Statement of Strategy for School Attendance

Barntown NS

Roll Number: 17913Q

1. Rationale

At SN Mhuire, Barntown, we believe that regular and punctual school attendance is essential for every child's academic progress, social development, emotional wellbeing, and sense of belonging within the school community. Consistent attendance enables pupils to fully access the curriculum, build positive relationships, and develop confidence, resilience, and independence.

Our vision is to nurture a happy, caring, and inclusive school environment where every child feels safe, valued, supported, and motivated to attend school every day. We recognise that strong attendance habits established in primary school lay the foundation for lifelong learning and positive engagement with education.

We value respect, inclusion, cooperation, and commitment to learning, and we acknowledge that promoting good attendance is a shared responsibility between the school, parents/guardians, pupils, and relevant support services. Through open communication, early intervention, and positive relationships, we aim to remove barriers to attendance wherever possible.

National attendance data indicates that levels of chronic absenteeism remain significantly higher than pre-pandemic levels, with illness, anxiety, and emotional wellbeing now among the main drivers of absence in primary schools. The school recognises that early identification, positive relationships, and timely support are essential in preventing the escalation of attendance difficulties. This strategy reflects national guidance from Tusla Education Support Service and the Department of Education and is informed by current research and attendance trends.

This Statement of Strategy is developed in accordance with Section 22 of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 and reflects our commitment to supporting every child to achieve their full potential.

2. The School's High Expectations Around Attendance

All pupils are expected to attend school regularly and punctually unless they are unwell or have another valid reason for absence. The school day begins at 9:00am, and

punctuality is essential in ensuring a calm and productive start to learning. Teachers' observations are that children who arrive late, even by a few minutes, can take longer to settle than children who arrived into the yard and walked from the yard with their classmates.

Parents/guardians are requested to notify the school of all absences through Aladdin Connect, providing a clear explanation for the absence. Where possible, medical and other appointments should be arranged outside school hours to minimise disruption to learning.

Parents are discouraged from taking pupils out of school during term time for holidays, as this negatively impacts continuity of learning, social development, and classroom progress.

The school endeavours to provide a positive, engaging, and supportive learning environment where pupils feel motivated to attend and participate fully in school life.

Emphasis is placed on both good attendance and good punctuality with the pupils and through the school newsletter and Aladdin messages throughout the school year.

3. How Attendance Will Be Monitored

Attendance and punctuality are recorded daily on Aladdin by class teachers.

Records of explained and unexplained absences and late arrivals are monitored regularly by the Principal and Deputy Principal.

Patterns or emerging concerns regarding attendance or punctuality are identified early and addressed in a supportive manner.

Attendance data is analysed by class level and pupil groups, where appropriate, to identify trends, patterns, and emerging concerns. This information is used to inform whole-school planning, targeted interventions, and School Self-Evaluation priorities.

Parents receive written notification when a child has accumulated 15 days of absence and again when a child reaches 20 days of absence.

In accordance with the Education (Welfare) Act 2000, the school reports attendance data to Tusla Education Support Service (TESS) when a pupil reaches 20 days of absence, regardless of the reason.

Attendance data and trends are reviewed monthly by school management, discussed at staff meetings where appropriate, and reported annually to the Board of Management.

Attendance patterns are reviewed in relation to wellbeing, learning needs, and behavioural indicators to ensure a holistic response to attendance difficulties.

4. Summary of the Main Elements of the School's Approach

(a) Target Setting

- Maintain an average annual attendance rate above 95%.
- Reduce unexplained absences and persistent lateness year on year.
- Identify pupils at risk of poor attendance by the end of October.
- Review attendance data annually.
- Monitor the percentage of pupils in each attendance band (satisfactory attendance, emerging concern, chronic absenteeism).
- Reduce the number of pupils experiencing repeated or long-term absence.
- Use attendance data to inform school improvement planning and wellbeing supports.

