

**Scoil Aonghusa Junior
Attendance Policy**

October 2010

**Scoil Aonghusa Junior,
Balrothery,
Tallaght,
Dublin 24.**

Introductory Statement

This attendance policy document was formulated as Scoil Aonghusa Junior's response to meeting our obligations under the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000. Attendance was reviewed in the process of compiling a Strategic Three Year Plan under the school's inclusion in the DEIS programme during a whole-school planning day and the following targets were set -

- Establish an accurate picture of attendance.
- Reduce absences on Fridays and Mondays by 20%.

Rationale

Scoil Aonghusa Junior decided to review its attendance because:

- It is a priority area identified by the staff, pupils and parents.
- It is requirement under the Education Welfare Act 2000.
- Our school needs to encourage all our pupils to be in attendance.
- It is part of our school's inclusion in the DEIS (Band 2) programme.
- Our school has a good attendance record which needs to continue and improve.

Relationship to characteristic spirit of the school

Scoil Aonghusa Junior aims to provide a happy, secure learning environment where pupils, parents/guardians, teachers, ancillary staff and Board of Management work in partnership, where each individual is valued, encouraged and respected for their uniqueness and facilitated to reach their full potential in a positive atmosphere. We believe that an effective Attendance Policy will help foster an appreciation of learning and underpin the importance of regular attendance at school.

Aims

- To foster an appreciation of learning
- To raise awareness of the importance of school attendance
- To identify pupils at risk of early school leaving
- To enhance the learning environment where children can make progress in all aspects of their development
- To promote positive attitudes to learning
- To ensure that the system of rules, rewards and sanctions are implemented in a fair and consistent manner that encourages pupils to attend school
- To comply with requirements under Education Welfare Act 2000/ Guidelines from NEWB (National Education Welfare Board)

Guidelines:

Defining and Recording Non - Attendance

- A parent/guardian is obliged to cause a child between the ages of 6 and 16 to attend at "a national school or other suitable school " on each day that the school is open for instruction.

Therefore Scoil Aonghusa Junior defines non-attendance as not being present in school at roll call at 10.20a.m.

- Non-attendance is recorded daily as per Dept. Of Education and Science guidelines on the approved school roll book. The roll book is stored in each teacher's classroom during term and in our secure strong room during holiday periods.
- Non-attendance is also recorded by the Deputy Principal via a daily tracking system. These records are stored in the Principal's office.
- Parents are required to explain non-attendance in written form.
- The class teacher also records the reason for absence under the criteria as outlined by the NEWB reporting guidelines as soon as the information is given by the parent/guardian.
- Teachers inform parents/guardians of attendance record at parent-teacher meetings.
- A pupil's total attendance is recorded on the official school record card.
- If a child is withdrawn during the school day the parent/guardian must collect the pupil at the office via the Principal or Secretary stating the reason for withdrawal.
- Non-attendance is tracked on a regular basis by the Deputy Principal and concerns about mounting absences or patterns of absence are reported to the Principal and Home School Community Liaison Teacher
- If deemed necessary a phone call is made or verbal reminder is given.
- After 15 days of non-attendance, a reminder letter is sent to the parents/guardians stating the implications of being absent for 20 days in accordance with the Education Welfare Act. (See Appendix 1)
- 20 days of non-attendance is reported to the NEWB. A letter is sent to the parent/guardian informing them that their child has been reported to the NEWB in compliance with the Act. (See Appendix 2)

Whole school strategies to promote attendance:

Environment:

- The Board of Management, Parent's Association and staff of Scoil Aonghusa Junior strive to create a safe, welcoming environment for our pupils and their parents/guardians through the school's Child Protection Policy, Code of Behaviour, Anti-Bullying Policy, S.P.H.E. curriculum and Parent's Room. Children who are late for school are welcomed by the teachers and staff. If any child is persistently late the issue is raised with the relevant parent/guardian.
- Our school is warm, clean, colourful and well equipped. The furniture is new and modern as is all sanitary ware.
- The school is situated in a large garden setting with plants, trees and native hedging. It has a courtyard garden at its centre which has a pond and is visible and accessible from corridors and halls.
- The pupils have the use of two halls for activities.
- The yard is spacious, has a good surface painted with playground games and activities which includes a football area.

