St Malachy's Boys' National School
Attendance Policy
'Building confidence to realise potential'

Introduction
Changing social habits and patterns necessitated the updating of the schools attendance policy, as well as changes in the attendance recording methodologies employed by the school. The redrafting was a collaborative school process involving staff and Board of Management.

Rationale
The main factors contributing to the formulation of a revised policy can be summarised as follows:
- To promote and encourage regular attendance as an essential factor in our pupils' learning
- Legislative requirements such as the Education Welfare Act 2000 and the Education Act, 1998
- The role of the Educational Welfare Service-Tusla Education Support Service (TESS)
- Department of education Circulars 0028/2013, 0033/2015

Aims and Objectives
The revised policy is geared towards:

- ensuring that pupils are registered accurately and efficiently
- ensuring that pupil attendance is recorded daily
- encouraging full attendance where possible
- identifying pupils at risk
- promoting a positive learning environment
- enabling learning opportunities to be availed of
- raising awareness of the importance of school attendance
- fostering an appreciation of learning
- ensuring compliance with the requirements of the relevant legislation
- 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.

Compliance with School Ethos
This policy complements the school ethos of nurturing potential in a caring environment where the welfare of children is paramount.

Roles and Responsibilities
- All staff has an input into the implementation of the policy.
- Class teachers record individual attendance on the Aladdin database and the school secretary makes returns to Tusla Education Support Service (TESS).
- The school secretary maintains a written daily attendance book.
- The Deputy Principal has responsibility for maintaining attendance systems and records and leading the review of the attendance policy.
- It is the responsibility of the Principal and staff to implement this policy under the guidance of the school's Board of Management.

Registration of Pupils

Upon enrolment in St. Malachy's Boys' National School, an enrolment form is completed by parents/guardians. The pupil information from these forms is uploaded onto both the Primary Online Database (POD) and Aladdin systems. Appendix A outlines the information required for registration on POD. Aladdin and POD are synced annually to ensure that the data on both systems coincide, and also to upload POD identification numbers to Aladdin.

A pupil moving from another primary school in the state to St. Malachy's Boys' School may be registered on Aladdin immediately. They must also be registered on POD on the day which the pupil first attends the school. Guidelines for updating a pupil moving from another school in the state from circular 0033/2015, can be seen at Appendix B of this policy and must be adhered to.

Punctuality

- School begins at 9:05am.
- All pupils and teachers are expected to be on time.
- The roll call will be taken via the Aladdin database no later than 10.30am each day.
- Pupils who arrive after that time will remain marked absent, as the register cannot be changed, once the attendance has been submitted (as per circular 28/2013 sect. 3.3b)
- 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 Services.

Recording and Reporting Attendance

Circular 0033/2015 allowed for the replacement of the 'Clárleabhar' by POD. It also provided the option for schools to use an electronic system for recording the daily attendance of pupils, thereby eliminating the necessity for the hardcopies of both the 'leabhar Tinreamh' and the 'Leabhar Rolla'.
Due to the absence of a hardcopy leabhar rolla, teachers are required to keep a laminated copy of their class list in close proximity. Absentees must be marked on this daily for use in the event of a fire drill/emergency.

In St. Malachy's Boys' National School the daily school attendance of individual pupils is recorded in the attendance section of Aladdin by the class teacher in each class. Class attendance data is also recorded daily by the secretary in a written attendance book. Reports on individual pupil attendance, class attendance, whole school attendances/absences can be generated via the Aladdin system. The leabhar tinrimh is printed off monthly and a hard copy stored by the principal.

If a pupil does not attend on a day when the school is open for instruction, his non-attendance will be recorded on Aladdin by the class teacher. The roll call is taken no later than 10:30am each morning. Any pupil not present at the end of roll call time will be marked absent for the day. The attendance may not be altered after 10.30am. A child may be marked as a late arrival, however they will still be marked absent (as per circ. 28/2013).

A note from parents/guardians is required to explain each absence. These notes can be submitted via Aladdin Connect and will update on the pupil's attendance section automatically or written notes can be submitted to the class teacher. Parents/guardians can also inform the school in advance of a pupil absence, late arrival or early departure via Aladdin Connect or note.

