



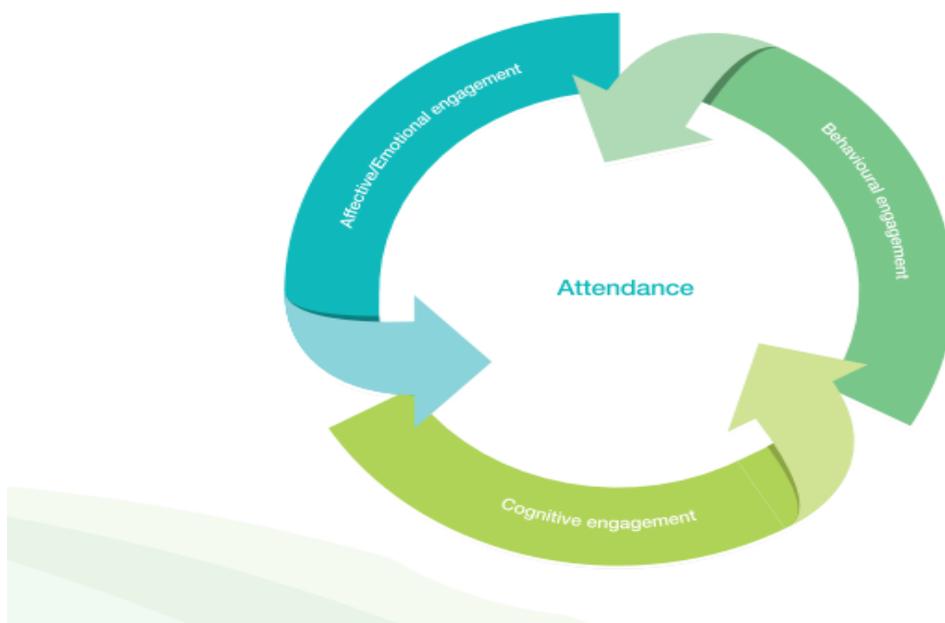
Corpus Christi Primary School

Policy: Attendance

Introduction

We, the staff of Corpus Christi Primary School, endeavour and are committed to promoting a welcoming atmosphere to foster positive teacher-student relationships and a supportive teaching and learning environment. This is our whole-school ethos and culture and is at the core of success in every aspect of school life and work, including attendance. School culture, ethos, curriculum, student-teacher relationships and the quality of teaching and learning – all these factors are central to the task of ensuring that students engage, participate and attend, and these critical influences are within the control of the school. However, research will often tell us that it is not just one deciding factor that affects poor attendance but often an array of factors such as; school, class, home, their peers, their community etc. It is with this heightened awareness that our school endeavours to adopt a holistic approach to school attendance. To get the most out of education and reach their potential, children need to be in school every day. School attendance has a major influence on educational outcomes. Students who attend school regularly are more likely to achieve better results and complete their schooling. Children who are in a position to access and fully engage in their education are provided with vital life skills, which can combat future unemployment and social disadvantage. Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS), the action plan for educational inclusion, was launched by the Government in May 2005. Attendance is one of four key pillars of this plan. Since the launch of the DEIS plan in 2005, Corpus Christi Primary School has been fully committed to improving attendance. We believe regular attendance at school is a vital element needed to improve learning outcomes and address the educational needs of the children in our school.

