



## **ST. COLUMBA'S GIRLS NATIONAL SCHOOL WITH FACILITY FOR DEAF CHILDREN**

### **POLICY ON ATTENDANCE**

#### **Introduction**

This policy document was drawn up:

- To ensure and maintain a high level of attendance at school by all pupils.

The Board of Management, in consultation with staff and parents/guardians drew up this Policy on Attendance.

#### **Rationale**

The policy was drafted for the following reasons:

- The Board of Management wishes to comply with legislation, such as:
  - The Education Act, 1998
  - The Education (Welfare) Act, 2000
  - The role of the NEWB
- The Board of Management wishes to promote and encourage regular attendance as an essential factor in our pupils' learning.

St. Columba's GNS with Facility for Deaf Children'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 drawn up by the Deputy Principal and the School's Attendance Committee.

#### **Relationship to the Characteristic Spirit of the School**

St. Columbas G.N.S. with Facility for Deaf Children endeavours to enable every pupil to actively participate in all school activities. Regular attendance helps to create a stable learning environment for all pupils, and the school hopes to promote co-operation among

pupils, parents/guardians and staff in maintaining a high level of regular attendance through the school year.

### **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.

### **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 to monitor overall school attendance levels in the school. Assistant Principals and Class teachers are responsible for monitoring individual pupil's attendance and for identifying and reporting ongoing concerns for 'at risk' pupils.

Parents/ Guardians are strongly discouraged from taking children out of school for holidays during the school term. All such absences will be noted and teachers are not obliged to assign school work for such pupils whilst on holidays.

**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.
- **IMPORTANT NOTE:** St. Columba's GNS with Facility for Deaf Children uses the **Aladdin Student Management System** as approved by the BOM to manage pupil information and to record pupil daily attendance. **As and from 2015/2016 school year, the school no longer records pupil attendance in the Leabhar Rolla.** All previous Leabhair Rollaí are kept on the school premises (Junior School Storeroom as valuable school records and may be accessed as necessary by school personnel.

## **PUNCTUALITY – BEING AT SCHOOL ON TIME AND FOR THE FULL SCHOOL DAY**

- School begins at 8:50am and ends at 1.30pm (Early Intervention and 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.
- The school is responsible for maintaining a record of children who arrive late to school, leave school early or are collected late. Teachers may access the attendance record to update the Aladdin system to note a pupil's late arrival to school and will note the time of arrival and the reason for being late if applicable.
- Pupils who are in class for Roll Call (normally 11.10am) are marked as present for the school day.
- Parents/guardians must notify 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 for good reason.
- 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 Deputy Principal/ Principal.
- In cases of concern about school attendance the Education Welfare Officer/TUSLA will be contacted.

## **SCHOOL ATTENDANCE – MEANS BEING IN SCHOOL EVERY DAY (UNLESS FOR A GOOD REASON)**

### **Recording and Reporting of Attendance and Non-Attendance**

Pupils are expected to be at school on time each day. The attendance of each pupil is recorded electronically on the Aladdin School Management System on a daily basis in accordance with Circular 33/2015. Attendance data for each class is recorded automatically, by the same system replacing the Leabhar Tinrimh (Attendance Book). A monthly hard copy is printed, signed by the Principal in the Office.

The school 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 Department 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 additional support or Irish exemption. School Attendance Data may be recorded on POD also.

Parents/guardians are informed in writing in the end of year (June) report of the total number of absences during the school year. The school is obliged to inform the Education Welfare Officer (EWO) in writing; where a child has missed 20 consecutive days the school is required to remove the child from the school register.

The following strategies are in place in St. Columba's GNS with Facility for Deaf Children to help foster an appreciation of learning and good attendance:

- The **school calendar** is made available to parents in advance of the beginning of each school year to ensure parents are aware of the school terms and closures.
- **Attendance is called in all classes before 11.10am each morning.** Pupils who come to school after Roll Call are marked **Absent** - however the teacher can record that the pupil arrived late and note the time and the reason for the late as necessary. The absence will be recorded as a LATE.
- **Parents must provide Class Teacher with an explanation of their child's absence, ideally on Aladdin Connect.** (Illnesses, family event, holidays or other). Late arrivals and early departures are recorded by the class teacher. A parent who wishes to sign out a child must do so at the school office.
- The Principal, Deputy & Assistant Principals 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 contact parents/guardians of target pupils who are presenting with persistent school absences on a daily basis to check if the absence is warranted.

**Identification of students who are at risk of developing school attendance problems** - categorised as follows:

- a. Irregular Absences: 5 days absent in a 20-day period without a valid reason.
- b. Seriously Irregular Absences: 10 days absent in a 20-day period without a valid reason.
- c. Chronic Absences: 15+ days absent in a 20-day period without a valid reason.

**For Irregular and Seriously Irregular Absences** the Class Teacher will make contact with parents to discuss the attendance matter and to ensure that improvement strategies are put in place by parents.

**For Chronic Absentees** the Class Teacher will inform the Principal and Deputy Principal. In such cases parents will be required to meet with the Deputy Principal /or Principal to discuss the matter.

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 Principal/Deputy Principal is obliged to refer cases of ongoing and chronic absences and poor punctuality to the Educational Welfare Officer/TUSLA. In such cases the Education Welfare Officer (following all reasonable efforts by TUSLA to consult with the child's parents and with the Principal of the school) 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.***

### **Required Notification for Pupils Transferring between Primary Schools & to Secondary Schools.**

- **Pupils Transferring TO St. Columba's GNS with Facility for Deaf Children from another School** Under Section 20 of the Education (Welfare) Act (2000), the Principal of St. Columba's GNS with Facility for Deaf Children 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 FROM ST. Columba's GNS with Facility for Deaf Children to Another School**, the Principal of the receiving school is required to notify St. Columba's GNS with Facility for Deaf Children that an incoming child is now registered 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 the parents/guardians.
- **Pupils Transferring FROM St. Columba's GNS with Facility for Deaf Children to Secondary School**  
Upon receipt of written verification of enrolment and a written request for school reports for named pupils our school 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 St. Columba's GNS with Facility for Deaf Children.
- 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 Class Teachers and by the Deputy Principal and the Principal with emphasis on early intervention to address identified concerns.
- Good practice and procedures in relation to electronic recording of daily pupil attendance (Aladdin System).
- Ongoing liaison with the Educational Welfare Officer /TUSLA to address cases of concern at an early stage.

### **Roles and Responsibilities**

It is the responsibility of the Principal and staff to implement this policy under the guidance of the school's Board of Management.

### **Implementation**

This policy will be implemented immediately following ratification by the Board of Management and communication to the Parents' Association.

### **Ratification and Review**

This policy was reviewed by the Board of Management in January 2025