

Attendance Policy Nicker N.S.

Rationale for the Policy

Whilst there is a very strong tradition of good attendance at school in Nicker N.S. it is important that parents/guardians are fully aware of their obligations to ensure that their children have consistent and punctual attendance at school. Regular attendance and punctuality at school is essential in order for each child to fulfil his/her educational potential. The Board of Management and school staff promote and support regular attendance and punctuality at school and consider it as an essential factor in maximising pupil progress at school. Nicker N.S. School Attendance Policy is based on the obligations arising from the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 (section 22) and on the guidance provided in Developing the Statement of Strategy for School Attendance: Guidelines for Schools – Tusla 2016. The policy also takes into account the updated DES requirements for recording and reporting on school attendance as per Circular 33/2015. This updated policy was originally drawn up by the Principal & Deputy Principal in consultation with the Assistant Principal and school staff and representatives of parents and to the BOM for comment in advance of its ratification. The policy was updated in 2023.

Relationship to the Characteristic Spirit of the School

Nicker N.S. seeks to enable every pupil to actively participate in all areas of school life both curricular and extra-curricular. Regular attendance and punctuality at school helps to create a stable learning environment for all pupils. However, the school ethos of care for the wellbeing of all, means that parents should never feel under pressure to send a child to school if that child is unwell and unable to attend. The school management and staff expect and value the co-operation of pupils, parents/guardians and staff in encouraging and maintaining a high level of regular attendance by pupils throughout the school year.

Aims and Objectives

The aims and objectives of this policy are as follows:

- To support and encourage high rates of school attendance and punctuality at all class levels
- To raise awareness amongst parents and guardians about the importance of school attendance and punctuality
- To ensure that pupils are registered as enrolled in the school and that pupil's attendance is recorded daily and that attendance records are monitored regularly by the school.
- To identify pupils at risk of poor attendance and those at risk of underperformance at school due to attendance and punctuality issues
- To promote a positive learning environment to enable all pupils to avail fully of learning opportunities
- To comply with the requirements of the relevant legislation in relation to school attendance
- To develop supportive links between the school and families at risk of attendance and punctuality issues.

Roles and Responsibilities in relation to School Attendance

The Principal, Deputy Principal, Teachers and other School Staff, in consultation with Parents, and the BOM, are responsible for the implementation of this policy. It will be the responsibility of the Principal Teacher/Deputy Principal monitor overall school attendance levels in the school. Assistant Principal and Class teachers are responsible for monitoring individual pupil's attendance and for identifying and reporting ongoing concerns for 'at risk' pupils. Tusla Education Support Service discourages parents/guardians from taking children out of school for holidays during the school term. (tusla.ie/tess/)

The Education Welfare Act 2000 (amended by the Child and Family Agency Act 2013) obligates schools to undertake the following actions in respect of school attendance matters:

- Maintain a record of students attending the school.
- Record school attendance and notify the relevant Educational Welfare Officer of issues relating to attendance.
- Support students with difficulties in attending school on a regular basis.
- Prepare and implement a school attendance strategy to encourage, in a positive way, regular school attendance and an appreciation of learning within the school.
- Prepare and implement a code of behaviour, standards of behaviour and disciplinary procedures for the school.
- Liaise with other schools and relevant bodies on school attendance issues.

Punctuality

- School begins at 8.50am and ends at 1.30pm (Infants) and 2.30pm (1st – 6th Classes). All pupils and staff are expected to be in school in a timely manner and to remain at school for the full school day. However, if a child is unavoidably delayed, due to unexpected circumstances, it is always better that the child comes into school late than remain at home that day. The child is assured of a warm welcome and a seamless inclusion in the work of the class. Parents should notify the school of the reason for a child's late arrival.
- School gates open at 8.40 a.m., at which time children assemble in the basketball court, proceeding into class for 8.50 a.m.
- Younger pupils, in particular, should be accompanied by a parent/guardian/responsible adult coming to school.
- The school is responsible for maintaining a record of children who arrive late to school, leave school early or are collected late

- Parents/guardians must contact the teacher/school if their child needs to leave class early during the school day. Parents should refrain from collecting pupils early from school unless it is unavoidable.
- Class Teachers will monitor patterns of attendance and punctuality and will bring concerns to the attention of parents/guardians at an early stage if necessary
- If punctuality continues to be an issue then teachers should bring the issue to the attention of the Principal/Deputy Principal/Assistant Principal.
- In cases of serious concern about school attendance the Education Welfare Officer/TUSLA will be contacted.

