St. Paul's Primary School,

Abbeylands,

Navan,

Co. Meath.

Attendance Strategy

February 2025

1. Vision and Values

Here at St. Paul's Primary School, we are committed to providing a supportive learning environment where children feel welcome and which will promote children's learning and encourage regular school attendance. We strive to foster a culture of high expectations for each student's learning and to provide quality learning experiences that are engaging, enriching, and enjoyable through a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum. We believe that regular school attendance and good punctuality are essential in order for each child to reach their full potential.

2. Rationale

Our Attendance Strategy was amended and drafted for the following reasons:

- The Board of Management of St. Paul's Primary School wishes to promote and encourage regular attendance as an essential factor in our pupils' learning;
- The Board of Management wishes to comply with legislation such as:

(a) The Education Act, 1998;
(b) The Education (Welfare Act), 2000

- The Education (Welfare) Act 2000 provides a framework under which attendance at school can be dealt with by law. As a result of the Act, the Tusla Educational Support Services (TESS) was established, with Education Welfare Officers (EWOs) appointed;
- Under the regulations / provisions of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000, the school is obliged to: (a) Keep a record of students' attendance (on our Aladdin Schools Portal); (b) Submit to TESS biannually the names of students absent for 20 days or more;
- Under the Education (Welfare) Act 2000, parent(s) / guardian(s) are required to: (a) Send their children to school each day; (b) Notify the school of the reason for a child's absence. The school keeps a record of all absences, using the codes as set down by TESS (see section 4 below)
- Following consultation during the DE / TESS National School Attendance Campaign 2023 / 24

3. Aims

- Provide a warm, welcoming, and supportive learning environment for our pupils, one in which they are valued and respected and in which provision is made for the learning needs that pupils may have.
- Encourage pupils to attend school regularly and punctually, encouraging full attendance where possible and ensure that the school has procedures in place to promote these initiatives.
- Raise awareness and share the promotion of school attendance amongst all in the school community.
- Highlight the vital role that parents / guardians play in ensuring regular school attendance.
- Ensure all teachers, parents / guardians and students are aware of their responsibilities and the responsibilities of Túsla with regard to school and specifically school attendance
- Identify pupils who may be at risk of developing school attendance problems.
- Develop links and relationships between the school and the families of those children who may be at risk of developing attendance problems.
- Identify (and remove insofar as is practicable) reasons for obstacles to school attendance.

4. General Information on Attendance

We have 32 mainstream classes and 2 AS special classes called Coiscéim. Our school attendance is recorded for all pupils on a daily basis by class teachers using our electronic school admin system, Aladdin. Daily, weekly, monthly and annual attendance / absence details are available for each child enrolled in the school.

Parents must provide a written explanation for any child who is absent (ideally via Aladdin Connect or alternatively via email or written note in the school journal). The school keeps a record and logs all absences on our Aladdin system using the following codes:

1. *Illness;*
2. *Urgent Family Reasons;*
3. *Expelled;*
4. *Suspended;*
5. *Other;*
6. *Transfer to another school;*
7. *Holiday.*

The importance of regular and consistent roll call by class teachers is emphasised at staff meetings and also to any teachers providing substitute cover in any class on a daily or weekly basis..

Attendance is monitored on a regular basis by the Principal and Deputy Principal. If either become aware of a child being absent for a prolonged period of time without explanation, they will speak with the class teacher and then contact the parents to discuss the matter if warranted.

Our admin office publishes the school calendar well before the end of each school year for the following school year. We communicate with parents the desire for them to use this to plan holidays and discourage them from taking children out of school for holidays or other unnecessary reasons during school time.

Teachers will not be required to supply schoolwork and / or homework to pupils who are absent on holidays during term time.

Parents will receive an automatic reminder message from our Aladdin system when their child has been recorded absent for 10, 15, 19 and 20 days. Absences of 20 days or more are submitted to TUSLA at the end of each quarter. These procedures apply to all students, regardless of reason for absence.

The school will support all parents in helping their child improve attendance wherever necessary (E.g. through our ‘Breakfast Club’ and ‘Parents’ Hub’ initiatives). However, if the school feels that there are ongoing concerns regarding a pupil’s absence, despite the school’s best efforts to support the family, the school may deem it necessary to make a referral to TUSLA and contact our Education Welfare Officer. Parents will be made aware of any referral during the support process.

5. Punctuality:

Classes start promptly each morning at **8:45 am**. Supervision is available from **8:25 am**, and children are welcome to enter the school grounds, via front or back gate, from that time onwards. Pupils are required to be assembled in their designated class lines no later than **8:40 am**, at which time the bell rings and classes begin to enter the building. On wet mornings, children may go to their classrooms from

8:25 am, where supervision is available. If a child arrives after **8:45 am**, they must enter the school through the **main front door** (reception).

All pupils and teachers are expected to be on time and allow for traffic delays around town. Being late on a regular basis is disruptive to classes and means valuable teaching and learning time is missed. The class teacher will initially contact the parents / guardians in the event of pupils being consistently late. If there is no improvement in a child's punctuality, the Principal or Deputy Principal will contact the child's parents / guardians to discuss the issue and offer support where necessary..