Early intervention:

- Parents/guardians of new Junior Infants are invited to an Induction Meeting (May) and a Welcome Meeting (Sept.) hosted by the Principal, Deputy Principal and Home School Community Liaison Teacher where the importance and procedures of attendance are explained.

Homework:

- No sanctions are imposed for the non completion of homework that would contribute to the non-attendance of pupils.
- The School Completion Programme supports pupils by providing homework support in the after school "Homework Club".

Uniform:

- Pupils who arrive at school without a uniform/complete uniform will be welcomed and the issue of uniform will not be addressed upon arrival in the classroom.

Nutrition:

- The School Completion Programme provides a breakfast (Breakfast Club) and lunch for any pupil who requires same. Fresh fruit and yoghurts are also distributed to every class each week.

Rewards:

- At monthly assemblies the Principal speaks about the importance of good attendance and acknowledges all success within the framework of good attendance.
- A raffle is held every term. Pupils earn a ticket for the raffle by having a week's full attendance.
- Full attendance certificates are awarded at the end of year assembly.

Curriculum:

- We in Scoil Aonghusa Junior seek to create an active learning environment where all types of learners are catered for based on a child-centred curriculum (Revised curriculum,1999).

Parents:

We communicate the requirements of schools and of parents under the Education Welfare Act to parents/guardians via

- ✓ Induction Meetings
- ✓ Welcome Meetings
- ✓ School Holiday Schedule
- ✓ Parent-Teacher meetings.
- ✓ Newsletters
- ✓ Reminder letters
- ✓ Text messaging
- ✓ Information packs
- Parents with Literacy difficulties are supported by the Home School Community Liaison Teacher.
- The leaflet - "Don't Let Your Child Miss Out" (Leaflet for Parents NEWB 2004) is made available to parents at enrolment time.

Timetabling:

Extra activities are timetabled to ensure that school is welcoming and stimulating for our pupils -

Irish Dancing lessons

Visiting story-teller

Violin lessons

Visiting theatre group

Hoops (Basketball)

Visits to the theatre

Colours Day

Visits to Imaginosity

Library visits

Music Workshops/concerts

Science Trips

Support:

To encourage good attendance our school liaises with supporting agencies e.g. School Completion Programme, National Welfare Board. H.S.E. Lucena, Clinical Nurse Specialists e.g. heart, diabetes conditions.

Learning Needs:

- Scoil Aonghusa Junior provides comprehensive support to cater for pupils who are experiencing learning difficulties.
- There are currently two Learning Support teachers, one Support Teacher, one EAL teacher for newcomer children, three Resource teachers in the school to cater for the learning needs of our pupils.
- Our Assistant Principal's priority duty is Special Education Needs within the school. This teacher liaises with our designated Educational Psychologist and the Special Education Needs Organiser.

- **SPHE Policies:**

Our school has a full range of programmes under the umbrella of SPHE to raise the self esteem of pupils which includes

- Walk Tall
- North Western Health Board
- Stay Safe
- Relationship and Sexuality
- Bí Folláin (Be Healthy)
- S.A.L.T
- Therapeutic Stories

Circle Time is used to foster good relationships and encourage good communication among pupils.

Staff development:

- Attendance is tracked by the Deputy Principal on a monthly basis in the first term; every three weeks in second term and fortnightly in the last term.
- A written report is given to the Principal and Home School Community Liaison Teacher.
- Follow up phone calls are made. Follow-up meetings are held if necessary.
- Attendance is discussed at staff meetings.