Early departures are recorded in a sign out book. The book must be signed by the parent/guardian when collecting a child early.

Parents are made aware of the school's obligation to report absences of 20 days or more to Tusla. This Aladdin system is set up to text message parents when a pupil has missed 10, 15 and 20 school days. They are also notified in writing 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 speak/meet with the Principal to discuss any issues affecting their attendance

Promoting Attendance

The school promotes good attendance by:
- creating a safe and welcoming environment
- displaying kindness, compassion and understanding
- being vigilant so that risks to good attendance such as disadvantage, bullying etc. are identified early
- rewarding good attendance with certificates.

Tusla Education Support Service (TESS)

The Education Welfare Officer (EWO) is informed if:
- A child is expelled
- A child is suspended
- A child has missed more than 20 days.
- There are concerns regarding a child's attendance

TESS is furnished with the school's total attendances through the Tusla Student Absence Reports (SAR) completed on-line in December and June, as well as the Annual Attendance Report (AAR) submitted at the end of each academic year.

Whole School Strategies to Promote Attendance

St. Malachy's Boys' National School endeavours to create a safe, welcoming environment for our pupils and their parents/guardians. Parents/guardians are informed of the reviewed policy with the aim of promoting a high-level of co-operation among the school community. The teaching staff collaborates in the planning and implementation of the primary school curriculum, so as to provide a stimulating learning environment for all pupils.

Traditionally, school attendance is strong in our school. However, all staff remains vigilant so that 'risk' students are identified early. Parents of pupils who miss 10 and 15 days are notified through Aladdin Connect whereby they are reminded of the importance of attending school and informing the school of absence reasons. A meeting between parents and the

Principal may be set up if deemed necessary. Absences of more than 20 days are automatically referred to the Education Welfare Officer.

The calendar for the coming school year is compiled annually in June and sent to each parent along with end of year reports. 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.

Certificates are awarded to pupils who have full attendance during the school year.

Strategies in the Event of Non-Attendance

Section 17 of the Education (Welfare) Act (2000), states that 'the parent of a child shall cause the child concerned to attend a recognised school on each school day'.

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

In such cases the Education Welfare Officer (following consultation with the child's parents and the Principal of the school) will intervene accordance with The Education Welfare Act 2000.

Reasons for absence are recorded and reported to TESS twice during the school year through an online system. An annual report is submitted – not more than six weeks following the end of the school year - detailing the overall level of attendance at the school during that school year including the number of exclusions and suspensions.

Transfer to and from another School

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 (in writing) that the child is now registered in their school.

The Education (Welfare) Act, 2000 requires that once a child is registered in a school, that child's name must remain on the register until such time as the Principal of the school has been notified in accordance with the Act that the child is registered in another school or is registered (under Section 14 of the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000) with the NEWB.

Whereby a pupil is leaving the school he must be removed from the Aladdin database on the actual leaving date. It must be input (if known) what school the pupil is transferring to.

The pupil must also be marked as a 'leaver' on POD and the actual leaving date recorded. This must be done no later than 2 days after the leaving date, unless the school was unaware that the pupil was leaving. It should also be recorded (if known) what school they are transferring to.

Upon receipt of confirmation of enrolment in another school, school 1 must then input to Pod the name of the school to which the pupil moved. This completes the removal of the pupil from the register.

In regard to a pupil who has been absent for 20 consecutive days **and there is no information that indicates that the pupil is returning to the school**, then such a pupil must be recorded as a 'leaver' on POD no more than 2 days after the 20th consecutive day (as per Circ. 33/2015 Appendix B).

For more detailed guidelines on transferring a pupil to and from another school on POD see Appendix B of this policy, copied from circular 0033/2015.

Communication with the Educational Welfare Service (Tusla Education Support Service - TESS)

The school will ensure that there is relevant communication with The Education Welfare Service in relation to children who are at risk.

The school will ensure that the required TUSLA reports are submitted annually within the required timeframes.

Communication with other Schools

When a pupil transfers to our school, a confirmation of transfer will be communicated to the child's previous school.

Pupils who transfer to post primary will have their education passports and school reports forwarded to said school. This will include attendance information from their most recent school year.

For more detailed information on communications with other schools – see Appendix B.

