# From 2016-2019

**Attendance/Retention Strategy for St Oliver Plunkett N.S. Navan**

Our attendance strategy hopes to continue to promote attendance and encourage parents and children to see that good attendance helps children to become fully involved in school life.

# Aims:

* Encourage pupils to attend school regularly and punctually.
* Share the promotion of school attendance amongst all in the school community.
* Inform the school community of its role and responsibility as outlined in the Education Act.
* Identify and monitor pupils who may be at risk of developing school attendance problems.
* Ensure that the school has procedures in place to promote attendance/participation.
* Develop, subject to available resources, links between the school and the families of children who may be at risk of developing attendance problems.
* Identify and remove, insofar as is practicable, obstacles to school attendance.
* To raise awareness of importance of school attendance and an awareness of forming good patterns of attendance. This is especially important in junior and senior infants so that good habits can be ingrained.
* To promote positive attitudes to learning.
* To comply with requirements as laid out by the Educational Welfare Act and NEWB guidelines.

# The school will ensure that:

* The importance of school attendance is promoted throughout the school.
* Pupils are registered accurately and efficiently.
* Pupil attendance is recorded daily.
* Parents or guardians are contacted when reasons for absences are unknown or have not been communicated.
* Pupil attendance and punctuality is monitored.
* The excellent attendance of children is acknowledged by certificate and rewarded by prizes at the end of each school year.
* School attendance statistics are reported as appropriate to: The Education Welfare Board (EWB) and The Board of Management.
* Contact is made with parents whose children miss 15 days or more.

# Punctuality

The school day is from 9.00a.m. to 1.45p.m For Junior and Senior infants and 9.00 a.m. to

* 1. p.m. for all other classes. All pupils and teachers are expected to be on time. The

school will contact parents/guardians in the event of pupils being consistently late. Names of children who are late are recorded each day by the class teacher on Aladdin. The Principal is obliged under the Education Welfare Act, to report children who are persistently late, to the Education Welfare Board.

HSCL will link in with every class teacher twice a term to check punctuality and attendance issues.

Section [(21) (9)] of the Act states that: “a pupil’s absence can only be authorised by the Principal when the child is involved in activities organised by the school or in which the school is involved”. The school principal cannot authorise a child’s absence for holidays during school time.

In circumstances where a child is removed for class during the course of the school day the parent/guardian responsible will sign the register in the school office which will note the date and time the child leaves the school. This document will also record the date and time of the child’s return to class should the absence be for a brief period to attend an appointment.

Reasons for pupils’ absences must be communicated in person or in writing, by parents/guardians to the school and will be retained by the school. The onus is on parents to give an explanation explaining a child’s absence, otherwise no explanation will be noted as the reason for the absence and this will be returned to TUSLA.

# Parents/guardians can promote good school attendance by:

1. Ensuring regular and punctual school attendance.
2. Notifying the School if their children cannot attend for any reason.
3. Working with the School and NEWB service to resolve any attendance problems;
4. Making sure their children understand that parents support and approve of school attendance;
5. Discussing planned absences with the school.
6. Refraining, if at all possible, from taking holidays during school time.
7. Showing an interest in their children’s school day and their children’s homework.
8. Encouraging them to participate in school activities.
9. Praising and encouraging their children’s achievements.
10. Instilling in their children, a positive self-concept and a positive sense of self-worth.
11. Informing the school in of the reasons for absence from school.
12. Ensuring, insofar as is possible, that children’s appointments (with dentists etc), are arranged for times outside of school hours.
13. Contacting the school immediately, if they have concerns about absence or other related school matters.
14. Notifying the school if their child/children, particularly children in junior classes, are to be collected by someone not known to the teacher.

# Pupils

Pupils have the clear responsibility to attend school regularly and punctually.

* + - Pupils should inform staff if there is a problem that may lead to their absence.
    - Pupils are responsible for promptly passing on absence notes from parents to their class teacher.
    - Pupils are responsible for passing school correspondence to their parents, on the specified day.