If there continues to be no improvement, the matter will be escalated to the Board of Management for further action.

Under the Education Welfare Act (2000), the Principal is also required to report children who are persistently late to the Education Welfare Service.

Class teachers call the roll between 10:00 am - 10:10 am each morning. If a child arrives after this time, they may be marked present by the office or Principal / DP.

6.Roles and Responsibilities

(a.)The role of the Principal / Admin Deputy Principal is to:

- Overall responsibility for pupils including monitoring attendance and attendance related issues;
- Ensure that the school register and pupils' records are maintained in accordance with regulations.
- Monitor closely the attendance of pupils for whom non attendance exceeds 10, 15 or finally 20 days and liaise with parents and pupils to help provide supports where necessary (from as early a stage as possible).
- Establish settings on Aladdin to notify parents by message when 10, 15, 19 & 20 days absence has been reached.
- Acknowledge good and improved attendance.
- Make referrals to the Education Welfare Service (EWS) / Tusla where non-attendance is of concern; if a pupil has been suspended for a period of 6 or more days or has been expelled; if a pupil has been absent for 20 or more days during the course of a school year; when a pupil's name has been removed from the school register.
- Notify home by letter and meet again with parents if days absent continue to rise past 20 days

(b). The role of the class teacher is to:

- Record pupil attendance, late arrivals and late collections on a daily basis in accordance with procedure (substitute teachers will be informed of procedure and assisted by the office).

- Ensure that pupils are aware of the importance of good attendance and punctuality and the procedures involved in recording full day absences, late arrivals and early collections.
- Contact the parent(s) in instances where absences are not explained via Aladdin Connect, a written note in the homework journal or via the office.
- Inform the Principal of poor attendance patterns or concerns s/he may have regarding the attendance of any pupil.
- Inform the parent(s) at the Parent Teacher meetings in November of their child's attendance record and punctuality. Discuss any concerns or issues parents may have regarding attendance and punctuality.
- Include the total number of absences on the annual school report in June.

(c) . The role of the school secretaries is to:

- Check that all rolls are completed daily.
- Liaise with class teachers to notify parent(s) / guardians by Aladdin message when their child is absent, if an absence reason has not been recorded by the parent on Aladdin Connect.
- Keep track of attendance patterns in the school and inform the Principal / Deputy Principal of the same.

(d). The role of the parent(s) / guardians is to:

- As the primary and natural educators of their children, parents have a responsibility to ensure that their children attend school unless there is an unavoidable and legitimate reason for their absence.
- Parent(s) / guardians must supply written explanations for all absences to the school via Aladdin Connect on the first day of each absence and on everyday thereafter. Absences should be recorded as early as possible on Aladdin Connect. Pre-planned absences i.e appointments, holidays etc. need to be recorded in advance of the absence occurring N.B Please note that if parents don't provide an absence reason, the absence will be logged as '*Unexplained*' on Aladdin by the class teacher.
- Absence reasons must be logged using the codes 1-7 (as previously outlined in section 4) on Aladdin Connect.
- Parents / Guardians must ensure that their children are assembled in their designated class lines punctually each morning (see above section 5 Punctuality for exact times). Parents / guardians need to ensure that, insofar as possible, their children are in school from 8.45am to 1:30pm daily for infant classes (and special classes where applicable) and 8.45am to 2:30pm for 1st to 6th Classes (and special classes where applicable);
- Appointments and holidays etc. should be scheduled by parents / guardians for outside of school time as much as possible / practicable to avoid disruption to teaching and learning. The school furnishes parents/guardians with a school calendar for the next school year well in advance of the next school year to allow them to plan accordingly in this regard;
- All early collections for appointments etc. must be logged by parents on Aladdin Connect / contact made with the office, in advance of the early collection occurring. Parents / guardians must sign any children leaving early out in the book at the reception window.
- Notify the school in writing / via email if their child / children, particularly children in junior classes, are to be collected by someone not known to the teacher.
- Late arrival to school and being collected early on a repeated basis may be viewed as a breach of this Attendance Strategy.

- Encourage children to participate in school activities and praise and encourage their children's achievements.
- Show an interest in their children's school day and related activities at home.

Note: On rare occasions a pupil may be absent from school due to suspension for breach of discipline in line with the provisions of our '*Code of Behaviour*'. In such instances parents / guardians will be consulted in advance. In such instances, where a pupil is suspended, they should not be on the school premises or engaged in any school activity as there may be insurance implications.

(e). The role of TUSLA is to:

- Promote and foster in our school community, an appreciation of the benefits to be derived from education.
- Promote and foster an environment that encourages children to attend school and to participate fully in the life of the school.
- Assist children and parents of children who are not attending school on a regular basis.
- Assist schools in drawing up strategies and programmes aimed at preventing non-attendance in schools.

(f). The role of the pupil is to:

- Attend school regularly and punctually.
- Inform staff if there is a problem that may lead to their absence.
- Pass any written school correspondence to their parents promptly (this will be kept to a minimum as the majority of school communication with parents will be via Aladdin Connect or school email).

