



St. Michael's School

Attendance Policy

May 2025

Introduction

An Attendance Policy was originally drawn up in 2001 in compliance with the requirements of the Education Welfare Act (2000) and is constantly under revision with changing family social circumstances and as directed by the Department of Education and Youth and Tusla, TESS (Tusla Educational Support Services).

Rationale

The main factors contributing to the formulation of this revised policy can be summarised as follows:

- Compliance with legislative requirements
 - The Education Act 1998
 - The Education Welfare Act (2000)
- Role of the Educational Welfare Services of Tusla, TESS
- Changing fabric of society
- Pupil and family needs
- Changing attitudes to special schools.

The Board of Management wishes to promote and encourage regular attendance as an essential factor in our pupils' learning.

TUSLA, TESS-Educational Welfare Services

The Educational Welfare Services of Tusla, TESS operate under the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000, a progressive piece of legislation that emphasises the promotion of school attendance, participation and retention. Schools are obliged by law under the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000 to submit reports on school attendance to the Educational Welfare Services, TESS.

Relationship to the Characteristic Spirit of St. Michael's School

St. Michael's School is committed to providing a secure, healthy and caring environment which values the uniqueness of each person.

Mission Statement

St. Michael's School is a welcoming and inclusive community for pupils, parents, staff, visitors and students from Teacher Training Colleges of Education and Third Level Colleges, including Nurse Training. Referrals are welcome on behalf of pupils of all religious denominations and none, who are functioning within the level of mild general learning disability. Education at St. Michael's is offered in a caring and supportive environment where the welfare of all pupils is paramount.

Our school endeavours to enable every pupil to actively participate in all school activities. Regular attendance helps to create a stable learning environment for all pupils to reach their full potential, and the school hopes to promote cooperation amongst pupils, parents/guardians and staff in maintaining a high level of regular attendance throughout the school year.

Aims

The aims of this policy are to:

- Encourage full attendance where possible
- Raise awareness of importance of regular school attendance
- Reward pupils who have good attendance records
- Identify pupils at risk of irregular attendance and of early school leaving
- Promote a positive attitude to learning
- Promote a positive learning environment to enable learning opportunities to be availed of
- Foster self-esteem, empowering each pupil to reach his/her full potential
- Develop closer contact between school and home
- Ensure compliance with the requirements of the relevant legislation

Compliance with School Ethos

This policy complements the school ethos of aspiring towards the optimum development of all pupils, to their whole education in a happy, safe learning environment, which will enable them to live as independent and fulfilling a life as possible.

Recording and reporting of Attendance and Non-Attendance

Each pupil, to whom the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 applies, ages 6 – 16 years, 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 attendance of individual pupils is recorded on a daily basis, in the Leabhar Rolla (Roll Book) of each class on Aladdin (software administrative website). The Leabhar Tinreamh is generated weekly using Aladdin. The annual attendance of each pupil is also recorded in the Clár Leabhar (Register) together with information provided in enrolment forms (pupil's name, date of birth, address, religion, parent's information).

If a pupil does not attend on a day when the school is open for instruction, his/her non-attendance will be recorded by the class teacher. The roll call is taken at 10.30am each morning. Any pupil not present when the roll is called will be marked absent for the day. A note from parents/guardians is required to explain each absence and should be recorded through Connect on Aladdin, or failing that, in the 'Absences Tracker' section at the back of the pupil's Homework Journal.

The Deputy Principal calculates the attendance of each child twice a year. Dates are provided by The Educational Welfare Services, TUSLA, Túsla Educational Support Services (TESS).

If necessary, where absences are not explained or if absences are not as a result of medical needs/behavioural reasons, parents/guardians of pupils who have missed 16 days are informed by letter, detailing the number of days missed and the fact that the Educational Welfare Services, TESS may be informed of these absences.

Parents/guardians of pupils who have missed 20 days are informed by letter, detailing the number of days missed and the fact that the Educational Welfare Services, TESS will be informed of these absences.

The above letters are updated at each cut-off date for reporting (and if a pupil has missed 3 more days since a previous letter, another letter is sent).