# Strengths of the school in relation to attendance:

## HSCL

HSCL teacher is in regular contact with the parent body and provides a very effective link between school and home. Besides home visits courses are provided for parents to up skill in various ways such as IT, Literacy, Fitness, Diet and Parenting. The opportunity to feel part of the school is epitomised by the Parents Choir, Garden Group and Running Club of St. Oliver’s which is open to parents. HSCL liaises with School Completion daily/ weekly and with EHB weekly. Joint home visits take place to support parents to improve their children’s attendance.

## School Completion

School Completion provide a Key Worker and other resources to the school and the Key worker works in tandem with our HSCL co-ordinator.

School Completion endeavour to-

* establish and maintain positive relationships with targeted children.
* Develop and deliver personal development programmes
* Help children express themselves through various mediums of art, drama, play relaxation, sensory play and music.
* Liaise with parents /guardians and all personnel involved with welfare of the child.
* Provide a Homework Club for the targeted children.
  + Provide a Breakfast Club for targeted children.
  + Provide a Lunchtime Club for targeted children.
* Involve the children in cookery, self help life skills programme.
* Work in conjunction with the school to help improve literacy support.
* Take social skills groupings with targeted children.
* Work closely with other agencies in order to support families and children.
* Monitor and track attendance and develop incentive based programmes such as golden trophy in Senior Infants.
* Organise a transition programme for transfer to secondary school.
* Deliver the Paws B mindfulness programme to 5th class students who may

be over reliant on technology and social media, creating opportunities to develop their self awareness and social skills

## Monitoring

We use Aladdin as our system of monitoring. School Completion, HSCL and class teachers monitor all the time.

## Lifeskills Room

Our Lifeskills Room is an integral part of the school and is staffed by an experienced teacher and an S.N.A. for 25%of her time

* It fosters a positive learning and social environment and supports children with emotional and behavioural needs in their classrooms.
* The EBD class forms part of a whole school approach to endorse the inclusion of children with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (within St. Oliver Plunkett’s Primary school).
* A variety of pedagogical strategies, a differentiated curriculum, the DFL school wide policy on reinforcing positive behaviour and regular communication with parents/guardians/HSE personnel are promoted to maximise the child’s emotional well being, social functioning and academic potential.
  + Children develop literacy skills which enhance self esteem.
* Children learn techniques to self evaluate, self regulate and develop self esteem through working to individual strengths.
  + The Kitchen based in the Lifeskills Room is a great encourager for attendance
  + The nurturing aspect of cooking, sharing and creating enhances self esteem.
* Our Bio Diversity Awareness programme is in place for the coming year and this has proved to be an effective programme for children with EBD and other pupils who may have anxiety issues

1. **School Attendance System**: New monitoring Student Management System makes it easier to track attendance throughout the school from the office desk.
2. **Play Therapy**: The school employs a Play Therapist who works with children usually because of behavioural or emotional difficulties. Non-directive play therapy is used.
3. **Parents Association**: A vibrant Parents Association works with Principal and staff in the school.
4. **Clinical Support:** The school has embarked on a pilot programme for children who attend the Lifeskills roomto access therapy within school hours from Sept 2016 using intervention from the Smithfield Clinic. To date it has been a very positive experience. We have found it helpful in reducing tension of children in relation to many different aspects of their lives and helping attendance. Use of the website “raise your IQ.com” has also been helpful.Some of the children through their private circumstances or socio-economic reasons cannot access the services they need and the school has invested in the services of a psychologist to try to fill this gap in needs.
5. **Literacy Programme**: A variety of literacy programmes are in place in the school. Please see our literacy 3 year plant for details.
6. **Numeracy Programmes**: A variety of numeracy programmes are in place in the school. Please see our numeracy 3 year plan for details.
7. **EAL Programme**: Dedicated teacher for support of EAL programmes in place in the school.
8. **Assembly**: Assembly held every second Friday which rewards positive behaviour including attendance.
9. **DFL**: Children who are in school every day can earn 2 stamps in the senior end of the school and 3 in the junior end.
10. **Extra Curricular Activities** – Sporting teams and activities are supported in the school with visiting coaches in Football, Athletics and Rugby.
11. **Learning Support and Resource teachers**: Our ~Special Needs staff of six resource/Learning Support teachers and 2 SNA’s are available to help any child who is experiencing difficulties be it academic or social.
12. **A positive classroom environment** is evident in the school. Teachers have done CPD on this. A number of teachers have completed the IY programme and The Friends for Life programme.
13. **Building Improvements** made to the physical characteristics of the school made during the last three years continue with the building of our new extension of six new classrooms and corridors. This project is now fully completed.