Figure 1: The three spheres of engagement influencing school attendance



Rationale

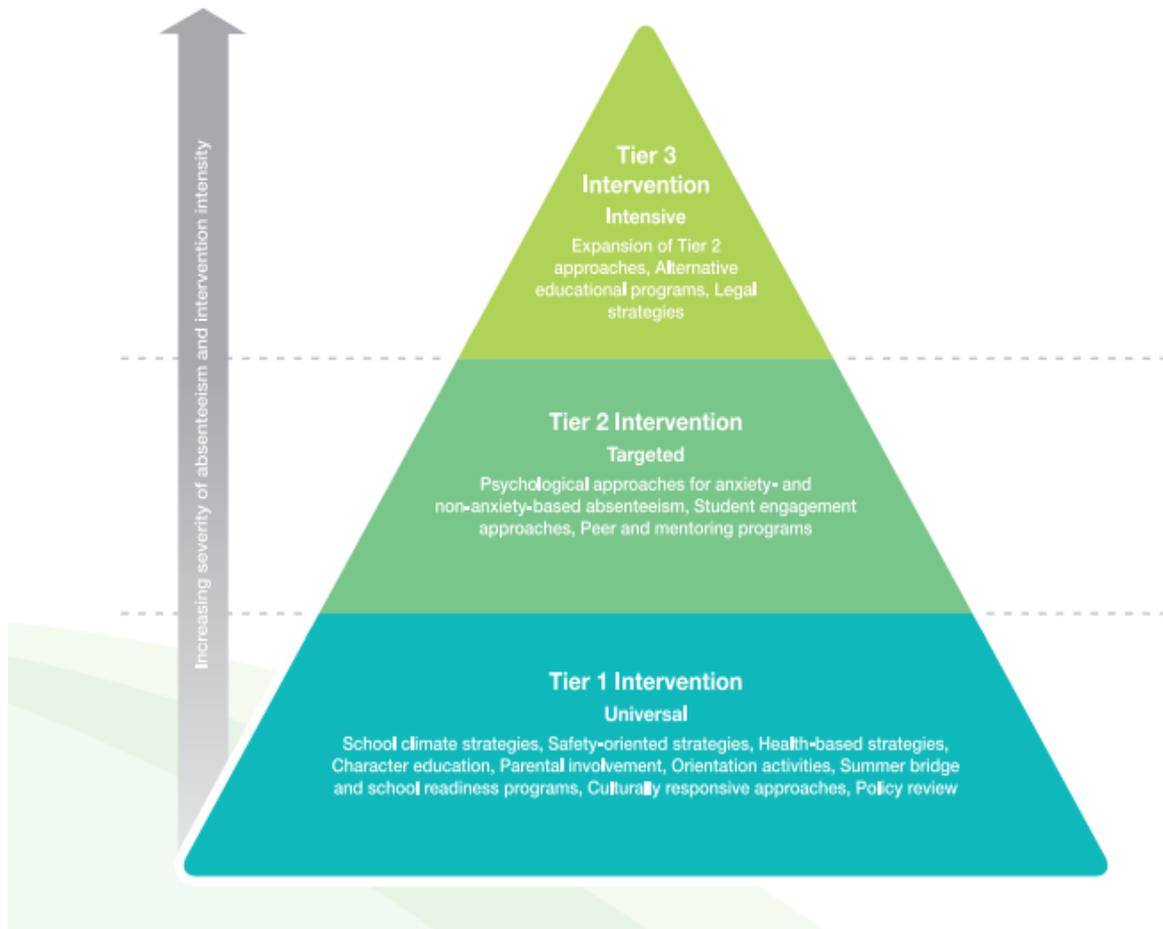
The main factors contributing to the formulation of a revised policy can be summarised as follows:

- To outline the arrangements for reporting absenteeism of pupils in the context of COVID-19 related absences for schools.
- To factor in our school's Covid-19 Response Plan for Re-opening in September 2021 under DES guidelines and to communicate such to the school community.
- To promote and encourage regular attendance as an essential factor in our pupils' learning.
- Legislative requirements such as the Education Welfare Act 2000 and the Education Act, 1998(amendments -(2018).
- The role of TUSLA and their Guidelines for Schools on Developing the Statement of Strategy for School Attendance 2015.
- Changing attitudes to education and research-led evidence on school attendance.
- It is the responsibility of the Principal and staff to implement this policy under the guidance of the school's Board of Management.

