Pupil Attendance Strategy

Introductory Statement:

This policy was originally formulated by the staff of Knockminna National School on 26/10/2011 and ratified by the Board of Management on 23/01/2012. It was reviewed by the staff again in September 2017. It was again reviewed by the staff on the 12.3.26 and changes made to the policy were re-ratified by the B.O.M. on 21.4.26

Rationale:

It was originally necessary to formulate a policy outlining the procedures in relation to pupil attendance in the school as the staff had noticed a high level of absenteeism beginning to appear on roll books over a period of time. The inspector had also recommended that we look at some ways of improving attendance. Following the 2 year period in which Covid 19 was hugely prevalent, absenteeism had become a very big problem, therefore it became necessary to re-visit our attendance strategy policy in 2022. A further review took place in 2026.

The Board of Management is also required 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 i.e. 1. Illness; 2. Urgent Family Reasons; 3. Expelled; 4. Suspended; 5. Other; 6. Transfer to another school; 7. Holiday

• Following consultation during the Dept. of Education & Youth / TESS National School Attendance Campaign 2023 / 24

Relationship to school ethos:

At Knockminna N.S., all the staff aim at making the school a centre of excellence in which high professional standards are maintained and where pupils learn in a well-ordered, caring, happy, safe and secure environment. It is felt that to reach full potential, all children should attend school every day, where possible to do so.

Aims:

- To clarify procedures relating to pupil attendance/absence.
- To outline roles and responsibilities for implementing our attendance strategy.
- To encourage all pupils to attend school when possible to do so and encourage their parents to send them at every opportunity

Content of Strategy:

- It is the policy of the Board of Management of Knockminna N.S. to inform parents in a 'Welcome back letter' that a notification to the class teacher, via the Aladdin Connect app, explaining any absences is vital for school records as reports are made to 'Túsla' (The Child and Family Agency) upon a child being absent for 20 days (or more).

- This notification is required on or before the day/days of absence where possible to facilitate accurate recording of the roll on Aladdin.

- At the end of each month a list of those with 100% attendance would be compiled and those that achieved 100% attendance would be rewarded with a homework pass or other such small reward. At the end of each term, children, who have no absences, receive little rewards and certificates as a congratulations for their good attendance and this also serves as an incentive to others to aim for full attendance.

- It was decided to inform parents of the number of days that their child has missed at Parent/Teacher meetings.

- Parents are informed via the Aladdin Connect app when their child has missed 10 days, and again when they have missed 15 days, to remind them that a report will be made to Túsla when they are absent for 20 days (or more).

- Parents are informed when a report is being made to 'Túsla' regarding their child's absenteeism of 20 days (or more)

- Parents are informed annually in the end of year school report of their child's attendance record for the year.

- Roll call is taken each day at 9.45a.m. on the online school management tool 'Aladdin' Children who come to school after this time are recorded as late and the number of minutes they are late is recorded by the class teacher.

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 support where necessary (from as early a stage as possible).

• Establish settings on Aladdin Connect to notify parents by notification when 10, 15 & 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. In the case of a teacher being absent the Principal or Assistant Principal will take the roll for that teacher's class.

• 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)/guardian(s) in instances where absences are not explained via Aladdin Connect, a written note in the homework journal or via the office.

• Inform the parent(s)/guardian(s) at the Parent Teacher meetings in October 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 parent(s) / guardian(s) 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) / guardian(s) 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 following codes: 1. Illness; 2. Urgent Family Reasons; 3. Expelled; 4. Suspended; 5. Other; 6. Transfer to another school; 7. Holiday on the Aladdin Connect app.

• Parents / Guardians must ensure that their children are assembled in their designated yard punctually each morning. Parents / guardians need to ensure that, insofar as possible, their children are in school from 9:30am to 2:10pm daily for infant classes and 9:30am to 3:10pm for 1st to 6th Classes

• 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. should 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 main entrance.

- Notify the school in writing / via email or by Aladdin 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.

(d). 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.

(e). 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.

• The school will promote development of self-esteem and self-worth in the children through the SPHE/Wellbeing 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.

•Consistent monitoring of the success of and teaching lessons based on our school's Bí Cineálta Anti-Bullying Policy each September with a review lesson on a termly basis or as required.

• The 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:

- We have a kind, caring, welcoming environment in Knockminna N.S.
- Monitoring attendance awards
- Termly class group awards
- Kindness awards
- After school facilities
- Hot School Meals and Fruit Scheme
- Buddy Benches
- Buddy Support System to be implemented in September 2026

In cases of school avoidance some of the strategies to be implemented may include;

- Open communication with parents, TUSLA, TESS, and the relevant Education Welfare Officer

- A breakfast facility can be made available **during school opening hours** with the support of our SNA's. This will be monitored and reviewed on a case by case basis as required.

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 in December and June each year. 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 upon 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 48.5% School Year 24/25 54.2%

School Year 25/26 - Aim is 60%

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 41.2% School Year 24/25 - 40.7%

School Year 25/26 - Aim is 30%

Long term goal: No more than 15% of students

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

School Year 23/24 10.3% School Year 24/25 - 5.1%

School Year 25/26 - Aim is no more than 5% of pupils

Long term goal: No more than 5% of students

Overall attendance: School year 2024/25 was 95.2%

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 21st of April 2026. It will be appropriately communicated to members of the school community and made available on our school's website.