(b) Whole-School Approach

- Attendance is promoted consistently across all classes and school activities.
- Attendance expectations are communicated to parents through newsletters, meetings, the school website, and school policies.
- Attendance data is discussed at staff meetings and Board of Management meetings.
- Positive behaviour, wellbeing, and engagement are prioritised to promote regular attendance.
- Support structures are in place for pupils with additional learning or emotional needs, in collaboration with the SEN team and external professionals, where appropriate.

(c) Promoting Good Attendance

- Recognition at assemblies and in the classroom
- Positive communication with parents through Aladdin Connect and phone calls
- High-quality, engaging teaching and learning that encourage pupil engagement
- Emphasis on the promotion of wellbeing, positive relationships and belonging through SPHE activities in the classroom and at whole-school level

(d) Responding to Poor Attendance

Where attendance concerns are linked to anxiety, school avoidance, or emotional wellbeing, the school will prioritise supportive and restorative approaches. These may include gradual reintegration, check-in systems, classroom supports, and collaboration with NEPS or other relevant services, where appropriate.

- Stage 1: Class teacher speaks with parents at PT meetings regarding attendance
- Stage 2: Principal or Deputy Principal meets parents to discuss unexplained absences and agree on actions to improve attendance or punctuality
- Stage 3: Written notice through Aladdin after 15 days, formal letter after 20 days, referral to EWO if necessary
- Stage 4: Individual attendance plan agreed and reviewed with parents and relevant agencies when appropriate

(e) Multi-Tiered Approach to Supporting Attendance (MD-MTSS)

The school uses a Multi-Dimensional Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MD-MTSS) framework to promote and support attendance. This approach ensures that pupils receive support at the appropriate level and that concerns are addressed early.

Tier 1 (Universal Supports):

Whole-school strategies that promote positive attendance for all pupils, including positive school climate, engaging teaching and learning, wellbeing programmes, clear attendance expectations, and regular communication with parents.

Tier 2 (Targeted Supports):

Early identification of pupils with emerging attendance difficulties, targeted monitoring, meetings with parents, small-group or classroom-based supports, and short-term intervention plans where needed.

Tier 3 (Intensive Supports):

Individual attendance plans, involvement of school leadership, collaboration with external agencies, and referral to Tusla Education Welfare Service where appropriate.

This structured approach supports early intervention and ensures consistency, proportionality, and fairness in responses to attendance concerns.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

Students:
Attend school daily and on time.

Try their best and engage positively in school life.
Take pride in belonging to the school community.

Parents/Guardians:
Ensure regular and punctual attendance.
Notify the school of absences promptly and accurately.
Avoid term-time holidays where possible.
Support a positive attitude toward school and learning.

Class Teachers:
Record attendance daily on Aladdin by 10:30am at the latest each day.
Record late arrival and early leaving on Aladdin.
Monitor patterns of absence or lateness.
Communicate concerns to school management and parents.

Attendance Coordinator (Deputy Principal):
Oversee attendance systems and monitoring.
Coordinate initiatives and interventions.
Report attendance trends to the Principal at the end of each term.

Principal:
Promote the importance of attendance across the school community.
Liaise with Tusla Education Support Service when required.
Ensure compliance with attendance legislation and reporting.

Board of Management:
Monitor attendance trends and policy implementation.
Support whole-school attendance initiatives.

6. Partnership Arrangements

The school works collaboratively with parents, pupils, Tusla Education Support Service, NEPS, Family Support Services, and other relevant agencies to support attendance and wellbeing. Particular attention is given to pupils who may be vulnerable due to additional learning needs, family circumstances, emotional wellbeing, or transition points, and supports are planned proactively to reduce barriers to attendance.

7. Monitoring and Review

Attendance data reviewed monthly by Principal and Deputy Principal. Termly updates to the Board of Management. Annual target review as part of SSE.

Progress on attendance targets and the effectiveness of interventions will be reviewed as part of the School Self-Evaluation process, and actions will be adjusted where necessary to respond to emerging needs and trends.

This Strategy will be reviewed in September 2027.