The Deputy Principal ensures that the obligatory school returns in relation to pupil attendance are made on a regular basis as directed by Education Welfare Service/TUSLA. The Primary Online Database (POD) of the Dept of Education and Skills holds relevant data in respect of each pupil such as PPSN, name, Mother's Maiden Name, Address, Date of Birth, Gender, Nationality, Religion, Ethnic background, whether in receipt of learning support or Irish exemption. School Attendance Data may be recorded on POD also. The school is obliged to inform the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) in writing; where a child has missed 20 or more days in a school year, when attendance is irregular, when a pupil is removed from the school register or when a child is suspended for 6 days or more or expelled. Parents will be notified by the school when a child has missed 15 days from school.

Strategies to Promote Good Attendance

The following strategies are in place in Nicker N.S. to help foster an appreciation of learning and good attendance:

The school is an inviting and welcoming environment with providing a wide range of learning activities to accommodate different learning styles

Support is provided for children who encounter educational, social, emotional or behavioural challenges at any stage of their school journey.

Staff are committed to working with parents in a spirit of mutual respect and co-operation to help ensure good attendance in the face of any difficulties which may arise in the course of a child's education in Nicker N.S.

The school calendar is publicised to parents at the beginning of each school year to ensure parents are aware of the school terms and closures.

An information sheet from Tusla Education Support Service is circulated to parents at the beginning of the school year.

Attendance is called in all classes at 9.00am each morning.

Parents must provide Class Teacher with an explanation of their child's absence on return to school (such as illness, family event, appointments etc). Parents/guardians should also inform the teacher in writing if their child needs to leave class early during the school day. Parents should call in person to the school when seeking to collect children early.

School staff regularly review pupil attendance and punctuality records with particular focus on unexplained absences and pupils who are regularly late. Parents/guardians are contacted to discuss the matter and an improvement plan may be put in place. The school will offer every assistance in resolving any issues.

School Attendance rates and absence reasons are recorded and reported to TUSLA in accordance with the current reporting requirements during the school year through the TUSLA online system.

An Annual Report is submitted to TUSLA at the end of the school year - detailing the overall levels of attendance at the school during that school year. Where deemed necessary, the school may be obliged to refer cases of ongoing and chronic absences and poor punctuality to the Educational Welfare Officer/TUSLA.

Required Notification for Pupils Transferring between Primary Schools and transferring from Primary to Secondary Schools

Pupils Transferring to Nicker N.S. from another School Under Section 20 of the Education (Welfare) Act (2000) - the Principal of Nicker N.S. must notify the Principal of the child's previous school that the child is now registered in this school. (Confirmation of Enrolment Letter)

Pupils Transferring Nicker N.S. to another primary school - The Principal of the receiving school is required to notify Nicker N.S. that the child is a registered pupil in the new school. A copy of the pupil's latest school report (detailing academic progress, school attendance etc) may be sent to the new school by request with the permission of parents.

Pupils Transferring from Nicker N.S. to Secondary School - Upon receipt of written verification of enrolment and a written request for school reports for named pupils the Principal/Deputy Principal will ensure that all relevant school reports regarding attendance, behaviour and academic records of pupils are forwarded to secondary schools in the format of the NCCA Education Passport as necessary.

Success Criteria

The following will provide some practical indicators of the success of this policy:

- Continued high rates of school attendance and punctuality in Nicker N.S.
- Increased Parent/guardian awareness of their legal obligations in relation to school attendance and punctuality under the Education (Welfare) Act 2000.
- Positive reinforcement of 'very good school attendance' and 'improved school attendance' at all class levels.
- Monitoring and tracking of pupils who are 'at risk of ongoing patterns of poor school attendance' by school staff with emphasis on early intervention to address identified concerns.
- Good practice and procedures in relation to electronic recording of daily pupil attendance
- Ongoing liaison with the Educational Welfare Officer /TUSLA to address cases of concern at an early stage.

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management at its meeting onand will be reviewed on.....