**ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION POLICY**

**Introduction:**

In Scoil Bhríde, as our Mission Statement states. ***“The uniqueness of each individual is nurtured and developed, enabling the student to live a full life and to realise her potential as an individual”***. Access to education is a fundamental part of children achieving their potential and good attendance at school is an essential part of this process.

**Aims & Objectives:**

As a D.E.I.S. Band 2 school we review attendance on an ongoing basis for the following reasons:

* To foster in children a positive attitude to regular school attendance to raise the awareness of its importance
* To raise awareness among parents as to the necessity and importance of good attendance
* To monitor pupil attendance and to identify at an early stage if pupil attendance is becoming a concern
* To identify areas of concern around attendance and to remove as far as is practical obstacles to school attendance
* Attendance is a priority area identified in D.E.I.S. schools.
* It is a requirement under the Education Welfare Act 2000

**Targets/Actions:**

* Our school attendance figure is currently at 93.1% attendance just slightly below the national average of 2013-2014. While we hope this will continue to improve due to interventions we now continue to focus on pupils absent for more than 15 days and to establish reasons why, in order to reduce these numbers by 25% over 3 years e.g .in 2014-2015 (27) target 2018 (20) approx
* To set up a school attendance team.
* To grow parental awareness of the importance of good attendance and its link with educational achievement and to ensure that they send a written explanation re all absence.
* To reduce/eliminate early/late collections.
* To develop a formal system of documenting all early collections and document and retain evidence of absence as per TUSLA’s Pre-Referral Checklist.
* To review the school attendance policy to include step by step approach to managing attendance.

**Roles & Responsibilities:**

* All staff will have an input into the implementation of the policy. Class teachers monitor and record individual patterns of attendance. The Deputy Principal will then make required returns to Tusla. The Deputy Principal has responsibility for maintaining the daily attendance.
* The individual class teacher, H.S.C.L. teacher and the Principal will monitor attendance daily. They will discuss the matter initially with families with a view to supporting them through any difficulties they may be having. It is the responsibility of the Principal and staff to implement this policy under the guidance of the schools Board of Management.
* In line with our D.E.I.S. Action Plan to promote good attendance, teachers and staff are aware of the targets and how we plan to implement them.
* Parents have responsibility to comply with school policies

**Strategies to Encourage Good Attendance:**

**Caring Environment**

* Scoil Bhríde at all times, aims to ensure that children are taught in a safe secure and caring environment where their intellectual, physical and spiritual development is catered for. We create a welcoming environment for pupils and parents. Teachers consistently try to encourage good attendance in their respective classrooms, by affirming attendance and creating opportunities intended to encourage pupils to attend. The school will also ensure where possible, through the D.E.I.S. budget and the book grant that all pupils have the necessary books, clothes and equipment lest this be a reason for poor or non attendance.

**Homework Support**

* The homework club exists to support pupils whose home circumstances dictate that there is neither the environment conducive to completion of homework nor the support at home to help with homework. Having homework completed removes a possible excuse for avoiding attending school.

**Breakfast/Lunch Club**

* A scheme is in place funded by the Department of Social Community and Family Affairs to provide all children with a breakfast each morning in the Parent Room and a lunch at lunchtime

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**Book & Uniform Support**

* D.E.I.S. funding will be made available when necessary.

**Individual Teachers**

* Individual teachers implement positive initiatives in their classrooms to promote attendance e.g. relevant curriculum, early morning activities, positive behaviour re-enforcement.

**Parental Information**

* On enrolling parents are given the document “What Can Parents Do and Don’t let your child miss out”. These leaflets outline all of the ways parents can make attending school easier for children and informs them of the current legal situation also.
* Pupil attendance is recorded in the end of year report and in the student passport when transferring to 2nd level.
* Clear guidelines are in place for parents regarding absences of pupils.
* The schools Aladdin system informs parents of their child’s absence by text if contact has not been made by them with the school by 10:00am each morning.

**Strategies in The Event of Non-Attendance**

In the event of ongoing poor attendance when all positive strategies have been exhausted the procedures for monitoring attendance as laid down by Túsla, The Child and Family Agency will be followed. These are as follows:

* ***In-school discussion with pupil***
* ***Contact between school and parent/guardian to express concern e.g. phone call, letter, discuss at parents evening***
* ***Specific meeting in school with parent/guardian to identify problems and agree interventions***
* ***Concerns and agreements communicated in writing to parent/guardian***
* ***Implementation of any appropriate in-school measures (e.g. change of class, ‘contact person’ in school, support in class etc)***
* ***Use of appropriate interventions with pupil (e.g. attendance charts/attendance report, incentives, rewards etc)***
* ***Other school interventions include care team and school attendance team which support pupils and their parents when necessary.***

The menu for possible actions to address poor attendance on the Túsla pre-referral checklist will be followed, when this is exhausted, referral will be made to TUSLA.

1. Circular 28/2013 informs schools that all pupils must now be removed from the roll book on the Monday after 20 days continuous absent or as soon as the school is aware that the pupil has left the school.
2. 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.
3. 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
4. In such cases the Education Welfare Officer (following all reasonable efforts by Principal of the school and the Board of Management to consult with the child’s parents ) may serve a ‘School Attendance Notice’ on any parent who he/she concludes is failing or neglecting to cause the child to attend the school. A successful case taken against the parent may result in a fine and/or imprisonment.

**Transfer to 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 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.

**Communication:**

The school has developed a good relationship with Tusla personnel regarding attendance and there is ongoing communication when necessary in relation to children who are at risk.

**Communication with Other Schools:**

* When a child transfers from Scoil Bhríde to another school, the schools records on attendance, academic progress etc will be forwarded on receipt of written notification of the transfer.
* When a child transfers into Scoil Bhríde, confirmation of transfer will be communicated to the child’s previous school, and appropriate records sought.
* Pupils transferring from Scoil Bhríde to a post primary school, will have their records forwarded of enrolment. This will be done in the format of the N.C.C. A. Education Passport.

**Evaluation:**

The success of our Attendance strategy is measured through:

* Improved attendance levels as measured through Leabhar roll records and statistical returns
* Happy confident well adjusted children
* Positive parental feedback
* Teacher vigilance
* Reduction in the number of pupils being collected early for trivial reasons

**Implementation/Ratification & Review:**

Scoil Bhríde attendance policy has been in operation since 2006 and was updated in May 2016. It will be reviewed again in 2018.

**Ratification of Policy**

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Chairperson

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Principal