The renovation of staffroom, foyer and office, refurbishment of the school hall, Library and new signage erected for the school, replacement of windows project, all give a sense of development and progress in the school leading to increased pride and connectiveness on the part of the child. A new entrance, walking track and soft play area are all projects earmarked for 2016-19

1. **ICT –** IWB in every classroom plus purchase of 40 new iPads in 2015/16 leads to new supports in teaching and learning.
2. **Library**: Newly renovated comprehensive library available for students.
3. **Positive anti bullying** strategies used within the school such as Friends For Life programme, Zippy’s Friends, Friendship Week annually and a Be Kind to each Other initiative monthly are all there to build resilience and develop social skills in line with Department of Education and Skills anti bullying strategy. Our Bullying Policy is reviewed, updated and is discussed at staff meetings annually
4. **Induction:** Induction day for new junior infant parents takes place every year.

# Concerns:

* The repeated non-attendance of some pupils which has become an established pattern among some of our disadvantaged families.
* Travellers are statistically higher non-attenders.
* Housing – lack of and poor housing.
* A disproportionate number of our pupils with attendance issues come from non- English speaking families. Many of these pupils leave the school for the mother country at various times during the year.
* Language barrier when trying to implement strategies
* A holiday culture is beginning to emerge in early September and June
* Larger numbers in classes.

## Recording and Reporting of Attendance and non-Attendance

* The school attendance of individuals is recorded in the pupil information Aladdin system on a daily basis for each class. Class attendance data is automatically recorded daily in the leabhar tinreamh (Register). The annual attendance of each pupil is also recorded in the pupil information system.
* If a pupil does not attend on a day when the school is open for instruction, his/her non-attendance will be recorded by the class teacher. The Roll-call is taken before 10.20am each morning.
* Our school completion Key worker will track absences of children who have missed 3 days in a week and in this instance she may make a phone call to the parents.
* Parents/guardians of pupils who have missed 15-19 days are informed by letter detailing number of days missed and the fact that NEWB will be informed of these absences. Our home school liaison teacher will contact parents by phone to see if the school can be of any assistance in enabling the child to attend. Our HSCL teacher Ruth Dunne will provide information to parents of the community based services that are available.
* The school must inform TUSLA when a child has missed 20 days or more days in a school year, when attendance is irregular and/or when a child is suspended or expelled.
* Referrals to NEHB of children who are absent for 20 days or more are made by School Completion, HSCL and Principal
* Parents are informed of our attendance policy and regulations on induction day.

