



8. Gortnahoe National School

Statement of Strategy for School Attendance



Introduction

The Board of Management of Gortnahoe National School recognises the clear and direct relationship between regular school attendance and pupil progress. That high attendance is linked to pupils staying at school to complete and do well in the Leaving Certificate and further studies. Overall, good attendance engenders a positive attitude to school and learning (McCoy et al, 2007). The Board also recognises the impact of poor attendance on wider aspects of a student's life, such as weak peer relationships, risks of engagement in anti-social activity and poor family relationships (Hibbett and Fogelman, 1990; Carroll, 2011).

In light of the fact that absenteeism is often a complex matter, the Board of Management, from the beginning, views each child in the context of his/her family and a holistic approach to improving attendance will be followed. By striving for greater understanding of the barriers faced by students and the supports and interventions that can be of help in ensuring students engage, participate and attend.

Aims and Objectives

The policy is geared towards:

- promoting a positive learning environment
- promoting a school culture where every child feels valued, trusted and respected
- facilitating children to have a voice in school matters
- encouraging full attendance where possible
- encouraging punctuality
- fostering an appreciation of learning
- raising awareness of the importance of school attendance
- raising everyone's expectations of our school attendance
- ensuring that pupil attendance is recorded daily
- ensuring that pupils are registered accurately and efficiently
- ensuring awareness of and compliance with the requirements of the relevant legislation
- identifying pupils at risk
- developing, subject to available resources, links between the school and the families of children who may be at risk of developing attendance problems
- identifying and removing, insofar as is practicable, obstacles to school attendance
- rewarding good attendance and improvements in attendance

Compliance with School Ethos

This policy complements the school ethos of nurturing children's potential in a caring environment where the welfare of each child is paramount.

Roles and Responsibilities

- All staff have an input into the implementation of the policy
- Class teachers record individual patterns of attendance.
- The Principal has responsibility for maintaining the Leabhar Tinreamh on Aladdin and making returns to TUSLA Child and Family Agency.
- The Principal will prepare a report on attendance for the Board of Management.



- Monthly attendance percentage figures will be updated on our school website.
- It is the responsibility of the Principal and staff to implement this policy under the guidance of the school's Board of Management

In drawing up this strategy it is worth noting the attendance figures for the previous years. Attendance figures are steady and can possibly be viewed in light of the successful implementation of school policies, strategies and procedures to date.

Our attendance figures are as follows:

2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016/2017
94.7%	95.12%	92.29%	95.33%	95.48%	95.5.%
2017/2018	2018/2019	2019/2020	2020/2021	2021/2022	2022/2023
95.6%	95.2%	94.8%	95.5%	91.3%	92.2%
2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	2026/2027	2027/2028	2028/2029
92.7%	93.2% to date				

Punctuality

- School begins at 9.20 am. Children are supervised from 9.10 am in their classrooms by their class teacher. The first bell goes at 9.10 on which children can enter the school and go directly to their classroom or alternatively enter the Astro pitch which is supervised for hurling practice or running. Friday mornings are Fundamental Fridays where the school is divided into their teams and there is a whole school focus on Fundamental Movements and PE skills as per our PE Plan.
- All pupils and teachers and SNAs 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 TUSLA Child and Family Agency.

Recording Attendance

- The school attendance of individual pupils is recorded on Aladdin school administration software, on a daily basis. 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 shall be completed not later than 40 minutes after 9.20 each morning as per Rule 55 for National Schools. Any pupil not present will be marked absent for the day. The roll may not be altered once it has been filled in. Late arrivals and early departures are discouraged by the staff unless absolutely necessary. They are monitored by the class teacher and records are kept on the Aladdin school administration software.
- The annual attendance of each individual pupil is recorded by Aladdin.



Promoting Attendance

The school promotes good attendance by:

- creating a safe and welcoming environment
- creating a building that is fit for purpose and well resourced
- ensuring children are happy
- developing mutual trust and respect with students
- facilitating children to have a voice in school matters via the Student Council
- listening to students' concerns
- having high expectations of students' attendance
- displaying kindness, compassion and understanding
- collaborating in the planning and implementation of the primary school curriculum, so as to provide a stimulating learning environment for all pupils
- being vigilant so that risks to good attendance such as disadvantage, bullying etc. are identified early for individual children
- intervening early with personalised support (e.g. curricular incentive, targeted attendance chart, behaviour plan or mentoring) and engagement with families and their children
- addressing personal (e.g. parent-child conflicts) and practical issues (e.g. access to health / mental health care)
- inviting parents/guardians of new entrants to engage in an induction process, through which the school's policies and procedures in relation to attendance are explained
- reminding Parents/Guardians of the importance of regular school attendance from Junior Infants onwards and the Board's obligations to report absences.
- publishing the calendar for the coming school early and posting it on the school website (it is hoped that this approach will enable parents/guardians to plan family events around school closures, thus minimising the chances of non-attendance related to family holidays during the school term)
- involving parents in discussion and reflection about attendance
- requesting parents to participate in reviews of attendance strategy
- escalating the response by the school in proportion to the complexity of the child's needs
- monitoring progress or lack of and noting when the threshold is met for a referral to TUSLA's Educational Welfare Services.
- Using the manual **"Managing Reluctant Attendance and School Avoidance Behaviour in Primary School"** and templates for support
- Implementing in full our DEIS plan
- Entering any child with 95% attendance rate into a raffle to receive a €100 voucher for a restaurant of the family's choice. This will be for Term 1, Term 2 and Term 3 for €100 for their family at the end of Term 1, Term 2 and Term 3.
- Assisting parents and children in accessing professional supports.
- providing free school books, work books, copies and stationery
- providing breakfast club "snacks" and hot lunches
- inviting parents in to the school to be more familiar and comfortable with the school and staff through talks, coffee mornings, infant library "Read Aloud" programme,