Communication with other schools/other providers:

Scoil Aonghusa Junior maintains regular links with -

Other primary schools -

- Scoil Aonghusa Senior School
- Scoil Rose
- Scoil Iosa NS, Tymon North
- St. Dominic's, Tallaght

Post primary schools-

- Tallaght Community School

School Completion Programme Co-ordinator - Noelle Moore

Educational Welfare Officer - Ms. Georgina Traynor

Strategies in the event of non-attendance

- Parents are made aware of Scoil Aonghusa Junior's duties outlined in the Education Welfare Act in relation to the non attendance of a child at school, that the Principal will inform the NEWB in writing where:
 - a) "a student is suspended or expelled for 6 days or more in a school year
 - b) a student has missed 20 or more days in a school year
 - c) attendance is irregular
 - d) when a pupil is removed from the school register"
- When a child is absent from school the parent/guardian is expected to inform the class teacher in writing at the earliest possible opportunity and give the reason for the absence.
- The school will accept the information by telephone but it must be confirmed in writing at the earliest opportunity.
- Non-attendance is tracked on a regular basis by the Class Teacher and Deputy Principal. Concerns about mounting absences or patterns of absence are reported to the Principal and Home School Community Liaison Teacher in writing.
- If deemed necessary a phone call is made or a verbal reminder is given to the parent/guardian.
- If a pupil is absent from school for 15 or more days a reminder letter is sent to inform the parent/guardian of the Education Welfare Act requirements and the number of days the pupil has been absent. (See Appendix 1)
- If a pupil is absent from school for 20 or more days a letter is sent to inform the parent/guardian
 - of the Education Welfare Act requirements
 - that the Principal has informed the National Welfare Board (NEWB) in writing about the number of days the pupil has been absent. (See Appendix 2)
- Every effort will be made to work with the families in question and to put into place supports to help parents/guardians.

- Teachers will be sensitive to any child who has been absent from school and will endeavour to "catch up" on any work missed without putting any undue pressure on the child in question.
- Referrals will be made and parents/guardians supported in accessing help from relevant agencies.

Procedures in relation to the Removal from Register/Transfer from another school

The Principal will only remove a pupil's name from the register of Scoil Aonghusa Junior when s/he has been informed in writing by the new school that the said pupil has been enrolled in it or when the Welfare Board notifies SAJ that the child has been registered by it as being in receipt of out - of - school education.

Transfer to another school: Where parents/guardians remove pupil/s from Scoil Aonghusa Junior and send them to another school, SAJ will, if requested by the Parents or the new school, forward a letter of transfer and a copy of the most recent school report detailing attendance history. The Principal will ask the parents/guardians in question to sign a permission letter giving authorisation to transfer files relating to the education of the pupil.

Transfer from another school: A letter of transfer will be obtained and the most recent school report detailing attendance history is expected.

Annual Report:

The Principal informs the Board of Management of the level of attendance at every meeting. The Deputy Principal reports the attendance to the NEWB by using the online services provided at www.schoolreturn.ie.

The level of attendance is reported to the staff at each staff meeting and to the Parent's Association at their meetings.

Success Criteria:

- Heightened importance of attendance for parents and pupils
- Increased motivation for parents and students to improve attendance
- Good levels of attendance maintained.
- Reduced number of 'lates' and absences in the school.
- Improved engagement in school activities.
- Improved academic performance.
- Fewer children reported to the NEWB.
- Specific families show improved attendance.
- Early warning system established for early school leaving.

Roles and Responsibilities:

Parents/Guardians - specific responsibility for ensuring pupils attend regularly and punctually, for provision of written reasons for absences.

Board of Management - overall responsibility.

Principal - overall responsibility, specific responsibility for reporting to the Board of Management, Parent's Association, provision of rewards and certificates.

Deputy Principal - specific responsibility for attendance monitoring and reporting in SAJ.

Home School Community Liaison Teacher - specific responsibility for supporting the parents/guardians.

Class Teacher -specific responsibility in maintaining roll accurately, keeping written explanations of absence and reporting this information to the Deputy Principal when requested.

Education Welfare Officer - overall responsibility for following up and supporting pupils attend school.

Remainder of staff - overall responsibility for creating a welcoming atmosphere in SAJ.

Implementation Date:

Implementation of this policy will take place as and from 17th February 2011.

Timetable for Review:

This policy will be reviewed and amended, if necessary, upon receipt of revised guidelines from the National Education Welfare Board.

Ratification & Communication:

The Board of Management of Scoil Aonghusa Junior officially ratified this policy on 16th February 2011.

Key elements of this policy are contained in our school Code of Behaviour will be given to all new pupils on enrolment.