# Whole School Strategies to promote attendance/retention:

1. **Early Intervention**: A pack is prepared each year for new enrolments. Information from the NEWB about the importance of attendance is included. INTO booklet on Primary education is included. The Principal and HSCL speak to parents
2. **Communication with Parents:** Traditionally we have Parent Teacher meetings in end of November. Any attendance issues should be raised with the parents at this point. An information note is sent home to parents annually outlining the importance of attendance and punctuality and stating the obligation on staff to report non- attendance. Parents are also informed, of their responsibility to inform staff of reasons of absence.
3. **School Records of Attendance:** The staff is involved in keeping daily, monthly and annual records of attendance.
4. **School Reports:** Children’s individual attendances are recorded in the annual school report which is sent home to parents. In the cases of children transferring to secondary schools and/or other primary schools attendance records are also forwarded.
5. **NEWB:** Returns are forwarded to the NEWB about attendance twice every year.
6. **Promotion of Good attendance:** Certificates are presented giving actual attendance at May each year. A Golden Trophy ceremony is held for Senior Infants& First Class every Friday which promotes good attendance. Class teachers promote attendance in their own classrooms.
7. **SPHE**: As part of our Social Personal and Health Education Programme each class teacher teaches SPHE. This hopes to promote self-esteem and encourage attendance through areas such as “Making Choices”.
8. **Homework**: Our school has a Homework Policy. Homework creates a good link between school and home and also helps to nurture lifelong learning. A copy of the content of the policy and the Code of Behaviour is forwarded to parents at the beginning of each school year. Both documents are also available on our website. Parents are free to approach the teacher if the child is experiencing issues with homework.
9. **Book Scheme:** Books are available to families under our lending scheme. We keep changes to our booklist to a minimum so as not to put pressure on parents.
10. **Equality of Participation:** We are very mindful that our school being Deis Band 2 that parents are under considerable pressure financially and as a result there is little monetary pressures coming from the school such as voluntary contributions etc. Our DEIS grant helps families with difficulties when it comes to swimming classes, school trips etc. Our commercialism policy deals with the increasing numbers of flyers etc., which are available, advertising events which also can put pressure on parents.
11. **Our special needs team:** Sometimes children can be reluctant to attend due to perceived failure or weakness in English/Maths or academics in general. Our special needs /EAL team intervene to ensure that each child is given support so that all children can integrate successfully into the classroom environment.
12. **Care Team:** Our Care Team meets on the first Friday of every month. It monitors the progress of high risk/targeted children.

# Communication with other schools/Agencies

* If a parent hopes to enrol a child in our school from another primary school in the state the principal contacts the principal of the other school to inform them of the request. It is hoped that the principal would then pass on any concerns re: attendance. Once the child is enrolled in our school the Principal will send a letter to the other primary school informing them that the child has now enrolled in the school.
* If a child from our school transfers to another school details about the child are passed onto the other school These details include attendance figures, results of standardised tests (where applicable) and any other relevant education report.
* When a child transfers to a secondary school the school report showing attendance for the previous year and standardised test reports are passed on to the principal/senior post holder in that school. NCCA passport is organised by the school completion worker and the sixth class resource teacher.
* Returns are made to the NEWB twice a year outlining the number of children who have missed 20 days. Annual returns are forwarded showing total attendance for all children and total absence numbers.
* Referral forms are also completed by the staff and returned to the NEWB when we have a concern about a child’s non attendance at school.
* NEWB will also be informed if a child has been suspended, for 6 days or more, and also if a child is being expelled.
* The principal of the school may also contact Social Workers (if involved) to discuss children.
* Related Documents : Safeguarding Statement

\_ Code of behaviour

* + Anti bullying Policy
  + Commercialism Policy
  + Data Protection.
  + School refusal-A good practice guide for schools. (HSE)

# Targets 2016 – 2019

* *To monitor the schools attendance record in relation to the national standards published by Tusla*
* *To maintain the schools attendance record at or in line with the national standards published by Tusla*
* *To decrease the number of pupils reported to NEWB (ie. missing 20 days from 9% in 2016 to 7.5% in 2019*
* *To reduce the number of children who have missed 30 days or more in 2016 from 3.% to 2.0% over the 3 year period.*
* *To reduce the number of children who have missed 40 days or more from 8 pupils in 2016 to 3-5 in 2019*
* *To bring average level of attendance up to 95% in 2019 from almost 94% in 2016.*
* *To increase awareness in International parents of the importance of regular attendance.*
* *Maintain our excellent transfer rates to secondary school*

## Baseline Data

**Overall attendance in our school is very good in relation to national standard**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **National average for DEIS schools** | **90.4%** |
| **St. Oliver Plunkett average May 2014** | **94.7** |
| **St. Oliver Plunkett average May 2015** | **94.3** |
| **St. Oliver Plunkett average May 2016** | **94.4** |
| **St. Oliver Plunkett average May 2017** | **93.5** |