At Corpus Christi School we aim

- To work closely with parents to ensure our pupils attend regularly and in time, thus enabling the children to fully avail of the holistic educational opportunities available to them.
- To foster a welcoming, caring environment where the well- being and education of the child is paramount.
- To promote positive attitudes to attendance in the school environment posters, charts, rewards, announcements, prizes, targeted fun events.
- To encourage pupils to attend school every day and punctually.
- To share the promotion of school attendance amongst all in the school community.
- To inform the school community of its role and responsibility as outlined in the Education Act 1998
- To comply with requirements as outlined in the Education Welfare Act 2000.
- Utilise Early intervention detecting to identify pupils who may be at risk of developing school attendance problems.
- To identify ways in which this policy or practice could be used to promote good attendance or address poor attendance
- To ensure that the school has procedures in place to promote attendance and participation.
- To work closely with other schools, outside agencies to promote good attendance outcomes.
- To provide a three-tier targeted support to school attendance drawing on the "Response to Intervention Model/Framework"
- To develop, subject to available resources links between the school and the families of children who may be at risk of developing attendance problems.
- To foster an appreciation of learning and raise awareness of the importance of school attendance.
- To foster positive teacher-student relationships and a supportive teaching and learning environment as this underpins the ethos and culture of the school

- To raise awareness of the importance of regular school attendance



Role of the school

- The importance of school attendance is consistently promoted throughout the school and pupils with a pattern of poor attendance are identified early.
- To communicate to parents the school's policy in line with the requirements of the Education Act on procedures regarding absences and notifications of absences (i.e on the first day of absence or on the day of return and who to notify)
- To inform parents of the school opening times and Covid procedures for dropping off children at designated points (**see Covid Response Plan for Re-opening September 2021 (updated in line with Covid guidelines)**)
- The school will inform the parent of relevant procedures on when to keep their child at home (see Corpus Christi P.S. Covid Response Plan for Re-opening September 2021)
- The school encourages the parent to submit the reason for his/her child's absence with the option of stating if it's Covid related under other.
- Creating a safe, supportive, positive and welcoming environment based on mutual trust and respect, by displaying kindness, consideration, compassion and understanding, and by being vigilant in regard to issues that may affect attendance such as bullying etc.

- Pupils are registered accurately and efficiently.
- Pupil attendance and class attendance is recorded daily on the school database Aladdin Student Management System.
- If a child is not present by 10am and the school has not received notification from the parent/guardian the child is marked absent. A text is sent to the parent informing them of the absence and the need to bring in a note on return to school, or contact the school explaining the absence.
- Children are encouraged to stay in school for the full day. Children are only permitted to leave the school if they are collected by parent/guardian, or a known adult that has permission to collect the child, who has been authorised by the parents/guardian and the Principal. Older children are permitted to leave the school if there is a written request from the parent/guardian. Permission for this must also be sought from the Principal. If a parent/guardian is taking a child from school during school hours he/she must call to the office, get permission from the Principal and sign the child out. If this becomes a regular occurrence or if there is not a valid reason for the child's removal the Principal will talk to the Parent/guardian and will encourage them to leave the child in school the full school day.
- Parents/guardians are contacted when reasons for continuous absences have not been communicated and are unknown.
- Pupil attendance, lateness and early leaving are monitored.
- Attendance for each class is monitored on a monthly basis.
- Attendance is monitored closely and the Principal gets in touch with parents/guardians if there are concerns.
- Parents/guardians of children who have missed more than ten days are contacted requesting the child's attendance improves and informing them that the Education Welfare Officer will be notified if the child misses twenty days or more.
- The Education Welfare Officer (EWO) is informed of all children whose attendance is affecting their education. Once the child's attendance is becoming a concern (10+) the Principal sets up a meeting between the EWO and the parent/guardians.

Role of the Parent/Guardian

- Parents/guardians have an obligation to send their children to a recognised school and engage in full time education between the ages of 6 and 16.
- Parents/guardians are encouraged to get to know the Principal and the teachers and to communicate any concerns that they may have regarding their child's education and welfare.
- Parents/guardians are expected to pass on the notion of the importance of getting a good education and the importance of attending school every day.
- Parents/guardians are expected to have their children in school every day, for the full day and on time.
- Show an interest in their child's school day and their child's homework.
- Encourage their children to participate in school activities.
- Instill in their children a positive self-concept and a positive sense of self worth.
- Parents/guardians are expected to let the school know if their child is absent and why.