Communication with Parents

The school will circulate the Tusla Attendance information booklet *Don't Let Your Child Miss Out* to all parents annually via Aladdin Connect.

Parents are reminded regularly to submit absence notes either prior or directly after a pupil absence.

Parents are made aware of the school's obligation to report absences of 20 days or more to Tusla. This is done via an automatic Aladdin text message to parents whereby a pupil has missed 10 and 15 school days. They are also notified in writing 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 teacher/Principal, are informed of the school's concerns and, if necessary, discuss strategies to help improve attendance.

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 to resolve any attendance problems;
- making sure their children understand that parents support good school attendance;
- discussing planned absences with the school;
- refraining, if 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 or via Aladdin Connect 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, in writing, the school if their child/children are to be collected by someone not known to the school personnel.

Evaluation

The success of any Attendance Policy is measured through:

- Favourable attendance levels as measured through Aladdin records and statistical returns;
- Happy, confident well adjusted children;
- Positive parental feedback;
- Teacher vigilance.

References:

Don't let your Child Miss Out - Tusla 2004
Education Welfare Act 2000
Education Act 1998
Section 29 Education Act
Empty Desks - CDU Mary Immaculate

Implementation/Ratification and Review

This policy has been updated on 28th March 2023..

Appendix A

What information is recorded on POD?

The following information is collected for each pupil on POD:

Personal Information	Enrolment Information
PPSN	Standard (i.e. Junior Infants, First Class etc)
Name	Teacher / Class Name
Birth Certificate Name (if different from above)	Enrolment Source
Date of Birth	Enrolment Date
Gender	Leaving Date
Mother's Birth Surname	Leaving Destination
Address (Including Eircode)	Pupil Type
County of Residence	
Nationality	
Mother Tongue*	
Irish Exemption (if any)*	

*Pupils in Mainstream Schools Only

Appendix B

Circular 0033/2015, Appendix 3

Four steps to be followed to update POD when a pupil leaves a school for any reason including when the pupil transfers to another school

The four steps outlined below must be followed to update POD when a pupil leaves a school for any reason including when the pupil transfers to another school.

Please note that the POD system will automatically categorise a pupil as a "leaver" from a school at the end of their last class year in the school (e.g. at the end of 6th class).

It is important to note that a pupil's education record remains on POD and the only change that occurs is that the status of the pupil's education record is updated to reflect the fact that the pupil has left a school or is transferring to another school.

Step 1:

The first school updates the pupil's enrolment record on POD by marking the pupil as a "leaver" on POD, recording the reason for same from the menu of options provided on the POD system and recording the actual leaving date of the pupil.

If the pupil is transferring to another school and the name of the new school is known at this stage then this should also be recorded on POD and this will result in the new school being automatically notified about the forthcoming transfer of the new pupil via the POD system.

If the name of the new school is not known at this stage then Step 1 must still be completed by the first school.

It is very important that Step 1 is completed in a timely manner and no later than 2 days after the actual leaving date of the pupil except where the school did not know or could not reasonably have known that the pupil had left the school.

In this regard, where a pupil is absent for 20 consecutive days in a school year and there is no information that indicates that the pupil is returning to the school then such a pupil must be recorded as a "leaver" on POD and this must be done within 2 days after the 20th consecutive day absence.

Step 2:

The second school has an obligation under Section 20(2) of the Education Welfare Act 2000 to enter the pupil on its register on the day on which the pupil first attends that school.

This can be done by the school by updating the pupil's education record on POD. If the first school has already done Step 1 then this is a seamless process.

If the first school has not already done Step 1 then the second school will get a "PPSN conflict" message on the POD system and a notification will automatically issue to both the first and second school of the requirement to do Step 1 and each school will receive the name and contact details of the other school.

When Step 1 is done Step 2 can then be completed.

Step 3:

When Step 2 is completed the second school has an obligation under Section 20(3) of the Education Welfare Act 2000 to notify the first school in writing of the enrolment of the pupil in its school.

Step 4:

Following receipt of this letter the first school shall record receipt of same in the school's notes section of POD.
The completion of this step complies with the first school's obligation under Section 20(4) of the Education Welfare Act 2000 to remove the pupil's name from its register.