7. Strategies to promote good school attendance.

The Board of Management is committed to providing a positive school atmosphere, which is conducive to promoting good school attendance. Parents/guardians are consulted in drafting and reviewing policies (through the Parents' Association) with the aim of promoting a high-level of co-operation among the school community. The teaching staff collaborates in the planning and implementation of the primary school curriculum, to provide a stimulating learning environment for all pupils.

- New entrants and their parents/guardians are invited to engage in an induction process, through which the school's policies and procedures in relation to attendance are explained.
- There is a focus on the value of regular attendance and on the importance of developing good attendance habits from Junior Infants onwards.
- Every September we inform all parents in our first school newsletter of the importance of good attendance and punctuality. This is re-emphasised in each subsequent newsletter.
- The school will promote development of self-esteem and self-worth in the children through the SPHE programme and Mindful Matters. Support for pupils, who have special educational needs, are in place in accordance with Department of Education guidelines.
- Positive behaviour supports are in place across the school.
- Engagement by all staff with the Cineáltas Action Plan on Bullying and the Bí Cineálta procedures to update our Anti-bullying Policy
- School strives to ensure that each child has at least one caring and trusted adult & one close friend in school and provides a range of activities for children to participate in outside class time

Initiatives in place to promote good attendance at school include:

- Fortnightly Junior and Senior Assemblies for all classes

- Breakfast Club subtly available for children in need
- Regular Parents' Hub activities (E.g. painting, wreath making, zumba, guest speakers and coffee mornings) to help support any parents in need and develop relationships
- Our 6th class pupils partake in a "Backpack" programme - a faith and resilience-based programme focusing on the pupils' relationships with self, others and God.
- "Fun and Friends" programme on offer each week, especially to pupils experiencing confidence, anxiety or social difficulties.
- Extend the July Provision availability to include some students who are at educational disadvantage and experiencing chronic absenteeism
- Principal's Special Achievement Stars to recognise pupil achievement outside of school
- Individual class and yard reward charts
- PA treats at Halloween, Christmas, Easter and ice pops and drinks on Sports Day
- PA Christmas table quiz
- Buddy class system between older and younger classes
- Celebration of important dates E.g. European Sports day, Well-being week, Grandparents Day
- Provision of a range of extra-curricular activities outside class time i.e. Gaelic football, hurling, camogie, rounders, athletics, basketball, badminton, tennis, Credit Union & Cumann na mBunscol quizzes, chess, messy play, STEAM Academy, skipping workshops
- Fortnightly in-house library visits. Also additional visits to Navan library for events
- Visits to shows and events in The Solstice Theatre and elsewhere
- Kids Inc. Afterschool Service available on site.

8. Communication / Record Keeping:

- Teachers are requested to record daily on the Aladdin portal all pupils in attendance and/or arriving late;

- Parents / Guardians may be notified via phone call, email or Aladdin message if the school has a concern about a particular absence any time on any given date;

- The Principal will write to the parents/guardians if there is a concern about a particular absence or absences as they come to the attention of the school. The parents/ guardians may be requested to make an appointment to discuss the matter with the Principal;

- Parents will receive an automatic reminder message from our Aladdin system when their child has been recorded absent for 10, 15, 19 and 20 days. Absences of 20 days or more are submitted to TUSLA at the end of each quarter. These procedures apply to all students, regardless of reason for absence.

- Subject to the restrictions of the Data Protection Act, attendance, behaviour and academic records of children who transfer to another primary school will be passed on written request to the Principal of the new school, by email or post, as soon as written notification is received of the transfer. Attendance, behaviour, and academic records of children who transfer from another primary school to our school will be sought directly from their previous school. Attendance, behaviour, and academic records of pupils transferring to a second level school will be sent to the school, when officially requested, once enrolment has been confirmed.

9. Success Criteria

• We hope to achieve an improvement in annual attendance rates, across the three tiers, by the following amounts:

Tier 1: Satisfactory / Regular Attendance - Attending: 95% or more of the time

School Year 23/24 - 39.2% **School Year 24/25** - Aim is 50% **School Year 25/26** - Aim is 55%

Long term goal: At least 80% of students

Tier 2: At-Risk for Chronic Absenteeism- Attending: less than 95% but 90% or more of the time

School Year 23/24 - 37.1% **School Year 24/25** - Aim is 30% **School Year 25/26** - Aim is 20%

Long term goal: No more than 15% of students

Tier 3: Chronic Absenteeism- Attending: less than 90% of the time-

School Year 23/24 - 23.7% **School Year 24/25** - Aim is 15% **School Year 25/26** - Aim is 10%

Long term goal: No more than 5% of students

Overall attendance % improvement: School year 2023/24 was 92.6%

School year 2024/45 - Aim is 94%

School year 2025/26 - Aim is 96%

12. Ratification and Review

This Attendance Strategy was ratified by the Board of Management at its meeting on the 11th February 2025. It will be appropriately communicated to members of the school community and made available on our school's website.

Chairperson BOM: PJ Finn Date: 11/02/2025

Principal: Eileen Mc Caughey Date: 11/02/2025

This Attendance Strategy will be reviewed again in February 2027 or earlier should any legislative or other changes come about in relation to attendance related matters.