- If an absence is known beforehand (eg. dental or eye appointment) the school should be notified of the intended absence. If possible children should be in school before and after appointments. Where possible appointments for children should be made outside of school times.
- Parents/guardians are encouraged not to take holidays during school time.
- Work with the school and the Education Welfare Officer (where applicable) to resolve any attendance issues.
- Parents must follow the schools Covid Response Plan on when to keep their child at home (see Covid response plan September 2021 (updated in line with covid guidelines)

Role of the Principal

- To provide leadership for the creation of a school ethos and climate that is supportive of high levels of engagement and attendance.
- Promote the importance of good school attendance among pupils, parents and staff.
- Promote the development of a positive self-concept and self worth in the children.
- Ensure that the school register (Aladdin school management system) of pupils is maintained in accordance with regulations.
- Ensure support is in place for pupils, who have special educational needs, in accordance with Department guidelines.
- Ensure internal communication procedures are in place to inform teachers of the pupils with special needs.
- Ensure arrangements are in place for monitoring, evaluating and promoting attendance.
- Promote the incentive initiatives for attendance.
- Link with other relevant bodies on school attendance issues.
- Inform the Education Welfare Officer:
 - If a pupil is not attending regularly.
 - When a pupil has been absent for 20 or more days during the course of the school year.
 - If a pupil has been suspended for a period of six or more days.
 - When a pupil's name has removed from the school register.
- Inform parents of the decision to contact the Education Welfare Officer of concerns regarding a pupil.
- In the instance of a child transferring from another school, inform the previous school once the child is on roll in Corpus Christi Primary School.
- Promote the sense of personal responsibility for their own learning among pupils and their responsibility to be in school every day.

Role of the Postholder:

- Work in collaboration with school management, the HSCL Co-Ordinator and the SCP coordinator to set SMART targets to promote and improve attendance in Corpus Christi PS
- Coordinate attendance team meetings every month.
- Promote and ensure attendance initiatives are taking place. Promote and introduce new initiatives.

- To target pupils who make one full weeks' attendance, the postholder will organise the "School is cool" raffle each month, purchase prizes and ensure winners receive their prizes. At the end of each month the Post holder will go to each individual classroom to announce the winner and highlight the importance of coming to school each day.
- To reward pupils with good attendance, the post holder will complete and distribute 100% attendance certs to pupils who make a full months attendance. At the end of each month the Post holder will go to each individual classroom to present certs to those pupils and a class photo is taken and uploaded onto the school facebook.
- To acknowledge and encourage parent involvement, the post holder will ensure that the parents of pupils who make a full months attendance receive their parent certs to promote good attitudes to attendance.
- To promote attendance throughout the school the post holder will organize the competition "To perfect attendance and beyond"
- Distribute and explain the attendance pack to class teachers.
- Update the schools attendance policy annually.
- The postholder will submit school absence returns to Tusla via its portal for the two reporting periods. These will include any child who has missed 20 days or more, any child who has been suspended or any child who has been expelled and the Annual School Attendance for the current school year at the end of June.
- Work with the HSCL coordinator, the SCP coordinator and the principal to collect necessary data.
- Correlate data annually.
- Check have targets been met and set targets as part of the DEIS plan

Role of the Class Teacher

- Encourage the pupils to attend regularly and punctually.
- Promote the development of a positive self-concept and self worth in the children.
- Promote the attendance incentives for the pupils.
- 'School is cool' raffle ticket to children who attend for a full week.
- Parent congratulations certs to be given to the parents/guardians of children who attend school without missing a month.
- 'Homework Off' vouchers to be given to children who have attended for the full month without missing a day.
- Maintain attendance on Aladdin, the school management on line system in accordance with procedure.
- Keep a record of explained and unexplained absences on Aladdin.
- Ensure the school curriculum in so far as is practical is interesting, flexible and relevant to the needs of the individual child.
- Support pupils who have additional needs and special educational needs.
- Inform the Principal of concerns regarding the attendance of any pupil.