Where there are on-going concerns with regard to pupil attendance and TESS have been informed the Deputy Principal will make additional supporting contacts with parents of pupils. These contacts may include phone calls and home visits as appropriate. Decisions as to whether home visits are deemed necessary will be made by the Principal/ Deputy Principal in consultation with the pupil's teacher. Visits may not always be appropriate or productive. The decision re home visits will be carefully considered.

School Attendance

As stated in our Parent's Information Booklet/ school website, (www.stmichaelsholyangels.com):

'Punctuality and regular attendance by the pupils is expected.

The pupils must have a letter from their Parent/Guardian when early departure from school is requested.

The Parent/Guardian of a child who is absent from school shall notify the Principal of the school of the reason for the child's absence as required by the Education (Welfare) Act 2000. It is best to do this by writing a note in the child's journal. There is a statutory obligation as outlined in this Act to report pupils' absences to the Educational Welfare Services of the Child and Family Services, irrespective of the reasons given for the absences. This will happen if a child has missed a total of 20 days in the school year, even if those absences are accounted for by letter.

Holidays during term are not encouraged. There is no obligation on the school to supply holiday work or to make up for work missed by the pupil during a holiday.'

Parents/Guardians are informed in writing on the end of year report of the total number of absences during the school year. The Parents/Guardians of pupils whose non-attendance is a concern are contacted by phone or in writing, and informed of the school's concerns.

The school is obliged to inform the National Education Welfare Board in writing where a pupil is removed from the school register and where a pupil is suspended or expelled for 6 days or more.

School Security

Security is of paramount importance. A combination lock is situated at the main Reception Entrance with CCTV cameras located at various points throughout the building.

A signing in procedure is established for visitors, thus enabling staff to monitor the presence of any person not employed by the school.

Pupils may not leave or be taken off the school premises without the consent of Parents/Guardians. The school must be informed in advance if someone other than the Parent/Guardian/family member is collecting the pupil.

When it is necessary for a pupil to leave school early, parents/guardians must notify the school, providing their consent. Any person collecting a pupil on behalf of a Parent/Guardian should present written authorisation and/or identification when requested. This person and/or parents/guardians must sign the 'Leaving School Early/Late Arrival' Book indicating the pupil they are taking from school and a brief explanation for the early departure from school.

Strategies to Promote Attendance

School Environment

The school environment is welcoming and well-maintained. Parents/guardians are consulted in drafting and reviewing policies, with the aim of promoting a high-level of co-operation amongst the school community. The teaching staff collaborates in the planning and implementation of the School Curricula, so as to provide a stimulating learning environment for all pupils.

There is a focus on the value of regular attendance and on the importance of developing good attendance habits from the commencement of a school place onwards.

Transport

Transport is provided by School Transport Services for all pupils attending St. Michael's School. Occasionally, a small number of senior pupils may travel independently.

Early Intervention

Staff are vigilant and show concern so that pupils' non-attendance is identified and monitored early. Appropriate contact takes place between school and Parents/Guardians, either by telephone, note in school journal, via the Aladdin Connect app or by letter when this occurs. In the first instance contact is made by the class teacher, where there are on-going concerns and the Deputy Principal may also make contact. Parents/Guardians are then invited to meet with the Principal/Deputy Principal if deemed necessary. This meeting should take place at the school but in exceptional circumstances may take place in the home.

Communication with Parents/Guardians

The following methods of communication are used:

- Pupil's school journals
- Telephone
- Text message
- Letter
- E-mail
- Aladdin Connect App
- Exceptional visits to home

An Information Booklet is available for all parents /guardians on our school website. This Information Booklet is reviewed at the end of each school year. The school informs all parents of the implications of non-attendance as per the Education Welfare Act 2000.

The school web-site www.stmichaelsholyangels.com is updated regularly by Assistant Principal II. The Deputy Principal takes responsibility for a school newsletter which is distributed each term among members of the school community.

Parents/Guardians are given details of the school calendar as soon as possible in the year prior to the one to which it relates. The school calendar is also printed in the pupils' school journal. Parents/Guardians are requested to arrange family holidays with the official school closing in mind.

If school based strategies fail to address a pupil's attendance, then a home visit can be undertaken and/or contact made with the Education Welfare Services Officer.

Sample letters from NEWB, guiding the correspondence between home and school will be used to address the absenteeism (see Appendix 1).

