

HAROLD'S CROSS NATIONAL SCHOOL

ATTENDANCE POLICY

RATIONALE

“The nature of the opportunities and the supports provided for a child’s development during the formative period, and the quality of the educational experiences over this period can have a far reaching effect on the individuals long-term development and prospects” (DES 2000).

Research has shown that there is a strong correlation between socio-economic background and non-attendance at school and early school leaving. In our own school absenteeism and/or late arrival is a serious problem for roughly 20% of our pupils. The long term consequences of this non-attendance and/or late arrival in class can result.

In educational failure becoming more serious as the child progresses up the school. The pattern of non-attendance in primary school being repeated in a similar pattern at secondary level. On a more serious level it may result the child leaving secondary school at an early age (35% of the adult population left school before the age of 15 (CSO 1998). The life chances of these pupils being seriously affected.

On a more personal level arriving late into school or absenteeism results in a range of inconveniences for the child or other children in class.

It causes embarrassment and discomfort for the child as he/she explains the reasons for their late arrival. It causes disruption to the learning and teaching process for the teacher and the other children in the class. It affects the child’s self-esteem, confidence as he/she struggles to catch up on what he/she missed out. The teacher must interrupt her programme in order to bring the child up to speed on what has just been taught or was missed out on due to non-attendance. In the light of the above our school has drawn up the following policy in order to improve the punctuality and attendance rates of our pupils.

The Education Act, 2000 provides for the entitlement of every child to receive an education. The Board of Management and staff of Harold’s Cross N.S., recognizing that the school is the first line of intervention, is committed to ensuring that this occurs. Thus in line with legislation and guidelines laid down in “***Reducing the Barriers to School Attendance,***” 2009, we have drawn up the following policy.

OBJECTIVES

- To formalize procedures which will assist staff, parents and pupils in ensuring that each child receives the education to which they are entitled.
- To reduce the level of non attendance.
- To improve levels of punctuality.
- To develop good habits of attendance among the school community.
- To use the funding provided under the Schools Completion Programme to realize these objectives.

APPROACHES

- In line with best practice, the school having reviewed attendance figures, will draw up a three year plan to improve attendance and punctuality levels. (This was done in 2007 and a further plan drawn up in 2010. See appendices 1 and 2).The plan will set annual attainable targets which take account of the profile of the school. These targets will be reviewed yearly and amended if needs be.
- The school will work closely with the NEWB to implement recommended approaches outlined in “*Reducing the Barriers to School Attendance.*”
- A profile of school attendance will be maintained which will be used to inform planning and will include individual profiles of those children presenting with patterns of poor attendance or punctuality.
- Using available funding from SCP, these children will be targeted for inclusion in specific projects/activities of interest to them in order to entice them into school. (See appendix 3)
- Close links will be maintained by the Principal and HSCL with families where poor attendance and punctuality is an issue.
- Staff will closely monitor the attendance and punctuality patterns of targeted children and report concerns immediately to the principal or HSCL.

SPECIFIC ACTIONS FOR STAFF

- The roll will be called daily at 10.00am. Unless the teacher has been informed by a parent/guardian that the child is attending for assessment or a medical appointment and will be in attendance later in the day, then any child who arrives after that time is deemed to be absent.
- All explanations, medical certificates. etc. will be retained by the class teacher in a file until the end of the year.
- Where patterns of poor attendance/punctuality are beginning to emerge, the teacher will notify the principal/HSCL immediately.
- The Principal will implement guidelines as recommended in “*Reducing the Barriers to School Attendance,*” 2009, (See Appendix 4)
- The principal will have responsibility for overseeing late arrivals and recording of same in the “*Late Arrivals Book*” which parents and older pupils have to sign. The principal and HSCL will review names on a weekly basis and if necessary approach parents with a view to resolving difficulties.
- As soon as 20 days is reached, the National Education Welfare Board will be informed by the Principal.

WORKING WITH PARENTS

Strong open links which already exist between the school and parents will be maintained and strengthened.

- (i) In September of each year parents will be reminded of the fact that their child has a legal right to education.
- (ii) Parents will be asked not to remove children from school for holidays during term time.
- (iii) Parents will be asked to provide written explanation as to why their child is absent.
- (iv) Where a pattern of lateness or absenteeism has been noted or is beginning to

emerge parents will be asked to come to the school to discuss the reasons behind these incidences with the Principal or HSCL.

- (v) If there are serious issues/reasons for the absenteeism parents will be encouraged to seek help from relevant agencies (eg Barnardos, HSE, NEWB) or will be put in touch with them by the Principal.
- (vi) Where absenteeism or lateness continues and there is no improvement, the NEWB will be asked to become involved. If there is a worry that a child is missing out on his/her education, the Educational Welfare Officer may visit with the parents to discuss the matter. He/she will work with the parent and the school to see what needs to be done to ensure the child gets every chance to enjoy school.

As laid down by the Education Welfare Act after 20 absences the NEWB will be informed.

Where there are genuine, legitimate and unavoidable reasons eg sickness, such cases will not warrant the concern of the HSE (even if an EWO makes contact with the families).

POSITIVE ACTION

Given the socio-economic profile of the families who attend the school and with this in mind - the staff of Harold's Cross NS will seek at every opportunity to ensure that the educational experiences to which each child will be exposed will be a pleasant, enjoyable, exciting and challenging.

1. Our Code of Behaviour Policy will be implemented in a fair and open manner.
 2. Our Anti-Bullying Policy and strategies will be made known to the school community and any such bullying behaviour will be dealt with in a decisive and fair manner.
 3. Every effort will be made to ensure that service integration will be established across the board - ie that strong links will be formed with our Education Welfare Officer, Community Garda, HSE representative and other agencies which seek to meet the needs of our children.
- The Staff and Principal in the first week back will speak to the children in class and at assembly of the importance of attending school and coming in on time.
 - No criticism will be made of the child who arrives late - (the teacher will write to the parent and ask her/him to have the child in school on time).

- A Prize and Certificate will be given each month to the class with the best attendance.
- At the end of every two months, attendance figures will be reviewed and those with full attendance or just one day's absence will either be brought to the cinema, an arts event or receive an award. Allowances will be taken for those who generally have excellent attendance but who might miss one to two days due to serious illness.
- At the end of each term a plaque/prize will be given to those who did not miss a single day.
- At the final assembly of the year, a roll call of all those pupils who had full attendance will occur, certificates and a cup will be presented to them..

IMPLEMENTATION

This Policy will be implemented from October 2010.

RATIFICATION

This Policy was ratified by the Board of Management at a BOM 28th September, 2010.

SUCCESS CRITERIA

Improved levels of attendance and punctuality.

REVIEW

This Policy will be reviewed at the end of 2012.