Role of the HSCL:

- To raise awareness in parents/guardians of their own capacities to enhance their children's education process and to assist them in developing relevant skills

- To enhance the students' uptake from education, their retention in the educational system, their continuation to post-compulsory education and third level education and their life long attitudes to learning.
- To develop a caring, open environment where information and guidance are provided and shared among the whole school community.
- Work with the Educational Welfare Service (NEWB) and the School Completion Programme (SCP) in a unified way, to address issues, which impinge on the attendance, participation and retention of children at risk of educational disadvantage and early school leaving.
- Establish and maintain appropriate structures to facilitate the involvement of parents/guardians in their children's learning in school and in the home in areas such as literacy, numeracy, leisure/curricular courses, personal development, parenting etc.
- Liaise with voluntary and statutory agencies in the community.
- To assist parents in identifying causes of and solutions to attendance issues;
- To identify and support parents to engage with in school and out of school supports to address attendance issues;
- To promote positive engagement between the home and school;
- To contribute to ensuring a whole school approach to improving attendance.

Role of the SCP:

The SCP is one of three strands of Tusla Education Support Service (tess) including the Home School Community Liaison (HSCL) Scheme and the Educational Welfare Service. All three strands share the same national outcomes:

- **Improved Attendance**
- **Improved Participation**
- **Improved Retention**

Our SCP Workers:

- Identify and support students at risk of not reaching their potential in the educational system because of poor attendance, participation and retention via a suite of initiatives such as breakfast clubs, in-class supports, student support programmes, attendance monitoring and tracking programme, and therapeutic interventions using evidenced-based programmes.
- Work in partnership with school management, school staff, HSCL Co-ordinator, and community agencies to provide best possible outcomes for targeted students and their families
- Gather and analyse attendance data and share as appropriate with school staff and management. Furnish monthly attendance meetings with this information

Who is SCP For?

The SCP Programme is a programme to support children and young people who are at risk of early school leaving and students of school going age who are not currently attending school.

SCP projects provide the following interventions to children and young people:

1. Evidence based/evidence informed interventions at universal level to whole class/whole school groups.
2. Brief interventions for 8 weeks or less for students identified as needing an immediate short term SCP led intervention.
3. Targeted interventions to children and young people with significant support needs who have been identified through the SCP Intake Framework. (Only students in this target group need to be processed through the full Intake Framework referral).

Teacher Absences

- When a teacher is going to be absent he/she is expected to notify the principal as early as possible on the first day of the absence. The teacher should where possible indicate the likely duration of the absence.
- If the teacher is going to have a medical cert, it is important to let the Principal know as this has implications for substitute cover.
- Each class teacher is to have the list of where children go when he/she is absent filled in and easy to access in the classroom.
- Each class teacher is expected to have work prepared that children can complete when teacher is absent.
- Teachers applying for leave of absence are asked to consult the relevant Department of Education circulars.

Corpus Christi School promotes good attendance by

- Fostering an environment that encourages children to attend school and to participate fully in the life of the school.
- Encourage the children to engage in school activities, both curricular and extra curricular.
- Promotes the development of a positive self-concept and self worth in the children.
- Ensuring the school curriculum in so far as is practical is flexible, relevant and meets the educational needs of the individual child.
- Supporting pupils who have special educational needs in accordance with Department Guidelines.
- Ensuring internal communication procedures are in place to inform teachers of pupils with additional needs and special needs.
- Utilising the assistance of the Education Welfare Officer.
- The HSCL teacher works closely with parents who may experience difficulty in getting their children to school.
- Pupils with poor attendance will be supported insofar as is practical to improve their attendance.
- Attendance rates will be monitored by the class teacher, post holder and the Principal.
- The class teacher will discuss any concerns he/she may have about particular pupils with the Principal.
- A cert of congratulations is sent to parents of the children who attend school for a month without missing a day.

