

Statement of Strategy for School Attendance

Lisvernane N.S.



September 2017

Name of School: Lisvernane N.S

Address: Glen of Aherlow, Co Tipperary.

A. Our School's Vision and Values in Relation to Attendance

Our vision for the school is that all our pupils attend school unless there is a serious reason not to. Hence we will:

- ! Foster an appreciation of learning among students attending.
- ! Encourage regular attendance unless you have a serious valid reason.
- ! Lead by example as educators in our own attendance, punctuality and preparation.
- ! Make parents/guardians fully aware of the value and need for regular attendance.
- ! Strive to create a positive, calm, welcoming school and classroom climate where there is a positive and respectful interaction between teachers and pupils.
- ! Teach a varied curriculum and have a balanced attitude to all aspects of school including our homework policy.
- ! Have a staff of teachers who have high expectations of every student and continuously instil in them the value of education.
- ! Have a school community who value and respect diversity.

B. Our School's High Expectations Around Attendance

Our school feels that regular attendance is paramount for each pupil if they are to succeed and we expect and encourage pupils to come to school as research proves that:

- ! There is a positive impact of high levels of attendance on teaching and learning.
- ! There are established links between good attendance, student engagement and staying at school to complete the Senior Cycle.
- ! There is a well-established impact of poor attendance on a student's educational outcomes.
- ! There is research evidence that even when they stay at school to Leaving Cert stage, those students with poor attendance do less well in the exam and are less likely to go on to further study.
- ! There could be an impact of poor attendance on wider aspects of a student's life, such as weak peer relationships, risk of engagement in anti-social activity and poor family relationships.
- ! The resultant pressures for students and their teachers when students miss out on classes and key parts of the curriculum cannot be denied.

c. How Attendance will be Monitored in our School

We now have the Aladdin system in place to record daily attendances and it has proved a great success. It is very efficient for returns to the Department and we have quick access to vital stats such as pupils who are absent regularly. Teachers can also input excuses given for absences. All teachers are encouraged to input attendances at the same time (10.10am) every day and the principal regularly checks returns. Furthermore each class teacher also maintains a daily record of attendance in paper format. This records events like illness or if a child has to be collected early from school for any reason.

D. The Main Elements of our School's Approach to Attendance

1. Target Setting and Targets

We in Lisvernane N.S. will strive to continue & maintain the current high standards of attendance. The main strategies are:

- ! The Aladdin system for recording absences was put in place and has been a great success. Daily attendance is also recorded on attendance sheet in each classroom
- ! The class teacher keeps a record on all pupils that are absent over 20 days and he/she will examine their absences to ascertain valid reasons. Contact will be made with parents of children who are absent for excess of 20 days, who are without good reason/and or unexplained absences. All parents from 1st - 6th class are requested to complete the absence record in student journal and this is signed by class teacher. Junior and senior infants a note from parents will suffice.
- ! Secretary keep absence notes on file for the current year and unexplained absences are followed up, especially more than 10 days by contacting parents/guardians.
- ! Parents are to be made fully aware via our newsletter in January/February that (Section 21(9) of Education (Welfare) Act 2000) states that schools cannot give 'permission' for holiday absences during term time and parents doing so should provide a letter to the school to say they are doing so and are aware of the implications. Teachers should remind these parents that their child's absences could easily exceed 20 days as a result.

- ! The Education Welfare Officer (EWO) will be urged to intervene in the cases where after the school exhausting every strategy, meeting the parents etc. there was still no improvement in attendance.
- ! In year 2015 - 2016 we had 07 pupils absent more than 20 days.
In year 2016 - 2017 we had 06 pupils absent more than 20 days.

2. The Whole-School Approach

Research findings are clear that the overall school climate (where there is a welcoming atmosphere, positive teacher- student relationships and a supportive teacher and learning environment) is at the core of success in every aspect of school life and work, including attendance. We recognise that the quality of the whole-school ethos and culture is the most important school influence on students' attendance and engagement in learning. Hence in Lisvernane N.S. we strive to have:

- ! A school ethos, policies and practices which work consistently together to support good attendance.
- ! Recognise that attendance has to be a regular part of development planning and school self-evaluation.
- ! A management, staff and B.O.M. that work as a team, with a consistent approach to attendance.
- ! A situation where parents and pupils are part of an inclusive school community and have opportunities to contribute to and take appropriate responsibility for policy and strategy. In our school they are afforded this opportunity via our newsletter and website where the importance of attendance is conveyed to them.
- ! We are in the process of establishing "Partnership Schools Ireland" thus affording parents the opportunity to engage in policy formation. They are also invited to comment on same on school website.
- ! Our student council were also involved in the compilation of this statement of strategy for school attendance.

3. How We aim to Promote Good Attendance

We have agreed on the following strategies to help promote good attendance in our school.

