them that a report has been made to the NEWB/Tusla *( Appendix III)*
* Following these communications a report will be made to the NEWB/Tusla officer through our on line pupil management system Aladdin
* Parents will be encouraged to ensure children do not miss school unnecessarily (See (*Appendix II )*
* Meetings will be arranged with the parents of ‘at risk children’ and the NEWB/Tusla Welfare officer as soon as a problem becomes evident.

# School Principal

The School Principal will support the work of the post holder with responsibility for attendance to:

* Ensure that the school register of pupils is maintained in accordance with regulations.
* Inform the Education Welfare Officer:
* ***If a pupil is not attending school regularly.***
* ***When a pupil has been absent for 20 or more days during the a school year.***
* ***If a pupil has been suspended for a period of six or more days.***
* ***When a pupil’s name is removed from the school register.***
* Inform parents of a decision to contact the Education Welfare Officer and/or NEPS of concerns regarding a pupil.
* Insofar as is practicable, promote the importance of good school attendance among pupils, parents and staff
* Communicate to the school community that all area’s of the student’s experience at school impacts on their engagement and attendance.
* Ensure that records of phone calls are kept in event of parent ringing school to advise of and explain pupil absence.

**Post Holder (Deputy Principal) with Responsibility for Attendance**

The Post Holder with a responsibility for attendance will:

* Liaise with class teachers and Principal regarding attendance and absenteeism,
* Co-ordinate and be responsible for preparing the attendance returns and the NEWB/Tusla returns,
* Support a whole school awareness of the role of staff in monitoring and encouraging school attendance,
* Present relevant statistics will at staff meetings.
* Promote good attendance on the website
* Highlight good attendance at assemblies
* Circulate Tusla’s information leaflet “Don’t let your child miss out”.

### Class Teacher

The class teacher will:

* Maintain the school roll-book in accordance with procedure (roll call before 9.30am in accordance with Rule 55 of the Rules for National Schools 1965)
* Affirm the school’s commitment to valuing the culture of every student and ensuring that every student will make the most of learning opportunities provided by the school.
* Keep a record of explained and unexplained absences through Aladdin.
* Contact parents in instances where absences are not explained in writing, using specified school absence sheet(available from office)
* Promote a reward system for pupils with exceptional attendance.
* Encourage pupils to attend regularly and punctually.
* Inform the Principal and/or Post Holder with responsibility for attendance of concerns s/he may have regarding the attendance of any pupil – e.g. patterns of absence or extended unexplained absences.

**Record/Communication**

Subject to the restrictions of the Data Protection Act 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. Attendance, behaviour and academic records of children who transfer from another primary school will be sought directly from the previous school. Attendance, behaviour and academic records of pupils transferring to a second level school will be sent to the school, if requested, once enrolment has been confirmed, subject to parental consent.

**Evaluation**

The success of any Attendance Policy is measured through;

* Improved attendance levels
* Happy, confident well-adjusted children
* Positive parental feedback

**Ratified by Board of Management on: Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Signed:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

 **Chairperson, Board of Management Principal**

 *(Nigel Williamson) (Deirdre Coyle)*

**Appendix I**

Sample letter to parents following **Absence of 15 Days**

Date:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Dear Parents/Guardians,

As part of our School Attendance Policy we inform parents know when a child has missed **15** or more days from school.

This letter is just to inform you that according to our records your child has missed  **\_\_\_\_\_\_**days since 1st September, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

In the event that your child misses 20 days from school we are obliged under the Educational Welfare Act to inform the National Educational Welfare Board /Tusla of the absences.

If you have any queries, please contact the school.

Yours sincerely,

*Deirdre Coyle*, Principal

**Appendix II**

|  |
| --- |
| **Guidelines for common**  **Childhood Illnesses** |
| Illness | Symptoms and signs  | What to Do |
| Fever | Temperature-100.4 F or38.0 C  | Stay home must be fever free for 24hrs before going back to school. |
| Headache | If the child can’t do normal activities  | Stay Home |
| Vomiting | More than 2 times in 24 Hrs or if diarrhorea also | Stay home until 24 hrs after last episode |
| Diarrhorea | More than 3 times in 24 hrs | Stay home until 24 hrs after last episode |
| Sore Throat  | If not eating or fever | Back as soon as well or 24 hrs after starting antibiotic if prescribed. |
| Cold Symptoms | Stuffed or runny nose, sneezing mild cough. | No need to stay home. |
| Cough | If the cough disrupts normal activities... | Return to school after Doctor has cleared child of serious illness e.g. whooping cough. |
| Asthma | If your child can’t do normal activities or coughing a lot... | Needs to see Doctor or asthma nurse to review treatment. |
| Conjunctivitis (red eyes) | With yellow or green puss | Seek treatment and return after 24 hrs. |
| Chicken Pox | May have fever, abdominal pain, sore throat, headache, or feeling sick a day or two before rash appears. | Return when blisters are dry and crusted over. |
| Hand foot and mouth Disease | Not infectious once rash appears | No need to stay home unless drooling. |
| Impetigo. | Blisters developing on patch of red itchy skin., soon forming crusty yellow-brown sores. | May return 24hrs after starting antibiotics, 48hrs after starting antibiotic cream. Sores must be covered with dressing. |
| Ringworm | Ring shaped oval patch of scaly red skin. | Return after starting treatment. Keep area covered. |
| Head lice | Spread directly from head to head.  | Must be treated. No need to stay home. |
| Dentist or Doctor visit |  | Back to school afterwards unless advised to stay home. |
| **Produced in association with HSE Guidlines.** |

**Parents!**

**Remember that schools must report to Educational Welfare Board/Tusla....**

**If your child does not attend on a regular basis.**

**If your child has missed 20 days or more!**

**Appendix III**

Sample letter to parents following **Absence of 20 Days**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Dear Parents.

I am writing to you regarding (Child’s Name)'s attendance at school.

(Child’s Name) has now been absent for\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_days so far this year.

Because (Child’s Name) has now been absent for 20 days, the school must pass the information to the National Educational Welfare Board/Tusla. An Educational Welfare Officer may therefore be in contact with you to discuss the matter further.

If you have any queries, please contact the school.

Yours sincerely,

*Deirdre Coyle*, Principal