Late Arrivals

Parents/Guardians are contacted by telephone or letter. Parents/Guardians who bring their son/daughter to school late will be asked to sign the 'Leaving School Early/Late Arrivals' Book providing a brief explanation for the late arrival.

Uniforms

A supply of school uniforms is available in school so that implementation of the school dress code is not used as a reason for non-attendance. School uniforms are available from 'Grants' shop, located in Blanchardstown and can be ordered online.

Food

- Milk and fruit is provided for all pupils on arrival to school.
- A hot mid-day meal is available every day for all pupils.

The school promotes good attendance by:

- Creating a safe and welcoming environment
 - Ensuring pupils are happy
 - Displaying kindness, compassion, understanding and respect
 - Being vigilant so that risks to good attendance such as disadvantage, bullying, etc. are identified early
 - Rewarding good attendance with certificates
 - Praising positive attitudes at Assemblies
 - Advising and educating pupils on the wise use of the internet
 - Awarding pupil attendance using 'Attendance Certificates' from the Educational Welfare Services of Tusla, TESS for our pupils (See Appendix 2)-
- Unbroken School Attendance Certificate
 - Improvement in School Attendance Certificate
 - Consistent and Regular School Attendance Certificate

Communication with Other Schools

When a pupil transfers from St. Michael's School to another school, school reports containing details of attendance and other relevant reports are provided by the parents/guardians and /or can be forwarded following written authorisation from the pupil's Parent/Guardian.

When a child transfers into St. Michael's School, confirmation of transfer is communicated to the pupil's previous school.

Relevant reports on pupils on completion of their education in St. Michael's School can be forwarded to the training centres on request, following written authorisation from the Parent/Guardian or the pupil as appropriate.

Parents/Guardians

Parents/Guardians are encouraged to assist in maximising attendance by:

- Developing a good relationship with the Bus Escort and Driver on their child's bus
- Encouraging friendships with pupils attending St. Michael's School and those sharing transport
- Making sure that homework is done as early as possible when the pupil arrives home
- Keeping the school uniform for school wear only
- Trying to have ready each morning the pupil's school bag, uniform and snack for mid-morning break and lunch if appropriate
- Ensuring the pupil goes to bed at a reasonable hour and is not watching television / or using electronic devices / playing computer games until late at night
- Setting the alarm on their alarm
- Getting up in time so that they will not be rushing
- Not allowing the pupil to watch television in the morning
- Giving the pupil a healthy breakfast every morning
- Communicating issues/concerns in a timely manner

Parents/Guardians who are having difficulties ensuring their children's attendance at school can contact the Educational Welfare Services of Túsla, TESS for advice and information.

Strategies in the Event of Non-Attendance

Section 21 of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 obliges schools to inform the Education Welfare Officer if a pupil is absent for more than 20 days in any school year, or if a pupil does not attend school on a regular basis.

The Deputy Principal will be vigilant, so that risk students are identified early. These pupils will be identified on receiving information from class teachers on the dates before the Educational Welfare Services submissions are required and/or as detailed on Aladdin. The actions to be taken are described above.

Reasons for absences are recorded and reported to the Educational Welfare Services of Túsla, TESS twice annually during the school year through an online system. An

end of year report is submitted detailing the overall level of attendance at the school during that school year.

Success Criteria

The success of this Attendance Policy is measured through:

- Improved attendance levels
- Happy and confident pupils
- Positive parental/guardian feedback
- Teacher vigilance

Policy Links

- Code of Behaviour
- Information Booklet
- Data Protection Policy
- Acceptable Use Policy
- Parental Involvement Policy
- Healthy Eating Policy

Roles and Responsibilities

All members of staff have a responsibility to implement this policy. Class teachers record individual patterns of attendance, and the school's Deputy Principal makes returns to the Educational Welfare Services of Túsla, the TESS. The Deputy Principal has responsibility for taking the class rolls using the Daily Record Roll Books and (Leabhar Rolla) on Aladdin, maintaining the Leabhar Tinreamh and Register and submitting all reports to the Educational Welfare Services of Túsla, TESS.