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

- ensuring regular and punctual school attendance
- working with the School and TUSLA Child and Family Agency to resolve any attendance problems
- making sure their children understand that parents support good school attendance
- discussing planned absences with the school
- refraining, if at all possible, from taking holidays during school time
- showing an interest in their children's school day and their children's homework.
- encouraging them to participate in school activities
- praising and encouraging their children's achievements.
- instilling in their children a positive self-concept and a positive sense of self-worth
- informing the school in writing of the reasons for absence from school
- ensuring, insofar as is possible, that children's appointments (with dentists etc), are arranged for times outside of school hours
- contacting the school immediately, if they have concerns about absence or other related school matters
- notifying the school if their child/children, particularly children in junior classes, are to be collected by someone not known to the teacher

TUSLA Child and Family Agency is informed if;

- A child is expelled for 6 days or more
- A child is suspended for 6 days or more
- A child has missed more than 20 days

TUSLA Child and Family Agency is furnished with the total attendances in the school year through the Annual Report Form which is completed on-line.

Communication with other schools

- Under Section 20 of the Education (Welfare) Act (2000), the Principal of a child's current school must notify the Principal of the child's previous school, via P.O.D. (Primary Online Database) that the child is now registered in their school.
- When a Principal receives notification that a child has been registered elsewhere he/she must notify the Principal of the pupil's new school of any problems in relation to attendance at the pupil's former school and of such matters relating to the child's educational progress as he or she considers appropriate. This applies to pupils who transfer between primary schools and to pupils who transfer from primary to second-level education.
- When a child transfers into Gortnahoe N.S., confirmation of transfer will be communicated to the child's previous school via P.O.D., and appropriate records sought.

Communication with parents

- Parents/guardians are made aware of the requirements of TUSLA Child and Family Agency particularly the by-law relating to absences of more than 20 days per school year.



- When a pupil has accumulated 10, 15 or 20 absences in any one school year, a standard message informing the pupil's Parents/Guardians is sent automatically via Aladdin. This states the school's obligation to inform TUSLA Child and Family Agency of all pupils who accumulate an aggregate of 20 school days in any one school year.
- Parents are notified on the end of year report of the total number of absences during the school year. Pupils whose non-attendance is a concern are invited to meet with the Principal during Parent/Teacher meetings or at other times and are informed of the school's concerns.
- The Principal will have responsibility for all communications with Parents/Guardians re: attendance.
- All pupil absences must be explained by the parents/guardians.
- Parents/guardians must also provide an explanation if a child departs early during the school day and details are recorded on Aladdin.
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Key characteristics for school attendance in Gortnahoe N.S.

1. Children need to continue to experience positive interaction and praise for effort.
2. Children need to continue to experience a positive climate of positive teacher-pupil interactions.
3. Our school, as a unit, needs to continue to consistently implement all school policies.

Research has shown that: 'School culture, ethos, student-teacher relationships and the quality of teaching and learning are central to the task of ensuring that students, engage, participate and attend school. These critical attendance influences are deemed to be within the control of the school. Our school strategy is based on the following areas:

Key Factors for School Attendance in Gortnahoe N.S.

In Gortnahoe N.S. we should continue to provide:

1. Positive interactive experiences for children and praise for their efforts and achievements.
2. A positive climate of pupil-teacher interactions.
3. Communication between pupils and teacher that clearly indicates that teachers have high expectations of and for our pupils, relative to their potential and needs.
4. Organised and structured support for all of our students.
5. Constant vigilance of children displaying behavioural or emotional difficulties and liaise with organisations relative to their needs e.g. N.E.P.S.



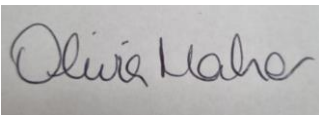
6. A positive attitude of respect for oneself, others, school community and school property.
7. Consistent application of school policies, especially Child Protection, Code of Behaviour, Anti Bullying, S.P.H.E.
8. Regular reviews to ensure our pupils are progressing in line with our school Mission Statement.

Evaluation

The success of this Attendance Policy is measured through:

- Improved attendance levels as measured through Aladdin
- Happy confident well-adjusted children
- Positive parental feedback
- Teacher vigilance

This Statement of Strategy for School Attendance was adopted and ratified by the Board of Management on 05/02/2025

Signed: 

Chairperson of the Board of Management

Date: 05/02/2025

Signed: 

Principal of Gortnahoe N.S.

Date: 05/02/2025