This policy will be given to all new staff members.

References

- Education Welfare Act 2000
 - "Empty Desks" 2000, Michael Finneran: Curriculum Development Unit, Mary Immaculate College, Limerick
 - INTO Q&A booklet Education Act & Education Welfare Act
 - Circular 20/90 on Discipline (DES website www.irlgov.ie/educ). Also as Appendix CPSMA Handbook
 - Circular 22/02 Appeals Procedures under Section 29 of the Education Act, 1998. (DES website). Deals with appeals under the following headings:
 - (1) Permanent exclusion from a school
 - (2) Suspension
 - (3) Refusal to enrol
 - Education Act, 1998 Section 15 (2(d)) (DES website)
 - Education (Welfare) Act, 2000 Section 23(1 -5), 24 (1-5) (DES website)
 - Management Board Members' Handbook. Revised 2007. CPSMA.
 - (1) Guidelines for School Behaviour and Discipline.
 - (2) A suggested Code of Behaviour & Discipline for National Schools
- *These references apply until new guidelines are issued by the Education Welfare Board
- Department of Education and Science Guidelines on Countering Bullying Behaviour in Primary and Post Primary Schools (1993) available on DES website
 - Report to the Minister of Education Niamh Breathnach, T.D. on Discipline in Schools. Maeve Martin Spring 1997. Ch. 4 p.56-61 Recommendations for Schools
 - Discipline in the Primary School INTO August 2002
 - Enhancing Self Esteem INTO 1995
 - The Education Act 1998. The Education Welfare Act 2000. Questions and Answers INTO
 - The Principal's Legal Handbook Oliver Mahon B.L. IVEA 2002 Ch. 2 School Discipline
 - Quality Circle Time in the primary school. Jenny Mosley. LDA 2000
 - Responding to Bullying. First Steps for Teachers. The Cool School Programme. NE Health Board
 - Investigating and Resolving Bullying in Schools. The Cool School Programme. NE Health Board
 - Stop it! Steps to Address Bullying. Wexford Education Network. Wexford Area Partnership. Phone: 053 23994
 - Stay Safe and Walk Tall Programmes
 - School's own SPHE Plan
 - Anti Bullying Unit. Trinity College. Dr. Mona O Moore.
 - NPC website www.npc.ie
 - IPPN website www.ippn.ie
 - INTO website www.into.ie
 - SDPS website www.sdps.ie

Appendix 1.



Scoil Aonghusa Junior

Balrothery, Tallaght, Dublin 24.

Gutháin: (01)4513912

Uimhir Rolla: 19502f

aonghusajnr.ias@eircom.net

Date: _____

Re: School Attendance.

Dear Parents

We are writing to you regarding _____ attendance at school. We are very concerned that s/he is not coming to school regularly.

As you know a good education gives your child a great start in life. It is your child's entitlement and it is in your child's best interest to come to school every day. Education helps young people get employment and develop into mature and responsible citizens and it is also linked to improved health.

The Education Welfare Act 2000 was introduced to encourage regular school attendance. The National Education Welfare Board (NEWB) was set up to improve school attendance and to follow up on children who are not attending school regularly. Under this act schools must inform the NEWB if a child is absent from school for 20 days or more.

So far this school year _____ has been absent _____ days. If s/he is absent for 20 days or more his/her name will be sent to the NEWB. We are obliged to do this. You may receive a letter or a visit from an Education Welfare Officer to discuss your child's education as a result.

It is our wish in Scoil Aonghusa Junior to support children and families in every way we can to improve school attendance and to get the best possible education. If you would have any concerns or worries about this letter please come to talk to us. We are here to help.

We thank you for your co-operation in this regard.

Louise Cunningham
Principal Teacher

Mary Mc Govern
Deputy Principal/Support

Una Qualter
Home-School Teacher

Appendix 2.



Scoil Aonghusa Junior
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So far this school year Dean has been absent _____ days. Accordingly, as we explained in our last letter, his/her name was sent to the NEWB on _____. We are obliged to do this. You may receive a letter or a visit from an Education Welfare Officer to discuss your child's education as a result.

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