After submitting the attendance returns, if there is a concern about a pupil's serious non-attendance, the Deputy Principal will contact the local Educational Welfare Services regarding this attendance. If a pupil's non-attendance is thought to be linked to Child Protection issues, the Designated Liaison Person will be informed and the school's Child Safeguarding procedures will be implemented.

Implementation, Ratification and Review

This policy has been in operation in St. Michael's School since September 2005. It was updated in September 2010, March 2017, May 2020, reviewed in May 2025.

Signed:

Sr. Bernadette Carron

Sr Bernadette Carron, DC
Chairperson, Board of Management

Dated: 18.06.2025

Appendix 1: Sample School Letters from Túsla.ie

Dear Parents,

I am writing to tell you a little about the Education Welfare Act, 2000 (amended by the TESS Act 2013) and about some of the responsibilities we share under the Act.

As you know, a good education gives your child the best possible start in life. A good education helps young people to obtain secure employment and develop into mature and responsible citizens. The purpose of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 is to encourage regular school attendance and participation in education and training for as long as possible. It is desirable that every child stays in school and completes the age appropriate level of certification.

Under the law, every child must attend school regularly up to sixteen years of age or complete at least three years education in a post primary school whichever comes later.

As a parent, you must let the school know if your child is absent and the reason why. It is school policy that reasons must be given in writing. The school will notify Tusla – TESS if a child is absent for 20 days or more or where the absence gives rise to concern.

If your child is sick or is absent for other good reasons, no action will be taken by Tusla - TESS. However, if there is concern about your child's attendance at school or about the reasons given, you may be visited by an Educational Welfare Officer who will discuss your child's education with you. The Officer will work with you and take full account of the circumstances of the child and the family before deciding what further action is necessary to ensure that the child receives his/her entitlement to an education.

Further information concerning the new service and about school attendance matters generally can be obtained from the national Lo-Call Education Helpline - 1890 36 36 66.

Yours sincerely,

Dear Parents,

I am writing to regarding <Insert name> attendance at school.

<Insert name> has been absent on the following days < insert days>. The school has not received any letter or contact from you. You are asked to contact the school as soon as possible to arrange an appointment to discuss the matter with <name of teacher>.

Under the law, every child must attend school regularly up to sixteen years of age or complete at least three years post primary whichever comes later. When your child is absent, you as parent must let the school know the reason for this absence every time. It is school policy that you do this in writing.

Thank you for your cooperation in this matter.

Yours sincerely,

Dear Parents,

I am writing to you regarding <Insert name> attendance at school.

<Insert name> has been absent on the following days <insert days>.

The school has written to you about this matter but has not received an explanation from you. The school is now very concerned that < Insert name> is not receiving an education and we will be writing to the Educational Welfare Service of Tusla - TESS to pass on our concern. An Educational Welfare Officer may therefore be in contact with you shortly to discuss the matter further.

Under the law, every child must attend school regularly up to sixteen years of age or complete at least three years post primary education whichever comes later. When a child is absent, you as parent must let the school know the reason for the absence every time. It is school policy to do this in writing.

If you wish to discuss < Insert name> attendance, please contact the school to arrange an appointment to meet with <name of teacher> as soon as possible.

Thank you for you co-operation in this matter.

Yours truly,

Dear Parents,

I am writing to you regarding <Insert name> attendance at school who has been absent on the following days <insert days>.

Because <insert name> has now been absent for 20 days, the school must pass the information to the Educational Welfare Service of Tusla - TESS. An Educational Welfare Officer may therefore be in contact with you to discuss the matter further.

OR

Because <insert name> has been absent through illness, the school will be reporting the absence in the normal way but will not be informing Tusla – TESS that it is concerned about your child’s educational welfare.

Under the law, every child must attend school regularly up to sixteen years of age or complete at least three years post primary education whichever comes later. When a child is absent, you as parent must let the school know the reason for the absence every time. It is school policy to do this in writing.

If you wish to discuss < Insert name> attendance, please contact the school to arrange an appointment to meet with <name of teacher> as soon as possible.

Thank you for your co-operation in this matter.

Yours truly,

Appendix 2: Attendance Certificates by Educational Welfare Services, Túsla, TESS (available on Túsla website)

- Unbroken School Attendance Certificate
- Improvement in School Attendance Certificate
- Consistent and Regular School Attendance Certificate