**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.

**Punctuality**  
The school day is from 9.00a.m. to 1.45p.m For Junior and Senior infants and 9.00 a.m. to 2.45 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.

Parents who present children for school after classes have commenced are required to sign their child into school. The Principal is obliged under the Education Welfare Act, to report children who are persistently late, to the Education Welfare Board.

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. If a child is absent, when the child returns to school s/he should give/send a written note to the class teacher, which contains the child’s name, the dates of absence and the reason for the absence. These notes will form a record, which may be inspected by the Education Welfare Officer on a visit to 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 the EWB.  
  
**Parents/guardians can promote good school attendance by:**

* Ensuring regular and punctual school attendance.
* Notifying the School if their children cannot attend for any reason.
* Working with the School and NEWB service to resolve any attendance problems;
* Making sure their children understand that parents support and approve of school attendance;
* Discussing planned absences with the school.
* Refraining, if at all possible, from taking holidays during school time.
* Showing an interest in their children’s school day and their children’s homework.
* Encouraging them to participate in school activities.
* Praising and encouraging their children’s achievements.
* Instilling in their children, a positive self-concept and a positive sense of self-worth.
* Informing the school in writing of the reasons for absence from school.
* Ensuring, insofar as is possible, that children’s appointments (with dentists etc), are arranged for times outside of school hours.
* Contacting the school immediately, if they have concerns about absence or other related school matters.
* Notifying in writing, 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 of St. Oliver’s which is open to parents.

**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.

- Involve the school in the Garda Diversion programme which can help to divert young people away from any involvement in crime.

- Involve school in Garden Projects to improve self esteem and give targeted children a sense of belonging of the group.

- Provides first tee golf programme for the 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 courses in conjunction with our HSCL teacher such as Parents Plus/parent to Parent programme.

- Organise a transition programme for transfer to secondary school.

- Organise breakfast club for needy children.

- 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**

**Behavioural Unit** - Our behavioural unit is an integral part of the school and is staffed by an experienced teacher and an S.N.A.

- 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 learn techniques to self evaluate, self regulate and develop self esteem through working to individual strengths.

- Our Animal care 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

**School Attendance System**: New monitoring Student Management System makes it easier to track attendance throughout the school from the office desk.

**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.

**Parents Association**: A vibrant Parents Association works with Principal and staff in the school.

**Clinical Support:** The school is embarking on a pilot programme for children to access therapy within school hours from Sept 2016 using intervention from the Smithfield Clinic. 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.

**Literacy Programme**: A variety of literacy programmes are in place in the school. Please see our literacy 3 year plant for details.

**Numeracy Programmes**: A variety of numeracy programmes are in place in the school. Please see our numeracy 3 year plan for details.

**EAL Programme**: Dedicated teacher for support of EAL programmes in place in the school.

**Assembly**: Assembly held every second Friday which rewards positive behaviour including attendance.

**Extra Curricular Activities** – Sporting teams and activities are supported in the school with visiting coaches in Football, Athletics and Rugby.

**Learning Support and Resource teachers**: Our ~Special Needs staff of six resource/Learning Support teachers and 5 SNA’s are available to help any child who is experiencing difficulties be it academic or social.

**A positive classroom environment** is evident in the school.

**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

**ICT –** IWB in every classroom plus purchase of 40 new iPads in 2015/16 leads to new supports in teaching and learning.

**Library**: Newly renovated comprehensive library available for students.

**Positive anti bullying** strategies used within the school such as Friends First programme, Friendship Week and a new policy first introduced in November 2013 in line with Department of Education and Skills anti bullying strategy. This will be reviewed in November 2016

**Concerns:**

- 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.

- The repeated non-attendance of some pupils which has become an established pattern among some of our disadvantaged families.

**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. Any pupil not present when the roll is called will be marked absent for the day. A note from parents/guardians is required to explain each absence. Notes will be retained by the class teacher until the end of the school year. Notes are shredded by the class teacher.
* 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 where a child has missed 20 days or more days in a school year, where attendance is irregular and/or where a child is suspended or expelled.
* Where there is an irregularity that is repeatedly causing concern the parents will be called in to meet with the Principal to discuss ways that we can help to improve the attendance of the child. An irregularity could be a pattern of Mondays or Fridays being days in which a student is absent from school. This meeting would follow on from a house call from our home school liaison teacher.
* The Principal will be notified once a child has missed 10 days and contact will be made by the school depending on individual circumstances.

**Whole School Strategies to promote attendance/retention:**

**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.

**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 each term 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 send a note explaining absences to the staff.

**School Records of Attendance:** The staff is involved in keeping daily, monthly and annual records of attendance. The staff also keep notes received from parents re absences.

**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.

**NEWB:** Quarterly and annual returns are forwarded to the NEWB about attendance every year.

**Promotion of Good attendance:** Certificatesare presented termly at assembly and at the end of the year to children who have had full attendance or to children who have only missed one day. Medals/prizes are also presented at the end of the school year to children who missed no days during the school year. The school certificates and medals are purchased from school funds. A Golden Trophy ceremony is held for Junior & Senior Infants every Tuesday which promotes good attendance.

**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”.

**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.

**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.

**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.

**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.

**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. This pack is prepared by the 6th class support teacher.
* 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.
* Returns are made to the NEWB each quarter 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 -

\_ Code of behaviour

* Anti bullying Policy
* Commercialism Policy
* 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**

**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

Overall attendance

**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

**Other Actions 2016/2017**

Attendance tracker for child attendance will be sent to full parent body.

**Tracker for your child’s attendance 2016/2017**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Date** | **Days Missed** | **Reason** | **Medical Cert** |
| Example  Monday 6th & Tues. 7th Oct. | 2 | Influenza | Note given to class teacher on 8th Oct. |
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* Don’t let your child miss out booklet distributed to 1st class (2016/17) parents and to parents of targeted children and school attendance strategy booklet distributed as well for further strategies (page 1 + 2)
* 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 and HSCL teacher. (See strengths for school completion strategies.
* The attendance officer from Tusla (EWO) will arrange a date with the principal in late October to meet with parents of children who look to be falling into a similar pattern of non-attendance as the previous year.
* 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 of 1st classes. Encourage parents of children in junior classes to come to school and help in maths4fun and science4fun activities and/or math trails.
* Friends First programme introduced in 5th class.
* 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 InternationalParents**.**
* 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 area
* Certificates will be given to good attenders at end of each term to promote good attendance.
* Good attendance to be promoted at assembly every second Friday.
* Golden trophy to be continued in infant classes 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 feedback on their child’s attendance i.e. Fair, good, v good, excellent.
* Fun Friends programme established in sen. inf classes following training of staff in 2015
* Zippy’s friends programme to be taught in 1st classes.
* Friends first programme to be taught in 5th classes
* 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**

**This will be done by-**

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

**Actions 2017 – 2018 –** Please see recording and reporting of non-attendance**.**

We will also be repeating all the successful interventions from year 1.

**Actions 2018 – 2019.**

Repeat all successful interventions from years 1 and 2.

**2019/20**

**Review and reflection**

**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

Termly awards for attendance

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.

**Attendance/Retention strategy review**

Dated 26/09/16 and 26/10/2016

Fergal Kelly Principal

Ruth Dunne HSCL

Mairead Traynor Deputy Principal

Pat Roche EBD lifeskills room teacher

Majella Clarke SCP Key Worker