- 'Homework Off' vouchers are given to children who attend school for a month without missing a day.
- Children are congratulated and receive a cert when they attend school for a full month without missing a day.
- At the end of each week a 'school is cool' raffle ticket is given to each child who has not missed a day in school that week. At the end of the month a 'school is cool' raffle is held and one child from each class wins a prize.
- At the end of each term a class prize is given to the class with the best overall attendance.
- At the end of every term (a time where we have noted attendance tends to drop) extra incentives are put in place to encourage the children to come to school every day.
- Special awards are given to children who do not miss a single day at the end of every term and at the end of the school year.

The Education Welfare Board

The Education Welfare Officers are employed throughout the country to offer advice, support and guidance to parents who need support in ensuring that their child attends school regularly. The main work of an Educational Welfare Officer (EWO) is around the welfare of the child and the family and on ensuring that concerns and problems are dealt with before school attendance becomes a crisis issue.

However, if a parent fails in his or her duty to ensure that their child attends school, then the EWO has the power to take legal action against the parent under the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000.

Taking legal action against a parent or guardian is a very serious matter. Legal action is the very last option and will only be taken in exceptional circumstances, when all other offers of support have failed and the parent has refused to co-operate with the EWO. Legal action will be taken if it is the only way a child's right to education can be safe guarded.

Monitoring

- School gates open each morning at 8:30am from when supervision is provided. Classes begin at 08:55am.
- Daily attendance is taken by class teachers via the Aladdin database system at 9:50 am.
- Principal will monitor attendance patterns and identify pupils presenting with attendance concerns.
- Principal will meet with HSCL teacher each week to discuss and review attendance concerns.
- Cooperation with SCP– Corpus Christi School works with the School Completion Programme. This programme aims to minimise the risks of irregular or non-attendance and to maximise the opportunities provided to all pupils. Activities are provided both in school and after school by SCP personnel and teaching staff to encourage children at risk of poor attendance to come to school. Monthly meetings will be held between a member of the SCP, HSCL and Attendance post-holder monitor the attendance patterns of pupils who present with attendance concerns and as being identified by SCP as attendance concerns. Any such arising concerns will be communicated to the Principal and the SCP Coordinator.

- Where a pupil has presented with Attendance Concerns in the previous year a pro-active approach will be taken by the HSCL Teacher and the SCP Coordinator. This will take the form of a restorative meeting the parents early in September to provide support to parents around getting their child to develop good attendance habits.
- When a parent wishes to remove their child early from school they must
 - Call to the Secretary's Office
 - The Secretary/Principal/Deputy Principal will give permission for child to leave
- The school maintains communication with local pre-schools and second-level schools in order to make the transition for pupils as easy as possible.
- A letter is issued from the Principal to inform parents when their child has missed 15 days. A further letter is issued to inform parents when their child has missed 20 days and that a report has been issued to the EWO.
- The school must inform the Education Welfare Officer in writing, where a child has missed 20 or more days in a school year, where attendance is irregular, where a pupil is removed from the school register and where a child is expelled or suspended for 6 days or more.
- Transfer to another School requires the Principal of the reception school to inform the previous school of enrolment. Transfer must also be completed on the Pupil Online Database (POD).

Evaluation

An Attendance report will be prepared by the Principal using Aladdin Software and will be examined at the end of each term and at the end of each year. A full attendance report will be presented to the Board of Management each year. The Parents' Council will provide feedback on the Attendance Plan at Parent Council Meetings. Reasons for absence are recorded and reported to the TUSLA/NEWB five times during the school year through an online system. An annual report is submitted – not more than six weeks following the end of the school year - detailing the overall level of attendance at the school during that school year. This information will be communicated to the school community through the school's newsletter.

Review

This policy will be reviewed annually and as necessary. On-going review and evaluation will take cognisance of changing information or guidelines from the Department of Education and Skills and TUSLA, legislation and feedback from parent/guardians, students, staff and others. The policy should be revised as necessary in the light of such review and evaluation and within the framework of school planning.

Ratification

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on _____ (Date)

Signed: _____ Date: _____
Chairperson of the Board of Management

Signed: _____ Date: _____
Principal