**Children of International families have attendance pattern difficulties**

**There is a link between poor attendance and children who are under achieving**

**May 2015**

Our attendance as of 1/06/15 is at 94.3%

40 pupils or 8.4% have been reported to NEWB as having missed 20 days or over 11 pupils or 2.32% have been reported to NEWB as having missed 30 days or over 5 pupils or 1.054% have been reported to NEWB as having missed 40 days or over

## May 2016

Overall attendance as of 1/06/16 is at 94.4 %

43 pupils or 9% have been reported to NEWB as having missed 20 days or over

14 pupils or 3% have been reported to NEWB as having missed 30 days or over 8 pupils or 1.6% have been reported to NEWB as having missed 40 days or over

## May 2017

Overall attendance as of 1/06/17 is at 93.5%

21 pupils or 4.6% have been reported to NEWB as having missed 20 days or more.

7 pupils or 1.5% have been reported to NEHB as having missed 30 days or over.

3 pupils or 0.65% have been reported to NEHB as having missed 40 days or more.

# Actions 2016/2019

* Don’t let your child miss out booklet distributed to 1st class (2016/17) parents and to parents of targeted children .
* Children in Junior Infants who are likely to miss days to be identified early by class teacher and their names given to HSCL and school Principal. HSCL will arrange call outs to link in with parents.
* School completion key worker will continue to liaise with school Principal , HSCL teacher and class teachers (See strengths for school completion strategies.)
* The attendance officer from Tusla (EWO) will meet with parents of children who are referred.
* Note sent to parents outlining our strategy and the importance of attending school
* Coffee morning for parents of junior infant children to be held in September of each year. At This meeting the parents will be reminded about the importance of good attendance.
* Organise Parent activities for parents. Encourage parents to come to school and help with numeracy and literacy activities.
* Continue with present policy of developing the physical characteristics of the school ensuring pride in ones school and increasing connectivity.
* Percentage attendance will be monitored monthly.
* Teachers who are trained in incredible years programme to include strategies in their teaching.
* Parenting courses offered to parents, English classes for International Parents**.**
* Parent teacher meetings are used to remind parents of the importance of good attendance at an early age. Staff will highlight the children with very good attendance and draw attention to students who are struggling in this a
* Good attendance to be promoted at assembly every second Friday.
* Golden trophy to be continued in infant classes and first class at their assembly.
* Continue with Violin and recorder programme for the next three years particularly targeting DEIS targeted group.
* At the end of the year the principal will meet with all parents of children who have exceeded 20 days absence.
* The end of year school report includes a grading system for number of days missed and parents receive a percentage feedback on their child’s attendance i.e. 90% attendance.
* Fun Friends programme is taught in senior infant classes.
* Zippy’s friends programme to be taught in 1st classes.
* Friends for Life programme to be taught in 5th classes
* DFL is our discipline policy throughout the school.
* Internet safety talks for parents and children annually.
* School care team will continue to meet on the first Friday of every month to devise individual strategies and help for those pupils who are in difficulty.

# Monitoring and Review

## This will be done by-

* + **Class teachers**
  + **HSCL Co-ordinator**
  + **School Principal and Deputy Principal**
  + **School completion key worker**
  + **Regular communication with Education Welfare Officer**
  + **Attendance**

**Success Criteria and evaluation**

We will reflect on the success of our Attendance Strategy in a number of ways:

* Termly records and reporting of absences
* Monthly percentage figures for attendance
* Annual attendance figures
* Feedback from Inspectorate, NEWB, parents and outside agencies.
* Analysis of NEWB reports
* Analysis of individual class roll books
* Targeted children’s attendance will be monitored against their own attendance..

## Attendance/Retention strategy review

Dated 5/ 3/2018

Catherine Keane-Faulkner Acting Principal Ruth Dunne HSCL

Teresa Murphy Acting Deputy Principal Pat Roche EBD lifeskills room teacher Majella Clarke SCP Key Worker