- ! Via staff development days all our staff are informed and empowered on aspects of a child's life that may impact on attendance such as factors in their own life e.g. health, school climate, teacher expectations, family issues and their community. This promotes a better understanding of why particular pupils are regularly absent and how we can help.
- ! There is continuous monitoring throughout the school year and the setting of high expectations. The principal and class teacher talk to the pupils about the importance of attendance when needed. The attendance records are regularly checked on the Aladdin system and records of attendance are noted in students' school reports and also conveyed to parents at parent/teacher meetings to establish early intervention.
- ! If a child is upset coming to school in the morning, they are taken under the wing of the S.E teacher, who organises a game/football or otherwise for first 10-15 minutes until the child is ready to go back to class.
- ! We teach the full curriculum and there are specific projects such as concerts, Brass music, gymnastics, swimming, Art and Craft activities, cooking and baking, debating, Student Council, sports and projects that should encourage pupils to attend school regularly.
- ! Furthermore we have incorporated Friends for Life programme into Lisvernane N.S to promote and highlight the importance of well being and building resilience.
- ! Parents are involved in the setting of high expectations and are informed promptly if attendance is irregular.
- ! There is a section on the school website dealing with opening/closing times, the importance of punctuality.
- ! Teachers regularly affirm pupils with good attendance and strive to help those who have poor attendance and try to find out the reasons for it.
- ! Finally we work hand in hand with N.E.P.S

4. School Strategies for Responding to Poor Attendance

The school has adopted the following strategies for dealing with poor attendance:

- ! The Aladdin system has proved to be very effective for recording attendance, generating stats, monitoring poor attendance, keying in reasons for absences, recognising patterns where we may have problems

on specific days and identifying specific ethnic groups that may have poor attendance.

- ! Each pupil is expected to have a note/letter when they return from an absence on reasons why.
- ! The class teacher contacts parents of children developing poor attendance to ascertain reasons for same and to remind them of the importance of their duty to encourage their child to regularly attend school.
- ! The class teacher contacts the parents of children approaching 20 days absent to again ascertain reasons for same and remind them of their duties.
- ! The school will try to help individual children who may need additional support e.g. children with special needs, children with health problems, children experiencing bullying, children experiencing emotional difficulties.
- ! The school will be sensitive to parents who may be experiencing personal difficulties and try to direct them to services which can help in developing good attendance.
- ! When the school has exhausted all efforts and there is no improvement in attendance, a referral will be made to Tusla's Educational Welfare Services. This referral will be followed up by school Principal.

E. School Roles in Relation to Attendance

We recognise that all the school community have a role to play in promoting good attendance.

- ! Each classroom teacher must diligently record that day's attendance on Aladdin before 10.10am., keep an eye on pupils developing poor attendance and liaise with the principal. They will meet the parents of these pupils, try to ascertain reasons for poor attendance and explore solutions. They will show empathy and care in cases of difficulty.
- ! The Class Teacher must liaise with Principal/parents to try to find out reasons, explore solutions and monitor progress or otherwise. The Principal will forward names of pupils exceeding 20 days absent to the Tusla's Education Welfare Office, at the school's discretion. In cases where the school has exhausted all efforts and there is no improvement the principal will notify Tusla's Education Welfare Office and arrange a

meeting with the Local Education Welfare Officer (EWO) and the parents.

- ! The principal provides leadership, leads the implementation of the Statement of Strategy, monitors it, engages staff in its development and implementation, brings it to parents' attention via school website. Liaises with B.O.M. in its' implementation and where necessary initiates links with other schools and relevant bodies on school attendance issues. She will also notify Tusla's Education Welfare Services and relevant EWO of particular problems in relation to attendance
- ! A copy of this Statement of strategy for school attendance will be placed on school website and parents will be invited to comment on same and contribute to its formation.
- ! The B.O.M examine and ratify the Statement of Strategy at a B.O.M. meeting.

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F. Partnership Arrangements With Parents, Students, Other Schools, Youth & Community Groups

- ! Parents will be included in the compilation of the Statement of Strategy as it will be shared on the school website and they will be invited to make an input before it is ratified. They will also be updated on the importance of attendance and advised and supported if there are difficulties.
- ! The school has a healthy relationship with outside agencies and community groups. This helps to foster and maintain good attendance at school.

G. How the Statement of Strategy will be monitored

All the school staff, the board of managements, pupils and parents have had an input in the formation of this statement of strategy and all have a role to play in maintaining attendance in the school.

1. The Principal has a special role in the monitoring of attendance throughout the school. She regularly checks the Aladdin system, liaises with class teachers.
2. Each class teacher creates a positive class climate, respects each individual pupil, respects diversity and has high expectations. They lead by example on their own attendance and punctuality, record attendances

accurately daily on the Aladdin system and in paper format and regularly inform the deputy principal on students who are developing poor attendance.

3. Parents are made well aware of their responsibilities regarding attendance, are informed on how important it is, ensure that their child arrives at school on time, avoid taking their child out of class unless there is a serious reason, avoid taking their child on holidays during term and promptly notify the school on the pupil's journal(snr classes) or a note(jnr classes) on reasons for absences.
4. The statement of strategy will be reviewed annually at a staff meeting.
5. There is a formal end-of-year review of the Statement of Strategy as part of preparation of the B.O.M.'s annual report on attendance.

H. Review Process and Date for Review

The statement of strategy will be evaluated on its effectiveness and will form the basis for the B.O.M.'s annual report on attendance. It will be reviewed at the first staff meeting in September every year commencing in 2018.

I. Date the Statement of Strategy was Approved by the B.O.M.

Date: _____

Signed: _____ (school principal)

_____ (chairperson B.O.M.)

J. Date the Statement of Strategy was Submitted to Tusla

Date: _____

