

# St John the Baptist Junior Boys' National School

Roll No: 19006Q

## School Attendance Strategy

### Definitions

Department: The word "Department" means the Department of Education and Skills.

Board: The word "Board" refers to the Board of Management of St. John the Baptist Junior Boys' School, Seafield Road West, Clontarf, Dublin 3.

Parents: Parents as defined in this document are as defined in the Education Act 1998.

School: The word "School" as used in this Policy refers to St. John the Baptist Junior Boys' National School, Seafield Road West, Clontarf, Dublin 3, Roll No. 19006Q.

Tusla: Tusla is the official title of The Child and Family Agency.

E.W.O.: The EWO is the Tusla Education Welfare Officer.

### Rationale:

This statement was prepared in consultation with the staff, Parents, Board and E.W.O. in order to highlight the strategies and measures in place in the School to foster an appreciation of learning among pupils and encourage regular attendance at school.

### Vision

Our School recognises the importance and value of good school attendance. We are committed to providing every pupil with an educational experience that promotes positive engagement, learning and self-development. The School nurtures potential in a caring environment where the welfare of children is paramount. Part of that is recognition that positive interactions, positive relationships, high teacher expectations and good school organisation are all important factors that impact on school attendance.

Teachers strive to create a supportive, positive and welcoming environment where children want to come to school and enjoy each day they are here.

Our Mission Statement states

'We believe that the School should be a place where children can learn; where the atmosphere is conducive to learning; where teachers are committed, caring, encouraging and

fair; where discipline is good and self-discipline is fostered; where unsocial behaviour is unacceptable and where boys are shown that aggressive behaviour is not part of growing up to be a man'. Continuing high attendance rates will be one strong indicator that as a school we are fulfilling the aspirations of the Mission Statement.

### **School context**

St. John the Baptist Junior Boys' School is a junior boys' school serving the three parishes of Clontarf. The School has classes from junior infants up to 2<sup>nd</sup> classes. As a staff, we value the very positive relationship we enjoy with Parents. At dismissal time, teachers are available to Parents to discuss any queries or concerns they may have. The principal is in the yard each morning and is similarly available should any Parent have a concern. As a staff, we feel that the Parents of the children we teach value the school and the work of our teachers. Our Parents show their support of the work of the School and its teachers in many ways- volunteering to help in yard supervision, participating in fundraising activities and making voluntary contributions to enable to school to provide an enhanced curriculum comprising for example visits by artists and visiting theatre companies.

### **Roll Call procedures**

In accordance with Department guidelines, each class teacher is obliged to call the roll by 9:30 each school day. Pupils are marked present or absent by that time. If a pupil arrives to school after 9:30, the absent record for the day is changed to a present and the minutes late recorded on the data management system.

### **Statistics**

The School uses a computerised data management system and hereunder are the attendance statistics for the past three years

- 2014-2015: 96.5%
- 2015-2016: 95.8%
- 2016-2017: 96.4%
- 2017-2018: 97 % (September to December 2017)

We feel that these figures show that our attendance rates are very strong. Attendance is monitored initially by class teachers.

### **Strategies to encourage good school attendance**

- Our policy, in line with Tusla guidelines, is to ask for written explanation for absences and planned periods when a child will not be in school. Parents are informed of this in the School Guidelines prior to commencing in the school.
- There is a welcoming atmosphere in the School.

- Where pupils are in receipt of specialist therapies- Occupational Therapy, Speech and Language Therapy and other services- we encourage Parents to seek an appointment outside of school time.
- Where the only available such appointments are during the school day, we encourage parents to collect the pupils from school and return them afterwards to minimize the loss of teaching time.
- Support for pupils with special educational needs is in accordance with Department guidelines.
- The School teaches the Fun Friends Programme across 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> classes. This is a resilience-building programme designed to help children deal with everyday worries and concerns.
- The principal is in the yard each morning to welcome pupils to School. Where a pupil is, for any reason unwilling to come in to school, principal and staff will encourage the boy to go to his class and will make every effort to check on him later.
- Where a Parent voices a concern about a child being unhappy at school or if there is stress about coming to school, teachers meet with the parent at the earliest opportunity.
- We discourage Parents from taking children out of school during school time for holidays or any other reason. In cases where Parents do, we require a written note.
- The School's reporting obligations in terms of pupil absence are mentioned in each school newsletter.
- The School has an Anti-Bullying Policy. Where incidents of bullying take place or are reported, these are investigated and dealt with in accordance with the policy.

### **Tusla requirements in respect of school attendance**

The school has been assigned an EWO who monitors our attendance. Every school is obliged to inform Tusla when a child is absent for 20 days for any reason. This is done 4 times a year. The school is also obliged to indicate a reason for each day of absence.

#### **The list of reasons is:**

A: Illness; B: Urgent Family Reasons; C: Expelled; D: Suspended;

E: Other (Religious observance, Death of student, Emigration, Holidays);

F: Unexplained; G: Transfer to another school.

As previously mentioned, we require a note when a pupil is absent for any reason. Such notes are then filed and used to report the reason for the absence. If a note is not received we have to describe the absence as unexplained.

### **When attendance gives cause for concern**

When a teacher is concerned about a pupil's attendance, s/he may bring it to the attention of the Principal.

Principal will inform Tusla in accordance with reporting requirements-

- When a pupil has missed 20 days or more
- When a pupil has been suspended from school more than once under the Code of Behaviour.

**Success criteria**

- A continued high rate of school attendance is the most reliable barometer that the school is succeeding in its attendance strategy.

**Ratification and review**

This policy was finalised and approved by staff at their meeting of December 13<sup>th</sup> 2017. It was presented to Board for approval at its meeting of January 16<sup>th</sup> 2018.

A copy of the signed strategy was forwarded to the school's EWO immediately after Board ratification.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date 16-1-2018