School Attendance Policy
Presentation Primary School, Clonmel

Introduction
This policy was drawn up in consultation with staff, the parents' council and the board of management in accordance with the Education Act, 1998 and the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000. This school recognises the clear connection between school attendance and school attainment. The school promotes an environment in which students feel valued - they will be missed when they are absent from school and they will be supported to catch up on their learning and sense of belonging within their class when they return to school.

Aims

- To ensure that the procedures in place to promote punctuality and good attendance are clear and are understood by students, parents/guardians and staff
- To foster positive attitudes to school and to learning
- To inform the school community of its role and responsibility in relation to the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000
- To identify and support students who are at risk of developing attendance problems
- To discourage non-attendance for trivial reasons.

Responsibilities
Good school attendance and punctuality is the responsibility of everyone in the school community - students, parents/guardians, staff and board of management.

Students
Unless a student is sick or needs to be absent for an urgent family reason, students are required to attend school regularly, arrive on time and be well prepared for the school day. They are reminded that if they have any worries about school, they are to discuss these worries with their teacher.

Parents/guardians
Parents/guardians have a responsibility to support their child to attend school regularly and punctually. They are required to notify the teacher (in writing/by phone) if their child is absent, giving the reason for the child's absence. Parents/guardians are asked to contact the school whenever any problem occurs that may keep the child away from school. Parents/guardians are asked to avoid, if possible, making medical/dental appointments for their child during school hours. They are asked to plan family holidays so that children do not miss school.

The school
The school will maintain a school register and daily school attendance records. The school will particularly recognise good/improved attendance and punctuality. Students who are absent through sickness for any extended period of time will be supported to keep up with their learning, if appropriate, and will be supported to settle back into

school upon their return. The school will make accommodation for parents/guardians whose first language is not English or who may have literacy difficulties in meeting the requirement to account for their child's absences.

The school will provide a varied and flexible curriculum and every effort will be made to differentiate learning tasks to meet the different needs of individual students. Children will be regularly reminded of the link between good attendance, success in learning and maintaining friendships in school. School attendance statistics will be reported to the school board of management, the Education Welfare Officer and the National Education Welfare Board (NEWB).

Promoting good school attendance

The school employs a range of strategies to encourage good attendance and punctuality including:

- The need for punctuality and good school attendance is discussed at meetings of parents/guardians of new entrants each year and a summary of school attendance procedures is copied to all parents/guardians in September each year.
- The Principal/Deputy Principal sends a reminder in writing to parents reminding them of the importance of good attendance and punctuality in the middle of the first term each school year. The attendance policy is also made available to parents on the school website.
- Punctuality and good school attendance is regularly discussed in class at roll call and in Circle Time. It is also discussed in school assembly.
- A child's school attendance is discussed at student/parent/teacher meetings and a child's yearly attendance total is included in the child's end of year school report.
- The school asks a parent/guardian to make early contact with the school to discuss any concerns about a child's punctuality or attendance. The school will liaise, where appropriate, with community and statutory agencies when this may assist students and families who are experiencing difficulties.
- Students with full/ almost full attendance are awarded certificates on a termly basis. The awards are made during school assemblies and the students' names are then displayed on the 'Good Attendance' display board.
- Certificates are awarded for full attendance or almost full attendance at the end of each school year (Gold Silver Bronze). The pupils names/photos are displayed on the school attendance board.
- Attendance is regularly referred to in school newsletters.

Procedures for supporting children

All absences are monitored on a regular basis by the class teacher and the deputy principal/ principal is made aware of concerns arising. If a parent/guardian does not give a reasonable account for absences or if a child has an irregular pattern of attendance, the class teacher will make early contact with a parent/guardian and will arrange a meeting to discuss what support can be put in place for the child. Persistent irregular absences will be reported to the deputy principal/ principal who will report concerns to the Education Welfare Officer.

To help parents/guardians to keep track their child's absences, the school will send a letter to parents/guardians when a child has missed a total of 10 days. A second letter will be sent when a child has missed 15 days. If a child has irregular attendance or when a child has been absent for 20 days, parents/guardians will be informed that the case is being reported to the Education Welfare Officer. The Education Welfare Officer will then make contact with the child's parent/guardian to offer support.

Students who have irregular/poor school attendance
At the beginning of each school year, class teachers are given the names of students who had irregular or poor school attendance during the previous school year/s.

- The class teacher will track the attendance of these students, including checking the attendance of any siblings in the school.
- If a parent/guardian does not provide a reasonable explanation for a school absence, the teacher will:

  - talk to the child to gain an understanding of the child's absence
  - send home an absence note to be signed by a parent/guardian
  - teacher or principal will monitor the attendance of such children and address same with parents/guardians regularly
  - teacher will refer the matter to deputy principal/principal if non-attendance persists or if reasons for absences are not provided.

- A parent/guardian will be invited to attend a meeting with the class teacher and the principal to identify and address the problems that are preventing the student from attending school.
- In event of further absences, the case will be referred to the Education Welfare Officer.

National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB)
The NEWB is the national agency with responsibility school attendance. The school will report attendance statistics five times annually to the NEWB. The school must report to the Education Welfare Officer if a child's attendance is irregular, a child misses 20 or more days in a school year, where a student is removed from the school register and where a student is suspended or expelled for 6 days or more. In accordance with Section 24 of the Act, in the event that the board of management decides to expel a student, the Education Welfare Officer will be given written notice. Upon receipt of notification from the Education Welfare Officer, a student shall not be expelled from the school before the passing of 20 days.

Success criteria
The successful implementation of this policy will be measured by:

- Improvement in overall school attendance statistics
- Greater number of awards made to students for good/improved attendance
- Reduction in number of cases referred to the Educational Welfare Officer

- Fewer instances of unexplained absences or fewer absences for trivial reasons.

Evaluation and review of policy
There will be on-going monitoring of these procedures. At staff meetings, staff will discuss their effectiveness, especially the follow-up of absences. The impact of procedures will be evaluated by reviewing attendance statistics and seeking feedback from students, parents/guardians and outside agencies, including the Education Welfare Officer.

Ratification and communication
This policy was discussed by staff, the parents' council and the board of management in March/April 2013. It was ratified by the board of management in April 2013. A summary of the policy is given to all parents/guardians on the enrolment of their child. The full policy is available on the school website and from the school office. The policy will be reviewed every two to three years.

Chairperson: Thomas Norris

Date: 10-04-2013